

With autumn slowly going and winter not much far away, fashion designers are busy planning a vibrant and contemporary design palette, Pramita Bose finds

When winter comes

Is winter fashion merely about warm woollies tumbling out of the cupboard? Wrong. The cold season is not only about well-knit sweaters and cardigans, declare contemporary designers who like to offer a choices galore to dress up in for the fashionistas this Fall-Winter.

A burst of contrasting elements, drama, exuberance, unisex characteristics and a riot of chromes are likely to dominate the fashion scene with the onset of imminent winter and the Yuletide fervour later in December. A breed of forward looking, upwardly mobile and innovative couturiers have geared up to hog the limelight in the forthcoming fashion weeks.

Stricter silhouettes with structured looks and masculine suits for women would determine the fashion diktats in the impending seasons, they say. Since winter also hails in the big fat Indian wedding season, the designers are also ready to rejuvenate the bridal trousseau and the grooms' wardrobe. There are funky designs too for donning

based Ajay Kumar participated in the current year's edition of Lakme Fashion Week with his exclusive 'Consonance & Dissonance' theme that punctuates the eternal aspect of dichotomy in life. Print is the main essence of his collection and the style is intricately ornate. Kumar has meticulously picked up Indo-Persian motifs to appear in a paradox of living and non-living; geometric and florals; birds and beasts. His choice of an elaborate surface is deliberate as it aims to catch the eye immediately. The sil-



ton mesh and organza," he reveals. Shirts, suits, bomber-jackets, dresses and trousers would adorn his festive oeuvre, this autumn-winter.

As to the colour-code this end of season, he sees "earthy pigments reigning supreme with a nature-themed palette unveiled on the ramp. Gold will be integral to the haute couture," as per his analysis. "There will be a trait of fun, fantasy and spunk on the fashionscape in the upcoming months. Also, the return of the retro era with 1960s' inspired dresses and coats would rule the roost."

Keralite Jebin Johny dubs gingham as a classic print and permanently in vogue. "Black checks on white base or vice-versa is the numero uno combo for me. It looks best both on men and women," he feels. Celebs like David Beckham, Imran Khan, Hollywood star Jake Gyllenhaal, French actress Lea Seydoux, Chinese actress and fashion icon Fan Bingbing, and India's very own Kangana Ranaut, he feels, should fit the gingham to the tee and carry it off with a faultless panache.

Seconding Johny, Kumar also feels that checks (gingham prints) never go out of fashion. "The pattern is eternally trendy, whether

this heightens the aura of glitz and glamour around an otherwise traditional garment.

Kumar predicts the autumnal tones as the 'in-thing' for the near future. "These hues will ripen, mature and grow more intense in the shape of a luxuriant lotus pink, cranberry and parrot green with a dash of lipstick red to create a vivid, bold and concentrated Indian shade card," he foresees. For example, green would progress into khaki green while other darker shades of chestnut tints would be accentuated with radiant rays. The range is specially developed and constructed with 100 hundred percent cotton, linen, silk and digitally printed fabric with a finished uber-cool look.

Delhi's Charchit Bafna is another rookie on the ramp who declares his debut with a vibrant set of designs. He is inspired by the kind of winter that India usually experiences. His work evokes a playful mood and the palette turns unexpectedly

zesty and flirty, keeping the season of shedding in mind. Titled 'Elakka Ice', the idea is to spice up the usual sombre winter by streaking it with an element of drama and a certain richness. "My primary objective is to upend the common metaphors and imageries associated with a dull winter and make it more celebratory in context," Bafna says. Echoing Kumar's line of thought, he asserts that "the beauty around us lies in that discord and slight imperfection."

Fiddling with the concept of androgyny, Bafna comfortably creates an array of gender-neutral pieces, thereby questioning the preconceived notions of both masculine and feminine styles. He is more at home with dusky tinges like blues, greens and gold. The silhouettes are more straight-lined with simple cuts and crafted out in distinctively powerful yet versatile pieces. "I have used a banana leaf print and floral hand-embroideries in my collection with a varied range

of fabrics including the



men's suiting material, cotton poplin, leatherite, cotton in east or west, with a casual wear bend (Contd on P-VII)



during red carpet events, at parties and on social occasions as well.

GenY draper Bengaluru-

houettes are strikingly well-structured yet flowing, conventional yet contemporary, with multiple layering;

By Subhasis K. Chanda

Tale of lost civilization

Treading the pathways of undulating terrain, bisecting deep forests and having a glance of peeped in gorges and narrow rivers and spring at times, and all the while meeting strange variety of flora and fauna and off course, forests' children always amazing the urban tourists seeking to escape from their daily grind life. Such a nature's reserve Unakoti, which is admixed with added colour, smell and taste in terms of history, archaeology and religious trait, beckons tourists. This is a moderate height hill range engraved with rock cut carvings of Hindu pantheon of the lost civilization, situated in a cool and calm ambience of lush green in North Tripura.

About 170 km far off from the capital of the State, the Unakoti hill presents rock cut images of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Huge carvings in a sprawling rock-wall appear to have chiseled out, and images carved out that spread here and there and at different heights. Mythological tales



sound interesting and states that there was an Assembly of Gods and Goddesses, with the Lord of Gods, Shiva leaving for Benaras (Contd on P-VII)



Shashank Manohar

Indian cricket is going through a difficult period both on and, more, off the field and Shashank Manohar may not have bargained for this when he agreed to return as president of the Indian board. Manohar has apparently told the board members that

he will carry out the badly required administrative reforms come what may. All those who know him have little doubt that he would do what he has promised and restore board's credibility. He has already announced some far-reaching steps like not using his

Can BCCI chief walk the talk?

By Veturi Srivatsa

president's vote or casting vote till the constitution is amended -- he doesn't think the chair should have a vote - and doing away with the age old practice of India team needing president's clearance.

In other words, he will not exercise his veto in matters next month. Will he also be able to amend the archaic statute giving the so-called five permanent Test centres - Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Kanpur - the

privilege of being Working Committee members as proposed by some of his colleagues?

The privilege makes little sense when the Tests are allotted by rotation. Along with it the appeasement of making centres which have held a Test in two years, adding up to another five members, must also go. Will Manohar rock the entire boat and change the administrative functioning and the mindset of people in the board in one fell swoop? The Lodha Committee left him with (Contd on P-VII)

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Exercise is bad for your health

Your narrator met an old friend while practising for a triathlon the other day. That is, he was practising for a triathlon: I'd just taken a taxi to the shop for a second box of donuts.

NOT that that means this writer is unhealthy, oh no. I once managed to separate two supermarket trolleys WITH MY BARE HANDS, and as everyone knows, staff weld those things into single units every night to torment shoppers.

Exercise is bad for your health. Proof comes in the shape of a news report a reader forwarded to me about the recent New Delhi marathon. Organizers forgot to put signs at the point where runners had to turn round to head back. As a result, they just kept on going.

Had a runner not become suspicious after an extra four kilometres, they would have kept going right through Nepal into the Himalayas and up Mount Everest. "This hill's a bit steep, Ayush." "Don't be a wimp, Ishaan."

Once they realized they were way off course, run-

ing away with a stolen iPhone-and noted his speed. Analysis by Jiangsu Public Security Bureau showed that the thief, a 25-year-old man surnamed Yang, ran 100 metres in 12 seconds. Clearly he could be guided to a new career as an Olympic sprinter. But no follow-up reports appeared, so he may have received normal Chinese security bureau justice, i.e., being slapped around and thrown over a wall.

This columnist was recently given a watch that counts calories so you can offset them against the snacks you've consumed.



ners had to beg passers-by for money so they could take buses back to the finishing line - where they were disqualified for taking buses. Imagine what that does for your blood pressure.

The same week, on the other side of the world, a fugitive being chased by police ran on to the route of the Chicago marathon and joined the runners. A puffing police officer followed. The news report did not say how far the pair ran, but I hope it wasn't the full 42 kilometres.

The cop eventually leapt forwards and brought down the runner in front of him, fortunately getting the right man to avoid committing the heinous crime of Turning Life Into A Comedy Movie.

A similar incident in China last year also nearly had a movie ending. Police officers looked at a street surveillance video to identify a snatch thief sprint-

In a single exercise session, I burned 55 WHOLE CALORIES, nearly enough to compensate for half a chocolate bar I ate in 1983. Tomorrow I plan to work on the other half, before moving on to the 40,000 other snacks I have eaten since then.

A female colleague who signed up for a weight-loss exercise class received an email telling her to "dress in loose clothing". She replied: "The reason I am doing this exercise class is because laws of physics prevent me having any loose clothing."

She was in a seriously bad mood so I recommended that she apply for the New Delhi marathon and run up the Himalayas. I did warn her: One of the hills may be a bit steep.

(The writer is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send comments and ideas via Facebook)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Forestry as career option

Forests are one of the important natural resources. It provides ample opportunity for living being with food, livelihood and many more. When it comes to career, it is one of the important areas of study as conservation and management of natural resources like forest is very crucial and important. This subject has more scope in north eastern region and areas which have more forest covers.

Forestry is an important and interesting subject of study and from scientific perspectives it started in 1864 in India. B.Sc Forestry was introduced since 1985 in the country and since then there are many institutes offering courses related to forestry. Trained and skilled personnel are needed to maintain and regenerate the forest cover, forest wealth and resources.

There are various courses available like graduate, postgraduate and diploma level, as well as at the Ph.D. level. Students willing to study courses related to forestry must be from science background with subjects like Physics, Chemistry and Biology at the senior secondary level. There are special courses at masters level related to same. Some of the courses related to it are Certificate Course in Forest Management, B.Sc. Forestry, M.Sc. Forestry, Post Graduate Diploma in Forest Management (PGDFM), etc. Those with Bachelors degree in related subjects can appear for Indian Forest Service exam conducted by Union Public Service Commission.

ICFRE: Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), an apex body in the national

forestry research system, has been undertaking the holistic development of forestry research through need based planning, promoting, conducting and coordinating research, education and extension covering all aspects of forestry. It has nine Regional Research Institutes and four Research Centres located in different bio-geographical regions of the country to cater the forestry research needs of the nation. The regional research Institutes are located at Jodhpur, Dehradun, Shimla, Hyderabad, Coimbatore, Ranchi, Bangalore, Jorhat and Jabalpur and the centres are at Aizawl Agartala, Chhindwara and Allahabad.

IIFM: Indian Institute of Forest Management is a sectoral management institute, which constantly endeavors to evolve knowledge useful for the managers in the area of Forest, Environment and Natural Resources Management and allied sectors. It disseminates such knowledge in ways that promote its application by individuals and organizations. It is based in Bhopal.

Forestry course at NERIST: North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology is situated in Nirjuli near Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh. The Department of Forestry under Applied Science Stream, since the establishment of NERIST has been developing its infrastructure facilities and imparting good Forestry Education in the form of Certificate and Degree Courses to the students of the North Eastern Region in particular and the country in general. The For-

estry course assumes greater significance as the North Eastern region which provides a rich biodiversity hot spot and it is required to be conserved and utilized on a sustainable basis. Forestry courses offered in NERIST shall help to generate human resources with better understanding of conservation aspects of Natural resources and sustainable utilization of their products.

There are various people who work in forest and wild life conservation. For example, foresters, dendrologists, ethologists, entomologists, silviculturists (forest propagation and culture), forest range officers, zoo curators, etc. Personnel attributes are also needed to be successful in this field. One must be good in communication skills and must love nature and ready to work for the same in different situations.

A student from North Eastern region may try for courses in this area as the region has a huge forest cover. It's time to use forest in sustainable ways which means there are needs of more trained and skilled people. Governments have forest department where people may work after completing courses related to forestry. Qualified and trained people may also join different Non Governmental Organisation for conservation and similar activities.

(Aspirants may call at 98640 55558 or send email to bkranjan@gmail.com for further details and career planning.)

By Aditi Singh

Gods live here, demons too. Cure and curse, both are promised. Yogis live with dhongis in harmony. Any of them might choose you in the holy city of Haridwar. It has a mystical way of functioning. For me, it had just been a place where remains of the dead are immersed, until I chanced upon its other facets.

I feel unusually cold in the rickshaw, which is taking me to Haveli Hari Ganga, a hotel on the banks of the Ganges, a little further down from Hari ki Pauri. On a rafting holiday to Rishikesh, Haridwar is just a luncheon stop.

The rickshaw wades through the narrow lanes. It is off-season, so there are no tourists. Little brass trinkets, traditional glass puja lamps that would look great in any Delhiite's drawing room, adorn the shops. The tempting preparations of pedo, goad me to splurge.

The rickshaw suddenly comes to a halt in front of the Haveli. A man in a safari suit with a rudraksh mala welcomes me. More than a century old, the hotel was earlier an ashram. Now, it has been converted in a luxurious property with its essence intact. A mandir in an open courtyard and arti keep the place rooted. I am guided to an open terrace, overlooking the Ganges. An artist's paradise, I think. I take a bench and enjoy the sun. "Hi, I am Parthi Krishnan," the manager introduces himself.

As I wait for my lunch, a chit chat with him doesn't sound like a bad idea. I find that he too is from Delhi. I am surprised how he can live in a place like Haridwar which has no malls, no cinema hall or pubs. "Ma'am, I have seen a lot here. Living elsewhere, I would not have come across many mysteries of life," Krishnan says. "Mysteries? I don't think so. But living in a place with innumerable legends and myths, I reckon, would be a great past time."

Going for walks where

Bhagiratha's ancestors were burnt to ashes and he brought the Ganges onto the earth to give them salvation, would be better than watching a new Bollywood flick. One might even chance upon the sacred nectar dropped by Indra after Samundra Manthan that renders one immortal.

"Don't look surprised. I'll tell you about some mysteries. I once had an encounter with the dead," he says. And I am all alert. "After a fight with my wife, I went for a ride in the night. After a round of chai from a roadside dhabba, when I was coming back, a sardar asked for a lift. I told him I didn't wish to have any conversation. He kept mum throughout. Later he asked me to stop. It is then that I asked him where he was going so late in the night. He said, 'I met with an accident in which I was killed. But I had to pay my daughter's school fee. So I have come back for that. Thank you, I will repay your help.'" I start feeling goosebumps. "He might be

down whatever the aghoris utter and then try to decode it into numbers. Then they buy lottery tickets of the same numbers.

I can hear Gangaji, no one in Haridwar refers to her otherwise, flowing past, telling me that she is a witness. The thali comes laden with the simple dal, roti, kheer, also sabzi and curd.

Krishnan smiles at me. "I met a man who can perform miracles. A yogi in the truest sense. He looks normal like anyone else. But he is a healer. Whosoever I have taken to him has been healed. Initially, he didn't meet anyone. It is only now that he has opened up a little."

Suddenly, he becomes alert and asks for his vehicle. "Come, I will take you to a remote place and there I will call the yogi. You can see for yourself."

Haridwar has been an abode of the weary in body, mind and spirit, and has also been a centre of learning for various arts, science and culture. The city has a long

Tale of lost civilization

(Contd from P-VI) at a point of time and the place is named as Unakoti.

Unakoti pantheons are of two types namely rock-carved and stone images. Central to these rock cut carvings are the Shiva and Ganesha. The colossal image of Shiva head, of 30 ft height, carved in a vertical rock is known as 'Unakotiswara Kal Bhairava'. Its head is embrodered in tresses forming a headdress of 10 feet high. Near by, there is a rock cut image of goddess Durga standing on a lion, while on the other there is an image of goddess Ganga sitting on a Capricorn. There are also images of Nandi Bull lying half buried in the ground.

Just a few meters down the Shiva carving three magnificent images of Lord Ganesha are found. A rare carving of the four-armed seated Ganesha and on its side two standing figures of Sarabhuja Ganesha with three tusks and the Asthabhuja Ganesha with four tusks are also found. Moreover, a three-eyed figure, believed to be that of Surya or Lord Vishnu is found. Other images found are chaturmukha Shivlinga, Nandi, Narasimha, Shri Ram, Ravana, Hanuman, and several unidentified deities. Hearsay is that digging anytime anywhere in the surrounding area, known also as Devasthal along the Unakoti-Belkum hill, one can find out an image of Shiva or the like carved out of rocks. At the bottom of Unakoti, a beautiful spring descending the hill terraces fills up a cavern, called 'Sita Kunda', having a dip into which is regarded as sacred. Every year, a big fair popularly known as 'Ashokastami Mela' is held during April when thousands of devotees visit the place to offer their prayers and have a dip in the 'Sita Kunda'. Asserting on the importance of its development as an ideal tourist spot, the Union Ministry of Tourism sanctioned Rs. 1.13 crore in 2009-10 under Unakoti destination development project for creation of tourist information centre, cafeteria, public amenities, view platform, landscaping etc within the radius of 5 sq.km of the site. According to the project officials of the Tripura tourism department the project, which has been handed over to the ASI, is likely to start commissioning new amenities very soon.

Unakoti is believed to have had the influence of the Shiva cult originating from the Pala-era of the mediaeval period of Indian history. At the same time, the influences of several other cults like Tantric, Shakti, and Hatha yogis are also found to be present around this archaeological wonder. According to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Unakoti dates back to the 8th or 9th century AD. Yet, many others differ with the opinion, conceding that it dates back longer further holding that those images were carved out in different spell of time.



Mystics of Haridwar

faking it," I tell him, trying hard not to believe. "Once, while on a drive with a friend, a truck suddenly came in front of us. We just managed to avoid a head-on collision and I heard a voice. Ehsaan ka badla chuka diya na. (I have repaid your favour)." This is not enough. Krishnan wants to tell me about more mysteries and superstitious events. Conversation steers towards aghoris. He tells me that they stay drunk throughout the day and mumble something all the time. People believe them to be in touch with the higher beings. So they note

standing position as a great source for ayurvedic medicines and herbal remedies and is home to the unique Gurukul school of traditional education. So, a yogi who would recommend all the above is no surprising. His treatment might even be effective.

Parallel to the famed Hari ki Pauri, is the place that we reach. It is here that bodies of most sages are immersed so that fish can feed on them. There are a few people feeding the fish. Children selling atte ki goliya, sages meditating or taking a bath in Gangaji. We choose a place that has maximum sun and wait for the yogi.

Travelogue

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

'Star - Gazing'

Sunday, November 1, 2015

It is a phase of work and development as Mercury parallel Neptune on your solar return chart. It's also a good time for expressing your creativity. Reach out, but avoid scattering your energies. Your ability to build up financial and monetary pursuits and good returns from overseas business are on cards. Your main focus is on personal freedom, reaching out to others, making new friends. You are enthusiastic and ready for adventure. Contentedness in love is likely to figure and to attract positive circumstances into your life. Trips bring good luck and you will be happily surprised by some outcomes. **Aries : (March 21 - April 20)**

Your wits and luck will give you a fine combination which will prove to be excellent in your profession. You will have a very good scope for progress in your career and business. You would be caught up in a lot of activity on the professional front. Many things take shape and your image will enhance. Pending tasks will be completed and you will get a new spurt of energy and enthusiasm to get on to more projects and jobs. Your efforts are recognized as you back in the glory. Those who are in a relationship will have a setback in their love affair. Sudden expenditure cannot be ruled out. Health must be looked after. **Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)**

Position of stars will give you some mixed results. You are hard working and sincere towards your profession but certain setbacks will force you to put some projects and issues on the back burner. You may invest money in some long term investments. You will have tour programs at your disposal but take care of your luggage and self. It will be advisable to rein your extra expenditure. Your health has been indifferent of late however you will feel energized and there will be an upswing in your energy levels. You will be eager to get back to your exercise routine. **Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)**

Many new contacts have been made over the last few months and these new contacts will pay off. Changes are manifesting faster than you may realize. All this will certainly be exciting but you may feel a bit apprehensive however you cannot move ahead without taking some risks. On the personal front friends will cooperate immensely in fact some of this goodwill spills over to your professional field too and you reap benefits. Family ties will be stronger and you will find that you express your thought and feelings to your spouse further strengthening your relationship. Your health needs some care. You may join some gym or a fitness routine. **Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)**

Your work, career and money related problems will require you to be more responsible and you may get some feeling of unrest at your work place. But it will be a temporary phase and you will have ability to come out of it. Presenting your ideas after taking into account all considerations and points of view will help you maintain good relations with your colleagues. Expenses slow down and you are in a position to consolidate and make investments. Health and vitality will remain to be good as you plan some outdoor activity with friends and family. **Leo : (July 23 - August 23)**

You may find yourself surrounded by sudden opportunities be it money, intimacy or relationship. Make hay when the sun shines, and utilize this favorable time and maximize gains. Travel plans take shape and materialize. For some of you overseas travel is not ruled out. Your family relations and contacts with loved ones will get reenergized. Socially, you are going to be very popular. During the course of this you may meet a new and interesting person and you will form a special bond, which energizes you. Be ready for a joyous affair. You need to remain relaxed. You will feel listless and seem to lack energy. **Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)**

It is a time when you get mixed results in matters related to your career finance or profession. Postpone a sudden trip for some time. Get rid of your negative thinking and approach and develop self confidence. Health related problems may influence your working so take care of health. You may find yourself to be in a phase of uncertainty and you will not have clear ideas so concentrate upon the issue. You need to remain

relaxed. You will feel listless and seem to lack energy. Travel will bring good luck and this travel could open up a few possibilities and to an extent some new avenues too, which will help you diversify **Libra : (September 23 - October 23)**

You will find yourself in an environment that is conducive to a much more creative mood and also provide you with requisite stability. Dynamic energy possesses you and you seek to channelize it in business ventures and interactions with peers and young at heart. You are judicious in matters related to personal affairs. Your focus is on getting to the heart of the matter and homing in on the truth. Financially this is a strong period where you will get good gains. Emotions are on an even keel, as you feel loved in family relationships and share joy with your family members - a period of happy family life. **Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)**

A lot of new things will happen. There is bound to be success in undertakings so go ahead and put into action your well thought out plans. Those in the creative field will excel. Your image will enhance, as you are ready to reassess your goals and dreams. Something can upset you emotionally but you will overcome it very fast also. You show love and care in personal relationships and get support and love in return as you infuse energy in your interactions with loved ones. Finances are stable and there are some gains. Your spouse or partner will provide you extra support and good advice. You find that you get cooperation from your friends **Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)**

You flower as an individual and share your vibrancy with people at work and in your personal life. Your potential is realized both by yourself and seniors as you manage professional matters with ease to get desired results. Peers stand by you as you make progress in your career. A previously unused talent in the field of art, entertainment or media could come to light and you look to ways to train in this field. You need to keep your emotional outbursts under control as you may be hurting some relationships. Timely medical advice is recommended. **Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)**

You will experience some mixed results even as luck will favour you and tremendously boost your career. You will get an opportunity for overseas travel. You will prove your mettle and you will be recognized for your worth. This too will widen your horizons and put your career on the fast track. If you use all your senses to manifest the state of abundance you want to attain, and keep doing this regularly, you will eventually get what you want. Be tactful in your dealings with family members else some angry and hurtful words can be exchanged. **Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)**

The planetary configuration gives you strength to achieve something new in your professional life. Energy and strength along with your remarkable personality will draw the attention of people. Money and financial gains are ahead even as expenses could rise. Courage is needed to look at all the points of view and get a balanced picture before you take decisions and arrive at conclusions. An overseas trip is on the cards of some of you this will benefit you both professionally as well as personally. Your health needs care and you need to look at your diet plan. **Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)**

There will be good chances for progress in your field of work or profession. You will insist upon innovation and these innovative ideas will catch the eye and imagination of others too. You bring forth your organizational skills to maximize your gains. There may occur some inevitable expenditure in your professional life but it will boost your gains therein. You may have some personal expenditure also. Travel is also indicated during this week and this will also help give a boost to your career. Exhibit patience in family relationships and avoid arguments. Your bonds with your children become stronger and they do you proud. You spend some romantic moments with your beloved. Health of life partner needs care.

Can BCCI chief walk the talk?

(Contd from P-VI) little choice but to carry out the reforms before the Supreme-Court-appointed Committee puts everything in writing.

It is quite possible the board got the wind of the Lodha Committee's likely recommendations as most senior board members and former India captains suggested some of these across-the-board reforms.

Manohar must end the obnoxious system of pleasing every board member by accommodating him in a plethora of sub-committees most of which have little work. Imagine, in a board with an effective strength of 30 members, the Working Committee has 23!

Some committees don't even meet as Sunil Gavaskar once pointed out as chairman of board's technical committee that no meeting was convened God knows for how long.

The board may not have the courage to take up the issue of one state one vote, but it would be interesting to see how the Lodha Committee looks at it. Officials from big states like UP, when it had Uttarkhand as its part, and Bihar, with Jharkhand in it, questioned the wisdom of allowing three teams from Gujarat and Maharashtra just because they were part of erstwhile princely states and thus became founder members. The players from these two states felt cheated.

Manohar's idea of transparency is to have online the board's constitution, its balance-sheet and also those of its affiliated units. Add to the list ending of corruption. It all sounds utopian and makes him out a messiah. If only we care to go back into board's history, these are the things promised by Team Pawar when it overpowered the hitherto unshakable Jagmohan Dalmiya a decade ago.

Manohar also promises to undo his successor Narayanaswamy Srinivasan's selfish step of removing the cap on the tenure of the board president, though he himself is a beneficiary of the changed law originally moved by Dalmiya but could not muster enough strength to get it through. It is a dangerous statute and that has to go, it is a different matter that some former board presidents continue to wield enormous clout in the board as representa-

tives of their state associations.

He reiterated yet again to end the on-field corruption by educating the players. It begs the question whatever has happened to Anil Kumble's plan to enlightening players at junior levels on not only nefarious off-field activities but also etiquette and decency.

Then how would he address the vexed conflict of interest issue involving administrators, players and the ever burgeoning staff. The board has so many sacred cows in its barn. He will have to get tough to deal with the issue and if he can do it, he would have saved the board.

Manohar faced his first big test when he was gheraoed by the Shiv Sainiks in his own office at Cricket Centre in Mumbai. The very fact he did not condemn it publicly shows his helplessness to deal with the subject.

To say Manohar, a Pawar acolyte, and his secretary Anurag Thakur, BJP parliamentarian, should have known the mischief potential of Shiv Sena before chiefing the talks with Pakistan board chief Shahryar Khan in Mumbai makes little sense, even in the light of what had happened to Sudheendra Kulkarni's face and Ghulam Ali concert.

Asking the highly respected Pakistani umpire Aleem Dar not to officiate and the equally pusillanimous International Cricket Conference (ICC) to withdraw him are dangerous signs for a sport considered a religion in this country.

Stretching the argument, what if the board or any international team decides to pick and choose venues and skip Mumbai fearing the very forces that forced Monday's meeting at Cricket Centre to be abandoned?

The question is how long the civil society and the elected governments in the mega polis allow themselves to be bullied by some miscreants wanting to score narrow political points. The board cannot also be a silent spectator.

Can Manohar walk the talk?
(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal. He can be reached at v.srivatsa@ians.in)



(Contd from P-VI) though, chequered shirts, trousers, tees and shorts may look hot on the ramp, too depending on how we use them and with what," he says.

Capitalising on this effervescent palette of festivity are the wedding bells which are ready to ring soon as winter comes calling. Designer duo Sujata and Sanjay unwraps their bridal collection 'Apsarasa' aka Apsara — The Ethereal Beauty. Keeping the needs of new-age brides in mind who now look for fuss-free silhouettes, where cut and style are



When winter comes

given more prominence, the elegant line doles out a basket of floor kissing, breezy gowns and placement thread embroideries mixed with daring cuts.

"Our garments speak the language of today's bride," speak the designers in unison. The luxurious collection thrives on a broad spectrum of influences ranging from western vintage to Indian heritage — be it the hand-crafted brocades of Varanasi or the fine French Chantilly lace. "We design to compliment the innate beauty of every woman and believe in celebrating life as an expression of fashion. Our clothes are embellished with mirror work, fine zardosi, resham (silk) and enhanced with sequins and diamonds. We have used soft shimmering fabrics mixed with delicate laces and intricate needlework, thus giving the output a very celestial grace," the duo inform. (TWF)

“The constant free flow of communication amount us-enabling the free interchange of ideas-forms the very bloodstream of our nation. It keeps the mind and body of our democracy eternally vital, eternally young.”

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

The Shillong Times

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Spitting as a political act

ONE of the memorable incidents of the procession organised by Synjuk Ki Nongsynshar Shnong Ri Hynniewtrep (SKNSRH) was the provocation by a particular Rangbah Shnong to spit on the effigy of Chief Minister Mukul Sangma before burning it. This act by a group that desires to lead the Khasi society also reveals the politics underlying this entire protest. The slogans on social media have also brought to the fore the Khasi ultra-nationalism which sees the Chief Minister as a Garo who is unfit to lead them because he has not given in to their demands for a grassroots governance mechanism that seeks to exclusively serve a particular ethnic community. The Rangbah Shnong must realise is that the Chief Minister and his cabinet as well as every elected representative swear their allegiance to the Constitution of India. It is their obligation to uphold the Constitution at all times. In the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, amongst the powers given to the district councils is the “Appointment and succession of Chiefs or Headmen.” This power was given 65 years ago when it was considered appropriate to protect the tribal community which was under the rule of a dominant non-tribal Assamese majority. Today things have changed. Meghalaya is a state where the majority population is tribal and where the non-tribal constitutes a minority of 13 %. Any governance system that further excludes the minority and gives the tribals overriding powers to conduct their governance on an exclusivist model at the grass-roots level is constitutionally flawed and not tenable in law. The Meghalaya High Court has perhaps taken this aspect of the Constitution when it struck down the arbitrary powers practised by the Chiefs and Headmen which more often than not intrude into the citizenship rights of the non-tribals. The state government is only trying to correct this anomaly by coming up with a uniform grass-roots administration bill. But this has earned the ire of the chiefs and headmen who see the state government as anti-tribal and the Chief Minister as the leader of the pack. Hence the deplorable incident where the chief minister’s effigy was spat at and burnt – an act unprecedented in the history of Meghalaya!

Spitting involves the expulsion of phlegm in a certain direction. It is considered unhealthy since it can quickly spread germs. In India people spit on chewing betel nuts and betel leaves laced with lime because swallowing the saliva that emerges out of that concoction can send one’s head reeling. But across the world, spitting on a person or his effigy is packed with the power to insult. While punching a person or calling him names can also hurt, spitting retains an offensiveness beyond all other acts of insult. The question to ask is what next? What if the CM refuses to step down as demanded by the SKNSRH since this demand is inherently political? What if he refuses to agree to the KHADC’s Village Administration Bill? What if the recently passed Act on dual posts is not revoked? What will be the next plan of action that is more pungent than spitting? Have the Chiefs and Headmen now attained the statuses of uncontrollable rabble rousers? It looks like we are in for more action from those who claim to safeguard our glorious tradition and its noble value system of basic respect for fellow human beings.

The future that also bonds with the past

By H H Mohrmen

When people are asked what the International Terra Madre means to them the response is quick to come because it is not something new nor is the idea foreign and which is imposed on us. As a matter of fact the idea behind the ITM is to reinforce what is already there in the community and which has been handed over from generation to generation. ITM is an opportunity to go back to our roots, our cultures, our traditions our best practices in agriculture and other livelihood activities. It is moving forward with our roots firm on our value systems and the principle of life of the community. But more importantly, ITM also helps us realize that there is much we can learn from the other indigenous peoples and that we also have so much to offer to the world.

The coming of ITM is like sprinkling cold water on our faces to wake us up from our deep slumber and make us realize that ours is a traditions which has profound relationship with nature and that everything that we do, we do with total reverence to mother earth. The Khasi-Pnar people understand that the earth is not only a dwelling place of the animate beings but it is also a place where the demigods associate with the hills, the rivers and the forest lives. The Khasi-Pnar traditionally had no temple or church and they worship everywhere because they considered the world a sacred place and every bit of this land as holy as any other. They therefore considered the mountains, the rivers and forests as sacred.

In the ITM which it is known locally the International Mei-Ramew Festival, there will also be talk about food sovereignty and initially I thought this is a foreign idea but then when I scratched a little further I realized that this is something that is still being practiced in our villages till today. With the little experience that I have in promoting livelihoods in the villages I found that in every household that we surveyed, farmers are engaged in multi-livelihood activities. We tend to look at it from our salaried economy perspective and interpret this phenomenon as income security. We thought that farmers involved in farming many crops and also engaged in other livelihood activities like livestock rearing and even doing daily wages is all about income gathering, but now we know we are wrong. We assume that they plant multiple crops and en-

gage in many livelihood activities to be on the safe side; that in case one crop or one activity fails them, then they would always have something to fall back. They do not depend on one crop or one activity so, this is a perfect case of income security, we conclude.

In fact the farmers have already made it starkly clear that they involve in multiple livelihood activities not for any other reason but for household use or self sustenance only. It was us who assumed wrongly because as livelihood promoters we failed to read what is already obvious. If one were to ask any farmer what crops or vegetables he/she grows, they will say, “Oh many things! (bun jait),” and then add, “well it is just for household consumption.” Whatever their plant is for household consumption only and the little extra that they produce from their garden is sold in the market to buy their miscellaneous needs. On our visit to Moosakhia the other day we noticed that in a small garden of maybe less than one thousand square feet, farmers planted garlic, mustard, beans, peas, beetroots and many other vegetables in one place. This is multi-cropping and food sovereignty in action.

We also supplement our nutritional needs by eating food that we collect from the forests like mushrooms and hundreds of other wild fruits and vegetables. I must thank my facebook friends on the ‘I tkong jong War’ page who had helped me come up with the list of more than 20 types of wild vegetables that people in War Jaintia (Amlarem Sub division) area consume. In fact each community in a different geographical area has its own varieties of wild, edible vegetables. This also reminds me of the interview that I had with an old lady in Lumchnong village many years ago who lamented the fact that the community had lost their land to cement companies which had also denied her the opportunity to collect wild vegetable from the forest. The lady said that she can no longer collect wild vegetables from the forests

because the land in the area is now owned by cement companies. “We use to wander in the forest to collect vegetables and wild fruits, but now we can’t do that anymore,” she lamented.

We did not realize that our people have followed this system of multi-crop farming because it is part of tradition and in doing so we also practice food sovereignty since time immemorial. In fact we even have a saying in Khasi, “U khaw na iing; ka doh na sem, u jhur na kper.” Translated this means that we have everything we need – rice from our fields, meat from our sheds and vegetables from the garden and we are in control of our nutritional needs. I think this is food sovereignty- the Khasi-Pnar way.

ITM is also going to give us the opportunity to talk about our local seeds which we are gradually losing to the hybrid or genetically modified seeds. Indigenous seeds have been handed over to us from our forefathers from generations to generations which have passed the test time and could withstand the vagaries of weather and pest attacks. Unfortunately these seeds are gradually being replaced by hybrid or GM seeds. In Jaintia hills alone according to Dawmanchuh Lamar (an Agriculture officer who had documented seed variety) the districts have more than 120 types of local rice varieties. We also have many varieties of millets and other vegetables like cucumber, tomatoes, chilies, pumpkins and others but these are on the verge of extinction because the government had introduced commercial seeds to the farmers. Not only crops and vegetables are on the verge of extinction but even the numbers of our traditional live-stock is dwindling. Local chickens and pigs are being replaced by foreign or hybrids animals. These are some of the issues that need to be highlighted.

The hosting of the International Mei-Ramew Festival is also like looking at a mirror and realizing how wrong we were to fall for the government’s suggestion and to use pesticides and chemical fertilizers only to be advised to take and turn and go back to our ear-

lier type of farming. The government is now suggesting that the farmers return to organic farming which was a farming practice that our ancestors has followed since time immemorial.

ITM is also an opportunity to reflect on our traditional value systems and question ourselves whether we have been able to live by those values as a community. Have we been able to live by the community’s cardinal principles of earning righteousness, knowing our fellow human beings and know God and to know and respect our relations from both the mother and the father’s side? Do we still follow these principles or are they becoming just empty rhetoric that we brag about during public debates but which are conveniently ignored at the personal level? If we still practice ‘earn righteousness’ and live by this principle and bear in mind that God is with us every moment of our lives then why is there so much corruption and crime against women in the community and also why is there rampant destruction of the environment in the state? Where has the righteousness gone?

ITM reminds us of our tradition which is rooted on a profound and cordial relationship with nature. The relationship whereby we know every herb or blade of grass by its name and every animal shared a story with human its fellow traveler on this big blue boat. A relationship that is so close that we can easily distinguish an edible plant from a non edible one and also enable us to identify medicinal plants from others. Hopefully the celebration will help strengthen the community’s deep respect for nature which is our temple, our home and the habitat of our fellow being. This should teach us that nature is everything to us and that it is not only our home but it is also our school from which we learn our lessons for life.

Most importantly may it remind us of the importance of collective responsibility which has always been the hallmark of the community - that everything we do is for the common good (ka bhalang uba bun balang). A community that believes the well being of the community is paramount to everything else.

Selfie meets Helfie: The rise and triumph of Demtech

By M J Akbar

How many elections has the mobile phone witnessed? It began to come into its own about a decade ago, when inexpensive calls and SMS expanded the universe of individual communication to an exceptional level. But its power to intervene significantly in the democratic debate matured only with the widespread availability of the smart phone, and its most potent instrument, the video camera.

The selfie is a benign aspect of the mobile camera. The video amplified this pleasure, eliminating distance briefly but powerfully by transmitting family or friendship experience. It did not take too long before mobile video exploded into a weapon of mass vigilance. Yet another “demtech” revolution has taken place as technology has reinvented democracy once again.

Every such phenomenon needs a name, and “demtech” seems an appropriate invention for the impact of technology on democracy. I hope, naturally, that the word catches on. But what would be appropriate for the video recording as distinct from the still-shot selfie? How about helfie? That is, in onomatopoeic effect, as close to hellfire as we can get - and the mobile video is lighting fires from hell below the feet of politicians.

Our politicians, across all parties, have still not fully grasped the meaning of life in the focus of a 24-hour camera. I have seen, during the present Bihar campaign, citizens rudely displaced by the speeding convoys of thoughtless candidates recording their revenge instantly on their mobiles. This revenge is party neutral, and will certainly play some part on polling day. But this naiveté, to use only the most charitable word, of politicians is not limited to anonymous candidates destined for anonymous careers. Even leaders don’t get it.

It would be unusual if nothing unusual happened in a Bihar Assembly election. But even by the dramatic standards of discourse and behaviour set by the likes of Laloo Prasad Yadav, the video-sight of a tantrik baba kissing a bemused Nitish Kumar on the cheeks was fruity to the point of bizarre. Nitish Kumar is a sober leader, not given to maverick gimmicks. This video was taken in the middle of 2014, when he had not recovered from massive defeat in the general elections, and was probably in need of any kind of psychological reassurance, even from a chap with voodoo propinquities. But the relevant point is a bit askance of what he did.

What should worry politicians, though, is that we are only on the cusp of a mobile phone’s capabilities. If its existing ability is causing disarray, then the fun has only begun.

Nitish Kumar had absolutely no idea that there was a candid camera in the vicinity and he was being recorded. He was on a private, or even secret, visit to someone who could, hopefully, predict a better future at a time when everything was in shambles. Ergo: everyone present in that room was someone whom Nitish Kumar implicitly trusted. And yet, one individual violated that trust.

Which, in turn, brings us to a dubious aspect of the helfie syndrome. Trust is going to be even more vulnerable to temptation. Trust has always been at a premium in politics. After all, the history of politics is replete with betrayal; and there is no shortage of contemporary evidence either. But when betrayal is verbal, through a leaked story perhaps, you can always limit damage by fudge or denial. How do you deny a camera’s revelations? There is a restriction on mobile phones in many VIP offices because of security reasons since these machines can be converted into triggers for devices. Perhaps restrictions will be extended because VIPs want their conversations to remain secure as well.

The most encouraging fact about democracy is that it never gets easier. It is not the phone alone that has become smart; so has the voter. Indeed, of what use is the smart phone without a smart voter? The electorate, for instance, has perfected the art of telling the candidate what he or she wants to hear during a campaign: why risk displeasure when it is so much safer to tell the truth via the voting machine?

The phrase “will-o’-the-wisp” has gone out of fashion, for it belongs to an era when England was still a lot of fog sitting on marsh. It means, literally, a phosphorescent sort of light floating through marshy ground; and, metaphorically, something that is difficult or impossible to catch. It is not only candidates who get this will-o’-the-wisp treatment. The large army of third party interventionists is subject to it as well. Paradoxically, this means that it might be safer to predict on the basis of a collective reality than individual enquiry; from the mood or behaviour of an election rally rather than a chat with a person who ends up sparring with his interlocutor.

What should worry politicians, though, is that we are only on the cusp of a mobile phone’s capabilities. If its existing ability is causing disarray, then the fun has only begun.

population is so small that the seats available for jobs and education will never be dominated by these two communities even if the reservations were to be done away with. The crux of the reservation issue is that there aren’t enough education seats in proportion to the growing population of every community and because of this ground reality doing away with reservations, especially for the SC/ST will lead to a majority of the seats being taken up by the general category communities which already have better facilities and opportunities and slowly and surely the SC/ST communities will be sidelined. It is true that there are huge differences in economic status of individual families within SC & ST communities but the fact remains that belonging to a community that doesn’t have as many opportunities and facilities, coupled with the fact there is a lack of educational institutions at every level and also that certain communities have borne the brunt of societal discrimination for

years, will only mean that it will further aggravate the socio-economic disparities in these communities unless more funding for educational infrastructure and proper fiscal policies are thought of to bring all communities at par with the advanced communities. I agree that reservations shouldn’t continue to perpetuity but doing away with it at this juncture demands a cautious approach. It is also a fact that the standard of evaluation between state and central boards differ greatly. Some Boards are stiff with their marking and this stands in the way of admission into universities for higher education, especially in renowned central universities which determine their cut-off marks on the basis of marks scored by students from central boards. Most students in central schools come from the general category hence they stand a better chance of getting into the best institutions.

Yours etc.,
Abner Ingtly Watre
Shillong-4

TO THE EDITOR

Artificial sentiments

Editor,

Apropos the news item on the issue of Khasi sentiment raised by one Allan Dkhar, the Secretary of UDP (ST Oct 25, 2015), I am curious to know as to what mourning programmes the UDP and its people in Nongstoin have had or are planning to organize on the demise of Late Bah Hopping Stone Lyngdoh. The readers would be enlightened if the UDP could publicise the details. As per my limited information, there is not a single programme that has been organized by UDP in any form that relates to mourning the deceased leader. The UDP is in a dilemma as the party in Nongstoin is in total disarray. It takes some time for the party to pull its socks up and decide whether or not to fight the bye election and if yes it will take a long time for the party to decide on who will be the candidate, as there are more than five aspirants fighting for the UDP ticket, and subsequently it takes some time for this sleepy and lethargic party to organize election campaigns for the bye election.

Therefore the Secretary UDP could not help but come up with an excuse by bring-

ing the imaginative, but irrelevant connotation “Khasi Sentiment” to buy time for the disorganized party to get ready for the bye election. It may be noted that as per the Khasi practice only three nights is sufficient to mourn the dead, however the aggrieved families do quietly mourn their lost ones for some time but there is no specific period for the purpose. One month has elapsed from the date of demise of Late Bah Hopping Stone Lyngdoh, so may I ask the UDP how much time more should we mourn? Nowadays mourning a dead political leader has become one of the tools for electioneering.

Yours etc.,
Spenson Lyngdoh
New Nongstoin,
West Khasi Hills
District.

Heights of Arrogance

Editor,

Apropos the news item “Jaiaw Durbar snubs Micheal Syiem” ((ST Oct 27, 2015) I would like to say that the action of the Jaiaw Laitdom durbar is to be condemned by all right thinking citizens of the state. The action of the

Jaiaw Laitdom durbar reveals the immaturity and short sightedness of the members of the durbar. In fact Micheal Syiem the protagonist for strengthening the dorbar shnong has been tirelessly fighting for this cause since the 1980s. The objective of the PIL is to bring clarity in governance in order to ease the citizens from various complications in the process of delivery of public services. Micheal syiem should be praised for his vision and effort in the endeavor to improve the Khasi society and to bring in reforms by doing away with those old and outdated practices to allow true democracy (ST dt. 27/10/2015) under the caption to evolve in the traditional system to cope with this century so that we become a progressive tribal society. Strive ahead Bah Mike. You are a leader with a vision.

Your’s etc.,
Bandonbok Laloo
Shillong-2.

Impact of doing away with reservations

Editor,

Apropos the editorial, “SC and Reservation,” the issue should be carefully thought out because while reservations will have to be done away with at some point in the future, doing so without finding alternatives will lead to socio-economic and political chaos. This is not to oppose the idea of doing away with reservations but because of the ground realities among the neglected communities. While it is true that some communities are added to the reserved category because of vote bank politics it should be noted that that reservations for SC and ST communities makes up a minuscule number. Not only is it a fact that people belonging to ST and SC categories are still discriminated against but these communities are still confined to regions where proper education has not reached them yet (SC) or where education came very late (ST). While regions like Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra etc. tasted the fruits of revolutionized developments such as the green revolution, better infrastructure, etc., much ahead, the SC & ST continue to remain bogged down by poverty and discrimination. The SC&ST

"When you believe in a thing, believe in it all the way, implicitly and unquestionably."

— Walt Disney

The Shillong Times

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Myanmar Prelude

MYANMAR goes to the polls on November 8. The nationwide general election may or may not be free and fair but it has already triggered considerable speculation. For one thing, it has fared pretty well in democratic transition compared with political experiments in Egypt, Afghanistan and Iraq. However incremental the progress has been in Yangon, Myanmar is regarded as a freer and more democratic country today. President Thein Sein has introduced a slew of reforms. But the forthcoming poll is likely to face several challenges. First, the government is, as is to be expected, worried about problems called "performance anxiety". Second, Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has started complaining about the presence of ghost voters and the possibility of rigging. If it is a just possibility, it should not at this stage be a cause for concern. More to the point is the anticipated undue military intervention. Monk Wirathu and his 10 million strong Ma Ba Tha support the junta-led Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). It gives the election a communal complexion especially because of Buddhist persecution of Rohingyas and other Muslims in the country. Suu Kyi herself is on a shaky wicket in supporting Muslims. The National League of Democracy (NLD) led by her has not fielded a single Muslim candidate. Millions of Muslims may not be left out of the electoral process. Ethnic minorities, rebels and insurgents might pose a major challenge as well. The Wa rebels active in the north-eastern region bordering China have called a meeting of all non-signatories to the recent nationwide ceasefire. Elections may be far from normal in the disturbed areas. The recent floods which have affected 12 out of 14 administrative regions have hit a million people and it casts a shadow over the holding of a representative poll.

The international community is keeping a close watch. Ejection observers from several countries are already in Myanmar. But that has nowhere in the past ensured free and fair elections. New Delhi is especially concerned about the outcome of the poll. The Manipur ambush and the pact between the NSCN (Khaplang) and the junta in power are disturbing factors. But at the same time, India has been keen on being friendly with the Myanmar government as Aung San Suu Kyi is not overly supportive of it.

LOOKING BACK

March 13, 1988

PM's call for fight against poverty

In a re-enactment of the historic Dandi March led by Mahatma Gandhi 58 years ago in defiance of the salt law, thousands of marchers were flagged off today by Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi from Harijan Asharam, once the abode of the Mahatma and Kasturba Gandhi in Ahmadabad.

The march was commemorated in several other parts of the country. Mr. Gandhi, himself took part in the padyatra walking a total of 12 km.

First he joined the marchers from the ashram and walked about 4 km. Sonia Gandhi several cabinet Ministers and members of Parliament participated.

Mr. Gandhi again joined the marchers in the afternoon at Chandola where Mahatma Gandhi took rest after first day of historic Dandi March.

Mr. Gandhi who marched for about one and half hours was accompanied by central ministers Mr. Shivraj Patil, Mr. Mohsina Kidwai and Mrs. Saroj Khaparde and the Deputy Chariman of the Rajya Sabha, Mrs. Pratibha Patil.

The veterans of the original Dandi March who

attended today's function at the ashram were octogenarians Messrs. Bhaushankar Dave, Madavilal Shah, Satish Kalelkar, Anand Hingorani, Laljibhai Parmar and Ratanjit Boria.

Mr. Andand Hingorani who has settled in the Sind province of Pakistan, specially came here to attend the function.

Before the yatra started on its long stretch, the young yatriis pledged to work for national integration, communal harmony, uplift of the poor, leading a disciplined life.

The Prime Minister today called for a relentless war against poverty, illiteracy and violence to help establish national unity an active role in the development of India.

Addressing a large public meeting at Chandola on the outskirts of the city, from where Mahatma Gandhi had addressed the people when leading the Dandi March in 1930, the Prime Minister said the task and values for which Mahatma Gandhi had undertaken in the march were still relevant as his goal had not been achieved by the country yet.

Who has failed Garo Hills?

By Albert Thyrianiang

The latest news from Garo Hills – a Block Development Officer (BDO) has been abducted. Jude Rangku T Sangma, the Chokpot BDO was taken captive by GNLA militants near Deku, South Garo Hills on October 27, last when the 2010 Meghalaya Civil Service batch officer way on his way to Tura from Chokpot. The mastermind is a well-known hardcore militant offender, the outfit's commander Hedeo Ch Momin. Initially the proscribed outfit blamed the BDO of corruption but later demanded withdrawal of operations against it as condition for the release of the 'financially upright' MCS officer. Deepest sympathies to the family members, particularly the elderly mother!

The dismayed news comes just two days after the discovery of the mutilated bodies of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) officer, Bikash Kumar Singh and trader Kamal Saha from a grave in a forest area in Bolchugre village, also in South Garo Hills. Singh and Saha were taken hostage by camouflaged gunmen militants of the A'chik Songna An'pachakgipa Kotok (ASAK) on September 24 at 8:30 am, while they were on their way to Baghmara from Rongara village. Their vehicle was waylaid at the Panda reserve forest area.

The latest incidents have sent shock waves across Garo Hills. Fear psychosis has engulfed the entire region. Inhabitants are in fear and insecurity. Militants and criminals strike at will. The law and order has totally collapsed. Headlines after headlines emanate from Garo Hills about abductions and killings. According to www.mid-day.com/news/July-6-2014 in Garo Hills, a man is abducted every other day. Quoting Home Ministry sources the news portal reported that at least 98 persons were abducted for ransom in Garo Hills between January and June 2015. The report further revealed that 175 people have been kidnapped since June 2013. Those kidnapped included government employees, businessmen, teachers, traders, women and even school children.

The *Indian Express* published on October 8, 2015 reads, "Abduction is order of the day in Meghalaya's Garo Hills". The national paper, citing a top Meghalaya cop re-

ported that most of the kidnapped remained untraced. The paper bluntly opined that with more than nine militant outfits operating here, Garo Hills is a disturbed region. An intelligence official who begged anonymity said, "Such a large number of abduction cases have not been reported from anywhere in the country".

Most of the abductions are carried out by the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA), ASAK and other criminal groups who procure pistols and revolvers and AK-47s at will from the largest arms market at Dimapur. In most cases non-tribal persons are the victims. The point to be driven home is that the news emanating from the region is damaging Garo Hills irreparably.

The situation is alarming to be most mild. It is worsening by the day. Why has Garo Hills come to such a low? What has happened to the beautiful hills? Everything has failed here. Who has failed Garo Hills? What has failed Garo Hills? Where has Garo Hills failed? This is a sketchy but critical attempt to answer the above questions.

The State Government has undoubtedly failed Garo Hills. It has let down 5.44 lakhs people residing in these five districts. The government seems to follow a middle path way in tackling militancy in Garo Hills. It seems to pursue a policy of dialogue and hot pursuit simultaneously. Neither has worked. Thirteen months ago the central and state governments signed the tripartite peace pact with the erstwhile ANVC and ANVC-B. Following the peace agreement the two splinter groups were 'disbanded' in a hyped ceremony in Tura on 15th December last year. Hailing it as the beginning of the end of 25 year old militancy in Garo Hills, the Chief Minister, Dr. Mukul Sangma proudly declared that the disarming of the twin outfits that once monopolized the Garo Hills terrains, would compel other armed groups to give up arms. 'It will signal peace', he predicted. At the final gathering of 'Shalom

Meghalaya' a week earlier, he lashed out at 'pessimists', who doubted that the peace process would bring no peace.

As it turned out the 'break-through' has come to naught. The Agreed Text, signed solemnly in the national capital, has yielded no positive result. With zero implementation and rehabilitation, the former ANVC cadres are disillusioned. Many of them might have returned to the jungles. The situation in Garo Hills has not improved. It has, in fact gone worse. Dialogue has failed. Should we continue with a failed experiment?

The hot pursuit against GNLA, ASAK and others is not a success either. Why? It is not that hot after all. The operations are being executed by the state police. It has been going on for far too long. The state force has won patches of battles but the war is far from over. How long will the forces take to defeat the armed rebels? They seem to have grown stronger and bolder. Is it not time to review the policy of the State Government? How much more resources are invested to neutralize the gun wielders? How many more casualties, abductions and killings are to take place for the Government to reassess its policy? How long more will the people suffer from fear, insecurity, extortion, harassment before the Government takes tougher decisions? Should not military action be an option? Should not Garo Hills be declared a disturbed zone?

Who is in charge in Garo Hills? Is it the Chief Minister or the Home Minister? The HM has seldom toured Garo Hills. We have hardly heard statements from the HM about the alarming situation ever since she assumed office. Is she concerned about the continuing deteriorating atmosphere? Is the collapsing law and order situation in Garo Hills in her heart and mind? She resigned after the 'Chokpot horror' but unjustifiably withdrew it as if peace was restored. Now in her second innings the situation is worse. Why is she still in the chair?

Apart from CM and the HM where are the representatives from Garo Hills?

Do they care about Garo Hills? Have we heard anyone offer a solution to the problem? Who are for dialogue and who are for harsh action against the anti-social elements? Who are for a middle path? Should not Garo Hills demand from legislators, individually or collectively, suggestions to restore peace and end the persisting menace of militancy? The callous elected representatives who move around in escorted SUVs wearing goggles and stay in secure residences have failed the common people who are at the mercy of gun toting men.

Let me make a combined summary of the other failures! The pressure groups, NGOs, conglomeration of all of them in addition to Church dominations and civil groups have been silent since a year ago. They seem to have given up on peace. Baghmara citizens did rise up to protest and condemn the abduction of the innocent officer but where are the rest? Most militants are drop-outs from missionary and government schools in Garo Hills. What values were they imparted? What skills were they taught? What role models did they see? Is it not a failure of the educational system as much as that of the educators or the educationists?

Corruption breeds militancy. Youths see wealthy politicians, rich government officers, the salaried class, profit making business men, church men and women who live comfortably. They also see that money and assets are acquired illegally. They too want the same comforts of life through easy means. It has to do with social injustice. Thus unemployment, backwardness, poverty, lack of education, may be roots of militancy. However, the final blame is squarely on the person himself. One makes his own decision and decides his own destiny. Life might have been unfair to the rebels but you can't blame people and circumstances. Fighters for 'Garoland' themselves have failed Garo Hills. As havens of gunmen the Chokpots, the Rongaras, the Baghmars, the Dadengres, the Songsaks have gone backward and will continue on this reverse trend.

Learnings from the NH7 Festival

By RG Lyngdoh

Now that the NH7 festival is over, and the dust has settled, the time has come to retrospect and learn for the future. It was the first festival of that scale for the North East region of the country. Credit has to be given first to the management of "Only Much Louder" and of "Springboard Surprises" who believed it was possible, and who sank in the money for the venture.

The first learning is that events can happen outside urban centres, even in rural settings. Most public events and festivals in Meghalaya have tended to be urban-centric. Organisers have always been wary that footfalls at a festival would drop if it was not held at a "convenient" place near an urban centre. NH7 has shown that the content of

I was proud to hear from the organisers, that at the Shillong NH7 festival they did not have to pay a single bribe in order to get things done. The Government of Meghalaya as well as the Ri Bhoi District Administration gave the logistical support required to ensure the festival ran smoothly. The organisers, on their part, ensured that all necessary duties and taxes were paid, in full, to the Government. The only financial consideration given by the State Government was exemption from paying the Entertainment Tax. This I feel is important to promote more such festivals coming to the State.

Considering that this festival, which is being held all over the country, is a purely commercial venture, I believe the organisers

The second important learning is that our youth have come of age and can enjoy themselves without being a nuisance to others. Till recently, local administrations and traditional bodies used to equate "rock shows" with excessive behaviour and trouble. But, going by the smooth manner in which the festival happened, it can be safely concluded that our youth can be trusted to actually enjoy themselves thoroughly without creating any problems for others. Even the presence of so many liquor bars at the venue, which provided excise revenue to the government exchequer, did not create any problems to the local and district administration. Both male and female guests were courteously treated and given proper "tribal" hospitality, and I am sure they have all gone back with good memories of their visit.

the festival is far more important than where the festival is held. The huge crowd that attended the two-day festival bears testimony to this.

However, the bigger learning in this regard, is that the rural people are ready and willing to join hands in organising such events. It was heartening to see youth organisations, women's groups, VDPs and traditional organisations coming forward to share the responsibility of organising the festival. At the NH7 festival, parking, housekeeping, venue cleaning, traffic management were some of the jobs taken up by the local people of the area.

The second important learning is that our youth have come of age and can enjoy themselves without being a nuisance to others. Till recently, local administrations and traditional bodies used to equate "rock shows" with excessive behaviour and trouble. But, going by the smooth manner in which the festival happened, it can be safely concluded that our youth can be trusted to actually enjoy themselves thoroughly without creating any problems for others. Even the presence of so many liquor bars at the venue, which provided excise revenue to the government exchequer, did not create any problems to the local and district administration. Both male and female guests were courteously treated and given proper "tribal" hospitality, and I am sure they have all gone back with good memories of their visit.

have to be commended for sharing the pie with all stakeholders. The Government earned through sales tax, excise duty, hotel room taxes, and shuttle services. The local community earned through NOC fees, management of parking lots, besides the improvement of physical infrastructure at the site and hiring of the VDP and locals for various jobs at the festival. Individual entrepreneurs also earned as transporters, campsite operators and food vendors. And, of course, for the organisers it proved a viable business venture worth repeating in the future.

Having said all this, I feel this article will not be complete without mentioning a couple of negatives that need to be corrected in future. Firstly, the NGOs of the district should also be involved right from the beginning to earn their trust and cooperation. On their part, the NGOs should look at taking advantage of the business opportunities rather than just getting free passes to the festival. Secondly, if the "VIP Raj" is to be eradicated, then a few bureaucrats, and they know whom I am talking about, should leave their egos at home before going for a public festival. It was sad to hear of government officers creating problems by barging through the entrance meant for artistes and demanding preferential treatment from the staff on duty at the festival.

TO THE EDITOR

Spitting germs!

Editor,

I read the news about the spitting and effigy burning near the Secretariat (ST, Oct 31) with much dismay. On two counts, its ironic. The leader of the Synjuk Nongsynshar Shnong happens to be both a well known medical doctor as well as prominent leader of the so called "purer" Seng Khasi movement or belief system.

I wonder if this is what they taught them in medical schools and religious places. To burn effigies and to spit openly in public. Millions of germs must have spread on that day from not so clean mouths. Wonder too if in the next protest TB patients will be brought from the wards to do the spitting for more voltage and power. It may be mentioned that the 26,500 tonne steel Howrah bridge in Kolkata had severe corrosion simply due to bird droppings and human spitting through the years. The Government had to spent 7 lakh rupees every year just to clean it.

Yours etc.,
Sincerely,
Rasputin Bismarck
Manners
Kolkata

Who will win the Nongstoin seat?

Editor, HSPDP has elected Mr Dios Jyndiang a driver cum personal assistant of (L) Bah Hoping Stone Lyngdoh to contest the upcoming by election to the Nongstoin seat. A Master's degree holder in Education, but a total stranger to most of the people of Nongstoin, we don't know how familiar he is with the idea of being an elected representative and how much he can deliver and contribute towards improving the political system. But we all know through media publications that he has been a close aide and was mentored by the legend (L)Mr Hoping Stone Lyngdoh. Ironically most party members do not favour him because they are doubtful about his winnability. Elite groups are not in favour of Mr. Jyndiang. They lack confidence in him and don't see him as the man who will one day lead but as a man who will follow eternally.

On the other side we have Mr. Gabriel Wahlang who is a nominated MDC to the KHADC, a former Science teacher of St. Anthony's School a former Youth Congress President and who has the backing of the party high command from both Sonia Gandhi and Dr. Mukul Sangma. The Congress Party in Nongstoin should

learn a lesson for what has happened in the past elections because lack of unity may lead them to disaster and a nightmare. Gabriel Wahlang who hails from Pyndengrei, Nongstoin, is a son of the soil and stands a chance of winning but his main challenge is shortage of time to make himself known to the grass-roots voters. Common people barely know Mr Wahlang and he has to put in all his might to convince voters in his favour.

This election isn't about sympathy for the HSPDP party any longer because we have seen the internal disputes in the HSPDP which is disgraceful. The Congress Party as well is not in a proper form. It is losing its grip on its members who are hungry for power. It's so damn pathetic! This election therefore is between Gabriel Wahlang vs Dios Jyndiang. It's a contest between two personalities rather than between two parties, which is quite interesting. However the people of Nonstoin are still in a state of confusion and dilemma as to who to vote for. The Biblical story of David battling the giant Goliath is playing itself out in the Nongstoin poll battle. There is Jyndiang who has no social and political status but is educated and Gabriel Wahlang, a

nominated MDC who has a huge army of supporters behind him. I personally carry no brief for either of them but I yearn to see change for the better in Nongstoin. May the people of Nongstoin choose the right man. Earlier the name of Mcmillan Byrsat the Lyngdoh of Nongstoin Syiemship had come up. He is seen as an expert in customary practices; a man who genuinely stands by the principles of 'Ka Jinglong U Khasi'. He is a very prominent member of the society and a member of Advisory committee of the KHADC. Nongstoin Hima already has its own written law which has been assented to by the Governor, which is why the local head men within the Hima Nongstoin can legally issue NOCs to their own people. Apparently Byrsat is the man behind it. He does not belong to any political party and nor has he applied for a ticket from any party. But it is intriguing as to why his name came up. Perhaps people see in him the potential to deliver and bring a change in the system of governance which we are most in need of in this present confused state of affairs.

Yours etc.,
Mickey Marwein.
Pyndengrei Nongstoin.

“Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, in your way of thinking.”

— Marcus Aurelius

The Shillong Times

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Statistics and Reality

IN societal and governmental attitudes in India, statistics only throw light on the existing state of affairs and that is also often taken with a pinch of salt. Recommendations of global institutions as a rule scratch the surface. McKinsey Global Institute has a whole lot of benefits which can arise from improving gender parity in India strengthening the country's economy. The bulk of this gain is about 70% which should result from a rise in India's female labour force participation rate by 10 percentage points—from 31% currently to 41% in 2025. The upshot will be bringing 68 million more women into economic activity in the next decade. Women in India at present generate a share of regional output adding up to 17%. It is marginally lower than in West Asia and North Africa (18%) and much lower than in North America and Oceania (41%). The gender parity score in India is 0.48 which is supposedly extremely high. The solution lies in reservations and quotas at the top and in greater gender equality at the bottom of the pyramid. All this faces the Indian government with the daunting task of addressing such crucial issues as the maternal mortality rate, gap in educational level, financial and digital inclusion and so on. The Mc Kinsey report states, “On average, women with no education attainment express a 30 percent stronger preference for a boy child over a girl, compared with a 3 percent stronger preference expressed by women with tertiary or higher education”. Gender equality in society naturally leads to greater equality at the workplace.

In India, the gender factor is further complicated by statewide variations. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar present a dismal picture while Sikkim and Mizoram are considerably better in the field. Delhi can of course make loud noises about drawing up a slew of measures to remove gender inequality. But the statewide picture also needs to be dealt with. All this, however, may sound hollow against a background of harsh reality. “Beti bachao, beti bachao” is a slogan which sounds nice but one is reminded at the same time of girl foeticide. In rural India, girls pay lip service to the policy of education for all but are soon forced to drop out of school by parents to do household chores. The legislation against child marriage among girls is frequently breached. Rape goes unpunished and sexual harassment at the workplace is oftener than not reported by the victims. The entire mindset in most parts of India is in the ‘dark backwards of time’ and the Hindutva zealots at the top are unlikely to improve matters. In such a context, statistics dished out by global agencies can only prove to be only ‘words, words.’

LOOKING BACK

March 15, 1988

22 killed in eslatd Punjab violence

Twenty two people, including a terrorist and eight members of two families, were killed in stepped up violence in Punjab during the past 24 hours.

A security forces patrol shot dead a terrorist identified as Balraj Singh alias Pappu, in an encounter in Patiala this evening.

One person, who was injured in terrorist shooting in the model town area of Jalandhar city this afternoon, succumbed to injuries in hospital this evening, police said.

An official spokesman said terrorists shot dead four members of a family late last night at village Chandher in Amritsar district, before fleeing they set the house on fire.

In another incident twelve people gunned down four members of a family last night at village Walia Majhpur in Amritsar

district.

Three terrorists shot dead two people in village Bhak. The victims were identified as Mohan and Nath.

One Harjinder Pal was gunned down at village Toor under Sarhali police station last night.

In yet another incident last night six youth shot dead one Satpal in village Kalsain Kalan in the district.

Two people were killed when terrorists fired indiscriminately at Chowk Nagajia in Jalandhar district last night.

Terrorists shot dead retired police constable Gajjan Singh at village Bhiki Katra, about 28 km from Ludhiana last night.

Meanwhile six terrorists were nabbed in Faridkot district last night. They were identified as Balwinder Singh, Jagjit Singh, Kala Singh and Gurjant Singh.

AFSPA made dirtier by the judiciary

By Suhas Chakma

The full bench of the Meghalaya High Court comprising Chief Justice Uma Nath Singh, Justice TNK Singh and Justice SR Sen in an order dated 2nd November 2015 while hearing a case relating to bandhs called by the insurgents in the Garo Hills directed “the Central Government to consider the use of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) in the Garo Hills area and deployment of Armed and Para-military forces to control the situation in the aid of but certainly not under the command of civil and police authorities till life becomes normal and the incidents of rampant kidnapping and killing totally stopped”. The Court also directed the Union Home Secretary and the Defence Secretary to ensure compliance with the order and report to the Court during the next hearing, and further directed the Principal Secretary in the office of the Prime Minister to place the order before the Prime Minister for perusal and consideration.

The court sought to justify its order, inter alia, on the ground that insurgents had abducted 87 people in the past 10 months and further stated that “even under the ideal federal system of United States of America, whereas ours is only quasi federal, under the Insurrection Act, the President can deploy Armed Forces under certain circumstances including terrorist activities in the states”.

The order is bad in law, grounds are fallacious, and it is nothing but an illegal transgression into the domain of the executive by the judiciary.

Under Section 3 of the AFSPA it is only the Governor of the State or the Administrator of the Union territory or the Central Government who can declare the whole or such part of such State or Union territory to be a disturbed area but the Meghalaya High Court took up the task of the Governor upon itself. There is only one Government of India and the law and order falls under the domain of the Ministry of

Home Affairs (MHA). Therefore, the direction to place the order before the Prime Minister is an over-zealous act indicting the MHA and the Ministry of Defence.

If crime statistics are to be the yardsticks, there is no doubt that the situation in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh afflicted by the Naxalites is worse than the Garo Hills. Does that mean that the Chhattisgarh High Court or the Supreme Court should direct imposi-

The assertion that the United States is the “ideal federal system” is a debatable issue. The Swiss consider their federal system under which each Canton/province has the power to seek referendum before imposition of any law or policy as the most ideal.

sition of emergency under Article 356 of the Constitution in Chhattisgarh?

The assertion that the United States is the “ideal federal system” is a debatable issue. The Swiss consider their federal system under which each Canton/province has the power to seek referendum before imposition of any law or policy as the most ideal. Under the United States’ Insurrection Act, the President of the US is authorised to deploy the armed forces under certain circumstances including terrorist activities in the states but the Supreme Court of United States is not authorised to direct the President of the United States in which situations he/she should deploy the armed forces. The AFSPA authorises the Government of India to deployed armed forces but unlike the Supreme Court of the United States, the Meghalaya High Court went to direct the Government of India to impose AFSPA in the Garo Hills.

held that the central armed forces are not required to operate under the control of the State security forces while performing duties in aid of civil power of the State. The Supreme Court relied upon the Entry 2A of the Union List of the Constitution i.e. “deployment of any armed force of the Union or any other force subject to the control of the Union or any contingent or unit thereof in any state in aid of the civil power, powers, jurisdiction, privileges and liabilities of the members of such forces while on such deployment”. However, Entry 2A of the Union List makes no distinction between States covered under the AFSPA and those not covered.

The Meghalaya High Court went a step further: it took over the power of the executive to impose the AFSPA in the Garo Hills and assaulted the basic tenets of the Constitution on separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive. The task of the judiciary is to assess whether the legality of the action of the executive on imposition of the AFSPA or any other law, and not to perform the task of the executive including analysis of the inputs of intelligence agencies on law and order situation to declare certain areas as disturbed.

Unless the State Government of Meghalaya or the Ministry of Home Affairs challenges the order of the Meghalaya High Court, the Courts in India may as well direct imposition of emergency under Article 356 of the Constitution of India, a common refrain of the opposition political parties in most States. The situation in the Garo Hills might indeed be a fit case for imposition of the AFSPA but it is simply not for the judges to take the call.

(The author is Director, Asian Centre for Human Rights)

AFSPA, the Supreme Court

TO THE EDITOR

Condition of Shillong roads

Editor,

I keep reading in the letters space of your daily several letters written by people on the condition of roads in different areas of Shillong. Most of them complain about their respective localities. The fact of the matter is that every road in the city, especially those leading into respective localities are all in very deplorable conditions. Many of these roads were repaired only last year or six months ago (like the road from Laitumkhrah to Spread Eagle Falls, the road leading to NEIGRHIMS, the road from Meter Factory to Mawlai (currently under repair), the road to Khlieh lewduh which also was repaired by the MES a few months ago. When it comes to sub-standard work and corruption then the PWD and MES are on the same boat.

My question is: Can this kind of sub-standard work by the PWD be tolerated by the people of Shillong? Should we not be out on the streets protesting against the all pervasive culture of corruption that is ailing the State PWD. Who is answerable here? The PWD Minister or the head of the Department? Can the AICC members in charge of Meghalaya, Mr Narayanswamy not take up these issues of governance? Does he have to come here only to settle disputes among the MLAs of his Party? Aren't the Congress party bigwigs interested in the life and wel-

fare of the citizens of Meghalaya? The problem with the AICC is that it looks the other way at the venality of its elected representatives in Meghalaya. The Congress does not seem to have learnt any lessons from its defeat in 2014 on account of the mega scams during the tenure of the UPA-2. Its heir apparent Rahul Gandhi is obsessed with Modi instead of keeping his own flock, especially those who are still holding the reins of Government, on the straight and narrow.

As citizens what we want from the Government are good roads, basic functioning civic services, such as regular supply of clean and potable water and good electricity supply and law and order. Is that too much to expect? And one wonders too why the Chief Minister of Meghalaya continues to look the other way at the non-performing ministers in his cabinet. If he seeks the views of citizens they will tell him exactly which minister/ministers is/are a liability to his Government. That is in case he does not know. But being the smart person that he is, I am sure he knows but is handicapped by the need to have only those MLAs as ministers whose loyalty to him is unquestioned. This is a tall order. At the end of the day it is all about electoral politics and being in power at any and all costs and we the

voters get the short end of the stick.

I have a suggestion: Can we all make a loud protest against the terrible roads that we have to put up with today? Can someone with an organization behind them take the lead? There are many who will come forward to join the protest.

Yours etc.,
JB Nongrum,
Via email

The spitting episode

Editor,

The Rangbah Shnong who instigated the crowd to spit on the Chief Minister's effigy and who also used very provocative language on October 30 when these so-called respected gentlemen were supposed to have a peaceful demonstration against the Government is from Mawpat and he allegedly is also a Government employee. I am also told that the Rangbah Shnong of several localities in the city including those venerable men in black gowns who are employed by the Government have instigated their people to come out in large numbers on November 5, when the RS will be barging into the Secretariat to confront the Government. This can only happen in Meghalaya. And this is the reason why conflicts of interests are not encouraged in any system. The same duality that exists in the District Councils and

legislature when one man is both MLA and MDC also persists in the Dorbar Shnong where a Government employee is also a Rangbah Shnong. This is a defective system that the society does not seem to have grasped. How dare a Rangbah Shnong who is paid by the Government also spit on the same Government. Isn't this what is called 'namak haram' in Hindi and 'haram nimok' in Khasi? Perhaps we have forgotten these terms now that we are so used to speaking in English but these are terms that carry weight and the society should be reflecting on them.

Khasi society as I see it today is one that refuses to rationalize or reflect. When will it come of age? The elders instead of giving good examples to their younger ones and mentoring them are themselves the worst examples. I am not sure what will happen today but the action in itself is unwarranted and reeks of BJP politics since the leader of the SNSBH was at one time a BJP leader. Dirty politics is what has destroyed this society. But we continue to repose our faith in this dirty system. Woe to us!

C Kharkongor,
Shillong-21

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.

Army controlled elections in Myanmar

Buddhist clergy calling the shots

By Barun Das Gupta

Myanmar, now formally a democratic country under a civil government, will go for its second general elections on November 8. In 2011, the army generals who had ruled the country with an iron hand for nearly half a century, decided to shed their uniforms and put on civilian garb to make Myanmar's 'democracy' look credible. They set up a political outfit named Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). The first election in 2011 was a loaded-dice election in which the army-sponsored party was destined to win. The second elections now will be no different either.

How democratic the elections will be? Aung San Suu Kyi, the unchallenged leader of the democratic opposition in Myanmar, has been debarred from contesting the polls and running for the presidency under a law which disqualifies any candidate with a foreign spouse or children. Suu Kyi's late husband was a British citizen. So are her sons. The 'law' was enacted with the sole objective of permanently preventing her from contesting and ever coming to power. However, her Na-

Myanmar State for a long time. There are seven provinces populated by the ethnic minorities. Four of them have a sizeable Christian population. They are afraid that with little monetary resources, they will be at a disadvantage to fight the coming elections. It will not be a level-playing field for them and reduce their chances of winning seats in the new Parliament.

How the opposition will fare in the November 8 elections is an open question. The parties have been directed not to criticize the army or the constitution drawn up by the army. They have been allotted fifteen minute time for election speeches on State television and radio but the speeches will have to be vetted by the Election Commission.

Myanmar's transition from a country ruled by an army junta to a real democracy will not be complete as long as the generals rule the country in civilian garb. The generals are determined to hold on to power and give the country an army-controlled democracy much like the 'guided democracy' of Gen. Ayub Khan in Pakistan

As far as India is concerned, the relations between the two countries have improved considerably in the last decade. As India realized that it had made a mistake in treating Myanmar as a pariah because it was under a military dictatorship, it started taking corrective steps. With an India cold to Myanmar, China had a field day to extend its influence in the country. Now India has a presence in Myanmar, providing financial assistance for its economic development.

tional League of Democracy (NLD) is contesting the polls and hoping to win a majority of seats.

Secondly, the Muslims who constitute about four per cent of the population (official figure) have been debarred both from voting and setting up candidates from their community. The Buddhist clergy saw to that. The series of organized attacks on the Rohingya Muslims, most of them living in the Rakhine province, led to the displacement of nearly 1.5 lakh of them who have been forced to live in ghettos, dependent on government doles. Another lakh and a half are believed to have escaped to other countries by boats, some never reaching their destination as their boats sank in the high seas. The only Rohingya legislator (elected in 2011) was told that this time he cannot seek re-election.

The Buddhist clergy, like its Sri Lankan counterpart, is very powerful. Earlier it supported Suu Kyi and her movement for restoration of democracy. But later it changed its stand. It extended full support to the generals and opposed Suu Kyi. Now it is opposed to her saying she is unfit to govern. In the coming days, Buddhist radicals are expected to assert themselves more forcefully.

The Buddhist clergy is also opposed to the Christians. There is a large population of ethnic minorities in Myanmar, divided into over a hundred distinct ethnic groups. The ethnic minorities have been carrying on an armed battle with the

way back in 1957. Even the disqualification of Muslims from taking part in the election is reminiscent of Pakistan's EBDO or Elective Bodies Disqualification Ordinance which effectively eliminated all opposition to the military dictatorship.

As far as India is concerned, the relations between the two countries have improved considerably in the last decade. As India realized that it had made a mistake in treating Myanmar as a pariah because it was under a military dictatorship, it started taking corrective steps. With an India cold to Myanmar, China had a field day to extend its influence in the country. Now India has a presence in Myanmar, providing financial assistance for its economic development.

Today, Myanmar occupies an important place in India's 'Look East' policy. There are several ongoing projects to deepen economic cooperation and trade between India and her neighbours involving Myanmar. One is the Asian Highway Network. Another is the East-West corridor. Then there is the Trilateral Highway connecting India with Vietnam through Myanmar. And lastly there is the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project. Once completed it will be of strategic importance for India as it will connect the Kolkata port with the Sittwe port in Myanmar by sea. Then Sittwe will be connected to Lashio in Mizoram by road and then to Kolkata. It will be an alternative trade route for India. (IPA Service)

"A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves."

— Lao Tzu

The Shillong Times

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AFSPA and its implications

ANY law that empowers the state to act with impunity must be resisted by a democratic society. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) which is imposed in disturbed areas of the North East and Jammu and Kashmir has been contested by several civil society groups of this country. In Kashmir several women are called half widows because their husbands have been abducted and secretly killed, all in the name of counter insurgency. In disturbed areas the army is brought in to tackle militancy. Under AFSPA the security forces enjoy immunity for causing death and for tortures they inflict in the name of countering insurgency. Very often the encounters are staged and suspects are killed because the higher ups need quick results. Irom Sharmila of Manipur has been the longest non-violent protestor against the AFSPA. She started her fast to protest against AFSPA in November 2000 and continues to be force fed in jail. Successive governments have refused to take a call against this repressive colonial Act because the Defence Ministry would refuse to deploy the army if the AFSPA is withdrawn. Army officials claim that sending their men into an insurgency affected area without the backing of AFSPA is like sending them with their hands tied behind their backs.

The point is that there is a cadre of para-military forces like the CRPF and Assam Rifles which can be deployed without invoking the AFSPA, so why is the Union Home Ministry not using these forces to strengthen the state police? It is learnt that CRPF personnel have been deployed in the Garo Hills earlier but they cannot adapt themselves to the harsh terrain. Moreover there are claims that the CRPF men sent here are well past their prime and are more of a liability. Meanwhile the state police seem to be on the back-foot as far as containing the GNLA is concerned. The outfit is always one up on the police. The recent cases of kidnapping for ransom followed by the kidnap and killing of an IB official and a merchant by the ASAK has created a fear psychosis in Garo Hills. Consequently the Meghalaya High Court has taken a dim view of the administration's inability to prevent the calling of bandhs and of securing the life of citizens. The Court has therefore taken a strident stance and directed the Union Home Ministry to begin army operations in Garo Hills by declaring the region a disturbed area. The Court's intent is to contain militancy but the human rights violations on account of army operations cannot be ruled out. It would be a case of the medicine being far worse than the cure. The Meghalaya High Court might need to review its decision.

LOOKING BACK

March 15, 1988

Cold response to Bharat Bandh

Bharat bandh is likely to have limited impact in Meghalaya. According to indications available here, the banking services is likely to be badly affected. Barring the State Bank in Shillong are likely to remain closed tomorrow.

It is likely that the functioning of the LIC and the NEEPCO may also be affected.

With none of the regional parties interested in the Bandh, the affect of the bandh is unlikely to be encouraging for the organizers.

The State Government has decided to maintain extra vigil against any attempt to breach of peace.

Meanwhile, the INTUC General Secretary Manik Das has welcomed the right decision of the regional parties to oppose the bandh call. In a statement, he said the ill motivated call was designed to disrupt peace

in the State and therefore urged upon the people to ignore it.

The executive committee of NE Congress (I) Coordination Committee has come down heavily on the national Opposition parties who have called a Bharat bandh to topple the democratically elected Govt. of Mr Rajiv Gandhi who still enjoys absolute majority in Parliament.

The Committee in its meeting here on March 12 pledged to strongly oppose the bandh call and reaffirmed their faith in the able and dynamic leadership of Mr. Gandhi, and appealed to all the right thinking citizens of India not to participate in such acts of foolishness because poor and the down trodden but also will result in great loss of the Nation's economy. The meeting was also termed those who called the bandh as anti govt. and anti-National.

The Indigenous Terra Madre : sights, sounds and lessons learnt

By Patricia Mukhim

The ITM 2015 which was conceived four years ago has finally come to fruition. For the team at the North East Slow Food and Agrobiodiversity Society (NESFAS) which has been at the helm of this event it is a culmination of many hours of hard work, sleepless nights, tensions, anxieties, last minute changes, adjustments and so many unforeseen hiccups. It is not easy for a small organisation to put together a programme of this scale and to coordinate the travel of over 600 people from diverse parts of the globe. Just organising their visas and travel is a huge task but the Government of Meghalaya has been phenomenal in their support for this programme. Mr Sampath Kumar, IAS the liaison person from the State Government's side is the rock of Gibraltar. Throughout the 3-day event at North Eastern Hill University, Sampath Kumar was seen keeping track of the logistics and ensuring that the national and international delegates did not face any problems. This is a fine example of Government teaming up with an NGO to host an event of such a momentous scale.

It goes to the credit of the quiet, demure Mr Phrang Roy and his small yet dedicated team of workers who functioned out of a small office that they have been able to pull off this magnificent event which brought the world to Meghalaya. The theme of ITM 2015 is, "The Future We Want," and the deliberations centred around this theme as Indigenous Peoples cogitated on it, shared their concerns about the onslaught of multinational companies on their farming cultures and the loss of food biodiversity. This time Dr Jen Astone, Executive Director of Swift Foundation, USA shared with the audience the meaning and purpose of Agroecology. For many this is a new concept but after listening to the session on Agroecology one understands that it about maintaining a productive agriculture that sustains yields and optimizes the use of local resources while minimizing the negative environmental and socio-economic impacts of modern technologies. Industrialisation ushered in modern agricultural practices for bigger yields by maximizing high-input technologies. This has resulted in environmental and health problems that often do not serve the needs of producers and consumers. In developing countries, in addition to promoting environmental degradation, modern agricultural technologies have bypassed the circumstances and socio-economic needs of large numbers of resource-poor farmers. Perhaps the lesson from Dr Aston's session is for us to go back to nature with a more

reverential attitude and not see this planet only as a resource to be exploited but as the "Mother". And who exploits a mother?

The session titled, "Are today's matriarchal communities societies of peace?" caused some flutter. The participants in the room who are from matriarchal societies themselves wondered why three of the five panellists should be male. One farmer from Ethiopia wondered why the panellists should be doctorates and intellectuals. "Where are the voices of ordinary women from matriarchal societies?" he asked. A Maori lady who was present at the same session found it too academic and Eurocentric. Others felt that the discussions did not really dwell on the theme of how matriarchies can become harbingers of peace. A male panellist from Colombia made it worse when he said that women in his community are not given political power because they are too emotional and not rational. This drew a chorus of protest from the women in the room. A participant from Mexico wanted to know from the panellists as to what was the value placed on women as keepers of seeds and holders of knowledge. She said there is a power play even in matriarchies that keeps women subservient and allows men to exercise control. For those of us who are used to this debate it sounds like a familiar refrain. The Maori lady, Hinewirangi Kottu Mougav of the Ngati Kahunguwo tribe later told me she works in prisons and has seen several men who don't know how to release their emotions. "Men hold their emotions very badly and it is my task to help them channelise those emotions without destroying them." It was also shocking to learn from her that in New Zealand out of 4.5 million people only 15% are indigenous and the rest 74% are Europeans. Of the 15% of Indigenous people, 60% are incarcerated in prisons. They include men, women and youth. "It's insidious," she said. It made me dwell on our own condition and how better protected we are by the Constitution, at least for the present, but one never knows about the future.

I chaired a session on 'Creative Communication Approaches for Indigenous Issues' and was delighted with the presentations from Nagaland,

Papua New Guinea, Ecuador, Arunachal Pradesh and Central India. Inoto Nawang Khulu from Nagaland documented the practice of tattoos among the Konyaks and the narratives behind that. Bao Wako of PNG showed how food is linked to culture and how documenting the way food is prepared indigenously helps deconstruct the Eurocentric perceptions of food. "Food is an expression of who we are," Wako said. I was particularly impressed by Shobhit Jain of Community Media's work. He has empowered the farmers with whom he works by providing them with cameras, giving them intensive training on how to handle complex cameras, teaching them to edit their work so that their films get international recognition. For him community media actually means empowering the community to tell their own stories the way they want to without any outside manipulation. We learnt from Luis Arturo of Ecuador how important community radio is to communicate with the world and also to help archive the contents that document their stories, including their recipes.

The problem with parallel sessions is that one cannot attend all of them. In between there are the taste workshops after which chefs come out with their concoctions and allow the delegates to taste what they have prepared. Chef Joel Basumatari of Nagaland gave us a taste of insects like riverbed beetles and grasshoppers and eri silk worms while Sunita Rao of Karnataka made ant chutney. The faint-hearted may balk at these foods but they happen to be real food for many who have survived on them for centuries. One of the objectives of the ITM is also to show healthy respect for one another's food cultures and food histories.

The session, 'Around the Loom: Eri Silk Weaving' was educative. The women weavers demonstrated to us what goes into the production of one "Thoh-rew stem," and how with the support of GIZ and NESFAS so many of these weavers from Umden, Mustoh and other places have been able to add value to the shawls/stoles/mufflers through a combination of designs and colours and therefore get a better price for them.

And in the hustle and bustle of this huge gathering of there was Michael Syiem displaying the Myllem locks which he

says is now a dying trade. Many flocked to his stall to understand more about these iron locks that once kept out homes secure.

It is difficult for anyone, even a journalist, to record everything about this 3-day event which will culminate in the Slow Food Festival at Mawphlang and which is expected to draw huge crowds. Phrang Roy deserves all credit for this spectacular event. So too the Government of Meghalaya, the volunteers who were so well trained to assist the delegates with every little thing! I salute the women who toiled hard to keep the toilets clean. They have shown us that true meaning of "Dignity of Labour" and indeed performed a labour of love. They took pictures with the delegates especially those adorned in their colourful traditional costumes. And truly what a sight to behold! If there is one thing about indigenous people that makes them stand out it is the colour of their costumes whether they are male or female. And just because they are farmers they don't feel they need to be dull and colourless. The delegates from Mongolia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Africa, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Russia painted the event with colours. It's not that indigenous peoples have no problems. They have loads of them but that does not dim their view of life.

On Thursday while speaking at the session on "Supporting Agroecology and Agrobiodiversity for the Future of Food," Phrang Roy made a remarkable statement. He said, "Eighty percent of biodiversity is in Indigenous Peoples lands and they have been the gatekeepers of this biodiversity despite all attempts by multinationals to barge in. Most governments too have never accepted that scientific knowledge needed to be blended with traditional knowledge. The future we want is one where governments will listen to the voices of the people because they know best what form of agricultural practice and food production works for them and they have been practicing Agroecology for hundreds of years."

There are many who wonder what this event is all about. It is about food and sustainable farming practices keeping the health of the ecosystem in mind. It is about food sovereignty where we are not pushed to buy the food that multinationals peddle to but the freedom to choose and enjoy our palates with greater reverence for nature.

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

10 JANPATH IS CURSED, RAJIV GANDHI WAS TOLD

10 Janpath is jinxed. Many in the Congress Party had advised Rajiv Gandhi not move to 10 Janpath as it was cursed but Rajiv Gandhi was so influenced by Sonia Gandhi that he did not heed to any advice, says the Congress leader Makhhan Lal Fotedar in his book the Chinar Leaves. A Youth Congress activist of Sanjay era apprised Rajiv Gandhi that the house was cursed and no one could survive in it beyond eighteen months.. The Youth Congress had folded up from there in 1977. Lal Bahadur Shastri as prime minister passed away within eighteen months. The Press Council of India had to move out within that period. Rajiv ignored the warnings and made K K Tewary who was a minister in government, vacate the premises so that he could move in. Incidentally Tewary's political oblivion also coincided with his moving into 10 Janpath. And Rajiv Gandhi himself was assassinated within eighteen month of his setting up abode at 10 Janpath.

BALMIKI JAYANTI ORGANISERS ONLY INVITE RAHUL GANDHI AS A GUEST

The Balmiki Samaj in Delhi that celebrated the Balmiki Jayanti in the ramparts of Red Fort after 38 years chose to boycott the all leaders of political parties including the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal. The only leader invited was Rahul Gandhi and this was done at the initiative of the former MLA Jaikishen, a Balmiki himself. He is also a patron of the Balmiki Sarpanch Committee and Balmiki Utsav Committee that organised the show. Jaikishen ensured that both Modi or Amit Shah or Kejriwal were not invited and only Rahul Gandhi was invited. Balmikis who had voted for Kejriwal in the last election are extremely upset with both the BJP and the AAP. The Balmiki Samaj is upset with the BJP over the killing of the Dalit children in Haryana and with Kejriwal because of his latest utterances against reservations. Balmikis who had voted for the AAP in the assembly polls are also upset with Kejriwal for ordering machines in place of safai karmacharis thus threatening the survival of the Balmikis in Delhi. Despite the fact that Rahul alone was invited on the podium, the highlight of the function was the infighting within the Congress. While PL Punia the chairman of the SC committee was absent the deputy chairman Rajkumar Verma were also conspicuous by their absence. Even Rahul Gandhi who was the only guest of honour and was supposed to inaugurate the Balmiki Yatra by breaking a coconut, was not allowed by the Delhi PCC chief Ajay Makan.

CONGRESS MINORITY DEPARTMENT HAS PEOPLE OF ALL COMMUNITIES

The Congress Vice Presi-

dent Rahul Gandhi may be facing problems in reshuffling the AICC but he has discovered via media to demonstrate his powers. He has decided to appoint two vice chairmen in each department. To begin with, Rahul has crowded the minority department with three Vice Chairmen. The status of the minority department that was already lowered by the Congress leadership when they had appointed an ex councillor Khurshid Ahmad from Gujarat as its chairman, will now have two Vice Chairmen with equal powers as Khurshid Ahmad. The appointment of an ex councillor had already invited a lot of criticisms the department was earlier headed by Congress doyens like Arjun Singh Ahmad Patel A R Antuley and their ilk. But these new appointments of three vice chairman Anil A Thomas a Christian, Parminder Singh Bawa a Sikh and Manish Shah a Jain has even raised a bigger hue and cry. All these three vice chairmen have no locus standi as there is no provision for a Vice Chairman in the Congress constitution just as the post of Vice President is a constitutional post. These appointments are in accordance with the prescription of Dr Antony who has prescribed that by projecting a Muslim alone, the Congress would be seen bowing to Muslim appeasement. So from now onwards, the minority department would be represented by all minority communities.

VINCENT GEORGE BACK TO POWER AT AICC OFFICE

Vincent George, the once all powerful private secretary of the former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who spent more than a decade in the wilderness, has bounced back to power. Of late two appointments have been done on the recommendation of V George. Both these appointments are of Christians. The appointment of one Anil Thomas as the Vice Chairman in the minority department has been done t the behest of George. In fact nobody even knows who Thomas is. When it was decided that a Christian has to be appointed and Rahul sounded a hunt he took the help of George who recommended the name of Thomas. Earlier it was George's efforts that Shobha Thomas Ozha also a Christian, was reappointed Mahila Congress chief. Though the main reason for the reappointment of Ozha was because of her growing proximity to Rahul but this was due to the initial efforts of George who is said to have got her the initial appointment. Her reappointment has invited criticism as she has not even been able to win even a corporation election despite being given several chances. Earlier she contested the assembly polls twice and lost. The latest she contested was for the corporation election and even lost her deposit. The buzz in the Congress is that with return of V George the AICC may see more Christians getting positions of power. (IPA)

TO THE EDITOR

Headmen or pall bearers?

Editor,
One is given to understand that the present agitation by our venerable Rangbah Shnongs is for the protection and preservation of our culture and tradition. It's a noble thought but a doubt arises. Is this the way to do it? There is such a thing known as a pyrrhic victory, where a battle is won at the cost of losing the entire war. Is this what is happening to Khasi society, culture and tradition under the banner of the SNSBH? The centrepiece of Khasi culture and tradition is and has always been 'Ka Akor, Ka Burom' (individual/collective dignity and prestige through proper behaviour and decorum). It defines ka long-ryngiang (standing) amongst other societies. To spit on someone has long been regarded as a kam pohjait (derogatory) something defiling to 'Ka Akor ka

Burom.' When such desecration is openly committed or encouraged by a Rangbah Shnong (reportedly of Mawpat) or head of our traditional institution it is a death blow to our tradition.

Our traditional heads have always been revered as elders armed with the experience of age and wisdom of their years. These are the qualifications Khasi traditional leaders have armed themselves with for generations as they led society from crisis to crisis. Foresight, wisdom and experience are core to our system of governance (ka synshar ka khadar). Words of wisdom from the Tymmen Shnong is respected by all even by Government. Today the temptation for popularity and star status on the electronic media has thrown caution to the winds. Rangbah Shnong are agitating out on the streets; rabble rousing (pynkhih

shnong) has become their forte; the institution of the Dorbar has been reduced to that of an NGO or pressure group. Today, how different is the Dorbar as an Institution from a student body (KSU), youth group (FKJGP) or any aggressive social body (HYC)? Can an alcoholic father advise his son against drinking? Have the durbars forfeited their authority to advice and govern?

One of the basic strengths of our dorbar system is its apolitical characteristic. Traditional wisdom has kept the dorbar away from party politics. We have always remained neutral and impartial in affairs of politics. Suddenly this has changed. Why take sides in the dirty political fight between PN Syiem and Mukul Sangma? Both the State Government and District Council are made up of politicians whose agenda has always been driven by self-interest, unprincipled

political ambition and naked obsession for power. No exemptions! Please tell me how have things suddenly changed today? Why are Rangbah Shnong , in the name of tradition, emulating the politicians? Our tradition has in the process been murdered. Today as the joyful pall bearers perform the last rites over the dead body of my tradition, I stand under the pine trees and weep.

Yours etc.,
Caroline Dkhar,
Shillong-2

Imposition of AFSPA in Garo Hills

Editor,
The recent order of the Meghalaya High Court asking the Government of India to consider the imposition of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 in Garo Hills in view of insurgency problem is interesting

in the context of enjoyment of human rights especially that of women in a democratic state of India. The Act has been considered by many as draconian and the Government of India has been advised by the United Nations to repeal it as it is contrary to democracy. Christof Heyns, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions as reported in one of the leading national dailies on March 31, 2012 stated, "The AFSPA in effect allows the state to override rights in the disturbed areas in a much [more] intrusive way than would be the case under a state of emergency, since the right to life is in effect suspended, and this is done without the safeguards applicable to states of emergency."

Similarly the Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which is an important international

body on women's rights had in 2007 and 2014 made a recommendation for the repeal of the Act in view of the violation of women's rights in the areas under its promulgation. Various committees in India had also recommended the repeal or at least a review of the Act which

included the B.P Jeevan Reddy Committee (2005), Administrative Reforms Committee headed by Veerappa Moily (2007), Working Group on Confidence-Building Measures in Jammu and Kashmir headed by Mohammad Hamid Ansari (2007) and the Justice Verma Committee (2012). Moreover, the Act has not shown that it is capable of tackling insurgency which a determined Home Department of the State Government can as in the case of Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

Yours etc.,
Batskhem Myrbob,
Viaemail

Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.

--- Robert F. Kennedy

The Shillong Times

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Power for every home

INDIA hopes to provide electricity to every home without polluting the environment. There has been a breakthrough with US firm SunEdison being a successful bidder in a government auction to set up 500 megawatts of solar power capacity in Andhra Pradesh. The firm made the lowest bid- Rs4.63 per kilowatt-hour. This is indeed good news. But a fall in solar power tariff is not enough to achieve the government's objective. Reform in electricity distribution is a priority goal. During the last decade, huge investments were made in thermal power generation. But the remedy lies in removing the fault in distribution. Distribution companies are mostly owned by state governments and face acute financial difficulty. The NDA government has been in the last few months having talks with the state governments to provide them with yet another bailout for distribution companies. It is known that earlier bailouts have proved abortive. State governments are not willing to reform the distribution system for political reasons.

The NDA government has to set a high target for increasing the country's solar power capacity. It has tried to rope in public sector companies to achieve its objective. NTPC has been called upon to bundle solar power with cheaper thermal power. The government has to take up a bailout scheme which will persuade state governments to carry out necessary reforms. 25% of power generated is lost in transmission. That has to be eliminated. The states will have to reduce the loss as much as possible and achieve 100% metering of power. They will no doubt show reluctance to fall in with the Centre's move. But without a thorough reform of distribution of power, electricity for every home will remain just a dream.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1988

Russian show deferred

The Russian ballet troupe's performance in Shillong scheduled for March 16 has been postponed at least by a day. Owing to Bharat bandh, the troupe could not take off from Calcutta on Tuesday. According to official sources, the troupe is expected to arrive on Wednesday afternoon.

An official press release issued here did not specifically say when the show would be held. It is learnt that all the shows are likely to be deferred by a day.

Sources said that the 25 member troupe is relatively a younger lot having no major accomplishment for making profile. There was no confirmation about the details of their show. However, the shows have been total sell out.

Meanwhile the State Central Library, which had of late turned into a veritable source of embarrassment for the State Govt, has been spruced up at a cost of some Rs 20 lakhs. The auditorium has now 890 seats against 600 odd in the past. The seats have been replaced by sleek blow plastic chairs. The entire lighting system, acoustics, and the front screen, the stage and the ceiling have been done up. The backstage and the green rooms also wear a new look. Some new toilets have been added both for the artistes as well as the spectators.

The frontage of the auditorium has a permanent steel frame gate, a fountain and improved approach road, besides illumination system. All in all it's a new look State Central Library.

The question that is up-

permost in everybody's mind is how will the Govt ensure its proper upkeep? The authorities are also equally excited about it. Said a govt high-up "from now on we will try to be selective in letting out the auditorium."

Assam to set up anti-infiltration check point on Indo-Bangla border

The Assam Government had decided to up 15 anti infiltration check posts manned by state police personnel all along the Indo Bangladesh border in Bhubri sector from the first week of April, according to Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta.

In a statement, Mr. Mahanta said that the check posts would be set up at a distance of three km from the border behind the BSF post to detect fresh infiltrations from across the border.

The government was also contemplating to open such anti infiltration check posts soon in the Karimganu sector of Indo-Bangladesh border, he said.

Mahila Congress holds meeting

A meeting of the Mahila Congress, MPCC (I) was held on March 12 at the Congress Bhavan under the chairmanship of the State Convener, Mrs. Maya Rani Kyndiah. The meeting discussed at length, among other things, the prospect of an all round development of the women in the social and economic fields. Ways and means of helping the handicapped persons were also discussed.

Returning State Awards

Whose intolerance is it?

The 'movement' of returning State awards is turning into a political conflict and has introduced "intolerance" as a hot issue in elections. In recent weeks, several scholars, intellectuals, writers and film personalities have given back the awards they have received in protest against what they perceive as an atmosphere of intolerance pervading the entire country. The action is growing day by day.

A group of scholars and artists called upon the President to advise the Government to ensure freedom of life, faith and expression. The occasion was the birth anniversary of Narendra Dabholkar, a rationalist writer who was murdered in August 2013 in Pune. They sought to raise their voice "in protest and in resistance" against growing intolerance. In a joint statement, a group of about 230 academics, writers, and intellectuals from universities in India and abroad also expressed protest against the murders and failure of the Government to condemn the action.

The murder of M M Kalburgi, who was a member of the Sahitya Akademi, it is said, did not receive immediate condemnation by the institution. It hurt the feelings of a number of writers prompting surrender of awards by many in protest.

Returning the award is not just a reaction to the murder of free thinkers like Kalburgi, Govind Pansare and Narendra Dabholkar. It was said to be against the 'growing intolerance' in the country manifested in different ways like ban on films, restrictions on food habits (read beef), opposition to inviting Pakistani artistes, and reorganization of academic and cultural bodies. Over 30 writers have so far returned their awards and 20 of them returned the cash award also.

For several days, the Akademi mutely witnessed the return of awards. Protesting awardees include literary figures from different parts of the country who have contributed works in different Indian languages.

Some BJP leaders accuse the Congress, Left thinkers, and activists of practising "ideological intolerance" towards Prime Minister Modi and the BJP and trying to

project India as an intolerant society through structured and organized propaganda. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley views this revolt as intolerance to alternative ideological pole. The perpetrators of this propaganda were seen as enemies to alternative viewpoints in universities, academic institutions, and cultural bodies.

While addressing the media in Varanasi, Jaitley stated: "Those returning awards are playing politics by other means...they are rabid anti-BJP elements". He called this a "manufactured rebellion going on at a fast speed" and a "disproportionate political reaction, mostly by those opposed to what the BJP believes in".

The Executive Board of the Sahitya Akademi broke its silence and held a meeting and passed a resolution to strongly condemn the killing of Professor Kalburgi, other thinkers and intellectuals and violence against fellow citizens in the country. The Resolution asked the Union and State governments to maintain the "ambience of peaceful coexistence" in society.

The Resolution sent a political message by registering its protest against violence and not just violation of freedom of expression of writers. The Akademi, however, wants the award winners who have surrendered their awards to take these back. Its meeting brought into the open the clash of interests between two groups - one condemning attacks on writers, and the other hitting out at politicization of the issue. Impartial observers and the general public must know whose intolerance is playing politics as the two contending groups accuse each other of "intolerance".

In a way, it is diversionary tactics to replace "development" with appeal to sentiments and emotions as prime national issues. Emotional issues have contagious effect and spread much faster than localized practical life issues. These draw people

from all sections, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, men and women.

The Congress President Sonia Gandhi led a protest march with 125 party members and met President Mukherjee to discuss the "rising intolerance" across the country. It was her second meeting with him. She conveyed her party's "grave concern" at the "growing atmosphere of fear, intolerance, and intimidation being deliberately created by sections of the ruling establishment". A memorandum charging Ministers for supporting people spreading hatred and divisions was submitted.

Union Minister M Venkaiah Naidu ridiculed the Congress move saying: "Congress talking about intolerance is like the devil quoting the scriptures. Their plan to meet the President of India protesting against intolerance is the joke of the decade. Congress and its political friends are intolerant of people's mandate."

The protests have also been ridiculed by Modi during his election tour in Bihar reminding the nation of the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984 following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. He made a pointed attack that the Congress had no moral ground to give a lecture on "tolerance" with its record of violence against a religious community.

Whatever may be the reason for returning the awards, such an act betrays that the award is seen as a political reward. Sahitya Akademi award, for instance, is meant as national recognition of excellence in intellectual, literary, academic, and creative work and should not have political implications. So also, the cultural and educational awards.

To offer political support to the return of awards and to organize party protests and rebuttals have all turned the episode as a political conflict. Intolerance, wherever exhibited and whom so ever is the culprit, needs to be addressed legally. No purpose could be served by an individual by

surrendering his award --- not even symbolic.

Honours system, as it is known, recognizes people who have made achievements in public life. The awardees are such people who would have dedicated themselves to make life better for other people or committed themselves to attain excellence in their chosen fields and succeeded.

Honours system is in vogue in many countries. Political patronage was shown in titles like "Sir" and "Rao Sahib" in colonial days. Today, honours are given to people involved in different fields such as education, health, sports, science and technology, arts and music, civil and political service, besides police and military service.

The method of selection of recipients has also raised controversies many times. Lack of transparency and political interference are common grievances. There are cases of rejection of Padma awards for late recognition. It is common knowledge, that for one awardee, several thousands of competent people may have vanished and are still vanishing without recognition and without opportunities to get recognised. Awards including the highest honour of Bharat Ratna do not always mean that the holders are the best in their fields. While the honours system itself needs reforms, the recipients are not concerned with that and have fallen prey to party politics. It is most deplorable.

Returning awards is a method of symbolic gesture without much substance. For fighting intolerance of the ruling groups or opposition forces, it is not likely to be effective. On the contrary, it can only raise questions of manifestations of intolerance in the past and the blissful silence of award holders at that time.

The onlookers fail to understand whose intolerance is now on display - ideology of power holders or the anger of power losers? --- INFA

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

Rail budget to announce more freight corridors

Prabhu keen to speed up connectivity

By K.R. Sudhaman

Hectic preparation has begun for 2016 rail budget, whose mantra will be to declog railways by decongesting overworked trunk routes. It will also shun populism like announcement of new trains in view of choked railway network.

"What is the use of announcing new trains (as in the past), when railways have no route capacity. We want to decongest railways first," Railway minister Suresh Prabhu in a free-wheeling chat said indicating the rail budget in 2016 will shun populism just as this year with special emphasis to fix the chronic problem of congestion by stepping up investment. Also one need not always announce new trains only in budget. As and when capacity improves and increases, new trains would be introduced as per requirement.

For example Mughalsarai-Allahabad stretch is so overworked and it needed to be first decongested before introducing more trains on the route, Prabhu said.

Prabhu was not oblivious to the demand for more trains but for that capacity has to be created and that is the priority of the railways now. However the Railways have stepped up passenger carrying capacity during the last one year by adding more coaches to the existing trains. This has helped in stepping up passenger carrying capacity by 30-40 per cent in some routes without adding new trains particularly in sleeper classes in choked sectors.

The rail budget is also likely to announce expansion of dedicated freight corridors in the country. The railways have already started implementing Delhi-Mumbai and Ludhiana-Kolkata freight corridors. The railways are spending Rs 82,000 crore for implementing these two sections through a special purpose vehicle. JICA and World Bank are providing part of the funding and 85 per cent of the land for the two sections have already been acquired.

Prabhu said the freight corridor project completion has been advanced by a couple of years to 2017 to decongest these two high density routes. Once completed railways will be able to run goods train with a schedule and will provide more capacity to run passenger trains with higher speed on the existing lines. At present there is no time schedule for goods trains.

There are indications that at least two more dedicated freight corridors are expected to be announced in the budget. The railways has almost completed feasibility study of four more dedicated freight corridors, connecting Delhi-Chennai, Chennai-Kolkata, Chennai-Goa and Mumbai-Kolkata.

Railways would soon be announcing an independent authority, which is an improvement over the rail tariff authority that would look into passenger fares, freight and monitor efficiency. The authority would do the cost benefit analysis of various routes and fix freight and passenger fares accordingly. The significant aspect is that it will take into account efficiency in determining freight charges and passenger fares.

This body is being given final shape and will be announced soon much before the next budget. Another priority area for railways in the next budget is going to be stepping up electrification as a measure to reduce dependence on fossil fuel.

This would not only help railways go green but also save on fuel cost. Despite fall in global crude oil prices, the railways still spend Rs 22,000 crore on diesel alone this year.

The railways proposed to take up 10,000 route km of electrification in the next three years, which when completed will help in saving in fuel cost of at least Rs 5000 crore annually.

India had only 380 route km of electrified railway track at the time of independence. By 2014, it had gone up to a little over 25,000 km. The NDA government proposed to add more than one third of the number in just three years. Prabhu feel electrification is a priority for railways as the rate of return on investment is one of the highest and payback time is short.

Prabhu is keen to make railways more and more green. Electrification is a step in that direction. Railways has also proposed to play a role in solar power generation by taking up projects in various stations and elsewhere. It would leapfrog in solar power generation from the present 5MW to 1000 MW in three years. It is proposed to have rooftop solar power in railway stations and already a beginning has been made in Katra station in Jammu. It has also set up a 25MW wind power generation in Rajasthan.

Railways proposed to spend Rs 8.5 lakh crore on modernisation of railways in the next five years. Though there is no dearth on availability of funds, the railways would have to adopt innovative funding as it cannot solely depend on internal resource generation through fares and freight and budgetary support.

Life Insurance Corporation would provide Rs 1.5 lakh crore funding, of which first tranche of Rs 2000 crore was secured recently. Commercialisation of railway property could be one of the innovative funding of railway modernisation. Foreign direct investment is expected to pour in modernisation of railway stations apart from major real estate developers and domestic construction companies. At least 417 stations have been identified on which work is expected to start next financial year. 5-6 stations including Anand Vihar in Delhi and couple in Gujarat, the work would start this financial year itself.

Port connectivity would be another area railways would concentrate. There are already some projects have been taken up under PPP mode in Gujarat and Maharashtra and more such projects would be taken up as they are money spinner for the railways, Prabhu indicated.

Prabhu said he did not believe in announcing projects for which there is no funding. Several such projects have been announced in the past including several rail coach factories and very few have come up.

Now states were coming forward to set up railway projects in their respective states. Seventeen states have so far shown interest in signing MOUs with railways on cost sharing basis. Maharashtra, which was the latest to join the bandwagon was willing to invest up to Rs 10,000 crore, which meant at least Rs 50,000 crore more could be leveraged for such rail projects in the state. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Traditionalism of street politics

Editor,

We have just witnessed another round of negotiations accompanied by a series of mud-slinging between political parties and their affiliates as the controversial Village Administration Bill is waiting to get its assent from the Governor, albeit, with the Central Government's blessing. The High Court of Meghalaya cannot be blamed for the entire controversy through many believe that the December 2014 ruling to be the genesis of this confusion. The actual players are those in power in the District Councils and the State Assembly. People should question their MDCs' and MLAs' who were sleeping for a very long time. Experts may cite many clauses, rules, paras etc...of the Constitution and go and on till kingdom come which to the common man on the street hardly makes any sense and nor will they understand. As it gradually unfolds, the entire conglomerate of traditional Dorbars seem to be at odds with each other over the way things were handled and decided by a few 'intellectuals', accusing each faction as betrayers of the society which is unfortunate. The Khasi society should evolve over time and therefore codification and improvements of customary laws should be deliberated rather than agreeing to any Bill without proper ground work.

Yours etc.,
N. Dympe
Shillong- 22

Unworthy official

Editor,

Time and time again we have read the news of high-handedness of the Tura Municipal Board Chief Executive Officer and his acts of impropriety. But he seems emboldened when he sees his name in print. Many officers have occupied this same chair and commoners like to share their thoughts with them and draw inspiration from them but this present CEO repels people with his domineering attitude, immature, autocratic hateful manners which are unbecoming of his position. What's worse is that he gets physical with people..

Yours etc.,
Dominic S. Wankhar
Shillong-3

Editor,
The Rangbah Shnong of
Mawlai Mawkynroh

By **Shinie Antony**

Hearts are breakable, we know that. Only the most dull, unimaginative member of the human race goes through life without crushing, infatuating, pining, wanting, yearning, lusting or loving at least once. Here we are all smitten at some point in time by someone or the other, and there we are rolling on the floor crying our eyes out because... because... oh, need you ask? There is only one acceptable response to 'I love you' and it is 'ditto'. Anything else is heartbreak. A loves B, but B loves C and C probably loves A but definitely not B, so that we have on our hands three heartbreaks at the same time. This is a fact of life, these zigzag arrows of Cupid. For any thinking, living, feeling person, heartbreak is a natural state of being. What defines us is the way we exit dead-end, going-nowhere unions when we've already gotten our marching orders. Heartbreak is more than boo-hoo-hoo; it is not just about how we fall, but how we stand up after that. It begins with a bang -- 'no one can love you more than me, no one!' -- and ends without even a whimper as you exit stage left. So, yes, hearts have been breaking for the longest time and, thank God, hearts have been mending too for the longest time. When her marriage to Jesse James ended in 2010, actor Sandra Bullock said: "I've been on the floor and I've been heartbroken. I didn't know how I was going to stand up. But I just gave it time. You don't think it will



One way ticket to the Blues

sense, because you can always find many, many others to replace the one that got away. And who can heed traditional wisdom on the subject: never love someone more than he/she loves you? As if feelings are a maths equation where you can subtract and add at will. You sit up nights berating yourself for what you said and what you did and how you'd say it all and do it all differently given a second chance, if only -- if only! -- you could get that second chance. And how resistant

physical pain, that the left side of your chest will feel like a truck tyre is crushing it for a feasible period of time. But remember that trucks have places to go and goods to deliver, so eventually one day you will wake up and, hey, no truck on your chest.

Heartbreaks go on as long as hope does. After all, when is one ready to say, this is it, I am ready to move on and let go? How can one cast a backward eye and say, well, that much love will do, that much happiness is enough? Even on our deathbeds we'd be thinking, this is not the end, that person will call back and, hell, what will I wear when we go out.

Heartbreak only begins to make sense when you think of the other party, the party brave enough to leave when things got pointless from their point of view. He may be your main dish, but you will only ever be his side dish, the salad he orders but will only pick at. The arguments are tediously and tiresomely the same: he will never find someone who loves him more than I do, my feelings are pure, I have never felt this way before... Please, he's heard it all before. And from you.

Listen to Marilyn Monroe, though she's been dead for some time, and some say from heartbreak: 'As for lovers, well, they'll come and go too. And, baby, I hate to say it, most of them -- actually pretty much all of them -- are going to break your heart, but you can't give up because if you give up, you'll never find your soul-mate.'

Nothing can mend a broken heart; you are bleeding to death, the object of your desire has spurned you, so,



pass when you're in the middle of it, but it does." Of course, in an over-populated country like ours, heartbreak hardly makes

you are to the voice of reason, when friends and family tell you that you will get over it, and you think, 'not

me, never me', in a high-pitched voice inside your head. Heartbreaks have gone hi-tech. Where earlier in Hindi films the dumped

hero sang bitter and profound stuff staring into sunsets, the heartbreak of today involves less poetry and more of pressing 'send' without a second thought. If romantic hellos are via a text, so is 'I am not feeling it, dude'. People spend entire lifetimes, especially their courtships, working their cell phones. There's not so much hand-holding as cell-holding! While hearts go through their fair share of breakage, fingers -- from all that texting -- go through their own quota of damage too.

A student at the University of Chester recently claimed to have gotten into a relationship with a woman whom she had thought to be a man. And this was possible because their intimacy mainly involved mobiles and social media. Now they stand face to face in court without texting or emailing, but it's too little too late. Junot Diaz in his short story 'This Is How You Lose Her' says: 'You ask everybody you know: How long does it usually take to get over it? There are many formulas. One year for every year you dated. Two years for every year you dated. It's just a matter of willpower: The day you decide it's over, it's

over.' Every morning you wake up and your heart breaks all over again as you remember your almighty offer of love and the spectacular rejection of it. You spend hours and days talking to 'him/her' directly inside your head, till it is a fulltime job. When someone is so important, so all-consuming to you, then the 'no' feels like a wholesale rejection of you, and you forget happily that a middle finger from someone is only that person's middle finger.

You are ready to beg and plead, promise anything and everything, and words pour out of your mouth with a will of their own. Unloved, unwanted... you are the life and soul of your own pity party. No pill or powder will do, mood swings are the order of the day and nights are for insomnia and listening to sad songs.

You think that all you want is clarity on the situation, you want to know where you stand, that the concerned person should say it to your face that he/she does not want you. But think about it, how can any person say it is off? There are many examples of how to declare love but hardly any advice on how to de-

clare non-love. He will only hem and haw and shuffle his feet, for he is only human. He is not looking for-

course, he is a dangler and wants to see you dangle. And you will both make a perfect match if all you want



ward to breaking your heart. But in the end, that is what he must do, unless, of

to do is dangle. Scientists say that a broken heart involves actual

what next? Walk away. Slowly. Don't look back. As we (Contd on P-VII)

struggling to develop world class talent in the singles category, the CTL will hopefully find a way out in the years to come.

Currently India have only Yuki Bhambri (89) in the top 100 of the men's singles rankings with next best player Somdev Devvarman (180) ranked close to 200.

"We don't have a problem with doubles, problem is with the singles. We are not being able to break into the top 50-60 players. I am very happy to see that Yuki has broken into the top 100. That is a huge milestone and he will capitalise on it and he is doing all the right things. Somdev is having a little bit of letdown in the confidence. He still has it in him to break into top 100. We need these guys to push each other to get into top 100 and then into top 50," he said.

The Padma Shri award winner pointed out that the 12 young Indian players accompanying top foreign players during CTL will give them a lot of confidence and change them as a player.

"For the last 25 years nobody is searching for new singles talent in India. Everybody does it on their own. Junior does it on his own, works with coaches, he spends his own money to be able to do it," said Amritraj, who had a career singles win-loss record of 384-296, and winning (Contd on P-VII)

By **Aritra Chowdhury**

Remembered specially for his exploits at the 1974 US Open where he knocked out then French Open champion and World No.4 Bjorn Borg, Indian tennis legend Vijay Amritraj couldn't refrain from praising Sania Mirza for her consistency and dream run which has fetched her 10 doubles titles in 2015.

The unstoppable duo of Mirza and Swiss veteran Martina Hingis came up with another stupendous performance on Sunday to win the women's doubles title at the prestigious \$7 million WTA Finals in Singapore.

This is the pair's ninth title together this season, having also won in Beijing, Wuhan, Guangzhou, US Open (New York), Wimbledon (London), Charleston, Miami and Indian Wells.

Sania also won at the Sydney International in January with American Bethanie Mattek-Sands to have her doubles trophy count to 10 this year.

"It's terrific. I have even posted that on twitter

'Winning 10 doubles titles in a year is terrific for Sania'



Vijay Amritraj

spectacular victory and run at the WTA finals for Sania. She and Hingis complement each other very well. Hingis is very skillful at the nets and Sania is powerful from the baseline. They make a great combination and now their confidence is very high as well," Amritraj said in an interview here.

"In doubles you need to have a good partner. It is important to understand your partner well both on and off the court. Nowadays those

who play singles, don't play doubles that much, so the players who play doubles, play for a longer duration of time and so the consistency is there," the 61-year-old said.

Reigning US Open champion Flavia Pennetta and Hingis are among the foreign attractions in the upcoming second season of the Champions Tennis League (CTL).

The CTL, which features six city-based franchises, will be held from November 23 to December 6.

Apart from international male and female players, each team will also have an international legend as their playing captain. They will also include an Indian male player and a top ranked junior Indian girl and boy from each city.

Amritraj, who is the mastermind behind this league, believes that with India



By Dipankar Jakharia

Online shopping

My trusted lieutenant of four years gave its way. One fine morning he decided not to wake up anymore. Panic and perspiring, I couldn't wait for my neighbourhood mobile doctor to open his clinic. Nervously waiting for him to open his shutter I surrendered my BlackBerry to him. His careful diagnosis revealed that my battery is dead but the good news is the phone is still alive. He also revealed a new battery will cost not less than 2K. With a corner smile I thanked him for his service and reached home to order it online from a famous shopping site.

MRP. Rs. 1100 and offer price Rs. 340. Holy Cow, my lucky day! In next two minutes I ordered it and next three days it reached my desk and in next 48 hours it died. Stunned in disbelief I called my friend Indrajit and jumped at the back of his gearless scooter and told him to Paltanbazar.

Reaching the official service centre of my mobile the front desk lady smirked at me and asked,

"Where have you got this from?"

"Online"

"This one is a fake!"

"What do you mean?"

She didn't answer.

"How much you paid this for?"

"Rupees 600", I lied.

"The original one cost Rs 2300"

I looked away looking for a waste been. More than the fake battery, I wanted to throw my brain on it. Just then Indrajit patted my back and soothed my heart with some kind words. "How do you think you will get an original BlackBerry battery for six hundred rupees". I thought I will need a bigger waste been, something which can be directly lifted to the back

of a garbage truck.

But all said and done in my experience of last six or seven years of online purchase of things from shoes to chocolate, this is the first time I was disappointed. Like in any other market in the world of virtual shopping you have to be cautious of your purchase.

secret. Some online stores require you to register a user name and password before buying an item. Just as you keep your ATM code secret, keep your password secret from outside parties. When shopping with card, keep your verified password secret.

*Use the Internet to com-

from being accessed by others as you conduct an online transaction.

*Keep a record of your transactions. Just as you save store receipts, you should keep records of your online purchases. Back up your transaction by saving or printing the order confirmation.



Shopping online can offer greater convenience, greater selection and in some cases better prices. Just like any other shopping, there are some basic rules that you need to follow when you shop online to ensure the best possible shopping experience.

*Register for verification code. The mandatory verification is a new service that allows you to use a security token to protect your card when you shop online, giving you added reassurance that only you can use your card. Contact your card issuer to arrange for your security token.

*Use a secure browser - look for an "s" after the "http" in the web page address or URL.

*If you are using a static password, always keep it

pare between shops before buying online. Compare products and prices before you buy - click around to find your item at the best price.

*Protect your card details. Only give your card details when making purchases - do not provide them for any other reason.

*Before completing an online transaction, read the delivery and return policies on the online store's home page. Find out if you can return items and who bears the cost.

*Never send payment information via email. Information that travels over email is not fully protected from being read by outside parties. Normally most reputable merchant sites use encryption technologies that will protect your private data

*Monitor your monthly statements, especially after an overseas trip. Check all transactions, even the small ones, because criminals try testing out stolen accounts by buying inexpensive items rather than large ones, in the beginning.

*Immediately investigate suspicious activity to prevent any possible additional fraud. Promptly notify your financial institution of any suspicious email activities.

Unlike my last greedy purchase I hope you have a better experience of doing some great shopping this festive season.

(The writer is a Guwahati based independent financial adviser. Follow the writer on twitter @d_jakharia)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Yoga is a more than five thousand year old art or practice of staying fit mentally and physically by means of exercises as well as mind control practices such as controlled breathing, deep meditation etc. The word Yoga is a Sanskrit word which means 'union' i.e of the body, mind and spirit. Basically Yoga is an amalgamation of breathing exercises and structured movement. It is an excellent tool to enhance the body's internal health and external beauty and to achieve a higher standard of overall health and immunity. This is one of the oldest sciences of the world, originated in India, which is very useful for preserving and maintaining one's physical and mental health and also for 'spiritual evolution'.

Individuals in our society have moved more into technological way and dependent on machine which is bringing many side effects too. Due to this health and fitness have become areas of major concern in the fast paced life.

Yoga can be used to manage stress, psycho-somatic and lifestyle related disorders. Non-communicable diseases very well respond to the Yoga therapy. The modern medicine hospitals and institutes are gradually adopting this system of therapy. Yoga demonstrations, yoga conferences, seminars, workshops, exhibitions, magazines and journals have also contributed immensely to the popularity of this discipline.

Foremost careers and opportunities in this area are that of yoga consultants, yoga therapists, yoga trainers/ instructors/ teachers. There are graduates and post graduates level courses related to yoga. There are some short term certificate courses too. Courses include Yogic Science and Human Consciousness, Naturopathy and Yogic Sciences, Yoga and Alternative



Career opportunity in Yoga

Therapy, Yoga Education, Applied Yoga and Holistic Health, Yoga Therapy and Spiritual Counseling, etc. The United Nations has declared 21st June as the International Yoga Day with the support of around 177 countries. This shall propel the popularity and propagation of Yoga to a great extent.

MDNIY: Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY) is an autonomous Institution fully funded by Govt. of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of AYUSH. MDNIY is a focal Institute for Planning, Training, Promotion and Coordination of Yoga Education, Training, Therapy and Research in all its aspects.

The best part is individuals with less academic qualification may also take it up as career by becoming in-

structors and all. Yoga is bringing more opportunities as health and wellness is an important aspect of life. Educational institutes, corporate and other various institutes appoint yoga instructor for training. Yoga instructors may look for employment in general fitness centers, yoga studios, or seek their own clients through self-employment. Now a day's yoga centres are booming in different parts as the demand has increased. There would be demand of yoga and instructors in our region in near future which makes yoga as an emerging career opportunity.

Scholarship Update:

Fair and Lovely Foundation has announced scholarships for girls and young women. It focuses on education, career and entrepre-

neurial skills. This foundation emphasizes majorly on women from low income group. Fair and Lovely foundation provides scholarships worth up to Rs. 1 lakh each year for deserving girl students. The Fair & Lovely Scholarship is for women who want to pursue their education in India from Government recognized Indian Universities. The scholarship is offered for all graduation, post graduation and Ph.D. courses in India from Government recognized Indian Universities. The scholarship is offered for the duration of one year and can be renewed depending on the student's performance. Last date of applying is 15th November.

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

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

'Star - Gazing'

Sunday, November 8, 2015

There would be some ups and downs as Mars is forming an angle of 160 degrees with Neptune on your solar return chart. Some old issue can crop up unnecessarily and create a chaotic environment around you. It is with a new strategy and some effective support that you see things move along desired lines. Your work will demand a lot of commitment and detailing. On the domestic front day to day tasks move ahead smoothly and some good news comes your way. At times you may feel overwhelmed but stay centered within and you will make progress. Romance gives you solace and will have a soothing effect on you. Travel will be meaningful.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)



Excellent results on the professional front and personal growth are foretold. Those in sports, law and justice would benefit from the planetary alignment as they are infused with positive energy and gain recognition for their talents and hard work. You have more energy for work and your daily routines tend to speed up now. Perhaps you have a larger workload than usual. It might be hard for you to work with others in a harmonious manner during this phase, and disputes with colleagues are possible. You have to pay attention to your image and avoid conflicts and arguments. Strong chances for visit to religious places.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)



This period promises communication and intimacy with loved ones and family. You focus on having fun, enjoying romance, and expressing yourself creatively. Your attention turns to domestic matters most of the time and building, decoration and purchase of households assets for your home figures strongly now. Personal relationships are warm and comfortable as you spend a wonderful time with your family. Social, romantic, intellectual, and financial opportunities arise. Avoid indulging in any arguments and confrontations with senior colleagues and people in authority. This can also produce an event that requires you to take charge and show your leadership skills.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)



You would attend to children, family and loved ones with devotion and care. It's time to expand your social circle and to make more contact with groups and friends. It's time to get in touch with exactly what pleasures and comforts you. Short romantic trips entertain you and you enjoy the company of your loved ones. You are ready to perform and express yourself creatively and you would interact with people in business and this brings good results and monetary gains. This is a very significant time, when you are inspired creatively and emotionally. Avoid conflicts in the family as cooperation and harmony in relationships satisfies an instinctive need.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)



This period is good for communication, finances, family and investments related matters. You are most successfully performing tasks that involve cooperation and team harmony with people around you. Creative self-expression of any kind is favored. You instinctively know how to place yourself in the best light in order to make a good impression on others. Take advantage of the magnetic energy by surrounding yourself with people. Your career matters come to the fore. Feeling secure and comfortable on the job is important to you now and you try to stick to the work schedule to complete the work in hand. Take care of your health and adopt a regular routine of healthy eating and have fruits and vegetables to avoid stomach ailments.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)



This period brings cooperation and harmony in relationships with people around you. This is an excellent time under which to work on resolving differences in values or problems with joint finances in a close relationship. Your desire for adventure, higher learning, and travel is enhanced. Feeling secure and comfortable on the job is important to you now. You might spend a lot of time in making long conversations, short frequent trips, meeting friends and loved ones. You regain health and energy after overcoming a physical problem. You enjoy doing things with others at work and home, as synergy and cooperation are available to you now.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)



This is going to be an adventurous phase for you. You take more pride in your creations, love affair, children, and hobbies. Pleasure and amusement play an important role in your search for freedom of self-expression now. An overseas trip brings new opportunities and chances are you may find yourself in

a new atmosphere or a new environment. You need to drop comparison and rivalry in personal relations and competition in professional aspects as they lead to a feeling in inadequacy and stress.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)



This period brings joy, understanding and harmony in personal and professional relationships. It's a good time to travel, learn and do things you normally don't do. It is a favorable time for your own creations, ideas and for you to apply them in your profession. It's a time of creativity, drama, and passion. Remember, domestic relations cannot be resolved through discussion and analysis but through love, acceptance and freedom. You are full of energy and indulge in sports and other physical activities or a structured exercise routine.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)



There is a pleasant atmosphere at work and you enjoy the company of your loved ones. You express yourself with charm and grace, whether it's through what you say or what you write. Creative self-expression of any kind is favored this week. In fact, it's a great time to open up conversations with loved ones, as you are more rational when it comes to personal matters now. Your mind often wanders to domestic concerns, and issues surrounding your home, family, and personal life. Domestic relationships and the home environment tend to be harmonious and peaceful this week. You turn your attention to fitness and diet programs.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)



There will be favorable results in domestic and professional life during this period. You might spend time in short frequent trips, communicating and visiting religious places. Your beloved would be supportive as this is the best time to bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships and feel more comfortable. Change your priorities and support your spouse with love and affection and make her/him comfortable and secure. There are strong chances of relocation and a few more responsibilities at work place. There may be a development of romance at your work place. Your style of communication boosts your personality.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)



The planetary configuration will improve your professional prospects as you communicate cleverly and interact in a more positive way with people around. Your romantic affair and pleasure-seeking activities gives you a big boost of confidence, and your personal magnetism runs high to be admired and adored. Married people should take care of family members as the health of a family member may suffer. You tend to get mentally stressed and anxious causing health problems, detach yourself from problems and view them from a different perspective. Meditation and prayer would help you to overcome the recently generated problems.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)



This phase brings good luck and appreciations in family, business and love and romance. You would be attracted and impressed by intellectual people. Public relations work, promotion, and other such endeavors are favored now. It is more about how you express yourself than the specifics of what you are saying that helps sway others to your position. This is an excellent time to do some financial planning and strategizing. It's also easier for you to approach sensitive, intimate, and personal matters with rationality and logic. Give yourself a new fitness routine and healthy diet program to rejuvenate energy.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)



People notice and admire you for your pleasant and cheerful personality and this brings financial growth. You will have the ability to build up financial reserves and resources, for this placement can bring a good deal of success in all monetary pursuits. Problems in your life may be overcome by bravery, self-assertion, and directness. People in law, justice and related fields will have a great time as they use their talents and skills to meet desired objectives. You will have the ability to build up financial and monetary pursuits and good returns from overseas business are on cards. You have to be very careful and try to be friendly, cooperative and helpful to resolve issues related to your married life. Meditation and yoga would help.

One way ticket to the Blues

(Contd from VI) reluctantly drag our feet in the opposite direction, we know it is for the best. And that there is someone/something better waiting for us around the corner.

Illicit, forbidden, dangerous love will always beckon us. We all want to feel that love, where we can die for someone, jump off the terrace, love that drives us wild, mad and singing in the rain. And if the price for feeling this way is to be unequivocally rejected, we are ready to pick up the tab. Unrequited love is Mother Nature's bitchy resting face. No one wants to hear, 'I love you, but not that way', when one is in the throes of Grand Passion. Rest assured, however, that this is just a rite of passage, a leveller like death and taxes, a must in the list of things to do before we die -- fall for the wrong person.

Someone has to break your heart, so it better be some-

one who is worth ruining your mascara over. Someone you can say to, as Gus Waters says to Hazel Grace in John Green's The Fault in Our Stars. "It would be a privilege to have my heart broken by you."

Okay, let's get practical. Must one kill oneself if dumped? This is the ultimate attention-gaining gimmick, no way can your ex-beloved not notice you after this.

A suicide note to boot will only clinch matters, name him and shame him. But there's a drawback. You won't be around to gloat! And that sneaking suspicion you have that the other party might shrug and whistle on may just be right. So there you'll be all dressed up in your pyre and there he'll be partying up a storm in the opposite end of town. If at all he comes, make sure your little sis misses the funeral, or else -- you've heard the song 'Oh my darling, Clementine', haven't you, where he kisses the sister in a not-so-bereaved fashion? INAV



'Winning 10 doubles titles

(Contd from VI) 16 singles and 13 doubles titles. "What CTL has done is given the 12 young Indian players a platform to play with the great tennis legends and get close to them. We are giving the juniors a strong healthy opportunity which nobody has given them in this country since independence. I hope CTL will eventually help produce good Indian singles player," he said.

The tennis legend who made notable appearance as MI6 agent Vijay in the 1983 James Bond film 'Octopussy', said the game has changed drastically from his time, adding that players are now focussed on attacking from the back and playing from the baseline rather than the serve and volley game of his days.

"The game has changed dramatically now compared to when I was playing. The game has ended up being changed gradually from being a serve, volley game and attacking from the back court to being very much like a baseline game. So you have to be very much physical from the back of the court now. Before we were attacking constantly at the net and today players are attacking from the back," he said.

Speaking on the men's doubles partnership of Leander

Paes-Mahesh Bhupathi, which had ended in acrimony a long time ago, he said, "I missed Paes-Bhupathi partnership long time back but I got used to it like everyone else. It was something we all missed so much. Because in 1999 when they did so well, they should have stayed together for the next 10 years. There is no reason for them not to have stayed together."

The 61-year-old, who reached the semi-finals of Wimbledon 1976, made it clear that with players outside the top 100 or 50 will be difficult for the country to push through in four singles matches at the Davis Cup playoff stage.

"In the Davis Cup, it is very hard to compete with players with World rank 40 and 50, if you don't have players also in top 40 or 50. It is difficult to play four singles matches with your player not ranked within 100 spots of the other guy. If you have a player in top 50 or 60 then you have a very good chance to compete in the world group," Amritraj concluded.

(The writer can be contacted at aritra.c@ians.in)



"We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future."

— George Bernard Shaw

The Shillong Times

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Curtains down on ITM 2015

FINALLY the Indigenous Terra Madre (International Mei-Ranew) event which centred around discourses on food, farming, sustainability of food production, indigenous peoples nutrition and the 'future they want' discussed at break-out sessions has come to a close. On Saturday it appeared as if the entire population of Shillong city and its suburbs had congregated at Mawphlang adjacent to the Sacred Groves where the event was held. Traffic right from the venue at Mawphlang up to Shillong city was choc-a-bloc. Many who desired to witness the event returned without doing so. The narrow and badly engineered road created more problems. While the venue had enough space to accommodate several thousand people, it is the Sacred Grove that bore the brunt of too many foot-falls on a single day. Entry to the Grove was billed at Rs 300 per head/group. No one grudges this as it is an excellent opportunity for the Mawphlang Lyngdohship to earn money which will hopefully go towards maintenance of the area and rejuvenation of the Grove. But the sacredness of a forest that was once a place of worship for the ancestors of the present residents of Mawphlang was, according to many, violated by the fact that visitors venturing inside the forest were hardly attuned to the meaning of the word "sacred" which also implies a reverential silence and an opportunity to listen to the sights and sounds inside that forest.

After the spectacular success of the great musical event NH7 which was held at Ri Bhoi District along the Shillong Bypass last month it is time for the authorities to consider holding such mega events at spaces that have easy access and can accommodate the sea of humanity that throng such spaces. Mawphlang has been a gracious host for the Slow Food Festivals over the years but this time the organisers should have foreseen that the scale of visitors would have been overwhelmingly large. This is a lesson for anyone wishing to hold a world class event. Easy access and ease of traffic movement are two important points to take note of. Traffic police did a phenomenal job and so too the Bouncers Association of Meghalaya (BAM) but even they could not have anticipated the population that turned up at Mawphlang on November 7. Those who had a VIP pass could get closer to the venue; others had to take a public transport or walk a few kilometres to get there. Much food for thought for future event managers.

LOOKING BACK

March 17, 1988

Parliament to amend Arunachal State Act

The Centre has assured the Arunachal Pradesh Government that a Bill would be introduced on Parliament during the current session to amend certain clause of the state of Arunachal Pradesh Act 1896.

Chief Minister Geong told newsmen here today that he met Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at Delhi on March 1 and requested him to take necessary action for removing "some lacunae" in the act.

Mr. Gandhi had accordingly instructed Mr. Oscar Fernandes, AICC (I) General Secretary to coordinate with the concerned departments and with Mr. Apang for the purpose.

Both Mr. Fernandes and Mr. Apang met Union Home Minister Buta Singh on March 3 last. Mr. Singh agreed to introduce the amendment bill during the current session of Parliament.

Mr. Apang said that the state government had requested the Centre for protection of culture, custom religion, customary laws, administration of justice and ownership of land and resources of Arunachal Pradesh under provision of Article 371 on the Constitution, as in the case of Mizoram and Nagaland.

The Government also requested further increase of seats in the legislative Assembly from the existing 40 to at least 60.

It sought amendments with regard to scheduled tribes in Arunachal Pradesh as recommended earlier, besides, deletion of clause of scheduled castes from the statehood act.

No delegation of special power to the Governor under Article 371 and financial assistance from the Centre as has been extended before attainment of statehood, were the other amendments sought. Mr. Apang said.

Rangbah Shnong issue; moving in the right direction

By H H Mohrmen

It is true that so much has been written and debated on the issue of the office of Rangbah Shnong, and the question with regards to the office being "traditional" was brought to the fore. It is also accepted that the root of the very word "dorbar" was borrowed from other cultures. In the recent ITM or International Mei-ramew the dialogue was on various issues with regards to the culture, tradition and various aspect of the indigenous people's lives. The meet has only reaffirmed my understanding that culture and tradition are not linear or static as reminded by one of the representatives from the Hawaiian Island. Culture, tradition and the way of life of the people evolve and change with changing times. Therefore the office of the Rangbah Shnong may not be traditional, but it has been part of our culture and tradition and the need of the hour is that we improve the system as we evolve as a community.

The office of the Rangbah Shnong is not perfect. Like any other human institution it has many flaws and drawbacks of its own that need to be corrected. One such defect is the gender inequality in the institution which has been highlighted by many. Again in its present form there were many reports of misuse and abuse of the office of Rangbah Shnong and the dorbar shnong by those in power for ulterior motives and vested interests. Take for example the recent case of the Executive Committee of Dorbar Shnong Jaiaw Laitdom's unceremonious removal of bah Michael N. Syiem from membership of the executive committee of the Dorbar Shnong. Now even if there is a section in the Constitution of the Dorbar Shnong that a member can be removed from membership in the executive committee for acting against the interest of the Dorbar, natural justice still entails that he be given the right to show cause and defend himself for his action.

Yet, as reported, the executive committee conveyed this message to him via the media and even refused to address his appeal.

This incident has raised many important questions, the first being - Why was Bah Michael not given the right he deserved to explain himself? If this is the way Dorbar Shnong operates even without the Village Administration Bill being enacted then I do not want to think what the Rangbah Shnong will do when they are empowered by the Act. But the most important question is why was Bah Michael removed from the membership of the EC of Jaiaw Laitdom in the first place? And if the answer is because he had filed a public interest litigation in the Hon'ble High Court to seek clarification on the relevance of the Autonomous District Council, the other pertinent question is since when has it become a crime to file a PIL?

This is a classic example of the executive committee of the Dorbar Shnong abusing its powers. By doing so it has discouraged people to raise their voices against the powers that be. This only brings to light what is a regular phenomenon in many Dorbar Shnong - that there is no room for voices of dissent in the institution. What democracy are we talking about when there is no room even for disagreement? And what one fears most is, if this can happen in the heart of Shillong where people are educated then, I shiver to think of what can happen in the villages in the interior of the state when the Act is enacted.

The other important question is how can we expect democracy to prevail in the Dorbar Shnong when we tend to systematically remove or sideline all those who choose to oppose those who are in control? We boast that election to the different office of the Dorbar Shnong is very democratic because it is being done by consensus. How can a true democratic election by consensus to the different offices in the

institution happen when people are not even encouraged to voice their dissent?

The decision of the executive committee of the Dorbar Shnong of Jaiaw Laitdom to remove Bah Michael from its membership also infringes on his right as the citizen of this country. Is it true that the executive committee took punitive action against Bah Michael because he approached the court as per rights guaranteed by the Constitution? And what is wrong with that? As a citizen he has every right to seek redress from the court of law on any issue under the sun. And if his removal from the Committee is on the basis of the PIL filed in the court then isn't this denying the citizen his right to approach the courts to redress his grievances? The other question is whether the Dorbar Shnong is above the law and does it has extra-constitutional powers which can even deny people their rights?

Cases of abuse of power by the headman or the EC of the Dorbar Shnong is reported from many villages and now it has happened in Shillong the heart of the state and Jaiaw Laitdom the heart of the capital. This is a very serious issue which concerns everybody and that needs to be addressed immediately. Can the Rangbah Shnong or Dorbar Shnong do whatever they like even if that is against the constitution?

We need to give ourselves time and the Government, the Synjuk Ki Nongsynshar Shnong and civil society should work together to make the best use of the situation at hand and come up with the best possible solution to the problem. Our Village Administration Bill or whatever nomenclature the Bill is given needs to be futuristic and forward looking. We are not going to do the State and its people any favour if the present Bill passed by the KHADC only addresses the current stalemate and does

not even look to the future.

We have always taken shelter in the fact that we are protected by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, and since we are tribals we can do anything under the sun with our land and anything related to our culture and tradition because it is guaranteed by the law. But isn't the Sixth Schedule a part of the larger Constitution? The very existence of the Sixth Schedule depends on the big book and the Schedule only derives its powers from the Constitution. On its own the Sixth Schedule has no power hence whatever Bill is prepared by the Autonomous District Council or the State has to be in consonance with the law of the land as prescribed in the Constitution.

The citizens of this State now have reason to hope because good sense has prevailed and the Synjuk Ki Nongsynshar Shnong had agreed to listen and talk to the government. Listening to another's point of view is yet another characteristic of the indigenous people. It reminds me of the story of the 'talking stick' that one of the Native American tribe uses whenever they have a Council. Whenever the tribe meets, they will have a stick passing around and only a person who holds the stick has the right to speak. And while the member speaks all others listen till the 'talking stick' is passed to another member. We need to listen to each other to address this very important issue. The Government too needs to listen to the Synjuk. If we continue without listening to others then if at all we are able to come up with any solution to the problem it will be half-baked and it will only address the present stalemate but will not be progressive. Until and unless we have an open mind we will never be able to solve this problem and come out of this impasse. Therefore let us listen to one another before we jump to conclusions.

tradition

Editor,

This refers to the news about Chief Minister Mukul Sangma talking of reviving the Pasteur Institute (Nov5,2015).I only wish he could but can he? When he says he wants to bring in global experts it just shows the dearth of experts here. Shillong had been lucky to have had a scientific tradition well-founded by the global minds (British Raj).But today in the whole NE India(former Assam) that tradition had almost been buried by the omnipotent TRADITION(shad mastieh).To make matters worse even Mother Delhi(not MeiRamew) is getting entangled in the octopus grip of Ram Dev saffronites and yoganites.

Let me narrate just a few things:

Once I collected a few British period files of the Pasteur Institute from the Secretariat just before they took them for burning (like burning effigies).There is no system or culture of keeping records which are essential for any science to grow. The British Govt almost set up this Institute in Haflong but Shillong won in 1915 mainly due to its salubrious climate. During those days all major policy decisions were taken right here in Shillong, not Delhi. British Raj was more local

Yours etc.,

Daniel A Lyngdoh,
Via email

Death of one

TO THE EDITOR

Of 'respectable' people and their slogans!

Editor,

Apropos to the news item in your daily 'PEACEFULLY EXPECTED'(ST October 30, 2015) where the hon'ble Chief Secretary declares that the Rangbah Shnong are 'respected' people..that day the whole traffic was held to ransom, effigy of the chief minister was burnt and many indecent slogans were raised during the rally. I am a witness to the slogan 'You Mukul Begum's stooges come down' aimed at the Secretariat people watching the rally from the over-bridge between the secretariats. The President of the group later threatens the Government that he will storm into the secretariat at any cost. On 5th November the capital witnessed further traffic jams and violent incidents. If these are the action of the so called, 'respected people 'I can't imagine the action by 'not so respected people.' The accountability of the crowd behaviour solely lies with the President of the Synjuk. What action is Government taking against the 'respected' President of the Synjuk for violating the prohibitory orders and mismanaging his crowd Mr Chief Secretary? You certainly owe a public apology for calling such unruly people as 'respected'

and allowing these 'respected' people to take the law into their own hands. The Government in turn has demonstrated its spinelessness when it comes to taking action against such respected people.

Yours etc.,
Danny Wahlang
Shillong-1

The Garo Hills situation

Editor,

I am amused by the statement of the state DGP Mr Mehta through some newspapers that 'GARO HILLS SITUATION DOES NOT WARRANT AFSPA AND WE ARE DOING OK.' Everyday we hear of some news about extortion, kidnapping and killing from the Garo hills. Development activities have come to a standstill. There is an atmosphere of fear everywhere and free movement is adversely affected. Even the Garos working in Shillong have confided to me that it is highly unsafe to visit Garo hills. The law and order situation has gone from bad to worse. The administration has virtually collapsed. There are many sympathisers and informers within the police force for the militants. The police force obviously cannot be trusted and is totally ineffective. Even a

The fog of opinion polls

By M J Akbar

May I make a fervent plea to the Election Commission for some immediate electoral reform? This prayer is placed before the Commission rather than Parliament because it is within their remit to make this change.

Could the Commission kindly ensure that results are never declared on a Sunday? This makes life terribly difficult for the crowded and varied group of columnists and pundits who enjoy making an appearance, clothed in wisdom, in the Sunday papers. You see, we are used to being wise after the event. Please do not force us to be wise before the results, on Saturday, when we need to do the writing. This intrudes heavily on our already stretched resources of knowledge, interpretation, analysis. The strain is difficult to bear. We are human. We hate the thought of egg on our face.

When exit polls for the Bihar election swing as widely as they have this week, our insecurity becomes that much more intense. Both sides can read the predictions that suit them; the unaffiliated grope in confusion, with a shrug as their only consolation until the big bell rings and the referee begins the countdown. Being a member of a political party, and hence partisan, it is but obvious that I find Chanakya's prediction of 155 seats for NDA the most palatable. I take comfort in his past success, noting that even if sometimes he did not get the figure right, he always correctly spotted the trend that the vote was taking. This estimate, in my view, reflects the enthusiasm shown by the massive crowds which came to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rallies, and the electric response of the young.

But here is a suggestion for all companies in the prediction business. I hope they check their estimates with the most realistic entry and exit polls in the fray: bookies. Their methodology is not vastly different, actually. Moreover, bookies investigate every single constituency before notching up their numbers. Opinion poll companies can afford to make mistakes, because they pick up their cheque in advance. Bookies can't. Each mistake costs them serious money.

Some election results were declared on Saturday. They were not on a Bihar scale. They did not consume the lung space or national attention given to Bihar. But they offered significant signals for the future. The results of local elections in Kerala told a very interesting story. The

Left Front was ahead of the Congress-led UDF, which means that the weather has changed and the Left could be back in power in Kerala after next year's Assembly elections.

The message that is emerging from across the country, whether Ladakh or Assam or Kerala, is that irrespective of who wins the Congress has lost the confidence of the electorate. In Kerala, the UDF has been weighed down by the burden of carrying the Congress. But that is not the only message. According to trends available at the time of writing, Congress has lost the corporation elections in Thiruvananthapuram, a celebrity seat that Congress held in 2014. Remarkably, BJP has made impressive gains in a number of district towns and a few rural regions, becoming the largest single party in Palakkad, ahead of UDF and the Left.

Perhaps Congress leaders think that things cannot get any worse after the nadir of 2014. Maybe they should think again. The reason is clear. Congress political tactics this year have floated out of the range of common sense. The people will not support obduracy and hysteria. It is the job of opposition to oppose, but there is always a measure. The response must be reasonable, and proportionate. Under Rahul Gandhi, Congress has developed expertise in creating mountains out of molehills. Since these mountains are full of air, they get punctured. Voters can hardly be expected to endorse thoughtless obstruction of governance and development.

The Election Commission is certainly not thoughtless, nor does it seek to disrupt governance; it does a fine job with impressive integrity. But there is still room for a second plea — this time, a serious one. Do elections in one state have to stretch into months? It surely cannot be the case that our authorities do not possess the resources for conducting more than an average of 50 MLA seats on each polling day, which was the Bihar average. An obese election may provide some excellent theatre for all of us, but it effectively interrupts governance. One is not talking of a pause only in Bihar, but also diversion of national attention and time. A stand-alone Bihar election can be easily wrapped up in two days. Trust me, the longest thank you notes will come from politicians, with only slightly shorter ones by voters.

than Delhi Raj. Who then is the true colonialist? There were Indian Medical Service administrators trained in medicine, public health and administration and not the generalist IAS we have today.

The Directorate of Public Health (preventive) was totally separate from the Curative wing. It was in command of research in vaccines, worm infestations etc. Public Health too was responsible for good safe drinking water. This was supported by a well equipped Public Health Lab for quick testing. After statehood in 1972 we had such short-sighted and 'traditional custom' leaders that had no basic knowledge of 'traditional science' that the Public Health Lab was quietly shifted to Guwahati.

I visited the library of Pasteur Institute in the 1990s and it was so dusty with most books and journals looking semi-century old. Today the situation has deteriorated to

such an extent that Public Health is already 'engineered' and became PH Engineering. I have heard many ministers and even doctors talking about PHCs as Public Health Centres; not Primary Health Centres.

We dance and shout that the whole foundation of our so called democracy is to preserve our old customs, beliefs and traditions' (6th Schedule).Where is the room to build new tradition of science and professionalism? Did JJM Nichols Roy commit a grave blunder?

Yours etc.,
Rasputin Bismarck
Manners
Kolkata

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

"I always like to look on the optimistic side of life, but I am realistic enough to know that life is a complex matter."

— Walt Disney

The Shillong Times

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Discourse on AFSPA

WHILE some groups and individuals have expressed their opinions for or against the imposition of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (1958) in Garo Hills following the Meghalaya High Court directive, there is as yet no concerted effort to deliberate on whether AFSPA is the only remedy to militancy in Garo Hills. Asking for AFSPA to address the present lawlessness in Garo Hills is actually giving the state police an alibi not to perform. Some questions that merit answers are: Why is it that when militancy in Assam (Bodo militants) is almost under control and when Naga militants are in talks with Government of India, what gives the Garo militant outfits the fuel they need to bolster their fire power leading the High Court to come up with a desperate directive? The correct thing for the Court to do is to find out by a quick research how and why militancy remains intransigent in Garo Hills.

In this country, it has become the norm to use the military for internal security. Much has been said about the army's prime purpose and mental and psychological conditioning being to fight an external enemy and not its own citizens and hence it should not be deployed for internal security purposes. Yet the repeated failure of the police to tackle the Garo militants is perplexing and forcing even the judiciary to go for quick-fix solutions. Interestingly, the Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School (CIJWS) in Vairengte, Mizoram continues to remain a training and research establishment of the Indian Army specialising in unconventional warfare, especially counter-insurgency and guerrilla warfare. Should this school not be used to train police personnel instead, considering that the terrain in Mizoram and Meghalaya are similar? CIJWS has a name for being one of the premier counter-insurgency training institutions in the world. The school's motto is to "fight the guerrilla like a guerrilla". Yet our cops are trained in the Greyhound school, Hyderabad which is better known for tackling the Naxalites/Maoists in Andhra Pradesh. It is true that commandos under this model have to undergo one of the toughest training phase in the country; specialise in creating a grass root level network of informers and maintain constant touch with the masses. They penetrate the strongholds of insurgents/militants not by force but by persuasion. This helps in gathering more information than any other police force. They are also trained to maintain a Special Intelligence Branch to monitor these activities. So why are the Commandos in Garo Hills failing repeatedly? These reasons need to be investigated before the judiciary could suggest an extreme measure like the imposition of AFSPA. But the discourse on AFSPA has to start now. Written and sit-in protests are not enough!

LOOKING BACK

March 18, 1988

India launches remote sensing satellite

India joined a select group of four countries when its indigenously built sophisticated remote sensing satellite, IRS-1 A hurtled into orbit minutes after launch here at 1213 hours today.

A powerful Vostok carrier rocket lifted the snow covered 980 kg satellite smoothly, India ambassador to the Soviet Union Mr. T.N. Kaul and Soviet and Indian Scientists watched with excitement.

The launching represents a major transition in India's space efforts from experimental satellites to operational ones in remote sensing.

Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, who announced in Parliament in New Delhi the successful launching, said all the satellite systems

where functioning normally. Describing it as a major milestone, Gandhi said "India now becomes the fifth nation in the world after the USA, the USSR, France and Japan to have accomplished the remote sensing of the earth's resources from space".

Scientists in Bangalore, the headquarters of the Indian Space Research launch, "the satellite will give a big boost to science and technology said Prof. C.N.R. Ray, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Science advisory panel.

IRS 1 A, the heaviest to be built by India, is the tenth Indian satellite to have been put in space.

This is the first satellite the Soviet Union launched on a commercial basis.

Ethnic autonomy with economic dependence

By Fabian Lyngdoh

The concept of 'Indigenous Peoples' Rights' implies the need to protect marginalised indigenous peoples from exploitation and oppression by other numerically, culturally and economically dominant peoples within a wider political system; but it does not mean providing absolute ethnic freedom to any tribe, even to the extent of destroying the eco-system, massacring and cutting each other's head, denying the basic human rights to the poor and the weak within their own community, and resorting to criminal activities in the name of safeguarding indigeneity and tradition.

The leaders of the Indian Freedom Movement were reluctant to support the British Government in the Second World War, but leaders in the Khasi Hills supported wholeheartedly because they preferred to remain under the British rule than under the rule of independent India. There was little enthusiasm in the Freedom Movement in the Khasi Hills. It is said that experience in trade and social relations with the neighbouring people of the plains brought apprehension in the minds of the people that life in independent India without the protection of the British rule might lead the tribe to being culturally and economically overwhelmed by the more advanced people of the plains. Hence, when India achieved independence, the Khasi chiefs aspired for independent himas, or at least as British Protectorates. Even today, majority of the Khasis seem reluctant to identify themselves as citizens of India.

Autonomy of any ethnic community is meaningful only if it is also economically self sufficient. There is no rationale for the autonomy of any ethnic community which is economically dependent on others. Primitive independence of tribes was possible only because of their self sufficiency in subsistence living. They were able to grow or gather their own food; to weave their own clothes or walk about contentedly seminaked on their thickened soles that knew no thorns; to concoct their own medicines and defend themselves and their territories with their own crude weapons. But with the present level of population and the standard of living, the economy of Meghalaya would not be able to provide even for the subsistence living of the people without the Indian economy. Meghalaya depends on Central financial assistance, either through grants or loans anywhere between 80% and 90% of the State resources. In addition,

the ratio of direct grants to loan is 90:10, as compared with non special category states where it is 70:30. But Meghalaya still maintains substantial deficits, with the State debt/GDP ratio of 29.41% as in 2010-2011. No society can ever develop without economic surplus over subsistent requirement. But in the case of Meghalaya, the Government of India is the only source of surplus, as well as of major portion of resource for people's subsistence requirement.

The Sixth Schedule was framed with three major considerations: to ensure the identity and autonomy of the socio-economic and political culture of the tribal people; to prevent them from economic and social exploitation; and to allow them to develop and administer themselves according to their own genius. It was probably assumed that the tribals with their own genius and natural resources would be economically self sufficient if there are no exploitations by outsiders; and with their sound customs and traditions they would develop into socially and politically just societies. But constitutional protection of ethnic autonomy has become only a way to economic dependence and a license to beg for special grants from the sweat of others. But political autonomy and economic dependence cannot go together perpetually.

The reality is that the tribals cannot become economically and politically self sufficient only with their own genius and natural resources even if there are no exploitations by outsiders; and they cannot develop into socially and politically just societies only with their customs and traditions. The economic infra-structure that sustains the Khasi society today is neither the subsistence shifting cultivation, nor the traditional clan-economy and the traditional relations of production, but it is the integration with the Indian national economy which provides the new economic infra-structure on which the society is sustained. Agriculture is no more only for subsistence living but also for sale in the market as surplus. Market centres like lewduh are made economically viable not by the existence of traditional

institutions, or by the customary animal sacrifices offered to the gods or goddesses, but because it is a corollary of urban civilization made possible under the operation of the national economy. Because of this integrated economy, even people who have never seen a paddy field can derive income from the industrial, commercial and service economy occasioned by the modern democratic set up and urban civilization. Majority of the inhabitants of Shillong and other semi-urban centres survive comfortably on the benefits provided by the overall Indian economy without any need to handle the spade (mohkhiew) to dig the earth.

Despite all the grants by the Central Government, there is high reliance on the government and semi-government institutions for employment due to the absence of diversified means of livelihood to meet the rising problem of unemployment. The number of persons employed in government jobs in Meghalaya had already become saturated at 72,808 in 2001-02, while the huge number of educated unemployed keeps increasing by the day. The size of the wage bill for this swollen state sector has already weighed heavily on the State's resources. In addition to that, the extravagant monthly salaries paid for the luxuries of unproductive honourable political appointees has drained the scant surplus meant for the poor. Rampant corruption everywhere consumes the rest of the surplus, and the poor and the needy are left to cry in the wilderness.

People in the grassroots feel no urgency for the empowerment of traditional chiefs or the traditional land right of clans. They care not whether they are administered by the State Government or by the District Council, but they are desperately in need of their own economic empowerment. They are miserably in need of medical and educational facilities, (not only in Shillong!) but in other areas as well. They need jobs for their educated children; they need good drinking water, good roads, better irrigation for their farms, reliable and affordable electric supply for their mini industries,

and they need good market facilities for their products. Whether such market facilities are run by the Khasis or non Khasis is immaterial as long as they can sell their products at good prices, to be able to feed their children as well as meet their medical and educational needs.

A certain pressure group leader said, "If the Government of India cannot provide financial grants for all our economic needs then leave us alone." This is only a bragging and uncalculated statement. The tribes of North-East India would not be able to combine into a single society and a single independent state; and individually, the tribes would never be able to survive independently at all. If people of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills were not in India, then they would have been under Bangladesh, or under the Burmese rule, or the Chinese rule. A divinely protected paradise for the people of these hills is possible only in a dream. When India was partitioned in 1947, and when the idea of a British protectorate failed to materialise, the traditional chiefs and leaders of the Federation of Khasi States decided that independence was impossible without sea route for foreign trade; without 'gold reserve' to make their own currency, and without the resource to mobilise even a battalion of military force. So they decided that it is safer to join with the Indian Union than with Pakistan. If we say that India needs to retain the North-Eastern Region at any cost for security reasons, then the north-eastern tribes also need the Indian State for the same security reasons.

By all calculations, India is the safest country for the Khasis to be in, where constitutional protection is provided not only against exploitation, but for local autonomy and special economic assistance as well. But there is always a certain level of mutual give and take to be considered between the concept of Indigenous Peoples' Rights and the fundamental human rights and human security of every Indian, Khasi or non Khasi alike within the same constitutional system. Absolute and exclusivist ethnic autonomy, in the name of 'Indigenous Peoples' Rights has no rationale to exist in a state of economic dependence.

Wanted a truly secular state

By Babet Sten

Today as Narendra Modi strides across the country like an old Colossus, I find myself asking about how the future of Indian secularism will fare in the long run. After the stampede of RSS, VHP, ABVP goons and the slow but deliberate injection of fear and hatred has taken place, where is Ambedkar's dream headed? Everyone wants to ride with the winners because that is supposedly a sign that you too have won. In reality though there are only a few winners and it is certainly not the Indian Public. Today the media houses of the country have either been bought or coerced into accepting these goons onto their screen and stages. Now they come online proclaiming all Indians as Hindus - disregarding the vast tracts of non-Hindu peoples as non-Indian or even 'un-Indians' - which is equivalent to traitor. By that logic, are all Hindus, Indians? Of course not! What it really comes down to is that this is a travesty that spits in the face of all who fought and died for this country to become secular.

But enough about national politics because we are close minded bigots and only our own affairs are worthy of consideration, hence let us proceed from there. It is sad to say that though the non-tribals seem to be woefully and tragically off (in the secular sense) we from Meghalaya can claim no better moral position for ourselves. We are quite plainly monsters when it comes to being secular. Some local idiots could beat the raucous pseudo intellectual Swamy Subramanian in their ability to spew diarrheal matter onto innocent bystanders. Much like Ebola their words are viral and deadly. I recently came across the most pungent refuse I have had the misfortune of reading by one Apol Mawniuh in his "Ka Jaidbyrniew Shahrah Umsaw". Islamophobic, orthodox and sexist to the core his work shall be remembered as a classic in Khasi Hate Speech writing for the future generations to come. It deserves to be enshrined in some Hall of Shame. Maybe we can approach this "Christian State" Government for funds.

One of the most ludicrous and dangerous proclamations that any Government can be labelled by is that it is anything other than "secular". The State has no business being Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist or whatever. It should in effect be atheistic or rather, agnostic. It should not favour one religious group over another. It should maintain the Law while being sensitive to religious groups of varying intensities of idiocy and tolerate them as such. That would go a long way to making the lives of its people more bearable. However, this is ever hardly the case. In Meghalaya especially, since we have made it a profitable business. Our beloved pastors, bishops have all found that special someone in the Secretariat to shower blessings on and be showered in turn. It is not the parish, pastorate that draws the attentions of the Church administrators but rather the Finance departments of various government organs. For "God", they acquire public

money and avail donations. There is a joke that if you ever want a road to your village, just try really hard to get a big Church Service hosted in your general area; magically a week before the Service a new road would have materialised inexplicably! Truly, another case of Divine intervention! One could go ahead and say that it is quite alright for religious institutions to do this. They, after all, are large unions or welfare organisations that seek to help their members. This is of course acceptable. But the show does not stop merely at that point. These Churches are just getting schemes and money they also invariably change the structure of our political scene and our politics as well. Once again, another majoritarian section of society gets to have its way because of essentially retrogressive vote bank politics. A Presbyterian minister is expected to help out his team, same with a Catholic MP or an Adventist IAS officer. This is done quite often much to the disadvantage of other more important work. Even if you are a useless and corrupt MLA/officer, the Church perhaps can cleanse you with its holy waters. It really is not good to have such diffusion of power and religiosity together. Perhaps the best example of this was the late JJM Nichols Roy who famously would end his political rallies with a prayer. Many today follow his large shoes and every political event seems more akin to a Revival service. Where is the dividing line?

Many people had a problem with PBM Basaiawmoit contesting for the MP seat this year because he was a pastor. People opined that State and Church should not mix. In reality, both have been in bed together for a long time now. From the first missionaries one can argue at length, but we will save that for another time. Public spaces are often times the sites for competition where Jesus and Mary can go head to head with Durga and Mahishura. Why do we need shrines when we really believe and cherish our beliefs? I think God would appreciate a bench for tired walkers at street corners, much more than a mini church. Thinking upon idols, another thing at big sermons is that we generally idealise/idolise white speakers. A "foreign-again" reverend once told a story about his dinner with George W Bush. People wowed and exhaled heavily; I was not impressed. Bush is a war criminal, plain and simple. But for them, he was the epitome of Christian spirituality coupled to worldly power. A good Christian, a politician - and a war criminal - what a mash-up!

Anyway in closing I must offer my congratulations to the present CEM for his lovely display of inter-faith sensitivity when he got into the Muslim prayer position, in gratitude, on being chosen as the new top man of the KHADC. We need more sensitive souls like him in key positions! Alaikum salaam to you, Sir

poorer sections of people who are not able to pay up handsome amounts. Even labourers and small businessmen are kidnapped by the terrorist groups. Many non-tribal people have been killed by the various terrorist groups in Garo Hills. My question to the NGOs is whether they want the non-tribals to become the scapegoats? If the NGO's from the Garo community are rallying to stop the AFSPA the people of the plain belts belonging to the non-tribal community will also start a rally for immediate implementation

of the AFSPA in Garo Hills and will even move the High Court for that. AFSPA is imperative to bring peace and security of citizens of Garo Hills.

Yours etc.,
Islam Hoque
Choudhury,
Rajabala

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

Mei-Ramew - The Good Earth

Editor,

I don't normally share my opinions about events in public because every event needs its fair chance, but since this touches so many lives, I feel it's my responsibility to share it. I visited the Mei Ramew Festival at Mawphlang and really it is great to see how ethnic food and culture can draw so much crowd. This is a festival to protect and to nurture for the long term. However, the slow degradation and impact that these kind of mega events have had on the Mawphlang Sacred Grove is shameful. The relevance of the Sacred Grove is that it is sacred - it has to be protected based on its original idea - that's the essence of it.

I was shocked to see its sanctity cut to half. A once small footpath in the middle of the meadow, that connected Mawphlang with the lower villages has now been converted to a single lane black-topped road. As an individual I am furious that this kind of development has been allowed to happen di-

viding that once exquisite meadow into two giving more importance to cars for the sake of the event. Where is the sanctity in that? How can such a development be allowed for the sake of a festival - however important it is?

For years my family and I have been visiting Mawphlang Sacred Grove and it was sheer bliss to be able to experience that primordial element of nature. We could boast about our indigenous sense of environmental preservation which is very rare and unique. That was the real beauty - the real sophisticated idea laid out by our forefathers as they understood the need for preservation and protection of nature. Now mega events like the Mei Ramew, Monolith Festival etc. are questioning the efforts of our forefathers on why this kind of place needs to be protected in the first place. The Monolith festival and the "Heritage Village" has gone ahead and created a meaningless village in the once pristine meadow with an architectural meaning of a dubious nature. That debate can continue on what

is exactly our architectural heritage. Now the Mei Ramew Festival has added to the Pandora's box with building toilets, vehicular roads etc.. Where does this end?

People dear to this event have been using words like indigenous, environment, sustainability and so on - sustainability is the ability of us to meet our needs, but reinforce the ability for our future generations to meet their needs in future. If events like this alter the landscape without understanding the original sanctity, then that's the first mistake which, very sadly, is irreversible.

Every event no matter how important, has to be sensitive to the place. It should not leave footprints that someone else needs to clean up, because that is being irresponsible and negative to the ethos of the idea.

Yours etc.,
Gerald Pde,
Via email

AFSPA imperative in Garo Hills.

“Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you cannot be successful or happy.”

—Norman Vincent Peale

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 91 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2015

Largesse to J&K

THE Centre has decided to offer Jammu & Kashmir a package of Rs 80,000 crore for development in the state. Though it was done before the BJP suffered a signal defeat in Bihar, it appears to have been decided on at an opportune moment. The BJP is now very much on the defensive. The assistance offered is in addition to other financial allocations to J&K and meant to be earmarked for humanitarian relief and post-flood infrastructure reconstruction. True, the state has been through death and devastation as a result of floods in the last two years. Local youth are being alienated for growing unemployment and huge investment is called for in generating employment and skill development. However, the amount to be dished out is enormous and nearly double that the Omar Abdullah government had even asked for. The reason is not far to seek. The PDP-BJP alliance is fragile and Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, leader of the PDP, has made it clear that he calls the shots. The BJP's growing coolness to the Hurriyat, its freezing of relations with Pakistan and the religious intolerance shown in the anti-beef campaign have antagonised the PDP and even threatened to topple its alliance with the majority party. The extraordinary security arrangements during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's latest visit, arrests and detentions, suspension of internet services and the violent protests triggered by his visit which caused one death had indicated the highhandedness of the ruling party at the Centre.

Modi had however, not been chastened yet by the lessons from the Bihar debacle. He tried to emphasize that the dollops of aid had been prompted by economic considerations alone and not because of political expediency. The PDP had hoped that the Prime Minister would try to reach out to the Hurriyat and Pakistan. Modi had not yet realised that his party's warning that the BJP's defeat in Bihar would cause jubilation in Pakistan would have the opposite effect.

LOOKING BACK

March 19, 1988

CM to consult opposition on policy matters

Meghalaya Chief Minister Purno Sangma has said that he would consult the opposition parties on all major policy matters. He said there was immense need for cooperation among all political parties in the State for taking Meghalaya towards the path of prosperity.

Mr. Sangma was speaking here today on the occasion of inauguration of the first helicopter service in the State.

A large crowd greeted the Chief Minister and his seven member encourage as the 17 seater white and vermilion colour chopper touched down at the BSF helipad. Others who flew in from Shillong in the first test flight were the Home Minister D. D. Lapang, Speaker P.G. Marbaniang, Transport Minister Armision Marak, Leader of the Opposition S.D. Khongwir, Chariman MTC Nimarshon Sangma and Chief Secretary V. Ramakrishnan.

Earlier speaking at Air Force Landing Ground at Upper Shillong before the flight took off for Tura Mr. Sangma announced that all the district headquarters of the State would be connected with Shillong and Guwahati by the chopper service. He congratulated

the Transport Department for launching the helicopter service in a record time of 17 days.

Ghisingh demands probe into Genocide in Darjeeling

Mr. Subhas Ghisingh, President Gorkha National Liberation Front, today demanded a judicial inquiry by a Supreme Court Judge into the recent happenings in the Darjeeling district and Dooras areas of West Bengal.

In a statement released here, he said the West Bengal Government had stepped up a policy of genocide and the central forces have been involved in killings. According to him the death toll in the current 40 days bandh is about 200. Nearly 200 people are under arrest, he added.

He said the GNLF would review the situation at the end of the bandh and submit a detailed report to the Union Home Minister of its findings about the crimes perpetrated by the West Bengal Government.

The militants also hurled bombs. The security forces returned 101 rounds and used mortars. Two GNLF militants, injured in the encounter, were carried by their colleagues to Nepal.

Resurgence of civil society, not AFSPA, is the remedy

By Urmitapa Dutta

The High Court of Meghalaya recently called for the Centre to invoke Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) in an effort to cope with escalating insurgent violence in Garo Hills. Draconian laws like AFSPA are antithetical to democracy and pluralism. Premised on the suspension of civil liberties, AFSPA has led to unbridled military action and gross infringement of human rights. This year marks the fifteenth year since Irom Sharmila began her fast in Manipur to protest the Indian State's refusal to repeal AFSPA. Are we going to mark this extraordinary act of civil resistance with a regression into militarization? While there is a smattering of support for AFSPA, this past week has largely witnessed protests registered by ordinary citizens and various civil society organizations. My goal in writing this article is two-fold: to elucidate why AFSPA is not a viable option and to provide alternative modes of conceptualizing the issue of insurgency in Garo Hills. I will do so by drawing upon my long-term community-engaged research on everyday violence in Garo Hills. Moving away from security driven perspectives, my research interrogates multiple configurations of marginality from the vantage point of ordinary citizens in Garo Hills.

The call for AFSPA is based on specious logic. First, it assumes that militancy in Garo Hills is an exceptional or extraordinary situation that calls for extraordinary, autocratic response. Such crisis-based politics tend to view situations as chaotic, unstable, and as a break from routine processes. However, not all acts of violence occur within the confines of insurgency. Crisis-based politics fail to account for the enmeshed systems of violence and inequalities that mediate people's everyday lives. Second, the High Court order claims that police and civil administration have exhausted all options in order to justify the recourse to AFSPA. This is however an inaccurate characterization given the poor quality of governance in Garo Hills. Successive governments have failed to adequately meet the needs of diverse citizens and guarantee the rule of law; thus creating an environment conducive to recruiting supporters for insurgent groups. A third problematic assumption is one that dehumanizes insurgent groups as a monolithic entity. Most armed insurgent groups are organized in strict hierarchies with "foot soldiers" occupying the lowest rungs of the organization. The circumstances of these young men, many of whom

are in their late teens, tends to be vastly different from those of the leaders. In the course of my research, I conducted interviews with a number of such youth incarcerated for their alleged affiliation to armed insurgent groups. These youth often hailed from remote villages in Garo Hills. Their trajectories converged on several themes: families fragmented by abject poverty, lack of employment opportunities, and a sense of disconnect with the larger community. Contrary to popular beliefs that young recruits are irrevocably "brainwashed," their narratives signal sites of possibility. They can in fact be reintegrated into society under altered circumstances. Draconian acts like AFSPA fail to make these critical distinctions and thus foreclose vital opportunities for recuperating human capital.

Protesting against the imminent threat of AFSPA, civil society organizations have rightfully pointed out the importance of economic development and combined peace efforts. While there economic deprivation stifles youth aspirations, the relationship between poverty and militancy is a complex one. When rising expectations of young people are met with limited opportunities in an exceedingly disparate society, the resultant frustration and anger can make young people more receptive to separatist agendas. Relative deprivation thus plays a far more influential role in violent conflict than absolute levels of poverty. We certainly need to work towards peace in Garo Hills. But what would this peace look like? In contexts of conflict, peace tends to be equated with the absence of direct violence, usually brought about by signing of ceasefire agreements. These agreements are limited in scope, Garo Hills being a case in point. The absence of direct violence may bring about passive coexistence but the active creation of harmonious environments that support cooperation and coexistence require concerted efforts. The conditions necessary to build a sustainable peace include access to education and physical necessities, societal justice, access to economic opportunities, freedom to express oneself without fear, to develop one's abilities without obstruction, and security from harm. Peace then is

not just the end or absence of direct violence, but the creation of lasting structures that ensure the reduction of all kinds of violence.

Moving forward, there are a number of steps that may be taken to deal with the current situation in Garo Hills without resorting to AFSPA. First, competent and sustained police work is necessary to neutralize the imminent threat. It is entirely conceivable that local police may be part of the problem whether it is due to incompetence, corruption, or co-optation. However, rather than relying on military forces, which are ill-suited for sustainable peace, radical police reform is imperative. This reform entails a two-pronged approach: enhancing operational effectiveness and fortifying intelligence; and investing in community-police relationships to address the erosion of public trust. While an overhaul of policing procedures will take time, interim measures can be taken to deal with imminent threat in ways that advance the long-term term reform goals.

A second step involves concerted efforts to resuscitate civil society in Garo Hills, one that is inclusive and offers a platform for social critique. The past few years have witnessed a gradual fragmentation of civil society in Garo Hills. Rather than an autonomous space for critical engagement and dissent, civil society in Garo Hills has been increasingly constricted by agitations against "outsiders" or ethnic others. In the course of my research, extensive interviews with both Garo and non-Garo youth pointed to the ways in which ethnic divisiveness has become an integral part of the social fabric and is no longer questioned. The tribal versus outsider conflict subsumes critical issues of gendered violence, corruption, environmental degradation, and displacement. The logic of ethnic divisiveness that drives armed insurgency is an invisible force gnawing away at the foundations of civil society. This is one of the primary reasons why AFSPA will fail to contain ethnic violence in Garo Hills. The struggle against insurgency is not a military campaign but one of strategizing how to prevail over the divisive ethnic identity politics fueling and fueled by insurgency. Some strategies include: creating opportunities for inclusive community and civic en-

gagement; providing a safe platform for the expression of multiple voices; building issue-based solidarity networks that transcend ethnic identifications; actively shaping public discourse to counter divisive ethnic identity politics. In particular, these efforts should be integrated in curricula at various educational levels.

Finally, we need a multi-phasic strategic plan to tackle the issue of "development," yet another buzzword that has come to be linked to insurgency. The dominant rhetoric is that "development" is the way to bring an end to insurgency. This raises the question: What would just, sustainable, and equitable development look like in Garo Hills? We need to resist neoliberal and top-down formulations to generate context specific understandings of development, those that are fundamentally committed to the local. Also crucial is the need to denaturalize corruption. Corruption damages the social fabric and weakens public institutions that are necessary for peaceful coexistence. By corroding the foundations of civil society, corruption makes it easy to create a society divided along ethnic fault lines.

Mounting research evidence points to the limited role of military and paramilitary approaches in bringing about lasting peace in contexts of insurgency. In order to generate more viable solutions, we have to reframe our problem definition. Expanding our conception of what constitutes violence to include inequality and oppression constitutes a vital step in moving past the current impasse. Violence that is ubiquitous and deeply entrenched in everyday practices necessitates a notion of "everyday" peace, that is, ongoing processes aimed towards building local community capacities. These processes have an implicit restorative value in that they begin to restructure the social fabric while fostering mutuality, trust, and equality.

(The author is Assistant Professor of Psychology and a faculty affiliate of the Peace and Conflict Studies program at University of Massachusetts Lowell. A native of Garo Hills, she has been involved in community-based research in Garo Hills for eleven years. Dr. Dutta is the President Elect of the Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence, a division of the American Psychological Association. She can be reached at Urmitapa.Dutta@uml.edu)

TO THE EDITOR

A racist obsession

Editor,

Off and on I keep on hearing about agitations on influx, ILP etc. by some NGOs in Shillong. It is an open secret that some political parties are also behind it. The bogey for such a demand is alleged illegal immigrants from a neighbouring country. Are the people really serious about the illegal foreign migrants? The answer is a plain NO. How many of these NGOs have visited the coal mines and checked the labourers when the mines were very active? How many are complaining about the movement of people belonging to the indigenous community across the international border? Some of them are even hard core militants! If the Garos in Shella area are ille-

gal immigrants then why is there no demand to drive them out of the country but only oppose inclusion of their names in the electoral rolls? In reality all such agitations against the so called illegal immigrants is not against foreigners but persons from other parts of the country who come to work here for higher returns due to the unwillingness of the local people to take up hard and skilled jobs. They are termed as 'dkhars' which is now a pejorative term.

The state was born out of Assam due to a movement against the non tribals. At the same time the WHITE NON TRIBALS are treated like Gods. The word DKHAR does not apply to them. The white men may be nothing in their own country but are real celebrities here. Getting married to a

white man is considered a matter of great pride and honour but not so with the indigenous brown or black DKHARS from other parts of the country. The economy of the state depends heavily on the earnings of the people of rest of India and not from WHITE NON TRIBALS. The whole state will collapse if the essential commodities stop coming even for a day from rest of the country. It may be a fact that the white men from the west have many positive qualities which can be emulated but so is it with DKHARS from other parts of the country. Is it not a fact that it is the same white men who looted our wealth and exploited us for centuries and called Indians as DOGS? Is it not the same white men who tortured their slaves with scant regard for human rights? Is it not the same white men

who in the name of democracy have murdered innocent people in the world? There are angels and devils in any society. Then why have double standards? Is one more secure with white men than own countrymen? We have been liberated from white men through sacrifices made by our countrymen but the slavery still continues because of the diehard belief that the 'white man can do no wrong' which is still deep rooted in the society. It is a time to say good bye to this unworthy obsession and fascination for the skin colour and unwarranted intolerance towards others, in the best interests of society and unity of the country.

Yours etc.,
KamalSingh Sodhi
Delhi

Airtel betrays

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) (Amended in 1972)

By Dr Milton S Sangma

In the context of the direction given by the Meghalaya High Court to the Central Government of India for imposition of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, in the entire five districts of Garo Hills of Meghalaya and the date fixed for next hearing on November 18, 2015, it is necessary for all of us to know the provisions of this Act so that proper awareness campaigns can be launched in every nook and corner of Garo Hills districts.

The following are the main provisions of AFSPA :

Section 1. This Section gives the title of the Act as "The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, and it extends to Assam and Manipur. The Act was amended in 1972 and extended to Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, Arunachal, Mizoram and Jammu and Kashmir.

Section 2. This Section defined the term "Armed Forces". In the 1958 version of the Act, the definition was "The military forces and the Air forces operating as Land Forces", while in the 1972 version, Armed Forces was defined as "The military and Air Force of the Union so operating".

In fact, in 1966, the Air Force in Mizoram resorted to aerial bombardment.

Section 3. This Section defines "disturbed area" by stating how an area can be declared "disturbed". The Act grants power to declare an area disturbed to the Centre and the Governor of the State but does not clarify the circumstances under which the authority would be justified in making such a declaration. The Act simply requires that such authority be "of opinion that the whole or parts of the area are in dangerous and disturbed condition such that the use of the Armed Forces in aid of Civil Powers is necessary".

Therefore, if the officials of the Centre Government or the State Government are satisfied that certain area or parts of it are disturbed, then the provisions of the Act can be enforced without any judicial review or public opinion.

Section 4. This Section deals with the powers granted to the military stationed at the disturbed area. These powers are granted to the Commissioned officers, Warrant officers or Non-Commissioned officers except the ordinary jawans. They are allowed to use

force for a variety of reasons.

The army can shoot to kill, for acts of commission or mere suspicion of commission of offences which are in contravention of any law and order that is enforced in the disturbed area. It prohibits an assembly of five or more persons, carrying weapons, or carrying anything which is capable of being used as a firearm or ammunition. In order to justify the invocation of this Act, the officer need only to say that "in his opinion, it is necessary to do so for the maintenance of public order and give such warning as he may consider necessary".

The army can destroy property if it is an arms dump or shelter is given to underground outfit from where armed attacks are made or are suspected to being made or if the structure is used as a training camp or as a hide-out by armed groups or absconders.

The army can arrest anyone without a warrant who has committed or is suspected of being committed or of being about to commit a cognizable offense or use any amount of force, necessary to effect the arrest.

The army can enter and search without a warrant to make an arrest or to recover any property, arms, ammunition or explosives which are believed to be unlawfully kept on the premises. The army is allowed the use of force necessary for the search.

Section 5. This Section provides that after the army has arrested someone under AFSPA they must hand over that person to the nearest police station with the "least possible delay" but there is no definition what constitutes the least possible delay. There is also no precise amount of time that can be called the "least possible delay" during which the arrested person can be detained by the army without a judicial review by a Magistrate.

Section 6. This Section establishes that no legal proceedings can be brought against any member of the armed forces acting under the AFSPA, without the permission of the Central Government. This Section leaves the victims of the armed forces abuses without a remedy.

Therefore, this Act is one of the more draconian legislations that the Indian Parliament has passed in its Parliamentary history.

its customers

Editor,

Bharati Airtel launched its 4G services in Shillong with much fanfare on July 31 last promising super speed internet experience for existing 3G users. Prior to that the company had launched its 4G services in various cities across the country and publicized its supposedly superlative internet experience through grand ad campaigns splashed across TV channels.

Callously tempted by the supposed claims of the girl in the red top and cropped hair about Airtel's 4G services being the fastest and promising a lifetime worth of talk time free if her claims were proven wrong, I fell into the trap of the Airtel call centre executive and consented to upgrade from 3G to 4G without any extra charges and got a new 4G SIM which was delivered at my doorstep promptly.

Alas, to my great dismay, I realized, within a couple of days that I had been cheated. The 4G services were nonexistent. The only time when my internet experience is good is in the evening

hours of morning but I really don't have any need for 4G services at 4 O'clock in the morning.

I would like to mention that I have a BSNL Broadband connection at my home which gives me satisfactory net speed.

Through this column, I would like to challenge the Airtel's Shillong area manager or whatever designation he/ she holds to visit my home on any working day in between the working hours and prove that Airtel's 4G speed is faster than the Broadband speed I have at home. I will bet that the company would be compelled to honour their promise of a lifetime of free talk time for me just like the girl in the TV ad had promised. Else, I would be forced to knock the doors of the local consumer court against the company for running a fraud and misleading ad campaign.

PS: I was an IDEA subscriber before I switched over to Airtel through Mobile Number Portability hoping for a better experience. Alas!

Yours' etc.,
Sanjay Kar
Shillong - 2

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."

--- Alice Walker

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 92 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2015

Child rights; who cares?

WHEN the international community adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child 25 years ago, it was a commitment made to the world's children: that the state would do everything in its power to promote and protect their rights. The commitment was not only to some children, but to all children. It was not only to advance some of their rights, but all their rights – including their right to survive and to thrive, to grow and to learn, to have their voices heard and heeded, and to be protected from discrimination and violence in all its manifestations.

It was a commitment to be honoured not only in times of peace and prosperity, but also, and especially, in times of conflict, crisis, and catastrophe. The commitment to realize the rights of all children was grounded in the conviction that it was both the right thing to do and also the strategic thing to do for by advancing the rights of children today, we help them become adults who will be able to assume responsibility for future generations – in turn, helping build a more prosperous, peaceful, and just world.

Last year the Nobel Prizes were shared by two visionary and pragmatic individuals – Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi. The former was a champion for the right to education of the girl child and survived a vicious attack on her. The latter has worked to reinstate those children who were engaged as labourers. As a country, India is a signatory to several international conventions and the Protection of Child Rights is just one of them. However, action on the ground is far from satisfactory. There are still several million children engaged in hazardous activities such as coal mining in Meghalaya, manufacture of fireworks and such other industries. The right to free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years remains unmet and many children continue to remain out of school due to sheer poverty.

It is unfortunate that Children's Day is celebrated year after year only within educational institutions. The street children or those who are forced to work to earn their daily bread remain forgotten. But even if some kind soul gives them a free lunch on such a day it becomes just tokenism. As a state, Meghalaya is yet to improve its performance on the reduction of child abuse and the rape of minors. Cases that are registered against the rapists and abusers take a very lengthy legal route. This is justice denied. The State Child Rights Protection Council is yet to show tangible results. Too often the action taken is diffused if not invisible. It is important for child rights groups to remain vigilant and to ensure that the Council delivers on its mandate.

LOOKING BACK

March 20, 1988

Special drive for easing road congestion in city

The Administration is planning to launch a special drive to ease the traffic congestion and to provide better transport services to the commuters of Shillong.

According to official sources, the proposed drive would be taken up to ensure adherence to terms and conditions of the permits by local taxis, mini and city buses and stopping of city buses at specified bus stops only.

Besides, the special drive would also be to ensure that parking of local taxis is at taxi stands only. Taxis which stop to unload passengers at any place on road, steps would also be taken to ensure that they stop only in specified areas without hindering the smooth flow of traffic.

The random stopping of taxis on busy roads particularly in areas not specified as parking zones, would in-

vite very strict action against such offenders, official sources said.

Roadside workshop and garages have also been warned that they would be liable to severe action, including eviction, if vehicles coming for repairs/servicing etc to them are parked on the road. This practice by workshops and garages amounts to encroachment on public property (roads) and is liable to severe action, including eviction.

It may be mentioned that the special drive is being undertaken in the public interest to ensure faster and more orderly movement of traffic in Shillong.

The administration hopes that the various organisations like the bus associations, taxi associations and all users of public roads will extend full cooperation in the enforcement of these basic rules.

The Act East Policy and what it bodes for the North East

By Trishanu Bipul Borah

The North East links India with its Eastern neighbours, sharing international boundaries with Myanmar in the East, Bangladesh in the South and Bhutan, China, Nepal. Geography and geopolitics of the past has thus ensured that the much neglected North East is a vital junction for India and any policy step, even tiny baby ones, towards the East, has to take into consideration the concerns of this region at the very outset.

That the Minister for External Affairs Mrs Sushma Swaraj recently briefed the Governors of the North Eastern States about the various aspects of trade and upcoming cross border connectivity projects is a sign that the Indian State is pursuing the matter in a serious manner, while the same cannot probably be said of the issues like the "framework agreement" with a single non-state actor and it's not-so-real-politically-feasible demands, which have been termed as "historic". However, questioning the historicity or not, of that matter, is not the subject of this article; elucidating the possibilities and potentialities of a greater connectivity strategy in the North Eastern region is.

The North Eastern region which shares many of its cultural, ethnic, linguistic aspects with the land and people lying to its east, is connected to the rest of India through a small corridor which has been christened as the "Chicken's Neck". This small stretch of land in the Siliguri district of Bengal which has ever since partition (and the formation of East Bengal) been India's sole line of access to the North Eastern states is a mere 14 miles at its narrowest!

A section of people from the North East of India have for long complained about the perceived "step-motherly" treatment from the Centre, be it in terms of economic policies leading to exploitation or due to the implementation of draconian laws like the AFSPA which has led to widespread violation of human rights in a region which has already seen much division and in-fighting along ethnic lines. In the light of this, the new Act East Policy of the Indian Government brings about much needed optimism to the region, especially when it is seen in consonance with renewed efforts to bring in order and peace through "historic" peace deals.

What actually is Acting East?

...A new era of economic

development, industrialization and trade has begun in India. Externally, India's 'Look East Policy' has become 'Act East Policy'." was what the Prime Minister said in his opening statement at the 12th ASEAN summit in November, 2014.

The "Look East Policy" was formulated and implemented during the governments of P.V. Narasimha Rao in the face of the opening up of the Indian economy and the subsequent globalization in the early 1990s and was followed up by A.B. Vajpayee. It aimed at forging closer trade and economic ties in order to expand Indian markets, security and strategic cooperation in matters of counter-terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering etc. In the realms of soft power, it emphasized on the shared value, culture and history and sought to utilize the long running historical and religious connect between the region using Buddhism and tried to attract Buddhist tourism, bringing people to the birth place of Buddhism. While much had been attained during this period, including bringing in much needed investments from the ASEAN block, signing of Free Trade Agreements as well as varied schemes such as Harvest Schemes etc, a lot remained to be done, and thus, a new and enhanced outlook.

In the current scheme of things and the proactive pursuance of "Act East Policy" where trade, economic development and industrialization plays an important role, the development of the North East region becomes utmost important. Only then can the fruits of Acting East be amply enjoyed by the country, along with bringing about much needed stability, prosperity and job creation in the North Eastern States through the creation of new infrastructures.

Importance of Connectivity

When it comes to the internal connectivity with the rest of India, often termed the "mainland", and the North Eastern region, matters had been complicated due to the refusal of transit via Bangladesh, which had long evaded the matter when

raised by the Centre. This had put the focus on the narrow "Chicken's Neck" and securing it was one of India's main security concerns, especially with the areas nearby having borders with Bhutan, Nepal and with a Chinese geo-strategic threat never really off the cards. Siliguri district is also a hotbed of international smuggling, crime and occasional instability with the Gorkhaland demand always doing the rounds, thus only adding to the apprehensions. Of late, the Bangladeshi policy has changed for the good in this regard, with the starting of bus service, renewal of old riverine networks and the proposed setting up of a Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Guwahati following the visit of Prime Minister Modi during July this year, though much still needs to be done.

With the area bearing the brunt of not just terrorism and ethnic divide but also brutal State sponsored repression for a longer period in the post independence history, the pressure on the supply lines and infrastructure have been over stretched for long and one blockade or the other can suck the lifeblood out of a whole state. Manipur is a good example of this. Thus the shoring up of connectivity is even for important for not just the sake of the region but also for the sake of creating a bridge to the international borders and the countries that lie beyond it.

Projects and policy Steps in this direction

1. The recently signed BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) Motor vehicle agreement will promote safe, economical efficient and environmentally sound road transport in the sub-region and will further help each country in creating an institutional mechanism for regional integration. BBIN countries will be benefited by mutual cross border movement of passenger and goods for overall economic development of the region.

2. The ambitious Trilateral Highway project to link India, Myanmar and Thailand can be further used to connect the region and even be used to promote trade and transport via Mekong-Ganga cooperation.

3. Better railway connec-

tivity within the region with the opening up of new railway links like Mendipathar-Guwahati and the proposed Dimapur-Imphal rail link.

4. The enhanced railway connectivity can be relied upon for the reopening of Stilwell road, which can connect the region to the fast growing Yunnan province of China.

5. The building of BCIM corridor between Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar further enhances the potential of the region.

6. The opening up of pre-partition railway links with Bangladesh as well as re-establishing the dormant riverine links is of vital importance for transport of both passenger and goods.

The trade routes to the ASEAN block stand to be shortened via road linkages through the North East. The need for better roads and infrastructure, thus cutting down costs, becomes even more urgent in the light of the RCEP Free Trade Agreement between ASEAN+6 which includes India.

What we already have is a set of policy guidelines and projects either in incubation or semi-complete and in halfway stages. Though it sounds easy on paper, the important task is the coordination and connection of these well laid out plans so that seamless connectivity across the region can lead to the creation of a pan-Asian Highway of some sort someday.

India needs to be proactive in doing the necessary. The North East can potentially be at a crucial junction in its history where globalization finally delivers the promised fruits. The increased opportunities arising out of growth of infrastructure, economic development and enhanced people to people contact can undo the harm that the hastily drawn boundaries of the past century had brought upon the people of the North East. Of course there are challenges that the government has to overcome, both in terms of economic feasibility as well as security which have to be overcome before all of the above mentioned projects can be delivered, but isn't deliverance exactly what the Modi government had promised before and while coming to power?

(The writer is a recent BITS PILANI graduate and a civil service aspirant)

Protect their childhood

By TFL Mawlong

International Human Right Law states that a child has two types of rights – the general human rights and some special rights for physical, mental and social well being of a child. Several legislations have been enacted ranging from the Right to Education, Prohibition of Child labour to the Juvenile Justice Act. But crimes against children go on. News of child molestation, forced labour and unjust inequality is continually streaming our media. What happened to the kids is something we hear and see in the media with disbelieving eyes. We usually ask ourselves; how could people commit such horrible deeds? How can that really happen in our society? We would spare no emotions in showing our concern.

Granted, society never stops contemplating the miserable injustice and child abuses here as the world over. But shrouded in a thick grey mist of perplexity we forget to look at the lesser known rights of the children. Does our so called fortunate child truly enjoy his/her childhood? Does he/she fully enjoy his/her right? There is so much in our society that we take for granted.

Many children are being abused right from their mother's womb. Seeking to protect the "physical right" of the 'unborn child', the Government introduced schemes such as the 'Indira Gandhi Matrivata Sahyog Yojana'. But most of our parents fail to understand the importance of this right to a child. Fathers were seen mindlessly and irresponsibly smoking near the pregnant mothers. Are the parents so ignorant of the effects of cigarette smoke on the unborn child? Or are they just simply being indifferent. Mind that the harmful impact on the unborn child can't be undone later.

Look around, the wide-eyed innocent children are trying to make sense of the legacy they were left behind with. Foremost being the irrational words and attitudes of parents at the 'Rympei'.

Words live. The 'parents' words breathe among the children. So when parents at the 'Rympei' speak ill of or criticize others constantly enough, the same mentality is evoked in the children, howsoever flippant the remarks might be. If a child hears his/her mother denouncing the elected political leaders as crooks, he/she may repeat that opinion in class or later in life. So the characters of children get negatively shaped unrealistically. And then there is this onslaught of commercial advertisements trying to get children to form specific attitudes towards their product. I feel sorry for the children. Their freedom to choose one's attitude is significantly being discounted. Not to forget the idiot machine called television doing its own bit. These machines would glorify and reglorify horrors and violence. Consequently, children would become obsessed with violence and pain and what not. The purity and innocence of a child is prematurely killed. Honesty is fast replaced with hypocrisy. And behold just like that the 'gem of childhood' is robbed away.

Then there is a materialistic world getting the best of children. We may not realize but materialism has its toll on the 'value of childhood'. Love of smart phones is one example. It has been projected that by 2019, smart phone users in India will touch 651 million. Of these, huge portions are children and the youngster.

Kids are asking for costly gadgets from their parents because their friends have it. They think of it as a basic necessity of life. There is a compulsive desire to not wait for something to happen. They are getting too accustomed to instant gratification which is the worst for a child. By giving the children whatever they want we are robbing them of the opportunity to grow up with the understanding of how difficult it is to achieve or buy something. The fault is not in the kids. It is in the society and parents.

All the more, smart phones also create a social divide among school children. The basic principle on which a school is based is 'Equality'. In fact due to this, a dress code was introduced in the schools. But, regrettably the smart phones that we irresponsibly buy for the kids have come to violate this. Who should we blame- The technology? - It is our materialistic way of life which has blind folded us. The widening social inequality among school children is alarming. Much to the pangs of the impoverished children.

Yet another truth is that children of our civilization scarcely have the freedom to follow their instincts. Most parents discourage their kids to mingle with the local kids. This is the attitude of the worst kind towards children. Social interaction which is so indispensable in childhood is reduced to a bare minimum. So gone are the days when children in every locality mingle together and share the heavenly pleasure they find in simple things like blowing of soap bubbles, swinging on swings etc, absorbing themselves in each other's smile, laughter, kindness, empathy or sometimes, petty viciousness! When the freedom of a child is taken away, the 'sweetness of childhood' loses its vigour.

And lest we forget, our localities too have been left with very little or no space for playground or community parks for the children. The environment too is fast degrading leaving no space for children to play or while their time. How many of us understand that 'we do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children'? Our environment belongs to the children. It must be a painful sight for the children's souls to see that without any consideration trees are felled, rivers are poisoned and so on. Further the divorce cases are on the rise. Without question, the worst sufferers in a divorce culture are the children. It is a shame that their childhood does not get the protection it deserves.

Am I insulting the civilization by writing all these? Am I insulting the parents? Never, that is not the intention. If you had taken the chance to spend time reading this short and unpleasant document, you would have perhaps understood my intention in writing this. And I write all these with perfect sanity. As there is no public language for private emotions, it may well have sounded private and irrelevant to many. But I assure you that the children, in their 'silence', are unconsciously crying out loud for their rights. Comrades, I strongly suggest that we listen to the silent cry of the innocents! Let us preserve and protect their precious childhood! Let them have a glorious childhood! Let them dream and let them discover!

TO THE EDITOR

Wanted some clarification!

Editor,

It has been noticed that the area in front of OB Mall which was once a mini park for tourists was dismantled for best reasons known to the authorities and left in a deplorable condition for years. This has prompted the hawkers to occupy the place for selling food items and whether the food is hygienic or not, no one ever seems to bother. Have the food and health department ascertained the quality of food and whether the sale of any food items meet the criteria and instructions of the departments? Secondly, it has been observed that the open area has been filled and the Government is planning to build something over there. The hawkers are not seen during the daytime but at night and on holidays, they start their activities again. On holidays they are there the whole day.

Can the Government clarify what exactly is it plan-

ning to build over there? I suggest that the area be developed into a resting place for tourists with steel chairs and benches and be converted into a strictly 'no vendors' zone'.

It has also been observed that a portion of the land has been left vacant near OB Mall. Is it meant for the entry to OB Mall or for some other reason? Please clarify? If the Government is incompetent to take care of the park, there are many corporate houses, that can come forward to do so. Even the Forest Department or Tourism Department can take care of it.

Yours etc.,
Bhakupar Khongsar,
Via email

Students' agitation & authorities' response

Editor,

"Students' unrest is

characterised by "collective discontent, dysfunctional conditions in educational institutions and concerns (of public and students) for change. Students 'agitations, on the other hand, are characterised by 'action based on the feeling of injustice, identifying source of discontent, frustration and deprivation'".

If the protesters indulge in looting, it is not to acquire property, if they indulge in breaking win-downs, it is not to seek vengeance, if they shout slogans against a person; it is not to insult him. All these methods are resorted to merely to express re-resentment against their unfulfilled demands. Agitation is to bring grievance and in-justice to the notice of people in power. So also is the case with the agitation of the Kiang Nangbah Students. There would have been no agitation if their demands had been addressed.

But sad to say that as the students were protesting against their unfulfilled demands, the actions of the

authorities was barbaric and uncivilized. Water cannons, tear gas & lathi charge were used against the students who express their resentment and grievances. I feel that everyone should condemn the incident not because the students are good and the authorities are bad but because the actions of the concerned authority were high-handed. Therefore, with a heavy heart after seeing the incident I request the concerned authority to avoid unnecessary delay in granting the demands of the students if those demands are genuine and also to act wisely because students are the assets of our state and nation as a whole.

Yours etc.,
Iahmi Khyriem,
Via mail

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.

“Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”

— George Bernard Shaw

The Shillong Times

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Chetia handed over

IN a major breakthrough, ULFA leader Anup Chetia was handed over by Bangladesh to India. His real name is Golap Barua. He joined the ULFA in the early 1980s and headed its political wing and was instrumental in getting the tea trade in Assam to collectively pay a huge sum of money to his outfit on an annual basis. He had placed several trusted persons in different contracts with the state government to ensure a regular flow of funds to the ULFA. During Operation Bajrang, the first army offensive against the ULFA, Chetia was arrested but he later disappeared. He was arrested subsequently in Dhaka for illegally entering Bangladesh and carrying foreign currency. He possessed three passports at the time of his arrest. However, in 1992, he attended a human rights conference in Geneva. In 1977, Interpol issued a red corner notice on him. By 1993, however, he had found a safe haven in Bangladesh and he visited other countries under different passports allegedly arranged by the Pakistani ISI.

The long-awaited return to India of ULFA general secretary Anup Chetia and his reported willingness to be part of a peace process with New Delhi is a major blow to the anti-talks faction led by Paresh Barua. The pro-talks faction headed by Chairman Arobinda Rajkhowa has most of the senior leaders of the former rebel outfit. Chetia's presence in Bangladesh had a positive psychological impact on rebels seeking shelter in that country. On the political front, Chetia's return is likely to help the BJP and cement India's relations with Bangladesh. With Assam heading for assembly elections early next year, Narendra Modi will have a new point to add about his campaign to solve the ULFA tangle.

LOOKING BACK

March 21, 1988

Solution to Chakma issue in sight

Dhaka has proposed to set up autonomous district councils in three districts of Chittagong hill tract in a bid to contain the unrest among the tribesmen here.

This offer has been formally made to the Jana Sanghati Samiti, the political wing of the rebel Shanti Bahini as a part of talks between the Government representatives and the leaders of the 20 year old Chakma insurgency.

The parleys, though started as early as October 1985 began to show signs of progress only at the beginning of this year. It was on February 17 last the Bangladesh authorities,

represented by two Brigadiers of the Army and one of the administration put forward nine contracts proposals to reach a political settlement. Earlier, it may be recalled a National Committee on Chittagong hill Tract issue, led by Planning Minister A.K. Khondkar, rejected the demand for autonomous status of CHT and recommended priority for local tribal people in employment and allotment of contract works only. As expected, this was rejected by the Jana Sanghati Samiti. Later the Samiti was persuaded to submit five-point demands, centering around their basic issue of self government.

Whether the package of proposals would be acceptable to the Jana Sanghati Parishad is not yet known, but the Bangladesh government had indeed, come down from their earlier stance that there is no scope in the Bangladesh's unitary constitution to concede special status to any region.

Dacca's latest offer recommended autonomy through direct election for the three districts -

Bandarban, Khagracherra and Rangamati under Article 9 and 28 of the Bangladesh constitution. Besides running the administration, it is proposed to transfer the legislative powers to the District Council in a number of subjects. The Council is also to be empowered with raising of police force within its jurisdiction and revision of Chittagong Hill Tract manual any law passed by the parliament, if considered undesirable by the Council, may be sent back to the parliament for reconsideration or exemption within its territory.

V.P. Singh demonstrates in support in Allahabad

Jan Morcha leader V.P. Singh today visited his home district, apparently to demonstrate the support he would command of he is fielded as a joint opposition candidate for the prestigious Allahabad Lok Sabha bye election.

Mr. Amitabh Bachchan who had won from this constituency in the last general elections to the Lok Sabha had resigned following controversy of his involvement in the Bofors gun deal. Visiting Allahabad for the first time after being expelled from Congress (I) about 8 months ago Mr. Singh was given a rousing reception on his arrival at the railway station by thousands of people.

State or district level leaders of almost all the major opposition parties, including the Janata Party, BJP, LD (B), CPI and CPI(M) were at hand to welcome him.

Later in the day, he drove down to Sirsa about 35 km from here, to address public meeting, considered massive for the small town.

Why democratic protests are necessary

By Patricia Mukhim

The recent protests by students of Kiang Nangbah College and the events thereafter have gone viral. A students' protest cannot happen without the tacit consent of the teachers. This means that the teachers too have their grouse. The Vice President of the Students' Association of the College, T Phawa had made public the demands since September 23 last when he spoke to the media. The demands include extension of college building, sanctioning of new departments, hiring of full-fledged teachers for the morning classes and construction of a basketball court. These demands are legitimate and the students have every right to these aspirations. Considering that this is the only government college in Jaintia Hills the government ought to have responded positively to at least some of the demands, if not all of them at one go. Phawa says that letters have been sent to every Minister in the government with a list of their demands but none of the ministers even deigned to give them a hearing; not even the Education Minister who is also their MLA. The government had enough time to respond but it did not. And why do governments wait for things to spiral and turn ugly as they did on November 10? From the video footage on social media it is evident that Meghalaya does not have a rapid response police force to tackle ugly incidents when peaceful protesters turn violent.

But the point to ponder here is why a students' protest should turn violent. Was it because the students had reached the end of their tether? Is it because a peaceful protest is ignored and government only takes a protest seriously when it is given an ultimatum of now or never? We in India have lived in the erroneous belief that democracy is a government of, for and by the people. But this is hardly the case. Once we have elected a government, it no longer serves the 'common good.' It appears to serve the interests of a section which tends towards profit making. The others who are outside that charmed circle get only the crumbs that are left over from the development platter.

Gandhi had averred that democracy is the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spir-

itual resources of various sections of the people in the service of common good of all. But this is only a truism. The anti-corruption movement led by Anna Hazare in 2011 was a protest that millions of Indians subscribed to since corruption hits at the root of governance. Development has become the new idiom for money that comes to the states and disappears into private pockets. Annual CAG reports that point to several anomalies in spending by the government are disdainfully ignored. Hence there is virtually no one to haul up the government for corruption since the CAG does not have punitive powers.

Many of those who joined the Anna Hazare protest expressed their aspiration to create a new form of participatory democracy which goes beyond the rigmarole of a once-in-five-year election. In Meghalaya, for instance, the Right to Information came after a sustained protest by RTI activists and groups. Protests have been instrumental in forcing the introduction of most of the freedoms that now exist in liberal democracies today. Protests are a sign that democracy is alive and kicking even if such protests are inconvenient for governments, which more often than not prefer to remain in a comfort zone with no external stimulus to stir them. It is unfortunate that those in government tend to forget that they are not the masters of the people but their servants and that the law is also not the master but is meant to serve the public.

Whenever the Government and the Law are out of step with the will of the People, it is expected that the People would make their views known through the medium of protest. This is the essence of democracy. A government that does not lend its ears to the voice of protest is asking for trouble. A sensible government should have braced itself for the protest of the students on November 10. This is the

first time that one can recall a protest by students of any institution turning violent. The protestors whose only slogan was, "We want justice," should have been given an opportunity to state their demands instead of being kept out of the gates to the Deputy Commissioner's office.

In a democracy dialogue is the only method of resolving differences between the rulers (servants) and the ruled (masters). Also what caught the attention of the public is the engagement by the additional deputy commissioner with the protestors. The body language of the former was provocative and not conciliatory. He, in fact, enraged the students further with his taunts.

Perhaps the ADM is unused to facing a protest of this nature or he has forgotten that democracy is alive not because citizens suffer in silence but because they give vent to their grievances. Without protests we would slowly lose even those rights that are guaranteed to us. Protests are part of a systematic and peaceful campaign to achieve a particular objective, and involve the use of pressure as well as persuasion but in a non-violent manner. Actually, a democratic state provides its citizens the right to protest, so that they can enjoy their fundamental rights and give their opinion in case they find anything against the system. The right to protest is a perceived human right arising out of a number of recognized human rights. So why do protests fail to stir governments?

The reasons are many. A protest that does not have the numbers is not taken seriously. Hence even the recent protests by the Rangbah Shnong necessitated the garnering of public support and such a public cannot be guaranteed to be disciplined or non-violent. What we had was therefore a stone pelting incident! However, the Rangbah Shnong were unanimous enough to apologise for the gathering turning chaotic. A sensitive, responsive government would not look at the num-

bers but at the genuineness of the demand, even if it is only by a small group of people.

Some officials of the Education Department however defend the government action saying that the there were processes to be followed in the expansion of an institution. The girl's hostel was to be funded by the University Grants Commission of which the state government is to pool in only 10% of the expenses. Yet the building is being constructed despite the fact that UGC is yet to release the amount. But the students according to the official were taking up the case of the casual employees more than anything else. These casual employees were appointed arbitrarily by respective principals without following formalities as required in any government institution. That the students should take up the cause of the employees is altruistic and in tune with their slogan, "We want Justice." But should the employee issue form the brief of a students' protest? How would their studies suffer if the employees were terminated because of the arbitrary nature of their appointments? And if that sort of arbitrary appointment is allowed at Kiang Nangbah College what prevents other colleges and government bodies from following suit? Legally therefore the protest does not sound tenable. But having said that it was the government's brief to engage the students in a dialogue without talking down to them. And considering that the unrest had started several months ago one is curious as to why the government allowed this issue to fester.

The next big protest could be by the citizens who will be demanding their rights to good roads that should last at least for a minimum period of five years. Look at the roads in Shillong city. In some parts the black topping has completely been washed away. Should the citizens not protest this corruption? The government is therefore looking at a series of protests against its own failure to provide public goods and services. Let's not curb all such protests by imposing Section 144!

TO THE EDITOR

Where is the principle of justice?

Editor,

It is very unfortunate that a section of the print media has not dwelt properly on the irregularities and issues affecting the students of Kiang Nangbah College in Jowai. An institution that once took pride in its alumni, of having the best authors, writers and other individuals from Jaintia Hills is now caught in a web of controversies. The peaceful protest where the student community demanded their right towards improvement and development of their college is justified considering the institution needed a number of things to grow. However the action of the D.C. Jowai along with the local police officers in assaulting without provocation is totally unjustified and violates the human values and human rights of students. Yet the government says that students are the future of the state and community which is utter nonsense. Without empathy, sympathy and understanding of their plight these government officials have been acting without foresight in the name of controlling law and order.

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

The plight of bookies!

Editor,

Apropos the article, "The fog of opinion polls" by

M.J.Akbar, (ST November 9, 2015) MJ Akbar may have found Today's Chanakya prediction of 155 seats to NDA palatable but the prediction was totally wrong. It was not only Today's Chanakya which was wrong but even ITG-Cicero, CVoter, News X-CNX, ABP-Nielsen and News Nation were all wrong. Massive crowds may have come to the Prime Minister's rally but the result has shown that the crowd did not translate to votes. Akbar is correct that bookies investigate every single constituency before notching up their numbers. Not only that but betting on elections is not a simple game. It is based on equations, calculations and reports from the ground sent by experts from within the loosely organised betting rackets that operate out of Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi. Based on the initials calculations and trends, bookies open a rate, or bhaav.

In Bihar betting began three months ago with odds in favour of the BJP winning the election and as the campaign progressed, the bookies became even more gung-ho about the BJP's chances and gave it in excess of 145 seats. But on 5th November 2015, on the final day of the polling, bookies were offering equal odds on the NDA winning only 110 seats and independents and others getting eight. The next government according to

them will now be formed by Nitish Kumar. This has turned out to be correct and the disaster fell on the bookies. This is not the first time that the Indian voters have turned the Satta Market on its head. Even in Delhi, the bookies had opened the game by predicting 45-Plus seats for the BJP and less than 20 for AAP. When the BJP won just three seats only, many bookies were thrown out of business; many punters were ruined financially for life. After Delhi the disaster awaited them in Bihar.

Yours etc.,
VK Lyngdoh,
Viaemail

Dr Pakem's unreal image

Editor,

While passing near the District Library Jowai, once a little boy asked me "Is that how the late Dr B Pakem looked like? I have heard much about this great scholar". Hence I decided to write something on the sculpture of Dr. B. Pakem standing at the District Library Auditorium Jowai so that the bust of the real Dr B Pakem could be seen by the young generation.

The sculpture of (L) Dr B Pakem standing tall at the district library auditorium does not make one happy to look at, as the same does not exhibit the real image of this great scholar of Meghalaya. It seems that the one responsible to issue an order to carve the

bust of Dr Pakem had never seen the real person while he was still alive. How can they unveil a bust of Dr Pakem which bears no resemblance to him? They should have examined the bust carefully before unveiling it. If this sculpture continues to remain at its present location then the next generation and also those VIP's who attend different functions who have never seen him but have heard of him will always have the wrong impression in their minds. In fact, a professional sculptor should be able to bring out the real image of the person. Dr Pakem was a great scholar of the state and of Jaintia Hills in particular and the first Khasi Vice Chancellor of NEHU. He came from a very remote part of Jaintia Hills but rose due to his hard work and academic integrity. I am sure his immediate kith and kin are not pleased to see such a wrongful depiction of the man. Let's not forget the perfect hand of artists who sculpted the statue of Indira Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi and other great personalities of India. Alas the sculptor who did the bust of Dr Pakem could not do justice to his work.

I would therefore appeal to the concerned authority to reconsider and look into the matter so that the actual image could be resculpted.

Yours etc.,
Omanga Laloo
Mynthong Jowai

Bihar gives a wake-up call to Modi and BJP Investors look also for social harmony

By S. Sethuraman

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has shown himself to be a silent spectator, often on crucial occasions of public disquiet, whether over the "growing intolerance" generated by rabid, violent elements of the extreme fringes of the Sangh Parivar including killing of some of the rationalists, or on challenging issues for his proclaimed "maximum governance" and "vikas" juxtaposed with RSS Hindutva agenda goals.

One hardly expects him to react to the political fall-out of the severe setback for BJP and him personally in Bihar, where he launched himself on an all-out campaign for electoral victory spread over several weeks. The party's sidelined elders have given vent to their frustration and called for a thorough probe on what went wrong for it in the Assembly poll. PM's close ministerial colleagues have dismissed such ideas, holding failure in Bihar as one of BJP's "collective responsibility", not to be pinned down on PM Modi and Party President Amit Shah, the obsessive campaigners. The Modi Government, on its part, has no doubt quickly moved to limit damage and reassured international investors that India's growth and reform path remains steady and would be pursued with greater determination. Yet some vital reforms like GST or labour or land laws cannot easily be got through in Parliament, which meets on November 26 for the winter session, without the support of opposition, mainly the Congress in Rajya Sabha, now charged with "obstructionism".

That the Congress is paying BJP back in the same coin for its having blocked the GST bill it sponsored while it was in opposition is not easily forgotten. But the stakes are high and it is, therefore, urged that the Prime Minister take the lead in re-establishing norms of parliamentary conduct and reach out to the opposition so that with a consensus, Government could overcome obstacles to building through key reforms. That would help toward a "transformative economy" that the PM aims at.

With all his foreign travels in Nov-Dec, the Prime Minister needs also to take note of some adverse media comment abroad, misgivings even in some countries, on the way social and cultural issues have become more divisive in Modi India. Still, the Prime Minister remains a charismatic leader who could also promptly respond to tolerance and plurality concerns. He goes to the G-20 Summit in Ankara this weekend (Nov.15-16), from London, heading an emerging economy best positioned to grow to its potential at 8 to 9 per cent in the not distant future while China is engaged in rebalancing its economy with multi-year moderating growth. Brazil and Russia are in recession. Mr Modi will cite the reform push of his government for inclusive growth and job creation.

The G-20 Summit has to take stock of global growth shrinking to 3 per cent and trade growth down to less than 2 per cent in 2015, and has to come up with a strategy to lift economies with "effective demand-side measures that support today's growth and maintain stability", as IMF points out in a note to the Summit on Global Prospects and Policy Challenges.

To offset fall-out from Bihar poll results, the NDA Government has announced some of the reforms that could be pushed through executive action, like further liberalising FDI entry in major sectors and accelerating processes to do business easier and also making growth-enhancing public in-

vestments in infrastructure, notably power and roads. Yet, despite continued low oil prices - which came as boon to Modi Government to cut subsidies and improve public finance - growth in the first half of fiscal 2016 had not picked up over the past year level.

Getting rid of the current slackness in the real sector - agriculture and industry - other than services must get more attention from Government which keeps making bullish statements on growth outlook and reform agenda but with no credible job gains yet. Although China's rebalancing has helped India to become the fastest-growing emerging market economy, IMF projections for the current year and the next for India remain subdued. Growth is slightly revised down to 7.3 per cent in fiscal '16 from earlier 7.5 per cent but retained at 7.5 per cent for 2016/17.

While OECD is broadly complimentary to India's progress with public investment, faster clearance of key projects and further easing of doing business, which should promote private investment, its economic Outlook on November 9, puts down growth to 7.25 per cent in current fiscal and then to rise to 7.3 and 7.4 per cent in the following two years. This too with a thrust on structural reforms.

Global uncertainties for emerging and developing economies are unabated and new vulnerabilities for them are cited by IMF, referring to the transitions under way - the divergence of monetary policy in advanced economies, rebalancing in China and the end of world commodity super-cycle. OECD points out that a more significant slowdown in Chinese domestic demand could hit financial market confidence and growth prospects of developing and advanced economies.

For EMEs more broadly, challenges have increased, reflecting weaker commodity prices, tighter credit conditions and lower potential output growth. Capital outflows and sharp currency depreciations may expose financial vulnerabilities. Of immediate interest and concern to emerging and other economies is the likelihood of US Federal Reserve effecting first rate hike by end of December.

Though India may be able to manage external vulnerabilities, IMF says Fed lift-off could increase financial market volatility, "with potentially disruptive moves in capital flows and asset prices". RBI Governor Dr Raghuram Rajan welcomes US Fed changing course at a time when "loose" monetary policies of advanced nations were leading to disruptive consequences for emerging and developing economies. Monetary policy in India, with rate cuts, remains accommodative.

While the Federal Reserve would be withdrawing accommodation, monetary policy easing will continue in Euro-zone and Japan. This, says IMF, is justified by economic slack and very low inflation in those advanced economies. Even for the Federal Reserve, IMF has cautioned its decision should remain data-dependent, with the first increase in Federal funds rate waiting until labour market gets further strengthened and firm signs appear of inflation rising toward the Fed's target of 2 per cent.

G-20 is called upon to agree on policies to secure strong and durable growth which should be "decisively implemented". (IPA Service)

"Education is the best provision for old age."
—Aristotle

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 94 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2015

Kabul seeks help

THE Kabul government has been battling Taliban-led insurgents for 14yrs. Security has deteriorated this year with the spread of insurgency and the withdrawal of almost the entire US and NATO forces. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has requested India to step up supplies of military hardware. Russia has reported to have received a similar request from Afghanistan. Afghan national security advisor Hanif Atmar has spoken of a long list of deficits in logistics, strike capacity and air and ground mobility assets. It has strategic partnership agreement in 2011. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had committed to offer assistance in the training, equipping and capacity building programmes for Afghan National Security forces. He feared that it might scuttle India's dialogue with Pakistan. New Delhi is now negotiating the transfer of a few helicopters to Kabul. But Narendra Modi's government has also dragged its feet in meeting request from Afghanistan.

Modi should treat Burmese appeal with urgency especially as India's relations with Pakistan has got worse. Besides, Kabul has been shopping for arms elsewhere. It has requested China for military help but Beijing did not comply because of Pakistan's resistance. Kabul has also put his appeal to India on hold as it tried to persuade Pakistan to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. India should ensure that Pakistan should not make Afghanistan is sphere of influence which will oust it from the Afghan scene to its detriment.

LOOKING BACK

March 22, 1988

State Govt is denying District Council its due

Chief Executive Member of Khasi Hills District Council Mr. Hopingstone Lyngdoh has squarely blamed the state govt for the specter of financial paucity that stares in the face of the Council. Replaying to the debate on the budget discussion on Monday, he said that the State Govt by adopting a policy of denial was pushing the District Council towards the path of confrontation.

Mr. Lyngdoh agreed with the members that the State Govt should submit annual statements to the District Council on the collection of royalty on mines and minerals, motor vehicles taxes and professional taxes to know that exact amount of shares. He told the House that in one of his meetings with the former Chief Minister, the matter of submitting annual statement had been agreed upon but so far nothing had materialized.

Mr. Lyngdoh regretted that grants in aid to the District Council under Article 275 were discontinued by the state government. He said that he would take steps to meet the new Govt and plead that grants coming under Article 275 should be taken up with the Central Government.

On small development schemes sponsored by the Central Government, the CEM agreed that the District Councils were most suited to implement and not the Deputy Commissioners and the Block Development Officers. Who were doing the job presently. "If we were to develop our rural areas," he said, "such schemes should be entrusted to the District Councils as they were in direct contact with the people in the villages".

Mr. Lyngdoh said that on certain occasion, he had met with the then Minister-in-charge Fishery who had given him the commitment for fishery grants to the District Council. However, on this matter too nothing was heard of from Department

concerned. Referring to primary education, he said that he would again take up the matter with the new Government for handing over to the District Council. He was even ready to quit his post, as suggested by a Congress (I) member, if that would ensure that return of Primary Education to the Council.

On the need to preserve the existing greenery and the need for more afforestation, he said that unless the State Government came out with generous grants and compensation for loss of forest revenue, the District Council would not be in a position to go in for more afforestation. He informed the House that in the previous year, the District Council had submitted schemes to the State Government on social forestry. But he regretted that no grants was forth coming from the State Government on this subject.

He informed the House of the steps initiated by the Executive to meet the people of villages surrounding the Umiam Lake to ask them to desist from poaching of fish. He further informed the House that the Executive Committee would see that fish was protected from poaching.

On border markets, Mr. Lyngdoh regretted that the Executive Committee could not implement the schemes previously. However, he assured the House that the matter would be taken in earnest in 1988-89. The District Council would also take up the matter of opening border markets as suggested by some members, he added.

The CEM was emphatic that the Executive Committee did not want to confront the Syiems, Sirdars, Lyngdohs and Wahadadar. If any courts cases are pending, he said it was because of the need to be enlightened by the Court on certain matters. He assured the House that he would soon convene a meeting with the rulers of the Elaka for a better understanding.

Me, myself and I

By Dolorem Ipsum

Unfortunately, like a young kid, who is unable to solve a Math quiz, I looked at him, quite embarrassed, and said, "I don't."

Using his psychic ability to read my mind, he gave me an askance glance and murmured, "You are thinking so hard that even your thoughts are echoing." As I chuckled at his observation, he continued, "On November 6, there was a rally in the city, which was supposed to be peaceful; however, it turned violent as some of the protestors started pelting stones at the security personnel."

As I looked at him disconcertingly, he continued, "As you have read, there weren't any loss of lives, but a few police personnel were injured and a few vehicles were damaged." My alter ego then went on to point out on the screen that the president of the organization that had called for this rally had this to say on this matter, "Reacting to a query on the supporters being unhappy with the outcome of the meeting, Kharshing said those who are not happy do not understand the law. "It is difficult for the State government to do anything when the matter is pending with the Ministry of Home Affairs," he added."

As I got up and walked away slowly from the computer, trying to process all this information, my alter ego quipped with unbridled enthusiasm, "Aren't you thrilled that violence is back? We will no longer be melancholic or despondent. Now, we can start 'Rioters' Anonymous", for all those people who have a propensity for hatred, disorder and turmoil. There is money to be made, lives to be annihilated, properties to be destroyed, terror to be spread, gullible masses to be misguided; corrupt politicians and incompetent leaders to be propped up... We are back in the business again, my friend. It is show time!"

I started to respond to him, but he interrupted me saying, "Don't even bother... I can read your mind and hear your thoughts. Look, we are among friends, now. We have people who think and act like you and I. We have people who are out there in the public domain who have DID, and they are ruling over the plebes, and the folks are none the wiser. Most people have no independent thought, they don't have any free will, and they will follow their psychopathic leaders and politicians over the edge of a precipice-the blind leading the deaf."

"How have you reached the conclusion that many of them have DID?" I interrupted.

"Look around you...," he answered "...look at the world around us... read that comment about the cause of violence, from one of the gentlemen who had called for that rally."

As I returned to the computer to re-read the last few paragraphs of that report my alter ego continued, "The organising committee knew that the State government would be incapable of taking this issue forward, as the matter is currently resting with the Central government. Yet, the committee and their cohorts called for this rally, disrupted the daily life of the people, created an ambience that led to violence and damage to property. And the protestors knew that if they resorted to violence, they, too, would break the law, yet they got violent anyway."

"Well, to me, it seems to be a case of Cognitive dissonance, not DID. You know... people smoke, even though they know it causes cancer." I retorted.

"Yes, however, Leon Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory suggests that we strive for internal consistency-we crave to ensure that our beliefs are in constant harmony with our behavior, and any disharmony or inconsistency between the two will be avoided.", countered the split self. "In this case, the organizers and the rioters should have realized that they are experiencing cognitive dissonance; hence, they should have taken action to reduce that dissonance. They knew that the State government could not have taken any unilateral action without understanding the position of the Home Ministry. Hence, having a rally in the middle of the week could have led to no possible resolution, which means that calling off that rally or not resorting to violence is the most logical action to avoid any disharmony. Yet, they went ahead with the rally knowing full well the outcome of such an action. There was no inconsistency between their beliefs and their behavior-hold a rally that won't solve anything and disrupt life; get violent and break the law-it was a consonant relationship."

"Well, don't you think, then, it is a bit of a stretch to consider that they are all suffering from DID?" I retorted.

"No, not at all..." was my alter ego's answer. "This is how a prominent website defines this condition ..." he added. "Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), or Dissociative Identity

Disorder (DID), is the existence in an individual of two or more distinct identities or personalities, each with its own pattern of perceiving and interacting with the environment. At least two of these personalities are considered to routinely take control of the individual's behavior, and there is also some associated memory loss which is beyond normal forgetfulness. This memory loss is often referred to as "losing time". These symptoms must occur independently of substance abuse, or a general medical condition."

"Do you see the connection, now? All of them have multiple personalities, which are distinct from each other. If I am not mistaken, one of the organisers' is a well-known medical doctor, who owns a hospital in the city. He is a capitalist-provides a service and charges for it. Could you imagine his patients or their family members disrupting his practice or his operations, or damaging his property, just because they were dissatisfied with one his hospital's new policies? No! I am sure he would go ballistic on them and have them arrested. However, he has-no, his alter ego-has no qualms about calling a rally in the middle of the week, disrupting businesses, throwing normal life into utter disarray and pretending that he is doing so to protect his culture. I am sure his alter ego would not even feel a tinge of guilt, if people lost their lives because the ambulance they were in was prevented from reaching a hospital-his hospital-by the protestors blocking the roads. DID, right there, right?"

"Likewise," he continued, "the alter egos of the remaining self-proclaimed leaders of this organization are probably working somewhere or running a business somewhere. Imagine somebody calling a peace rally and disrupting their normal life. They would, most likely, go medieval on them. Same is true for the alter egos of people who were pelting stones at the police or the alter ego of the PWD Engineer who felt the rush to join in on the festivities. They are all suffering from DID and the associated memory loss. But, hey, there's nothing to worry, let's call them and give them the telephone number of our shrink. Talking to a shrink will probably help them all to exorcise their ghosts and will probably help them all return to normal life. If not, we can at least make some money by referring thousands of patients to our shrink. Capitalism rocks, ask Herr Doktor, and, moreover, it is finally time for you to show me the money!"

furcate and divide the people of Bihar they showed them that they are united. Now the need of the hour for the N.D.A is to have a "chintan baithak" and to clearly understand that politics of intolerance and hatred will be made to bite the dust.

Your's etc.,
Zaki Anwar Siddiqui,
Shillong-2

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

(Not) The Future That I Want

By Babet Sten

While Shillong Town and the State Government are excitedly celebrating their new-found "indigeneity" I think some moments should be taken to evaluate what all this means. For the urban middle-class, International Terre Madre (ITM) is a chance to enjoy themselves, flirt with foreigners, a day to relax and unwind, all-in-all an event to savour (literally). For the rural poor, it means some money will be coming their way, some photos will be taken of them and for the rural elites it means that - just like at some big Church service - they can show up their "traditional" knowledge and open up 'their' villages to outsiders. ITM is without a doubt a grand event, but it is only an event and that is where the problem lies. It is not a farmers' movement, it is not a grocers' movement; it was decided at the highest levels of the state administration and then came down to the grassroots. There is the fatal problem. Would ITM or NESFAS have even materialised if it were headed by a farmers' collective from Ri-Bhoi or any other district? I will boldly say NO. The reason is not because the farmers would have been too stupid to do something similar to ITM/NESFAS (though probably it would not have been so vulgar). On the contrary, farmers would themselves know that they are facing a challenge in whatever form. They do not need some European "voluntourists" to come along and remind them of the threats. The ease of access that NESFAS has

ask for money to build a road or some other public works: so sorry, no money for you! Meghalaya, next time you need a road, lane or some pipe-works installed go pick up some random foreigner from PB first and then go to the concerned department. Voila, your wishes will come true!

What should have been done? Enough Events, CMji. Events, it is now clear, are just another blackhole into which the corrupt admin can dump cash. Instead of wasting money on these sinking ships, it would have been far better to have injected the same into the various agri-businesses that are floundering. It could have been used to upgrade machinery, improve warehouses, market local goods better, whatever. Now the hotels, non-slowfood eateries, the local artists, musicians, filmmakers can all have a slice of the "indigenous" cake. In one way, this obscene glut can be justified economically but it does not reach everyone, just a certain class in the know, in the loop. It might not be illegal but it is unethical. It does not make sense to court foreigners just for the sake of PR when Garo Hills is burning, when natural resources are dwindling and unemployment dangerously high! This is a mistake like Meghalaya Rural Development Society (MRDS) was a mistake. If you look carefully, it is the same people in a different

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gained into and within the Secretariat indicates how being from a position of privilege and power can literally open doors. Local farmers simply do not have the clout to be able to pitch something like this with such success to our state government. The Secretariat has shown itself to be nothing but an "old boys' club" which only favours those who are already established.

I recently learned this new word - "voluntourism". It is a handy word to describe the work that NESFAS is doing. All these events which it has wasted our money on have little to do with policy-making and 'setting right the wrongs of the past'; they have everything to do with tourism. Tourists form an important part of its workforce; they serve as vindication that its work is noble and true. And of course, the expectation is that white Euro tourists will come in to indulgently lift us out of this depressing cultural and physical poverty. I am not trying to pigeon-hole anyone. Some of the most insightful and compelling work I have read/viewed on North East India are by foreigners; those deserve our respect.

I will repeat again: this event is a WASTE of money. Someone from Opposition/Civil society should bring this up every time Mukul and company go to Delhi to beg for funds. The same government makes a sad face whenever people go to

boat. It creates a dependency on the mother organisation (like MRDS did) which cannot simply be shrugged off. That is what the government is here for, not NESFAS or others. To cover the costs, lighten the burden, of the rural people in particular; to put this mantle on someone else's shoulders is unethical and dangerous. I hope for the farmers' sakes that this does not turn out to be another Monolithic mess. They will be the ones under the mortar not the big-wigs if that happens.

Lastly, what on earth is this "indigenous" thing that NGOs are touting nowadays? Is a Native American the same as a Chittagong tribal? Is a Garo the same as an Aborigine? Is this part of some UNO plan to create a 'global all tribals' political party? Suddenly people have started caring so much about being "indigenous". Care about your roots, your traditions; learn from others too. It's a way of living in the world, not a concert gig to attend. It's not cool, it's not swag or hip. Yes, we need cultural preservation but not as much as rejuvenation. Too many people are obsessed with being romantic about the past and so they look for these types of events to remind them occasionally. These guys can't help you! You need to engage with culture and learn and teach and grow and rear. It isn't outside your Self, it's attached deeply within it.

TO THE EDITOR

Illegible advertisement

Editor,

The advertisement issued by the Health Department under the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes & Cardiovascular Disease published in page twelve of your esteemed daily (ST dated 13 November) is illegible. The sections captioned 'The types of diabetes' and 'Diabetes related complication' are not at all readable. This advertisement was issued

for disseminating public information and awareness on diabetes.

For the benefit of the general public the advertisement may kindly be republished in a form readily legible form so that the ads serve their purpose.

Yours etc.,
Dr Omarlin Kyndiah
Shillong -2

Bihar Assembly results

Editor,

By Aditi Singh

Remember the good old days? Those magical yesteryears when the skies were bluer, air purer, people nicer, music sweeter and life a rainbow-hued fairy tale. In those mythical halcyon days, love and friendships lasted lifelong. Life was all pristine innocence and goodness. Today's crass materialism and soul-stifling lack of morals were unimaginable then. At least that is what we wish to believe when we daydream our way into a nostalgic time warp. Most of us, at some time or other, have compared the glorious past to the degenerate present. It's tempting to tell our successors how we were more intelligent, diligent, honest, better-behaved and better in everything than them. We forget that we too were at the receiving end of such grievances from our own elders. Our venerable elders would surely have heard similar complaints from their own venerable elders. Our prehistoric caveman ancestors would probably have lamented the hairless bodies, larger craniums and more erect gait of degenerate younger generations. They would have deplored the new-fangled way of communicating with words as needlessly complicating the traditional hominid system of modulated grunts. Those new bone and iron tools would have seemed more cumbersome than traditional rocks and sticks. Nostalgia makes us gloss over the flaws and cocoon ourselves in an idealised ver-



Value the life lived

sion of olden days. We feel that in the past people lived better lives. But we conven-

iently overlook the fact that their lives were shorter because of smallpox, cholera and other ailments which

can be cured today. Let's

carry the argument further. If the past was indeed perfectly wonderful, what about the thugs who waylaid innocent travellers on the Grand Trunk Road, and the murderous hordes of Genghis Khan and Timurlane's armies? They too belonged to the golden past. Life in the Middle Ages or Dark Ages as modern ignoramuses call it, was a time of faith. Blind faith. The people were discouraged to learn and ask questions. Thus they were protected from unpalatable

truths. The Salem Witch Trials and the Spanish Inquisition belonged to the golden past too. In our own land, widows were routinely burnt upon their husbands' funeral pyres. Human sacrifice, slavery and other progressive social customs prevailed along with all sorts of superstitions and taboos. People dared not cross the seas and travel to foreign lands for fear of being excommunicated from respectable society. Time-honoured institutions, sadly forgotten today. In the distant past, cave-men led the purest life. No hectic work schedules, no money, and therefore no need to chase that root of all evil. Issues were resolved swiftly and decisively. They simply smashed opponents with their clubs and either killed, or got killed. The apelike forefathers of the Homo Sapiens lived on a higher plane above their degenerate future progeny. They thrived close to nature with their heads up high, usually in the branches of trees. The remoter the past, the grander everything was. Just think of the dinosaurs. Those primeval monsters truly lived life king size.

So, are we the inferior waste products of history and pre-history? Is Darwin's theory of evolution a crazy myth? Is human civilisation hurtling toward a cultural compost pit? Think about it. Is nostalgia deceiving us? Was the past ever perfect? Is the present merely imperfect continuous?

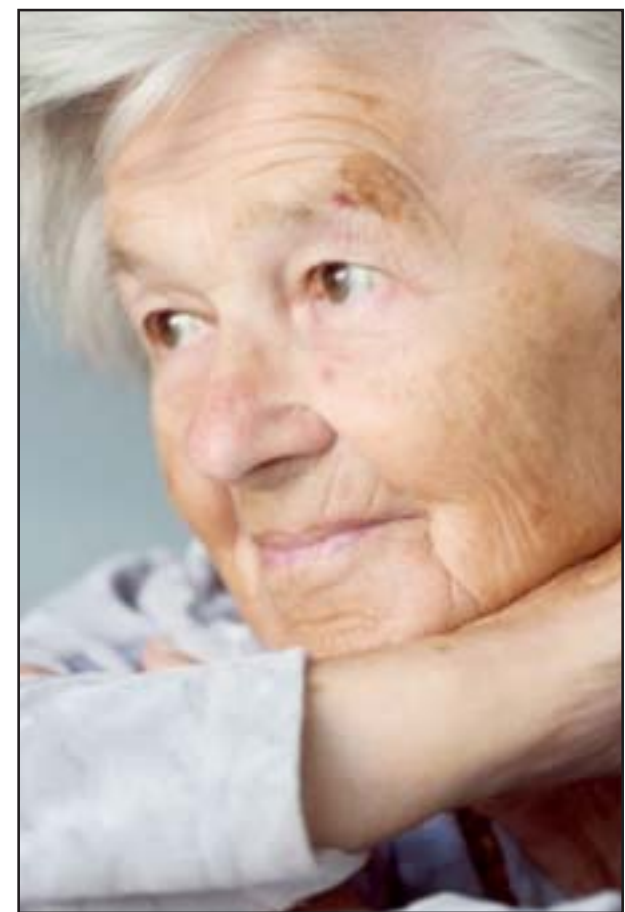
Idealised images from the past have their uses. When the computer gives up its ghost to a virus, or when the Internet grinds to a crawl, it's therapeutic to go strolling through the tranquil bends of memory lane. Sentimental longing and wistful affection for the

past; treasuring selective airbrushed and rose-tinted mental images of times long gone; that's what nostalgia is all about. It's but human to long for a home and loved ones, who have changed considerably with time. Even loved things such as old movies or books can trigger feelings of nostalgia. An old Lata Mangeshkar, Bob Marley, Bob Dylan or Kishore Kumar song can unlock the gates of magical memories, depending upon the generation and culture to which the listener belongs.

Nostalgia smoothes and softens the rough edges of things from the past. In the words of Doug Larson, nostalgia is a device that removes the potholes from memory lane. Nostalgia can

our lives worth living. They were only human, and not all-powerful superheroes. But when we were young, they were perfect in our eyes as they lovingly nurtured us into becoming what we are today. Some of them have left this world, but their affectionate memories continue to guide and uplift us.

Inanimate objects like favourite books, songs or movies can similarly boost our spirits. They gain this power because of their association with our dearest people and happy events from the past. That movie or song is evergreen because we enjoyed it in the company of friends from our carefree schooldays. That favourite book is often the one a beloved parent or teacher gifted us, opening



add cheer and joy to our race-weary lives. How magical it is to leaf through your childhood autograph book filled with scrawls from school pals, teachers, and those film stars who shot a scene in your school if you were lucky enough. Oh, that dreamy feeling of reliving old memories as you view sepia-tinted photographs in the family album! Have you ever felt more delight and contentment? The aromas of your mother's cooking; that camping trip you took with your father; the warmth of his hug as you snuggled into your grandfather's lap and listened to his stories; our dear elders had made

our intellectual perspective in an amazing new way. Whenever I pass a Subway sandwich shop in any city, I am flooded with soft-focus memories of the lively addas I once enjoyed with my children's author friends in a cozy Subway branch in Mumbai. We all live in different cities now. Distance and time draws old friends apart. But nostalgic memories can bring back some of that old happy glow.

Pleasant memories can help us tide over hard times. I remember how my late brother was once passing through a rough phase in life. When I visited him, we sat together leafing through old (Contd on P-VII)



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can be cured today. Let's

ected from unpalatable

The White Road by British potter, writer and alchemist Edmund de Waal has just hit the book stands, with reviewers calling it a "shimmering paean to porcelain". While China was the birthplace of porcelain making almost a 1000 years ago, it travelled to Europe and soon gained huge popularity. Susanta Paral traces the journey while in Austria's capital Vienna

Porcelain: A shimmering journey

Imagine a story of a king with two daughters. One was married within the region while a different story awaited the other. Suppose one day a prince of a different country arrive and fall in love with the other princess, marry her and take her to his kingdom far away. There they lived happily ever. This in a nutshell is the story of porcelain's journey to Europe from China. Though it had originated in China at the time of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), with Marco Polo it travelled to Italy in 1295 and later became part of Europe's craftsmanship.

Edmund de Waal, who has worked with porcelain for 25 years, just recently come out with his book The White Road tracing the journey of the magical clay with his memoirs and anecdotes, making it more than just tracing a history. He says: "It's really quite simple, a pilgrim-

plan to go to three places where porcelain was in-

China to Dresden and Cornwall after beginning his jour-

According to the book quoted by New Statesman, the process, kept secret for centuries, begins with the mining of two substances - petuntse, or porcelain stone, and kaolin, or porcelain clay.

"First, they are dug from the earth and then they are purified, mixed, shaped, glazed and fired. It was an industry that once involved thousands of different labourers and thousands of now half-extinct skills and techniques, among them 'six categories of decorator, three of specialists in packing kilns, three for firing kilns, mould-makers, carpenters for crates, basket-makers, ash men..."

Journey of porcelain in Europe's Austria started with Claudius Innocentius du Paquier who in 1718 was the founder of the second



"Panorama" soup plates

age of sorts, to beginnings, a chance to walk up the mountain where the white earth comes from...I have a

vented, or reinvented, three white hills in China and Germany and England." The writer travels from

ney in Jingdezhen in south-eastern China, known to be the porcelain capital of the ancient times.



"Tambours" or bronze-gilt stands

porcelain manufactory in Europe in Vienna. It was called Augarten

porcelain and the manufactory in Vienna was set up after Augustus II, King of

Poland, founded the first European hard paste porcelain factory at Meissen in

1710 (in Germany). Augarten pieces bear the shield from the coat of arms of the Dukes of Austria as a trademark. Austrian connection with porcelain developed further with Duke Alexander of Lorraine's porcelain collection from far east around 1700, which are in display at Hofburg Place in Vienna. It then peaked with tableware collection of Empress Maria Theresa in the mid 18th century.

Some of the surviving pieces of Duke Alexander of Lorraine represent an interesting symbiosis between Far Eastern and European culture. European silversmiths created a unique combination of silver and gold with porcelain from Japan and China. Their blue, red and gold painted decoration is in the typical colours of Japanese porcelain of that epoch, which is known as Imari ware.

"Tambours" or bronze-gilt stands which held sweetmeats and decorated the imperial dining table; belongs to the New French Centre piece acquired by the young Emperor Franz Joseph.

In 1803 Emperor Franz of Austria ordered a porcelain service comprising 120 items for the court table, including 60 pictorial plates for dessert and 24 "panorama" soup plates of exceptional quality.

The choice of motifs was both patriotic and Romantic. Framed by gold rims, the scenes include erupting volcanoes, icy glacier landscapes or imposing Viennese architecture - with each plate displaying three views from Austria, Switzerland and Italy, executed by the best porcelain painters after old engravings, a painstaking (Contd on P-VII)

By Dipankar Jakharia



Safeguarding doctors

One of the most respected professions on earth is undoubtedly the medical profession. Although doctors are still considered as close to gods, perceptions have changed a lot in recent times. Frequent news of tussle between medicos and their dissatisfied attendants and patients is not only disturbing, but also demeaning. With changing social norms in our increasingly market-oriented economy, doctors are also service providers who cater to clients, i.e. their patients. Like any other profession where one has to cater to clients, there may ensue some disputes. A patient may demand compensation if he/she is not satisfied with his/her doctor's service, staying within the legal framework of the land. And to safeguard his/her liabilities as a service provider, doctors can go for insurance, which is called the professional indemnity insurance.

This particular insurance covers a doctor when he/she is sued by a patient for negligent diagnosis in the course of treatment, or for providing a sub-standard course of treatment. When a doctor is sued by a patient, the insurance company will indemnify the insured for those sums which the insured is covered for, and will pay the damages during the policy period. The damages can be paid when a doctor is sued for:

- o Medical practitioner's endorsement.
- o Loss of documents, including computer records of medical records.
- o Breach of confidentiality, i.e., giving away patient information.

o Dishonesty of employees.

o Libel and slander, written or verbal.

The scope of the cover is for civil liabilities. Any criminal negligence and subsequent liability is strictly beyond the scope of this insurance. While insuring a doctor, insurance companies categorise them into different groups according to the risk they undertake in doing the insurance. Some broad categories can be seen as:

Low-risk: Physicians, general pathologist.

Moderately low-risk: Specialist or consulting physician (non-surgical).

High-risk: Surgeons (excluding specialists in plastic surgery), radiologist, lithotripsy specialists, dentists.

Very high-risk: Surgeons (plastic surgery) and anaesthesiologists.

Needless to say, doctors belonging to the very high risk group pay the highest premium, and the low risk group pays the lowest. One interesting fact is that, cosmetic surgeons are normally out of the scope of this insurance.

For doctors, while choosing an indemnity insurance, the following tips might be of help:

Having several policies with the same insurer will often give you discounts. Ask your insurance company where you already have your motor or fire insurance, if they offer professional liability insurance. Find out what savings will apply if you add this type of policy to your existing kitty of policies.

Look for companies who specialise in your profession, whether you are a paediatrician, or a plastic surgeon. Many insurance companies design policies specifically for your speciality.

Mention any professional associations or membership. Some insurance companies will offer discounts to members of certain organizations.

Get quotes from at least three or four companies. Make sure all the information you provide to each carrier is the

same. Ask for itemized quotes that include the amount of coverage offered, as well as your premiums and deductibles.

Review the quotes and compare them with your colleagues. Pay attention to what is covered. Make sure the policy covers you as a professional, as well as your establishment as a whole. Check coverage amounts, as well as your costs and any exclusions that are not covered. Most policies start from a sum assured of five lakhs.

Review annual financial statements from the company to determine their financial strength. Your hospital finance team or accountants should be able to help you with this.

Talk to colleagues and ask for referrals. Find out which company in your network are active for their professional liability insurance, and ask if they have been pleased with the service they have received.

(The writer is a Guwahati based independent financial adviser. Follow the writer on twitter @d_jakharia)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career option in retail

Retail Industry, one of the fastest changing and vibrant industries in the world, has contributed to the economic growth of many countries. The term 'retail' is derived from the French word 'retailer' which means 'to cut a piece off' or 'to break bulk'. Retailing is a vital part of the business industry that involves selling products and services to consumers for their individual or family use. Retailing can also be defined as the timely delivery of goods demanded by consumers at an affordable and competitive price.

A course in retail management can help one to learn

tail industry are : Sales, Store Manager, Retail Manager, Retail Buyers and Merchandisers, Visual Merchandisers, Supply Chain Distributors, Logistics and Warehouse Managers, Marketing Executives, etc.

Many institutes in India and abroad offer several online courses which are exclusively meant for retail management. Nowadays most of the Business

Post Graduate Certificate in Retail Management, Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing and Retail Management, Post Graduate Diploma in Retail Management, Post Graduate Programme in Fashion Retail Management.

The scope of the retail has tremendous potential in the north east as more and more number of corporate or retail outlets or malls

are sponsored by different ministries or agencies.

Exam Updates:
NID Entrance : The National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad has invited application for an entrance test to be held on January for admission to its 4-year intensive professional Bachelor of Design (B.Des.) and 2 and half years Master of Design (M.Des.) Programmes for the year 2015-16. National Institute of Design offers professional education programmes at Bachelors and Masters Level. Last date of receiving the application form for admission into next year's programme is 27th November. Design Aptitude Test for B. Des and Design Aptitude Test for M. Des would be held on 10th January 2016.

TISS Entrance: Tata Institute of Social Science, one of the leading institutes related to social work and development studies has announced MA admission for next academic year. It has announced admission to the 2016-18 batch for its Full-Time (Regular) Post-Graduate Degree Programmes offered from Mumbai, Tuljapur, Guwahati, Hyderabad campuses and other locations. Last Date for Online form submission for All Master's programmes 30th November. Last Date for receipt of application form by post is 1st December. National Entrance Test would be held on January 09, 2016.

(Writer is a associated with North East Youth Foundation and he may be reached at 98640 55558 or youngmatters@gmail.com for career planning and further details)



the concepts of retailing, which would be helpful for future undertakings as well as practical experiences. Marketing strategies, Accounting, Business mathematics, ethics and law, Customer relation, business communication and Retail buying and operations are some of the topics related to Retail management courses. Some job prospects in re-

schools offer Retail management as a subject of specialisation and some institutes offers diploma programme in Retailing. Some of the courses are Bachelor of Fashion Retail Management, Diploma in Fashion Merchandising and Retail Management, MBA Marketing and Retail Management, MBA Retail Management,

has started. Though there are no big malls in region but there might be many in the years to come which will bring scopes for trained young people on the subject. Effective communication skill and positive attitude is bonus for the people who want to work in the sector. Apart from regular courses there are some short term courses which

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

'Star - Gazing'

Sunday, November 15, 2015

Venus is forming an angle of 150 degrees with Neptune on your solar return chart which denotes that positive developments would take place as opportunities emerge. This is certainly a good period as your morale and self-confidence are high and you meet difficult tasks head on and resolve work related issues. New beginnings are in store, whether this means a fresh start in existing relationships or new ones altogether. You look at investments. Give due attention to health. A time when you become emotionally stronger and family ties are strengthened.

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

This phase will give you wonderful results. A lot of excitement, pleasure, romance is on the cards. You focus on having fun, romance, 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. Strong chances of finalization of a property related matter. Monetary transactions are beneficial in land related matters.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

This period may put on lot of pressure on you. A positive and creative approach brings gain and resolution in old conflicts and work situations. You need to view professional and business problems from a balanced perspective. Learn from past experience and get on with your life rather than repeat old patterns. Emotive issues can crop up. However later on dust will settle down and you will look up at life with 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.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

The planetary configuration promises an excellent phase. 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. You gain the trust and confidence of people in authority. It's time to let go of obsolete patterns and routines and have a new vision for the future. You will spend on clothes, furniture, and entertainment; the areas of life where you are most likely to express your appreciation of the fine things in life.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

Money and domestic issues will take a 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. This is a time when you need to act with prudence and focus on your priorities. 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, 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 at this time. Problems in your life may be overcome by bravery, self-assertion, and directness. There's nothing wrong with a bit of self-centeredness. Romantic matters come to the fore this week 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 this week.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

You can look forward to an exciting week. 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 finer print. However, financial pressure will be there as you spend large sums of money on homemaking, house repairs, re-decorating and family activities. 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. Opportunities and invitations from overseas take you on an unplanned journey. Visitors, friends and family make this a happy time as an event in family is celebrated. You are full of hope and enthusiasm as you make new beginnings at work and home. The desire for some form of recognition and financial success is stronger than any other time enhanced now. You express your feelings to your beloved and will be happy to find that they are reciprocated.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

An action oriented week keeps you busy. Public relations work, interpersonal relations and other such endeavors are highlighted now. There will be a multitude of tasks for you to handle both at work and at home. 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 mixed period 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. You are inclined to learn new work skills, or to improve your skills and output in terms of work. Your family and friends will support you and you will find solace in their company. You will be able to enjoy personal relationships with love and affection. Children will bring joy and happiness. Pay attention to your health and do not neglect or overlook minor ailments.

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)

This is an excellent week where communications, romantic affair and fun activities flourish. You can expect something new at this time. You would be able to make use of your talent and communication skills and impress people around you. This brings some new opportunities. Your career prospects 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 decorate your home with good taste and quality. Your charm makes you the center of attraction as you find yourself back on the social whirl. 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 are likely to travel and engage in a variety of activities and meet new people. 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 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. 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 the investments and insurance. Monetary transactions are going to be beneficial, you have to research and focus to achieve the desired goals. Romance is very much on the cards. It's time to let your lover know what you want and what has been making you especially happy.

Porcelain: A shimmering journey

(Cond from P-VI) task that took five years. This white and gold dinner service was acquired for Emperor Ferdinand in 1851. Ferdinand, abdicated from the throne during the course of the bourgeois revolution of 1848 and subsequently moved to Prague, where he lived until his death. The white and gold dinner service was ordered for his household in Prague from the porcelain manufactory of the Counts of Thun at Klösterle in Bohemia.

The design was the very height of fashion at that time. Tastes had changed around the middle of the 19th century, with the emphatically clear lines of the Biedermeier era giving way to softer, more flowing formal idiom. The rich gold decoration expresses the growing need to demonstrate feudal magnificence, a tendency that also made itself felt at the imperial Viennese court.

Another magnificent service with the green ribbons was a precious gift as a sign of increasing rapprochement between France and Austria after the bloody wars of succession: from the French king, Louis XV, to Empress Maria Theresa. Green intertwining ribbons represent the main decorative element, between the ribbons are delicately ornamented representing love, poetry, music, painting and sculpture.

This elegant wares were produced by the royal French porcelain manufactory at Sèvres (France), which was founded in 1738. They are made of a special porcelain known as "frit", which, while more fragile, allows the colours to develop a particularly intense radiance due to the lower firing temperature.

There was a tradition that every archduke of Habsburg family had to learn a manual craft or trade. The Vienna Porcelain Manufactory was commissioned to produce two series of floral plates dedicated to Emperor Franz III (1768-1835) who had learned gardening and loved flowers. These plates were used as dessert.

The first porcelain manufactory in Europe was established at Meissen in Germany around 1710. Meissen china is the first European hard-paste porcelain developed from 1708 by Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus, a German mathematician, physicist, physician, and philosopher considered to have been the inventor of European porcelain.

This Meissen service made around 1775 is striking for its exquisite floral painting. The shapes of the individual pieces are good examples of "Baroque Classicism". The perforated fruit basket already displays elements of Classicism with its predilection for the formal repertoire of Antiquity.

A remarkable exhibit here is the unusual English dinner service that Empress Elisabeth gave to Emperor Franz Joseph for his hunting lodge at Offensee. Dating to 1870, it was designed by William Coleman and is decorated with naturalistic representations of insects, birds, sea creatures and plants.

The Palace was without bathroom till Empress Elisabeth had her own bathroom installed in 1876. Even after this, most of the court house hold had to make do with sets of sanitary porcelain consisting of washbasins, water jugs, footbaths, shaving bowls, soap dishes, chamber pots and so on. Most of them were made of white porcelain and decorated with a gold rim and a gold imperial eagle.

The manufactory dropped out from business in 1864. The porcelain of the Vienna manufactory are often referred

Value the life lived

(Cond from P-VI) photos of our shared childhood. Then, he brought out his file of testimonials. That letter of appreciation from a visiting dignitary; that photo with a famous film star; a glowing recommendation from a former employer; those newspaper clippings; all helped gradually ease his frown and bring back the spring in his stride. Drawing a deep breath, he then readied to face the challenges ahead with fresh hope and energy. Nostalgia helps us overcome setbacks. It reminds us that if winter has come, spring cannot be far behind. If we succeeded before, we have the capacity to succeed again in our endeavours. Nostalgia can give us hope and courage.

Nostalgia is a great way of creating and nurturing human ties. Families and friends bond over happy memories, sharing experiences and emotions. School and college alumni associations are strengthened by nostalgia. When I attended a meeting of the Lady Shri Ram College Alumnae Association in Delhi, I had hoped to reunite with long-lost friends from my college days in New Delhi. I scanned the unfamiliar names and faces of attendees who ranged from august ladies to youngsters who looked as though they had bunked lectures to be there. I didn't find a dear old friend, but as I chatted with the others, I realised we all shared memories. Our favourite teachers, discovering fascinating books in the library and bonding over snacks at the college canteen; we had been there and enjoyed the same things. People may have studied different courses, and may be born generations apart. But getting together to celebrate the glory of the shared alma mater can draw diverse people closer.

Our memories of what was good in our past can guide us to build good things in our future. I sometimes feel nostalgic about Melly Aunty, an especially friendly and caring neighbour from decades ago. These memories stand as guidelines for my own behaviour today. Nostalgia can help us understand the things that matter the most to us; the memories and emotions that leave a lasting impression in our minds when all else has passed.

Nostalgia can enrich literature and history. Rabindranath Tagore's enchanting memoir, My Reminiscences, brings to vivid life Tagore's unique childhood world as he grew up in the thick of the Bengal Renaissance. Dipping into nostalgic memories is a lovely way to soothe and revitalise our souls. But we must take care to dwell just long enough, and not lose ourselves in nostalgia. Our focus should be to use that fresh energy and insight to face today's challenges with renewed vigour. INAV

to as "Alt Wien" (Old Vienna) porcelain, to distinguish it from the products of the new Ausgarten manufactory, which was established in 1923, and revived the traditions of the old Vienna porcelain manufactory.

Modern designers such as Josef Hoffmann, Walter Bosse and Hertha Bucher characterized production in the 1920s and 1930s. The preference for clarifying simplicity that prevailed in the 1950s is on display, as are works by Arik Brauer from the 1970s.

Albin Denk is another name which can't be avoided when depicting Viennese porcelain. It was founded in 1702 as the first porcelain house in the city center of Vienna and awarded with the title of imperial purveyors in 1878. (TWF)

“If you want to achieve excellence, you can get there today. As of this second, quit doing less-than-excellent work.”

Thomas J. Watson

The Shillong Times

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Judicial activism

JUDICIAL activism has become a subject of constant discussion, debate and often a matter of controversy, in India in general and in Meghalaya in particular. According to Justice A M Ahmadi, former Chief Justice of India, “judicial activism is a necessary adjunct of the judicial function since the protection of public interest as opposed to private interest happens to be the main concern”. Since the establishment of Meghalaya High Court on 23rd March, 2013, many thought provoking and progressive judgements were passed by the Judges of this High Court which have proved that such judgements are essential for a dynamic, vibrant and participative democracy.

The judgment about the authority of the traditional heads in Meghalaya, the judgment on unauthorised high rise buildings of the who's who in Shillong, banning media from publishing bandh call notices of banned organizations like HNLC and GNLA and other militant groups operating in Meghalaya, and orders of summoning and making the district officials accountable when business establishments were closed during the illegal bandhs by the banned outfits are a few historic judgments and Orders that set the intelligentsia and executive in constant introspection and course correction.

The judgment on the authority of the traditional heads of Meghalaya led to the drafting of the Village Administration Bill for the first time since the formation of Meghalaya in 1972. The order on the illegal high rise structures in Shillong resulted in CBI enquiry against MUDA Officers; an orders of this Hon'ble Court held the district officials in Mawkyrwat accountable for the ill treatment meted out to a mentally challenged person. And for the first time in the last two decades, people celebrated Independence Day this year. It would seem therefore that the best thing that could happen to Meghalaya is the establishment of the Meghalaya High Court. Its proactive judicial intervention has woken up the officials who have been somnolent. The police department too has been hauled up on a number of occasions. When the executive fails the judiciary has to step in to correct the anomalies that have crept in through executive inaction and lethargy. The High court is setting many things right in Meghalaya.

LOOKING BACK

March 22, 1988

Tripura CM renews offer for talks with TNV

Tripura Chief Minister Mr. Sudhir Ranjan Majumdar today said his government was prepared to have a dialogue with the outlawed Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) provided it accepted the Indian constitution and gave up the demand for “free Tripura”.

Addressing his first news conference here after he became Chief Minister. Mr. Majumdar said in reply to a question that extremists activities in the state were under control. There had been no incidents since the Congress (I)-TUJUS Ministry came into power. He denied allegations of interference by the army in the maintenance of law and order and said it had been given specific tasks which it was performing.

Mr. Majumdar, and Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti Chief Mr. Shyama Charan, who was also present, said the army was not expected to remain indefinitely. Therefore, it would be better if TNV joined the national mainstream by accepting

the constitution, they added.

Mr. Majumdar and Mr. Charan alleged that TNV had links with the previous Left Front Government. Evidence had been found in this regard, they claimed.

The Chief Minister denied the allegation that TNV was the creations of the TUJS, like the Pradesh Congress Committee (I), had long ago asked former Chief Minister Mr. Nripen Chakraborty and the State Government to ban TNV and declare the entire state as disturbed. How could such a party have connections with the outlawed, Mr. Majumdar asked.

The army had maintained good relations with the people. They were distributing medicines and helping them in other ways, he added.

The State Government had constituted a one-man commission to inquire into charges of misappropriating of funds amounting to about Rs 90 crore of the Autonomous District Council of tribals since 1985, he added.

Saddest Day in the History of Jowai

By H H Mohrmen

Jowai or Jwai as the residents of the town would like to call it is one of the oldest villages in the state and historically speaking, although we have stories about the existence of the place only in the British records, that does means that it did not exist in the pre-colonial period. Although the earliest written records we have about the town was from the British era, yet because the place and the natural phenomena in and around it abounds with legends and stories, we consider the place old. Jowai is old because the origin of the town is based on a folk story with mythical figure which is still being narrated by those who are still follow the traditional religion (niamtre) while performing the many religious rites and especially during Behdienkhlam festival.

All in all Jowai is a peaceful town and people who live on the hilly portion of the erstwhile Jaintia Kingdom are peace loving people. There were not much records of public violence in the town, yet, the town has its own share of history which is heartrending and also affects the entire village or town as the case may be. The sad story of this small village which is now becoming a major town in the state begins with the first rebellion of the Pnar people against the British Raj when u Kiang Nangbah's uncle protested and fought against British intrusion into their land. This was followed by the great Jaintia rebellion which saw the rise of u Kiang Nangbah; a common man from Jowai who went on to lead and unite the entire hills portion of the Jaintia Kingdom to fight against the mighty British empire till he was hanged to death on the scaffold.

In the late sixties Jowai experienced another unpleasant incident when few young man were fired at by the armed forces stationed then at the PWD inspection Bungalow, Jowai. It was supposed to be a night of joy and merry making for the people of the town who till now still have an unparalleled tradition of bidding farewell to the old year and celebrating with gusto the coming of the New Year. It was a New Year's eve and as usual communities from around the town celebrated throughout the night to wish

each other happy new year. But on that ill-fated day before the old year could give way to the new one, a group of young men of the town on reaching near the DC's office and while dancing to the music, were fired upon without any provocation. Many were injured and some succumbed to their injuries.

Even during the heydays of the HNLC the people of Jowai did not willfully support bandhs called by the organization till they were terrorized by the militants and their supporters. People went about doing their chores during Independence and Republic day until the militants manhandled and threatened those who dared to come out at gun point. The residents of the town particularly those who are in the old part of the Jowai are business people and they do not easily support bandhs and hartals for the simple reason that it is going to affect their business.

But the recent police attack on the students who protested in the heart of Jowai against the government's apathy towards the college is unprecedented. The government in general and the minister in charge of education in particular should be held responsible for what has happened on the ill-fated day. The local MLA who is also currently minister in charge of education and had been minister of this same department many times before has failed to address the grievances of this only government college in the district. The government had time and again failed to address the needs of the college and the students had no other option but to resort to agitation to compel the government to address their grievances. This is not the first time that students of this college had to hit the streets to demand what is necessary for the smooth running of this college. In the late eighties this writer was a student of this college and was also elected as the vice-president of the Kiang

Nangbah Government College Students' Union and even then the students had to agitate to compel the government to provide the college with a bus. The government has been turning a blind eye to this college hence the students of this institution had to hit the streets almost on a regular basis to compel the government to address their demands.

This time too, the students of the college had earlier marched to the DC's office and withdrawn their agitation based on the promise made by the DC that the government would comply with their demands. The student community had earlier given the district administration time to address their issues, but even after many months had lapsed, their demands were not addressed. It was after the deadline was reached for the ultimatum given to the district administration that the students decided to march again to the DC's office in protest but what began as a peaceful protest ended up in a mess.

Everybody knows that the District Administration is only a shield to defend the government which has time and again failed to address the grievance of the students. That being the case the district administration should anticipate that something like this could happen. The ill-fated incident has only exposed the lack of preparedness on the part of the district administration because the students were on strike and the students had already announced that they were on the agitational path.

The district administration may claim that they have gone by the book and used Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) to tackle the situation, but what they failed to realized is that some situations do not require SOPs but commonsense. The administration should have used commonsense and taken into consideration that it was a cold wintry afternoon and in few hours the students would have had to go

home because they are not prepared for a long-drawn agitation. The district administration should have allowed agitation to play itself out and diverted the traffic on the particular section of the town so that the students could peacefully protest by occupying lawmusiang. The administration should have at least waited for until dusk before the students would have dispersed anyway, but it acted rather unprofessionally and decided to charge against a crowd of unarmed students.

I used to take a class on land holding systems and mining at the Meghalaya Administrative Training Institute (MATI) for new IAS recruits of Assam-Meghalaya cadre, but now I realize that something that would prepare the administrators for their jobs is to do a bit of study on the people and the place where they are going to serve. Jowai in particular and West Jaintia hills in general does not have a history of violent agitations; the district administration should have also taken this fact into consideration and addressed the issue cautiously. But the more important lesson that an administrator needs to learn is that standard procedures can never replace common sense while performing their duties and handling crises.

Common sense would have made the district administration realize that filing first information reports against the students and the pressure groups would only add fuel to the fire. What property did the students damage? Can we compare the recent agitation of the KNGSU with the agitation organized by the conglomerate of pressure groups which demanded for implementation of the Inner line Permit (ILP) in the state? And about the policemen who claimed that they were hurt by the students, how many of them had to be taken to the hospital? The district administration will do itself a favour if it withdraws the FIR filed against the students unless the government wishes to incite the civil society to join the students in the protest.

Will the game of alibis get over?

By M J Akbar

The terrorist assault on cities began in Mumbai: not Mumbai 2008, but Mumbai 1993. A series of coordinated bomb blasts in February 1993 had an impact far greater than the destruction of half a dozen buildings. The thesis that a humungous metropolis constitutes a soft spot has been proved often since 1993 across the world. It is porous, and therefore particularly vulnerable to those whose only objective is terror, best achieved by the killing of innocents wherever they can be found. Nothing is sacrosanct: school, hospital, railway station, stadium, music arena. Terrorists are mass murderers; mass urbanization offers them a hunting ground. It once required armies to raze a city. Technology has changed the equation between offence and defence. A few can inflict the dread that once needed a host of uniforms.

The assault on New York, more familiar as 9/11, was perhaps the most dramatic, not least because of unbelievable visuals that still live

about the hunt for mastermind, pursuing a quarry only when it suits them rather than as a principle. We hear the same clichés on the day of a tragedy. Once memory cools, politics and clever advocacy of geostrategic options prevail. The killers in Paris were puppets. The puppeteer is sitting in some sanctuary somewhere else. As long as he can survive with impunity, protected by vested interests that could include local governments, this malevolence will not ebb.

Initial reports say that ISIS was behind the havoc in Paris. On paper this simplifies the search; in real life this extends the problem. ISIS has, uniquely, been attracting volunteers from western Europe, particularly England and France. The Trojan horse does not have to be dragged through city gates by stealth. The horse is living quietly within its target city, if not with a regular job then at least with social security. This will have consequences in the whole of Europe, most emphatically

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on airwaves. But New York was not alone. Equally famous Western cities were hit and hurt, leaving each one in uproar, rage, horror, pain - and, in all cases till date, still groping for a comprehensive answer to a vicious problem.

Nations have improved their tactical capacity to defend their cities, but have been singularly unable to agree upon the counteroffensive needed to bring terrorist masterminds to justice.

This deadlock is a recipe for ruin. Terrorists have expanded their reach, improved their weapons and increased their recruits. We can no longer dismiss the possibility that nuclear contamination might be within their reach. If we are hapless in a confrontation with conventional weapons, what will we do when they use unconventional ones? Those on a suicide mission do not care how they die. What they care about is how many they will take with them.

Responsible governments now know that you cannot wreck a country in search of elusive militias. Iraq was an expensive folly. Responsible leaders recognize that you cannot blame a whole religion, Islam, for the sins of a few Muslims. It was a coincidence, but just hours before the anguish of Paris hit our consciousness, Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted that the spirit of Islamic Sufism has been and remains the antidote to guns and terrorism. This is the kind of understanding that requires reinforcement.

In practical terms, however, what next? We cannot deny a simple fact. Nations who have been worst hit by terrorism remain ambivalent

TO THE EDITOR

Getting back to our roots

Editor,

The negative criticism of the International Terra Madre 2015 which was held in Mawphlang is totally uncalled for since the organisers have put in a massive effort to make sure that the event is a resounding success. Most of the people who came were left disappointed since they were expecting a mouthful from a large number of foreign cuisines but all they could get their hands on are food being prepared out of cuisines indigenous to the region. Most of them are ignorant of the fact that the spotlight of the event is on indigenous people and their cuisines rather than on the fast food culture that is so popular nowadays. The event should have been an eye opener to the youths of the region of the rich cultural heritage and cuisines of their people and their land. Our fascination with anything western, (I'll leave music out since music is something which is universal) makes us put our own culture on the back burner which in turn makes us the laughing stock of the rest of the country and the whole world. It's high time that youths of the region learn to embrace their own culture and language since it is these two

things that defines us as Indians.

Yours etc.,
Gary Marbaniang,
Via email

Accidental guerrillas to AFSPA

Editor,

During the 49th annual conference of all state police chiefs and DGs of Central police forces, the former Director of the Intelligence Bureau Syed Asif Ibrahim said, “Insurgency situation in Northeast has remained fragile, while Maoists’ activities and strengths are on the wane. The situation is critical in Garo Hills and the State DGP seems to realise that his men are not working harder in stabilising the region. Why? The police force seems to have forgotten the centre of gravity ‘PEOPLE’. What propelled the Meghalaya High Court to open the AFSPA option?”

“Accidental Guerrilla” is a term coined by Australian counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen to describe the villagers. People are the decisive terrain, communicating and informing the people is now a common task that should be executed and an essential element of battle com-

mand. The people have no transnational agenda but they are defending their local ways and customs from encroachment from outside. The paramount in leadership skills is to learn how to listen and thereby protect the people.

The goals of counter insurgency cannot be achieved with firepower alone. The region is deficient in political stability, infrastructure, education and basic services which are required to be looked upon without which the population remains at risk of falling in the hands of insurgents. It can only be won through alliances, building trust and reading intentions which requires exceptional ability to understand people, their culture and their motivation. Least to say for outside forces that jump into an unfamiliar turf can easily turn them into foes. The political leadership seems to misunderstand the concept of insurgency and is therefore pushing more forces into the area. Counterinsurgency approach should stress the need to make local populations feel secure by living among the population and using less force. Small is always beautiful and the police force should imbibe this concept. The knowledge of the enemy's motivation, intent, will and cultural environment will prove to be more important

than drones and smart munitions.

On the other side the draconian law AFPSA (1958) which would be a sting of a scorpion for the region, is sought to be imposed, but what is the success rate of such a law? The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act was enacted in 1958 to bring under control what the Government of India considered ‘disturbed’ areas. From targeted killings to night raids it gives immunity to the army which is why the Act has drawn flak from various quarters of society.

The present crisis in Garo Hills requires a multi pronged approach and to stabilize the situation through changes in strategy and leadership. Two main principles within the COIN spectrum; counterinsurgent forces must be able to learn and adapt, to protect the population and the side that learns quickly and conforms more rapidly would win.

Finally, if we do not proceed with caution we would create more enemies than friends.

Yours etc.,
Christopher Gatphoh
Shillong-14.

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

"The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential... these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence."

— Confucius

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 97 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2015

Paris is not for burning

PARIS burnt in an immense terror attack on Friday for a little more than 3 hours. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the catastrophic attack. It called the attacks "the first of the storm" and mocked the cultural capital of the world as a capital of prostitutions and obscenity. It was the worst manifestation of Islamic fundamentalism sweeping over West Asia. The nature of the attack was more like IS operations than Al Qaida operations. France is part of the US-led coalition that has been striking the IS group in Syria and Iraq for the past year and has been targeted by the Jihadists because of its perceived tolerance of speech deemed offensive to Islam. In January, Al Qaida was supposed to have killed cartoonists at the Charlie Hebdo office in Paris. Even if something may be said in defense of the attack of the cartoonists who were targeted for blasphemy, the invasion of Paris was unparalleled in recent history. It was not just that 150 people were killed, the widespread destruction in the great city is a wakeup call to the UN to bring the IS to heel.

The world closed ranks behind France and President Francois Hollande pledged relentless war on terrorism. Cities around the world lit up their iconic monument to show solidarity with Paris while Eiffel tower plunged into darkness. The tragedy belies US President Barack Obama's claim that the IS atrocities have been contained. It is good that Russia and China which had been ambivalent about joint action in Syria have roundly condemned the attack in Paris. The weakness of security in France should create great concern in India. The recent act of terror has triggered debates in Indian security and intelligence establishment on the safety of Indian city. Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has gone from UK to Turkey is firmly committed to raising the issue of counter-terrorism at the G20 Summit.

LOOKING BACK

March 23, 1988

Lapang turns down opposition plea

Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister D. D. Lapang turned down in the State Assembly on Tuesday an opposition demand for making public the Chandrachud Committee report on the Assam and Meghalaya boundary. He, however assured that the report would be placed in the House after the Chief Ministers of the two states had discussed it.

The Opposition made a hubbub in the House through a cut motion. Several members criticized the state govt for its failure to protect the people residing in the disturbed areas.

They alleged that Assam Police personnel deployed in the border had been harassing the people of Meghalaya. Some of the Opposition members asserted that Meghalaya's territorial integrity should be protected by any means with a veiled suggestion for resisting physically.

Mr. Lapang tried to pacify the members saying that the disputes should be solved without bitterness. It was a delicate issue which demanded mutual understanding on both sides. He appealed to the Opposition for extending cooperation but rejected a suggestion for an on the spot study by members from all sides of the House.

Referring to the criticism over the Chandrachud Committee Mr. Lapang said that the committee had submitted its report on the basis of documents and submissions made by both the States. Several leaders and

institutions had submitted their views on the matter. The State Govt also placed important documents from the archive.

Earlier, moving the cut motion Mr. Sanbor Swell Lyngdoh (PDIC) wondered why the Assam Chief Minister was pressing for an early settlement on the basis of Chandrachud Committee report. Does the report favour Assam, he asked. The report was not binding on anybody and therefore it was wasteful expenditure.

Mr. S. L. Marbaniang (HSPDP) accused the Govt of "shedding crocodile tears" for the people of the border. The affected people had the right to know about their fate. He said the amount spent on the Chandrachud Committee could have been better utilized by giving it to the people to defend themselves.

Mr. Korbar Singh (HPU) regretted that there was no territorial boundary determined for the State. Therefore the people of Meghalaya were being harassed by the authorities in Assam. He castigated the govt for its failure to protect its people. Referring to Chandrachud Committee report, he said there should be nothing so secretive about it. The press had already given a gist of the report and the Govt ought to have placed it in the House. He claimed that Beltola, the biggest coal market in the region, was part of Meghalaya; it was under the Myliem Syiemship, Assam Govt was collecting revenue from the area.

Forget "War of the Worlds." The latest explosion to rock the world is 13/11 Paris which left over 128 dead, 200 injured and counting in a series of attacks targeting concert-goers, soccer fans and Parisians enjoying a Friday night out at popular nightspots. Sending horrifying shockwaves across the globe and surpassing even ace filmmaker Steven Spielberg's surreal 'aliens' hitting on the world! In one fell stroke, the globe was turned on its head once again by the icy harsh reality of terror, terror and more terror.

The deadliest violence to strike France since World War II once again exposes the extent to which terrorists have spread their tentacles world-wide. As suspected the ISIS has owned responsibility in retaliation to air strikes on its territories and promised more.

A shaken NDA Government taking no chances has put Delhi and Mumbai on high alert. As in the last ten years alone, 20 such attacks have taken place across the country since 2000 with the terrorists still roaming free. Parliament, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Surat, Gauwhati Hyderabad, Bangalore etc.

Underscoring that India continues to be a soft target as we only talk big about terror whereby each attack elicits an archetype response: Pakistan's ISI and their jihadi cahoots within India and elsewhere are accused of the dastardly attacks.

VVIP after VVIP then fall over one another in condemning the perpetrators 'cowardly' (sic) act. "India will not be cowed down, the executors will be brought to book" with more promises to act tough et al. But do nothing. And we all know talk is cheap.

A ritual drama which draws the same cynical reaction --- more and more of the same. Followed by a series of high-profile appear-and-vanish visits to the city to profess their angst and, hopefully, extract, political mileage. Yawn, so predictable.

From Kargil to Mumbai the

Paris Crashes

War on World

By Poonam I Kaushish

story, comments and diagnoses have been heard before. Questionably, why has no attack taken place in the US since 2001 or the UK after 2005? Bluntly, the terrorist know they would have to pay with double measure. Remember post 9/11 Washington destroyed Afghanistan and recently "smoked out" Osama bin Laden. But India will continue to be under assault as our security infrastructure is abysmal. Think. Whenever terror strikes a country over and over again it emphasizes that the Government lacks the political will to fight terror or does not have the capability and skills to meet the threat or that its cities are secure. Terror has already cost us more than 72000 civilians and 12000 security personnel. In fact, since 2004 the country has lost more lives to terrorist incidents than North, South and Central America, Europe and Eurasia put together. So much for fighting terror!

The tragedy of it all is that over the years we have politicised terror in religious hues to such an extent that it has become the biggest hurdle to crafting a uniform approach to security and fighting terror. Only in India has terror been compartmentalized on the basis of caste and creed for the sake of votes.

Remember Afzal Guru's hanging? Vote banks politics dictated our leaders' reactions to his hanging? From trying to earn brownie points to human rights violation. Worse, for the Congress and its allies Muslim appeasement has become a safe sanctuary for inaction. For the BJP vociferously denying the rise of Hindu terror is to keep its Hindu image intact.

Forgetting a terrorist has no caste or creed, he is faceless. For him terrorism is the religion. Be it a

Hindu, a Muslim or a Sikh. He is an indiscernible enemy who uses our resources and freedom to hit us. Moreover, it no longer needs sophisticated weapons or nuclear missiles to destroy a nation. All it takes is an innocuous modern-day convenience that can turn deadly in terrorists' hands. Guns and bombs.

Adept in exploiting the latest technologies, he identifies and exploits our weaknesses. While we talk, he acts. Inflicting maximum loss at minimum cost, making sure he always have the upper hand in choosing the time and place of the next attack. We need to learn from him. For a starter be proactive, think like a terrorist and stop taking a high moral ground. No longer will "work in progress" suffice.

Examples abound. Post 26/11 the much-promised National Counter Terrorism Centre is nowhere in sight. The National Intelligence Grid is behind schedule. The National Security Guards hubs in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad for quicker response to terror strikes have yet to materialize. The Maritime Security Advisory and Maritime Security Adviser have been thwarted by turf war. Our coastal security apparatus comprising registration of vessels & ID cards to fishermen are both incomplete.

Clearly, post Paris the time has come for the Government to smell the coffee. Prime Minister Modi needs to walk his talk else India will continue to be under assault as our security infrastructure is abysmal. Until we get out of this unprofessional rut, terrorists will continue to strike with impunity and innocent civilians will continue to die.

How to neutralise their capability and infrastructure is a question that should engage our continuous attention. Obtaining accurate intelligence about impending attacks

and then neutralizing the terrorists' ground capability once and for all will only work.

New Delhi needs to realign terrorists' strike where their intentions and capabilities meet the opportunities. Hence, the success of counter-terrorism lies in degrading their capabilities, forcing them to change their intentions and denying them opportunities to strike.

Against this backdrop, the Centre and State Governments needs to think of ways and means to neutralise their fast-growing domestic base, availability of hardware and human resource, collaborative linkages with organized crime, gun runners, drug syndicates, hawala operators, subversive radical groups et al.

That is not all. Raisina Hill must realize that normal deterrence doesn't work against a fearless and fearless enemy. For any anti-terrorist operation to succeed one needs to focus on the essentials and leave the desirables till the vitals have been achieved and essentials addressed.

In sum, when the State's existence is in peril, the only way to strike back is to carry the fight into the enemy camp effectively. It is not enough to assert "we have might and muscle." One has to display that power. We need to give sharp teeth to our anti-terror laws.

Plainly, we need to learn that this terror dance is just the beginning --- worse will follow. We as a people need to come together, unite and collectively and fight it. New Delhi needs to hammer out a well-thought-out strategy to cry a halt to terrorism.

Is the Government capable of defusing this powder keg? High time national security was delinked from electoral vote bank politics. NaMo needs to show a strong resolve to fight against terror. Remember, like Parisians, for Indians it is a question of life and death. — INFA

Paris attacks show dangers of Europe's interventionist policies

By Kanwal Sibal

More than 120 people have been killed and nearly 200 injured in multiple attacks by eight terrorists in Paris on Friday evening.

The security agencies, which have been on heightened alert since the dramatic terrorist assault on the offices of the French magazine Charlie Hebdo in January, seem to have been outflanked by the terrorists, suggesting the attacks were carefully planned and coordinated.

There could be several explanations for such a massive terrorist attack in Paris.

The number of people of Islamic faith in France is probably the largest in Europe. While the majority is reasonably well integrated, a substratum of disaffected youth is a social reality. The earlier terrorist attacks in France have been the handiwork of extremist Muslim youth.

Amongst the European countries, the largest number of those who have gone to Syria to fight alongside the Islamic State are from France. French authorities have expressed fears that some of them will find their way back to France, well-trained in the use of arms and fired by extremist ideologies to carry out terrorist attacks.

French policies in North

perpetrated the latest attack were Muslims, some were heard shouting Allah-o-Akbar and justifying their act as a riposte to what was being done in Syria and Iraq, specifically mentioning President Hollande by name. They spoke perfect French, which further confirms their identity as French Muslims determined to resort to terrorism to express their political and social resentment against their own country.

These attacks will have an impact on internal policies in France. The anti-immigration sentiment in France is already gaining strength and fuelling the rise of the right-wing Front National led by Marine Le Pen, representing a challenge to France's two principal political parties. This challenge is likely to become stronger, though there will always be strong voices in France that will caution against anti-Muslim sentiments spreading across a society that is already diverse and could risk undermining the values of the French Republic.

These attacks highlight the dangers of a blow back in Europe of interventionist policies in the Islamic world that have caused massive instabilities and human disasters.

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TO THE EDITOR

The future I want

Editor,

Babet Sten's "(Not) The Future That I Want" (ST Nov 14, 2015) triggers me to think about what I really want the future of our children in particular, mankind in general and the world as a whole to be like: I want no stomach to go hungry. I want every soul to be clothed. I want every person to have a roof above his/her head to shield him/her from the heat and cold. I want safe drinking water for all. I want proper health care for all. I want quality education for our children in spirit and in action; not only on paper. I want job opportunities for all. I want a clean and healthy environment to breathe in. I want every girl and every woman to be safe. I want a future with no threats of terrorism. I want a future free from violence. I want a future with no division between the haves and the have not's. I want a corruption free world. I want a clean government. I want conscientious minds. The list is endless and these are just some of the basic opportunities I crave for the future. Can we at least attempt to have a few of them?

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Via email

The Paris terror attacks

Editor

remember not to jump to conclusions and take similar actions for the purpose of retaliation from the perspective of jingoistic nationalism. It is important to remember what Mahatma Gandhi preached to us all when he humbly suggested that "an eye for an eye will make the whole world blind".

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

TMB CEO's ouster

Editor,

I read the Press statement issued by the CEO, TMB, Tura published in your esteemed daily under the caption "Demand for ouster of Municipal CEO, TMB, Tura politically motivated" (ST Nov 6, 2015) His statement is totally incorrect and baseless. It is a fact that the CEO, TMB, Tura had let loose his tyrannical engine of oppression towards the business community of Tura irrespective of caste and creed. The show cause notice issued to businessmen and the shopkeepers is fearsome and threatening in its purpose and intent. The illegal direction to file affidavits after sub-

mission of show-cause statements by the traders and shopkeepers extracted a heavy cost both financially and mentally from the business community and members and their families. The direction of the CEO, TMB, Tura to the traders and shopkeepers of Tura is illegal and unwarranted. This naked truth cannot be changed by distortion or simple denial. Over and above I, for one, feel that the tyrannical and rude actions of the CEO, is a great blow to the State Government because 10-15 days prior to the GHADC elections the CEO created such problems and inadvertently created among the citizens of Tura an aversion for the ruling party. There is no truth in the press statement issued by the CEO. The demand of the Tura traders and citizens of Tura is legitimate and based on genuine displeasure against the acts of omission and commission of the CEO, TMB.

Yours etc.,
P. R. Marak,
New 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.

Africa and West Asia can be linked to the terrorist threat it faces. France was in the forefront in western intervention in Libya. It has intervened in Syria politically and militarily. It has been vociferous in its opposition to Bashar Assad, and along with its western partners, has actively supported forces seeking his ouster, some with extremist affiliations.

Many external observers have been surprised by French support for regime change policies in the Southern Mediterranean area. France has traditionally been seen as more independent-minded and pragmatic in its foreign policy choices, but it changed tack and aligned its policies more firmly with the US and NATO when President Sarkozy took power in 2007 and has continued along the same lines even after he was voted out in 2012.

France has justified its interventions as an obligation that falls on it as a responsible member of the international community to combat the global threat of terrorism. Its permanent membership of the Security Council and its past as a colonial power in North Africa and Syria would explain its more robust approach. Germany, by comparison, has been much more circumspect.

The terrorists who have

As it is, Europe is facing a huge problem of refugees from the Islamic world. This is shaking some of the structures on which the European Union has been built. France has closed its borders temporarily in the wake of the terrorist attacks. It is not unlikely that the existing open border regime in the Schengen area may have to be reviewed.

The Climate Change Conference in Paris later this month will now require draconian security precautions, putting an additional burden on French security. For countries far away, including India, there are lessons to be learned from these attacks, even though we have had the experience of Mumbai in 2008. Successful attacks like these provide inspiration to others. This accentuates the problem of "lone wolves" perpetrating mayhem without being detected by preventive surveillance by agencies.

India is vulnerable, as we have a country next door that is involved in terrorism for years. The Taliban is raising its head in Afghanistan again. Our vigilance levels have to go up.

(Kanwal Sibal served as a former Foreign Secretary of India and also served as India's Ambassador to France).

"If you believe in yourself and have dedication and pride - and never quit, you'll be a winner. The price of victory is high but so are the rewards."

— Paul Bryant

The Shillong Times

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Encroachment on Press Freedom

ON October 24 this year the Assam Rifles wrote to the newspaper editors of Nagaland asking them to refrain from publishing any news from the Myanmar based banned militant outfit — NSCN — Khaplang group. Colonel General Staff for Assam Rifles opined that by carrying news from an outlawed outfit that carries on an agenda of violence against the India State, the Nagaland media is (a) intentionally or unintentionally supporting unlawful association; (b) they have violated the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967; and (c) by publishing statements by banned organizations, they are, ipso facto, complicit in the organizations' illegal activities. These are serious allegations with dangerous portends. So much depends on interpretation of who the NSCN (K) is. For the Naga people the NSCN of both factions are 'national workers' who have been pursuing the objective of a sovereign Nagaland for nearly five decades. For several years the NSCN (K) was on a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India. This was only abrogated by the former in March this year. Following the ceasefire revocation and a series of attacks on the armed forces by the NSCN (K) the Government of India declared the outfit 'outlawed.' These are actions taken by the Indian state but for the Naga people Khaplang represents their kinsmen in Myanmar who by the senseless drawing of boundary lines by a colonial power left them outside of their common hearths and homes — a social space they still respect and a union they hope would materialise one day.

Meanwhile three editors of Nagaland representing the Morung Express, Nagaland Page and Eastern Mirror carried blank editorials on November 16, a day observed as National Press Day, to register their protest against what is perceived as an infringement into the rights of the media to report events without fear or favour. They have also refuted point by point the allegations levelled by the Assam Rifles and have circulated their responses on social media. Messages of solidarity have been pouring in from the media fraternity throughout the country. The Assam Rifles it appears have bitten more than they can chew by taking on the fourth estate in their frustrated attempts to keep the NSCN (K) under check. But these attempts to check press freedom by different actors and institutions including at times the judiciary are unwarranted. The media of this country needs to stand together at this critical juncture.

LOOKING BACK

March 23, 1988

Sikh terrorists use rockets

Terrorists in Punjab gave the proof of their deadly arsenal when they used rockets for the first time in bid to blow up a CRPF camp headquarter at Phagwara even as continuing violence claimed eight lives in the state during the past 24 hours. Two terrorists were among those killed.

According to reports received here, no one was killed in the rocket attack but a head constable suffered minor burn injuries when a mosquito net under which he was sleeping caught fire.

Mr. B. S. Yadav, Commandant of 78 battalion, said of the projectiles fired from a rocket launcher, positioned 200 meters away from the camp in a field, wall of the hall where about 50 CRPF jawans were sleeping. They had a providential escape as the rocket pierced through the opposition wall and exploded after hitting the adjoining staircase.

The rocket which passed through the wall just above the bed, of head constable K.R. V. Nair blasted a six inch hole in the

wall. The second rocket pierced through the parapet wall and exploded. Six of the killings took place in at different villages of Amritsar district, official reports received here said.

Terrorists intruded into the house of one Shingara Singh at Anbarpura village in Amritsar district and opened fire, killing him and his wife Reshma Kaur on the spot. A daughter of Shingara Singh was injured in the shooting.

Terrorists shot dead one Harbajan Singh at Sattawal village in the district last night. Terrorists shot dead one Kulwant Singh and injured his wife Manjit Kaur at Sheron village in Amritsar district early this morning.

In another incident, goldsmith, identified as Gian Singh, was shot dead by terrorists in the Tej Nagar locality of Amritsar city this morning.

Terrorists gunned down one Tarlok Singh at Tarpur village in Amritsar district last night. In a pre-dawn encounter, security forces shot dead two terrorists at Makshapur village in Hoshiarpur district.

Rising Temperatures

Climate plans not hopeful

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

countries of Asia and Africa the most as these would not be in a position to peak their emission by 2030.

Even before the release of this report, the Centre for Science & Environment (CSE), after studying the US climate action plan and the Human Development Index (HDI) data to understand lifestyles in rich nations found that these are disastrous for the world climate. The study 'Captain America' lays bare that the world's most powerful economy is doing very little to combat climate change.

Referring to this plan, CSE found the "USINDC is neither ambitious nor equitable" and it puts the world at "deadly risk" given the impacts of changing climate. One may mention here that the INDC of the US promises to reduce emissions by 26-28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2025. But even then the per capita emissions of India in 2025 would be around 3 to 3.5 tonnes that is one-fourth of the US even with the former having such huge population.

Most experts, however, believe that examining the climate plans of different countries and specially of the top five polluters, the temperature rise may exceed 30C — with 60 per cent probability — as revealed by Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. Another US based non-profit unit, Climate Interactive has even predicted that temperature rise will be 3.50C. Scientists had earlier concluded that a 20C rise would entail sea level rise up to four feet due to polar icecaps melting, increasing extreme events such as typhoons, changes in rainfall patterns etc and this is expected to

be more severe now.

Studies have also revealed that richer countries or blocs like the US, European Union, are promising cuts which are much below their accumulated shares of emissions. In fact, developing countries such as India, China are committing to much more in comparison. In such a scenario, lot of acrimonious debate is bound to come up at the ensuing Paris meet. Though the BRIC countries and other groupings of the Third World would put pressure on the western polluters at the conference, there is little reason to be optimistic about the results.

Tackling the problem thus poses a big challenge in the coming years. With the five top polluters — the US, European, Russia, China and Japan — being responsible for around 70 per cent, the onus would be on these countries to take the initiative in curbing emissions. However, there are grave doubts about what they would actually be able to achieve, considering their lavish lifestyles and way of living.

As regards the commitment of the western countries towards the Third World since the Kyoto Protocol though technology transfer was agreed there has been little progress on that front. Environmental-friendly technologies have not been transferred much to countries such as India so as to enable them to shift from renewable resources and check pollution growth. Moreover very little financial resources have been made available by the rich nations, resulting in the poorer countries not being able to do much in checking greenhouse gases.

Meanwhile, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), a multilateral fund to help poor

and developing countries fight climate change has been stuck as the nature of contributions and the beneficiaries have yet to be settled. At such a juncture just two weeks ahead of the Paris talks, there is need to seriously delve into the question of managing climate change through various options including exhaustive exploration and discovery of business processes and options for greenhouse gas abatement through research and development. It goes without saying that adoption of the right strategy for mitigating long-term climate change risks have been outlined by countries like China, India etc. and it is expected that they would implement their pledges.

If special efforts are not taken to check climate change, the impact on agriculture and food security, human health, water resources, coastal areas would be disastrous, affecting a large segment of this country's population. Apart from India, many other countries of Asia and Africa would also be affected. One may mention here the need to aggressively promote dryland farming, soil conservation methodologies, watershed management as also other agricultural technologies to the farming community so that food production is not hampered.

With a steady rise in living standards of the people of the Third World in addition to the rapid increase in population growth, there would be increased demand for food. The Third World countries would have to adopt the right technologies to ensure that due to the effects of climate change, food production is not hampered. In fact, there is need to formulate programmes and strategies for effective promotion and implementation in this direction. Sooner, the better. --- INFA

PM Modi: NDA's Second Episode

By Sajay Laloo

India is shining. This time Indians have proved that their way of thinking is way above the thinking capacity of the political parties. They vote for a purpose and they have given it all. Giving absolute majority to one single group reflects the maturity of the voters while casting their votes. A stable government is one which enjoys full majority in the House. The people in India have given such verdict to BJP in the Centre then to the AAP in Delhi followed by the Grand Alliance in Bihar.

India had voted for BJP in the centre. But soon after enjoying the people's confidence BJP has started underestimating the power of the people and instead of taking the nation to new heights and preserving its federal structure, it has been trying to demolish it and create a country of their choice, which is not accepted to the people of India. Going by the current influences of external forces on the BJP, it won't be wrong to say that the next stops for BJP to bite the dust are West Bengal, Assam and other states which are going to polls soon.

BJP has forgotten that there has been no such country called India prior to 1947. The united India of today was created by Sardar Vallabhai Patel by merging several princely states. So, in 1947 a great nation India was born. It is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-racial nation. This unique nature of our country is respected and understood by most citizens. Every sensible person in the country would like to see that the federal structure of the country is preserved. The time for appeasement politics is over. BJP cannot follow in the Congress's footsteps of pleasing one section of population and ignoring the rest. Every word is heard and every voice echoed when the thumb hits the button during elections. So, no matter how small or big the particular section of population is, there will always be sensible number of people to sympathise or care for them when someone tries to suppress them.

India is a perfect example of true democracy. There is the pro-Hindutva group on one hand and secular one on the other. For BJP to be able to take India to new heights, it now has to take each and every citizen into confidence. Otherwise, the remaining 4 years will simply be horse riding period for the party post honeymoon time. It has to work above party lines and care for the development of the country as a whole. PM Modi once said that, a developed India can be achieved only when all the states in India are developed. So, as a man of principles and the one who has spent most of his time in fulfilling his dreams to achieve a developed India, he should work closely with each and every state and behave like

a Guru to all the Chief Ministers. Otherwise, his party which is in majority in Lok Sabha and minority in Rajya Sabha will not be able to bring any positive changes in this country. And going by the current trend of elections in the states, BJP will never gain majority in the Rajya Sabha. So, all Bills and proposals passed by Lok Sabha will be kept in cold storage when they reach Rajya Sabha. Thus, there will be a pause in development in the whole nation for another 4 years and the parliamentary sessions will simply be wastage of public money and the Houses will merely be confrontational fields for various political parties of India.

It's a fact that, irrespective of colour, faith or food habits, the neighbours are the most important supporters and the third arm in our lives. They are not chosen but made. When one is in trouble, the first person to approach for help is always a neighbour. So, as a sensible person, I will never be a sheer spectator if my neighbour is harmed or suppressed by unwanted elements. This time it has been proved that prior to hitting their thumbs, neighbours had discussed and decided for a common cause for a better tomorrow.

Congress was greatly responsible for and contributed a lot towards the victory of BJP in 2014 Lok Sabha elections. This time, after losses in two consecutive State Assembly elections, the picture is clear that, there was never a Modi wave or Amit Shah strategy. It was a vote for a Change and when people realized that the change which they had voted for was apparently different from the one they expected, they have subsequently rectified their mistakes.

BJP should start building its own spine to stand on its own and fight by itself to achieve every citizen's dream of a developed India. They should not be a string pulled by religious extremists. To divert the attention from the rising price of essential commodities, it doesn't need to play appeasement politics. With the present BJP government at the Centre, the poor man's protein (Dal) has become an item of luxury, even more expensive than chicken or any other meat in the market today. The lower sections of the society are badly ignored, and those who are ideologically different than the BJP are directly out-casted.

Late President Prof. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam has rightly said that one has to wake up from sleep to make his dreams come true. So, it is high time for BJP to wake up and realize that, their think tanks and string pullers are living in the fairy world of the past which is no more in existence today. Otherwise, India will have to wait for several years after 2019 to see the NDA's Third Episode.

pair of bullocks. Invariably bullocks so sold are taken to the slaughter house. In case of milk producers, cattle farmers keep the cows as long as they yield milk. After five to six lactations, milk yield of the cow reduces and the farmers sell these cows in the market.

For the replenishment of the cattle, farmers get heifers from the cows. How so ever venerated it may be, they cannot feed the animal when it is un-productive. The cows are taken to the slaughter house. This is the ground reality. Livelihood of lakhs of people depended upon beef trading and they are also citizens of India. Ban on cow slaughter will adversely affect the economy of small cattle farmers and poor and marginal peasants. Most of them belong to the backward communities/ schedule castes and schedule tribes. I think the states imposing ban on cow slaughter

should take the following measures to protect the interest of small cattle farmers, poor and marginal peasants as well as old cattle population.

In every district cow slaughter banning states should have cattle shelter homes for old cattle. This provision should be mandatory. After all by rescuing them from slaughter houses we cannot allow the sacred cattle population to die of starvation. The old pair of bullocks of the poor and marginal peasants should be taken by the Govt and the peasants should be paid 50% of the actual price of working bullocks. If this provision is not made mandatory peasants and cattle farmers' economy will be ruined and the economy of the country will suffer.

Your's etc.,
Swarup Upadhyay Ex-
MP (LS Tezpur)
Tezpur

TO THE EDITOR

Hurrah! Its influx once again!

Editor,

The issue of unregulated influx has always been upper most in most people's minds. Many consider it a threat to the fragile demographic balance that exists in the state. On Sunday last, the 15th of Nov 2015, PCN at the concluding part of its weekly programme telecast a scene of massive foreigner influx into a few villages of Ri Bhoi, Meghalaya but for a change it was all about a kind of influx that all of us welcome. It was about the temporary migration of thousands of Amur Falcons into the villages of Tyrso and Umru of Mawhati, Ri Bhoi district.

That these graceful migratory birds on their way to South Africa from their nesting sites in Mongolia should consider Ri Bhoi as one of their temporary halts is a blessing. Of added delight is the collective decision of the people of Tyrso and Umru led by their visionary Rangbah Shnong, to provide protection and refuge to these winged visitors from abroad. People who snared or caught the birds were apprehended and punished by the village authorities. From killing birds to protecting them is a mindset change of unimaginable magnitude but the villagers of Tyrso and Umru managed it.

We salute them for their foresight and wisdom. In a world that is fast returning to the delights and blessings of nature and mother earth, Tyrso and Umru could well be on their way to becoming international bird sanctuaries where bird watchers from all over the world,

could come and enjoy the sight of thousands of Amur Falcons wheeling, turning and gliding in the sky above. It could well be the turning point for the prosperity and development of these villages. PCN is to be congratulated for beaming this rare but fascinating documentary to our bedrooms and sitting rooms. Its CSR (Cable Social Responsibility) at its best.

Yours etc.,
Toki Blah,
Via email

Unfair appointment

Editor,

Appros the new report "Appointment anomalies", (ST Sep 29, 2015) it is learnt that no action has been taken from the Higher Authority SSA SEMAM against the back door appointment of the post of District Inclusive Education Coordinator since the year 2012 in the office of the District Mission Coordinator SSA Ri Bhoi Nongpoh.

The question arises as to why no action has been taken till date. The post of District Inclusive Education Coordinator required the services of a qualified person with specialization in the field of Disabilities registered under Rehabilitation Council of India(RCI). I once again request the higher authorities to look into the matter for the welfare of Persons with Disabilities and to ensure transparency in appointment.

Your's etc.,
D. Lyngdoh,
Ri Bhoi District

On beef ban

Editor,

For the last couple of months, the issue of cow slaughter and the controversy over it has been a hot topic of discussion in both television and other forms of media in the country. A lot has been said and argued upon by both the proponents and opponents of cow slaughter in this country. And while some see it as a raging and unwanted controversy, I feel that by expressing themselves, peoples on the opposite ends of the spectrum are only exercising their constitutional right to freedom of expression. Having said that, I, as a citizen of this great nation, feel that, I should share my views and suggestions.

Many states in India including the state of Maharashtra have banned cow slaughter by enactment of law. It is well within their Constitutional rights. However, I personally feel that, at this juncture, a total ban on cow slaughter is not necessary. At the same time, I do not register my protest against ban on cow slaughter. We all are aware of the fact that anti-cow slaughter movement and tirade against beef eating have caused the loss of innocent lives and it has created a fear-psychosis in the minds of the minority communities both religious and ethnic. When we speak of united India and unity in diversity we should literally mean it. We must respect the food habits and socio-cultural differences in our pluralistic society. If we fail in this respect our big utterances like Ek Bharat, Srestha Bharat will simply be re-

duced to grandiose words carrying no meaning. The issue of beef has already created a psychological divide between those who eat beef and those who oppose beef eating. Not less than 25 crore people eat beef in India. We cannot drive them out of the country because they eat beef.

The Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs in the present government - Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said those who eat beef should go to Pakistan. As Prime Minister of India and as an advocate of unity in diversity Mr Modi cannot suggest that Nagas, Garos, Mizos, Khasis, of North East should go to Pakistan because they eat beef. I think this is why banning cow slaughter throughout the country is not necessary. But it was very necessary on the part of the Govt. and the BJP to study the problem and find out the solution before any such enactment. As any other Hindus too venerate mother cow but they cannot sacrifice the unity of the country and let it turn into a psychological divide between people simply for the gratification of an emotional feeling for the cow.

We all know, cows and bullocks play an important role in our rural economy. Other than rich peasants who can afford mechanization of agriculture the poor and marginal peasants use bullocks for ploughing their fields and pulling their carts. After eight or ten years of use the bullocks become old and useless and are generally sold in the market and the peasants get 40% to 50% of the price of young bullocks for the old ones. On that money, they add some amount and get young

“Talent is God given. Be humble. Fame is man-given. Be grateful. Conceit is self-given. Be careful.”

— John Wooden

The Shillong Times

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Khaplang threat

THE NSCN(Khaplang) which has been outlawed and declared a terrorist outfit is losing its bite that marks all its stings. It has signed a ceasefire with the Centre in 2001 but called it off in June this year. It also mounted an attack on India's security forces in Manipur. A large number of its cadres defected to other groups in the past few years, many of them to be NSCN (IN). A new group called NSCN (Reformation) has sprung up in April. Other groups which emerged were NSCN (Unification) in 2007 as NSCN (KK) in June 2011. The NSCN (Khaplang) has around 1500 activists and 600-700 of them are in Myanmar. Intelligence sources indicate that they are facing a financial crunch. Security forces have stopped Khaplang extortion significantly and a sized society movement has galvanised public opinion against it.

NSCN (K) camped in Myanmar provide, shelter, training and weapons to other north eastern outfits. The handing over of Anup Chetia, secretary of ULFA pro-peace talks faction, by Bangladesh to India is expected to pave the way for the diffusing of the ULFA crisis. But the thumping victory of Aung Saan Suu Kyi's party in the Myanmar elections can complicate matters. New Delhi has so far been negotiating with the defeated Junta government in Yangon for the fluttering out of Khaplang rebels from Myanmar. It is not altogether clear to what extent the new regime in Yangon will be anxious to build good relations with Delhi in view of the Modi government's recent bonhomie with the Junta in Myanmar.

LOOKING BACK

March 22, 1988

Deputy Speaker to be elected today

The ruling UMPF had nominated Mr. J.D. Rymbai as its nominee for the office of Deputy Speaker election for which will be held on Tuesday. The Opposition RDF has setup Mr. Chesterfield W. Marak as its nominee.

The election will be held by secret ballots as the first item of business for the day. It is likely that Mr. Rymbai will romp home comfortably by 35 to 23 votes, if not more.

Earlier, the ruling party nominee had to be decided in the nick of time after Mr. Charmerlin Marak, to be the candidate, declined the offer on personal ground.

Since by convention the post of Deputy Speaker has gone to Garo Hills, and that of the Speaker to Khasi Hills, the UMPF leadership tried to look for a suitable Garo candidate for the post. Strangely there was no taker. The Garo MLAs believe that the Deputy Speaker's office is jinxed since all the previous incumbents failed to get re-elected to the House.

The earlier incumbents to the office were Mr. Singjan Sangma, Mrs Miriam D. Shira and Mr. Ira K. Marak.

Ghisingh demands probe into Genocide in Darjeeling

Mr. Subhas Ghisingh, President Gorkha National Liberation Front, today demanded a judicial inquiry by a Supreme Court Judge into the recent happenings in the Darjeeling district and Dooras areas of West Bengal.

In a statement released here, he said the West Bengal Government had stepped up a policy of genocide and the central forces have been involved in killings. According to him the death toll in the current 40 days bandh is about 200. Nearly 200 people are under arrest, he added.

He said the GNLFF would review the situation at the end of the bandh and submit a detailed report to the Union Home Minister of its findings about the crimes perpetrated by the West Bengal Government.

A Darjeeling reports says GNLFF militants ambushed security forces at two places, attacked the Mirik police station, burnt down the houses of two CPI (M) supporters and kidnapped another as the forty-day Gorkhaland Bandh entered its 38th day today.

Officials sources said that in a fierce encounter the militants fired 150 rounds and used mortars when the security forces led by Mr. R.K. Panchananda, Additional Superintendent of Police raided dreaded GNLFF leader R. P. Waiba's hideout at Oketi under Mirik police station.

The militants also hurled bombs. The security forces returned 101 rounds and used mortars. Two GNLFF militants, injured in the encounter, were carried by their colleagues to Nepal.

5 bank employee among 11 killed

Five bank employees and a police head constable were among the eleven people gunned down in a stepped up violence in Punjab during the past 24 hours.

Terrorists looted more than Rs. 1.27 lakh in two separate incidents while the terrorists shot dead five bank employees, including the bank manager at Dhoulka village in Amritsar district this afternoon.

The victims were identified as Bank manager Chuni Lal, bank guard Jog Raj, Amrik Lal, Kulwant Raj and Ramesh. The terrorists escaped after looting Rs. 47,000.

Police said the truck used in the shot out was found abandoned half a kilometer from the bank. The terrorists are believed to have escaped on a motorcycle.

State BJP leaders support Margdarshaks

Will Modi-Shah allow a complete revamp?

By Arun Srivastava

following.

With rumblings in the BJP getting shriller these leaders have highlighted the mistakes during the campaign and demanded fixing of responsibilities. Following in the footsteps of the senior leaders — LK Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Shanta Kumar and Yashwant Sinha — the party MPs Bhola Singh, Rama Devi, Hukumdeo Narayan Yadav, Hari Manjhi, Ashwani Choubey and Ajay Nishad have expressed displeasure over style of functioning of the party leaders and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's remark over “reservation review”.

For some the revolt by BJP veterans may not be more than mere grumbling of old and outdated leaders, but it has come as a moral booster for the state BJP leaders, interestingly even to a section of the RSS cadres and swayamsevak. This has also come as a major reprieve also for the leaders of NDA allies who were feeling suffocated and marginalized.

Leaders of the Lok Janshakti Party, Rashtriya Lok Samata Party and HAM allege that the Modi-Shah duo never held a comprehensive strategy session with them and even their suggestions were not given due importance. Though the BJP leadership exchanged notes their role was not more than of passive on-looker. Shah would chalk out the strategy and they were supposed to follow it. These leaders cite the observation of Shah that if the BJP loses the Bihar elections crackers would burst in Pakistan. They argue that it simply hurt the feelings of the Bihari people and conjured the Muslims to unite against the BJP.

They lament that Modi and Shah could not correctly read the psyche and mood of the backward caste people as well as Muslims of Bihar. It was their abrasive attitude and use of abusive language that alienated the back-

wards, Dalits, EBC and Muslims. The allies together had contested more than eighty seats but could manage to win only five seats.

While these leaders have preferred to keep a low profile and have adopted the policy to wait and watch, the real challenge has been thrown by the state BJP leaders who feel enthused with the veterans under the leadership of patriarch LK Advani raising the banner of revolt. Unlike allies the BJP leaders are vocal.

Modi should have known that Muslims of Bihar are not like Muslims of western UP. They are an integral part of the Bihari social life. But Modi and Shah targeted them and even frequently referred to the Darbhanga module of the terrorists. This simply turned the Muslims skeptical.

Of the six MPs, Bhola Singh, MP from Begusarai has been quite critical. According to him poll outcome has proved that the Modi magic is “not durable”. While terming as “undignified” the speech of the Prime Minister during Bihar campaign, he said, “The situation emerging during Parliamentary elections had helped ‘Modi magic’ create an impression among voters... but it's nowhere to be seen now when the situation has become normal... Bihar poll outcome has proved that Modi magic is not durable.” He also criticized Shah as “drunk with power he was always seen surrounded by sycophants.” He endorsed Shatrughan's comment, “Taalikaptanko to gaalibhikaptanko. Leadership should be one in which everybody has astha (faith) which is lacking at present”.

Another State party MP, Nityanand Rai, said, “Mr. Amit Shah should not have raised the issue of Pakistan. Remarks made by some leaders cost the party heavily.” Maharajganj MP Janardan Singh Sigriwal and Gopalgunj MP Janak Ram said the party “needs

to introspect”.

Normally, in case of elections to the assemblies the state leaders need to be involved as they identify with the aspirations of the voters and articulate their feeling. They can enthuse the people to vote for the party. But in the case of Bihar, Shah put Modi on the gamblers' table. These leaders nurse the regret that if local leaders had been inducted some 10-20 more seats could have won. The change in campaign strategy was also carried out in a whimsical manner. It was done only after receiving reports of not so positive feedback.

These leaders feel that a instead of hiding behind the façade of “arithmetic” the central leaders should carry out a thorough probe and fix the responsibility. In Bihar's case no other leader except Modi and Shah should be held responsible. They are feeling a sense of remorse that a section of the leaders, close to Modi, have been trying to provide cover to them. They seek to know: Was the arithmetic not known before the counting day, and yet why did every BJP leader declare that the party would get an absolute majority? If arithmetic decided elections, how did the BJP win 22 of the 40 seats in Bihar in the Parliament election of 2014? There is a growing feeling in the state unit that Modi must not take directions from RSS and instead involve real liberals and democrats.

It is over reliance on RSS and tendency to appease the Sangh leadership that was the prime reason of the BJP's defeat. How could the central leaders explain someone challenging the very idea of India and allowing the fundamentalist elements to ridicule the idea: “Abdul Kalam was a nationalist despite being a Muslim”, “Shah Rukh Khan may live in India, but his heart is in Pakistan”, “denigrating army men, the return of awards by writers is a manufactured protest” Modi addressed election rallies in 26 constituencies. The BJP lost in 13. The BJP drew a blank in 13 out of 38 districts of Bihar. It was a crushing defeat. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Delayed convocation in NEHU

Editor,

As a former student of NEHU I have been a victim of the irregular manner in which examinations are conducted and results declared. NEHU takes so much more time than any other university in the country and does not care about the students' welfare, and I write this with conviction as I've seen many of the young students suffering at the time seeking admission or appearing for national level entrance examinations.

A permanent Vice Chancellor has been appointed after a long time and one assumes that with a regular VC in place the various administrative departments will function more smoothly. But I am saddened that this is not the case. Many of my ex-students who are now studying in NEHU are upset over the delay in publication of results this year and also the holding of the convocation.

Most of the Masters Degree Departments were very late in giving out their results this year, some stretching to October. As a result many students have missed many competitive and higher education examinations. In the first week of October a notification regarding the convocation was released by the University stating that it would take place sometime in

the third week of November. Now we are in the third week but there is as yet no news of the convocation. Without the convocation students will not get their original degrees and rank certificates which are imperative to be produced in most institutions of higher education. Rumours have been doing the rounds, that the event might get delayed until next year. This robs the chances of many students to attend the event, which they so want to for the love of the University and also because of the successful completion of their courses. I see many students religiously checking the website everyday for news but they are disappointed all the time.

I write this letter to ask the University authorities why they are delaying such an important event when the careers of many students depend on it? I request the student organisation of NEHU like NEHUSU to kindly take up the matter with the authorities, so that students who are planning to shift out next year at least get to attend the convocation this year. It is to improve the systems in universities that vigilance is required, and I request the esteemed university to kindly take steps to hold the convocation this year so that those who are due to get their certificates are able to attend, for without

students, the institution would be just an empty building.

Yours etc.,
N Purkayastha Bhatt
Shillong-4

Student's protest and aftermath

Editor,

The bizarre action against the students of Kiang Nangbah Govt. College is a sad experience; a brutal 'Drive Away Attack' of the so called 'Authority,' followed by the polished response of the Hon'ble Minister of Education is satirical. Indeed, 'Students in the Street' is a bad idea. But who is to blame here? It is neither a blunder of one person, nor a group. Such incidents happen for multiple reasons. This is a system in ruins.

Firstly, the long pathetic pedagogy! Where students are expected to learn the skill of reading and writing they were told to memorize some texts, gain good marks, get a job to profess inhumanely in a diplomatic style. Actually, this is a utopia. The irony is if the conscientized learner makes any efforts, the aftermath is atrocious. This is a pseudo educational configuration.

Secondly, it should be reminded that; 'Authority is Responsibility.' The democratic essence of the

land should not be tampered with a *Lathi Mutiny* or *Tear Gas Phobia*. There must be a converging balance keeping aside all influences. Here is a need for a revolutionary change towards a new paradigm. Thirdly, it is a systematically driven failure. The current political trend popularized as law making turns instead into a tool of massive subjugation, suppression and even polarization. The voice of the disadvantaged makes no sense in the politicized climate. The absence of space for articulating public grievances makes things difficult for the large majority of people. The selected few, the protagonists, the law makers are elated at the disastrous fate of the commoner.

The crux of the matter is to let the educationist take home a check list. Meanwhile, may the learner understand that if every season has its wind, every road has its path; therefore, every effect has its cause. Furthermore, when might is right, it only hinders from reaching the goal. Tomorrow seems to be too late for the tables to turn. The law with its hinge is expected to set a line of security with certainty not to create a larger socio-disorder. Here and now, it is high time to say adieu to tyrannical social interaction.

Yours etc.,
Lamjingshai O Garod
Raliang

Tipu Sultan Row

Legacy musn't be politicised

By Syed Ali Mujtaba

The birth anniversary celebrations of the 18th century ruler of Mysore, Tipu Sultan, by the Karnataka Government have distressingly got embroiled in an unsavoury controversy. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) is again flexing its muscles, this time against the Government's decision calling the celebrations as 'glorification of a tyrant ruler'. Regrettably, the event has taken a communal turn following several groups turning violent during the State-wide protests calling against the celebrations.

Worse, the issue flared up soon after noted actor-cum-playwright Girish Karnad commented that Tipu would have enjoyed the status of Shivaji had he been a Hindu and suggested that Bengaluru's international airport be named after Tipu. Karnad had earlier written a play titled *'Dreams of Tipu Sultan'* to celebrate the bicentenary of his death in 2000. His comments sparked an outrage from the Hindu right wing forces. He received a death threat that warned the he “would meet the same end” as that of the slain scholar MM Kalburgi.

It is a pity that the mere expression of a view on a historical figure can generate spiralling social reactions. This is because the Hindu right wing forces like to target Tipu Sultan's secular image dubbing him as a Muslim bigot. This view is now getting spilled on to the streets. There are certain forces who are stoking the fire against him for political gains and an atmosphere of hatred is being built against him.

A fresh narrative on Tipu Sultan is gaining currency painting him as an Islamic 'Jihadist'. The Sangh Parivar, has started propagating the 18th century ruler of Mysore as “intolerant” who persecuted Hindus and converted people to Islam. They allege that Tipu hanged 700 Melkote Iyengars, killed or converted the people of Coorg region to Islam and unleashed a reign of terror on the Mangalorean Catholics and destroyed their churches. Further, they allege that Tipu tried to exterminate the Nairs of Wyanad and Malabar and so on and so forth...

This new narrative on Tipu is unfortunately filtering in media discourse and acquiring dangerous propositions, poisoning young innocent minds. Sadly, the right-wing groups seem unwilling to debate issues with civility. If this narrative is allowed to go unchecked, soon Tipu Sultan will become another tyrant ruler like Aurangzeb, who too is victim of prejudiced propaganda.

While there is no denying that Tipu destroyed temples in lands that he conquered, at the same time he protected and generously supported those within his own domain. Those who depict Tipu as a Muslim bigot are so selective in their propaganda that they forget that he constructed a temple inside his fort of Srirangapatam along with a mosque. It is a living testimony of Tipu's secular outlook where devotees through the temple even to this day.

However, when the British invaded the Srirangapatam fort, they razed all structures inside, looted the priceless artefacts and took them to England. Many valuable items of that loot are now in private possession. Those in public domain are showcased in the British museum that has a separate chamber for the exploits from Srirangapatnam. After the fall of the Srirangapatnam, when it was ascertained that Tipu was

killed, some of the British officers went to look for his body. Benjamin Sydenham described him as: “He was in stature about 5 ft 8 in (1.73 m) and not very fair; he was rather fat, had a short neck and high shoulders, but his wrists and ankles were small and delicate. He had large full eyes, with small arched eyebrows and very small whiskers. His appearance denoted him to be above the ‘Common Stamp.’ And his countenance expressed a mixture of haughtiness and resolution.”

“He was dressed in a fine white linen jacket, chintz drawers, a crimson cloth round his waist with a red silk belt and pouch across his body and head. His head was devoid of any headgear and there were no weapons of defence about him.”

Historian William Dalrymple in an essay on Tipu Sultan pointed out that the British had an interest in painting him as an “intolerant bigot” to drum up a case for their conquest over him. The British tried to belittle all that Tipu stood for as they tarred the ruler's achievements. And thus, the image of Tipu Sultan as the cruel Oriental despot captured the European imagination. Many of the stories that were circulated about him were largely blatant fabrications. Reports such as those produced by Colonel Wilks after the humiliating British defeat at the Battle of Pollilur and the sensational personal accounts of some 200 British captives taken to Srirangapatna after the battle helped form the impression of a demonic Tipu in public eye.

Such fictitious propaganda has whetted the appetite of some readers in India. It is a pity that the British propaganda about Tipu Sultan is today shaping people's opinion to think differently about him. It goes without saying that it's improper to judge figures of the past by canons of the present. It would be outrageous to put pressure on today's Muslims to pay for any such sins with the skewed understanding of that past.

Tipu Sultan has no relevance for any Muslim, except for the fact the ruler belonged to their faith. It is left to the astute people who are well-versed with facts to decide his place in history.

As per history books, Tipu was “one of the most innovative and far-sighted rulers of the pre-colonial period.” He understood British designs on India and, as a “modernizing technocrat” used advanced western weaponry to fight them.

As compared to Tipu no Hindu ruler of his time can match his vision of the scientific advances that was made during his reign. Overall, Tipu's reign was much more than what the Hindu right-wing fanatics are trying to portray about him. It is sheer communalism to paint him as a Muslim bigot. This hidden political agenda is a dangerous trend in the country, which must be checked. Those doing so should be warned that they could be booked under the provisions of the IPC dealing with spreading animosity among religious communities.

The real nationalist thing to do is to advance a truer understanding of Tipu as a historical figure, who was a secular south Indian ruler working for Hindu-Muslim unity. An example of this is of Purnaiah aka Miran Purniya who was the member of Tipu's inner Cabinet and the only Hindu in an all-Muslim Cabinet. Those distorting history for political gains must be stopped. — INFA

If you can give your son or daughter only one gift, let it be enthusiasm.

—Bruce Barton

The Shillong Times

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Censors at it again

THE censor board has ordered the length of two kissing sequences in Spectre, a new James Bond film, to be shortened by half. It is apparently according to archaic obscenity codes. There was a protest against kissing in Indian films during the freedom movement as it was erroneously argued that it was against Indian tradition and borrowed from the west. The GD Khoshla Commission eradicated the ban. If kissing is allowed, one boggles at the fact that its length can be put to the censor's scissors. The censor board continues to frown upon intimate scenes in films even though there has been sharp criticism against it for some time. Indian film-makers are accordingly constrained to show that through ridiculous imagery. The board has disproportionate powers to judge what adult citizens should be allowed to see. A handful of independent film-makers do circumvent the restriction. But the board's tendency to repeatedly strangle artistic freedom often leads to mangling of works of art. The governments at the Centre betray their own ideological inhibitions. Their interference causes a variety of paternalism. The audience has to surrender to supposedly moral principles.

Democratic values are naturally severely mauled in such an ambience. An informal institution to appraise the quality of creative effort should be perfectly in order. But the Indian situation is far removed from it. Here the censor board is packed with yes men who toe the line of the party in power. The state should ideally promote a culture which encourages citizens to exercise self-censorship. Freedom to make, know and judge should enable citizens to develop the necessary critical faculty. But then the censor board itself has to be disciplined and prepared to inculcate proper artistic values in citizens.

LOOKING BACK

March 25, 1988

Prime Minister says no change in dealing with economic offenders

The Government's policy of sternly dealing with economic offenders has remained unchanged in the last three years. Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi declared in the Rajya Sabha today.

Replying to supplementaries on raids by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the Prime Minister said the policy followed all along had been the Government's policy and not of any individual.

Ministers of State for personnel Mr. Chidambaram replied that the CBI had registered 3,600 odd cases in the past three years and he could not reply off hand regarding any particular case.

The question regarding the Bachchan brothers caused heated exchanges between the treasury benches and opposition members, including Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, who insisted that the supplementary was related to the main question and the minister could answer it.

Mr. A.G. Kulkarni and some other Congress members contended that only the Finance Minister could reply to this supplementary and it was totally unrelated to the main question. Mr. Chidambaram evaded a reply despite the opposition's insistence. The chairman at one stage even appealed to the members not to mix up the issues.

Mr. Chidambaram, replying to the main question, said the CBI had registered 3600 cases in the past three years and conducted 869 searches. Of this, majority were against gazette Officers. It had recommended for court trials.

Mr. Chimanbhai Mehta expressed concern about the large number of officers involved in corruption cases investigated by the CBI and wondered if it was not necessary for the government to find out the reason for this.

Mr. Chidambaram replied that he could only quote Mahatma Gandhi— "the world had enough to take care of everybody's needs but not enough to take care of everybody's greed".

President urged to withhold consent to bill

The Communist party of India today urged President Mr. R. Venkataraman to withhold consent to the new law empowering the Centre to impose emergency in Punjab.

The central secretariat of the party also urged Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi to immediately call an all party meeting and seek a national consensus on urgent measures for a political situation in Punjab.

In a statement here, the secretariat expressed concern at the way the Rajiv Gandhi government was handling the Punjab problem. It has been treating the problem in a narrow partisan manner and not as a national problem.

The secretariat also condemned the highly provocative threats of economic boycott of Sikhs by Shiv Sena chief Mr. Bal Thackeray. Such threats encourage the forces of communal violence and lawlessness everywhere and also directly play the game of the Khalistan terrorists, it said.

Foreign policy implications of the Bihar elections

By Kanwal Sibal

While the impact of the Bharatiya Janata Party's electoral debacle in Bihar and the public rift between the party's "veterans" and the current leadership on the course of domestic politics is uncertain, India's foreign relations will not normally be affected by these developments. Diplomats in Delhi and other observers abroad, including business houses, will of course analyse and assess the results of the Bihar elections for their meaning for Narendra Modi's leadership, parliamentary work, government's economic policies, investment prospects and so on. It is being speculated that Modi may have to change his style of functioning, concentrate less power in his office, rely less on the bureaucracy, give his ministers more room and realize that governing a state is different from governance at the Centre. Whether the electoral defeat in Bihar following that in Delhi, and the call for more consensual leadership made by the old guard, will bring about changes in working style is open to question. In the context of foreign policy, such speculation is not very germane.

India's external partners are essentially interested in economic governance and the opportunities that a rising India offers. For them, as in the case of our own people, a single party majority government under Modi after years of weak coalition governments at the Centre held out hope that India would be able to deal with its problems more decisively and move forward more purposefully. Modi's message, delivered with confidence, has been business- and investment-friendly from the start. During his foreign visits he has invited investors to look at opportunities in India, sought their participation in his various campaigns, whether Smart Cities, Digital India, Make in India, Clean Ganga and the like, promised them ease of doing business in India, announced fast-track arrangements for major investor partners such as the United States of America, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and others, extended assurances of predictable tax policies and so on. He has met top CEOs in the financial, industrial, infrastructural, digital and

Whether the GST, in which the US and others are keenly interested, sees the day in April 2016 as earlier envisaged, is moot. If, as it appears, the Modi government may not now be able to get a majority in the Rajya Sabha, and the

media sectors to convey this message.

Modi's message has been received positively, but would-be investors want to see more results on the ground, quicker implementation of declared policies, more concrete steps by way of ease of doing business, more clarity about tax policies, further liberalization in the financial and labour sectors, and more efficient regulatory mechanisms. Better protection of intellectual property rights, and less stringent local content requirements are other demands. They have adopted a wait and watch attitude, even if, as the government rightly claims, FDI figures have gone up by 40 per cent. The government has announced, just before Modi's UK visit, further liberalization in 15 sectors. Foreign investors will, nevertheless, always seek more and faster liberalization and will build pressures in that direction through business lobbies, rating agencies, international financial institutions and the media. Tax issues will always be raised as escaping tax liabilities as much as possible in any jurisdiction is part of their business strategies. There will always be a gap between what business seeks and what governments can do, especially in democracies where political consensus behind reforms has to be forged, which is not always easy. The Modi government has not been able to get the land acquisition bill passed and the fate of the goods and services tax remains uncertain, more so after the Bihar elections, which may make the Congress and others more determined to oppose Modi tooth and nail, even if the larger national interest suffers.

Whether the GST, in which the US and others are keenly interested, sees the day in April 2016 as earlier envisaged, is moot. If, as it appears, the Modi government may not now be able to get a majority in the Rajya Sabha, and the

country will have to live with this duality of a single-party majority in the Lok Sabha and an Opposition-dominated Rajya Sabha, the confidence of prospective investors in the capacity of the government to deliver on all its promises may get affected to some extent.

Investors know, however, that in virtually every country governments are not always able to implement their policies and programmes because of internal opposition, the economic situation is almost always perceived as unsatisfactory and governments are accused of failing to find the right solutions. The mismanagement of the US financial sector that continues to plague the world economy, the economic crisis in Europe, the slowdown of the Chinese economy, the faltering of almost all emerging economies show that no government gets everything right. Notwithstanding some negative features relating to the health of the banking sector, the slowdown in manufacturing and exports and so on, the scenario in India is actually quite hopeful in international eyes in view of expected growth rates, the size of the Indian market, the country's human capital, the liberalization process under way and the Modi government's ambitious developmental plans. These are durable factors that will continue to attract India's foreign partners, not the ups and downs of state-level elections in India.

We have to see things in perspective. President Barack Obama has seen his majority in the Senate and the House of Representatives reduced to a minority. His flagship programmes have been emasculated by the Republicans, who are determined to oppose his legislative agenda and attack his foreign policy. Yet, this has not affected our calculations about the benefits we derive from India-US relations, which have taken on a new momentum under Modi. President François Hollande of France has seen his domestic popularity fall dramatically and local elections have

gone against his Socialist Party, but without affecting in any way the content of Indo-French ties. In fact, even when governments change in countries, there is continuity in relationships because of a host of underlying geopolitical, security, economic and other factors.

The Bihar election result may give glee to the Opposition for cutting down Modi to size domestically in some measure, but foreign governments work with Modi in his capacity as India's prime minister responsible for the country's foreign and security policies, and, of course, economic policy. Modi's visit to the UK just after the Bihar elections and the focus there on perspectives of multifaceted cooperation between the two countries, whether in the areas of finance, trade, reciprocal investments, science and technology, nuclear and renewable energy, defence, security, education, health and so on, shows that the external view of India is larger than what happens in a state-level election.

The election defeat in Bihar reinforces the Opposition's narrative on rising intolerance in the country. This is finding echoes abroad as an extension of a concerted campaign by those sections of India's political class, civil society and the media that are still not reconciled to Modi's rise to power and would like to politically and morally delegitimise him nationally and internationally to prevent him from consolidating his position and continue in power beyond his first mandate. Expatriate Indians as well as local elements in countries like Britain who are traditionally antipathetic towards India participate in this campaign. The audacious and ill-mannered questions on intolerance by British journalists to Modi in London flowed from this. Obviously, for these elements, this is the most material issue in India-UK relations. By this they exhibit their own almost pathological intolerance towards Modi and his party.

(The author is former foreign secretary of India and can be reached at sibalkanwal@gmail.com)

TO THE EDITOR

The wise, old rustics

Editor,

There are too many deaths by drowning in the tempestuous and unpredictable rivers and streams of our beautiful hill state, which compelled me to write this letter. The problem with us, human beings, is that we cannot accept the fact that tragedy usually springs out of ignorance. As a Khasi lady, it is but natural for me to love, respect and follow the customs, tradition and the unique etiquette of Khasi society. When we were young and about to go on a picnic to any Khasi or Jaintia village, our parents gave us a strong warning not to venture to a jungle or a river or a waterfall without the knowledge of any of the village elders. We had to get their opinion whether it was safe for us to venture near a river (let alone swimming) or exploring a jungle. Obeying our parents and the village patriarchs, we came back home thoroughly fulfilled and also safe and sound and alive! How can we ignore the old and wise rustics? These sturdy village men folk of knowledge and experience know better than us. Society at large, may count them as illiterate or semi-literate and at times call them "natives" in a derogatory undertone. But, swallow the bitter pill—THEY KNOW BETTER. Therefore, won't it be sensible for all citizens of the state, to spread awareness about the existence of such wise and experi-

enced rustics who can give opinions or advice? Society knows this fact, as an unwritten law, but a traditional acceptance. Emphasis on this awareness needs to go out to ignorant citizens and tourists alike, so that precious lives will be saved. In turn, it will also save the working days of farmers, who, out of compassion, go and search for missing persons. This is just a humble suggestion coming from a grandmother, for the benefit of society at large. Either accept it or leave it. Think twice!

Yours etc.,
Cassandra Syiemlieh,
Shillong-17

Reservation for the rich

Editor,

Recently the Supreme Court called for an end to reservations in all institutions of higher education, regretting that some privileges have remained unchanged 68 years after independence.

It is argued that caste based reservation is a positive discrimination in favour of the oppressed for the sake of social justice so that they can get the chance of quick recovery from the age old social ills. But certainly this cannot go on forever. Many deserving students are being sacrificed at the altar of reservation. No one can deny

that it has become a political compulsion and a game of playing with reservation cards.

However, it is perplexing that those who speak in favour of meritocracy raise their voice only against reservation for the Dalits. They seldom utter a single word against the prevalent practice of making higher education accessible only for the high income groups by earmarking a sizeable number of college seats for management quota students and by escalating the fee structure that keeps many deserving students out of the college campus especially the technical ones. The cost of higher education has witnessed an astronomical growth in recent years. Since educational scholarship is not enough to meet the demands, higher education has practically been hijacked from the domain of the lower and lower middle class. Now parents are to cough up a new form 'dowry' if they want to settle their wards in jobs that can do justice to marksheet and aspirations of their children. This new version of educational dowry has gone up to such a level that only those who belong to very creamy layer of the society can afford to pay. As for example, last year IIM Kolkata raised the fee for their two flagship courses from Rs.13.5 lakh to 16.2 lakh. Thus the capacity of parents' credit card

has become a more important factor in our higher education system than a student's marks in his or her merit card.

Education and health sectors are gradually being exported to private players without meaningful control and without attachment of necessary strings. As a result majority of our population have to play the role of helpless spectators when it comes to saving their lives or educating their children. Many students commit suicide when their parents failed to finance their education. Are not these students victims of quota raj for the rich? Or shall we call it reservation for India in Bharat? This is the worst form of discrimination as it only carries coal to Newcastle, jettisoning struggling meritorious students for good. This negative discrimination is also destroying the democratic environment and social mobility in our country.

So first of all it needs to be ensured that meritorious students get higher education without any caste or economic road blocks. It is time to do away not only with the caste quota but also with the huge chunk of management quota from the backyard of educational institutions. Moreover sufficient scholarships and easy interest free loans for the needy is a must to make meritocracy meaningful.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

RAHUL GANDHI TO BE CONGRESS NOMINEE FOR PRIME MINISTERSHIP IN 2019

Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi will be the prime ministerial candidate in 2019 Lok Sabha elections against Narendra Modi. He indicated this in an off the record interaction with a group of journalists when he rejected the idea of supporting Nitish Kumar as the PM from the anti-BJP front. The journalists asked him whether the Congress would support Nitish as the opposition candidate for the PM's post against Modi. On the face of it he was quite evasive and reluctant to give any answer in yes or no, but all indications suggested that the Congress would like to have the post and Rahul would be the candidate. His supporters have already started the chorus. Captain Amarinder Singh, the new convert to the Rahul faction after an adamant Rahul relented and gave his consent to make him the Punjab PCC chief. Captain has said in Punjab that Rahul is the prime ministerial material. He has however urged him to take over as party president first. Joining the Captain is Sachin Pilot who too has demanded that he should take over the party. Unlike previous days when Rahul was asked about his coronation, at the interaction he appeared quite soft and said it was for the party to decide. His statement is being seen that he has no option but to patch up with the party seniors.

BIG SCRAMBLE IN BIHAR CONGRESS FOR

partners, particularly his caste cousin Laloo Prasad Yadav, it was KC who did the ground work. He managed the Delhi media and was seen on TV channels. He coordinated between the media and Prashant Kishore who managed the successful campaign of the grand alliance.

CHANAKYA'S BIHAR EXIT POLL SURVEY WAS MOTIVATED

Though most surveys that covered the exit polls proved wrong, but the most shocking was the survey done by today's Chanakya. Chanakya who proved right in three previous surveys of Lok Sabha 2009, 2014 and Delhi assembly elections of 2015 was supposed to be the most dependable of all the surveys. Chanakya is now blaming the computers. Calling it a technical mistake. But the buzz in the capital is that this survey was for money. But there was only one agency Axis My India that could catch the mood of Bihar. The agency gave 176 to 182 seats to the grand alliance. But the TV channel that had assigned the agency to do the survey could not gather courage to show in the channel the survey. But in this age of twitter and social media, nothing can be kept a secret these days. Axis survey was circulated in internet.

SENIOR CONGRESS LEADERS CLOSE TO RAHUL ARE SAFE

His contribution to the Bihar verdict is nil but CP Joshi, one of the three Rahul favourite general secretaries is the safest. There are ump-

The Congress can never change. Getting 27 seats in Bihar has given them the boost and arrogance to boast. Rahul Gandhi refuses to admit that the Congress got the seats not because of joining the alliance. He is of the opinion that it was the compulsion of the leaders of the grand alliance to take the Congress with it.

BECOMING MINISTERS

The Congress can never change. Getting 27 seats in Bihar has given them the boost and arrogance to boast. Rahul Gandhi refuses to admit that the Congress got the seats not because of joining the alliance. He is of the opinion that it was the compulsion of the leaders of the grand alliance to take the Congress with it. He is supposed to have told some journalists that without the Congress, it would have been difficult to get the kind of victory the grand alliance has got. At the party level, the scramble to become a minister has already begun. Ashok Choudhury the present PCC chief of Bihar, who is taking the credit for the victory, is a front runner to become a minister in the party. Ram is a veteran and much senior to Choudhury. He has been the five times MLA plus he was a Congress working committee member. The Congress is set to get five seats in the Bihar cabinet. The names that are being discussed include Ashok Ram a dalit, VS Dubeay a Brahmin, Anita Bhushan, a bhumihar, Sadanand Singh, a kurni and Javed Khan, a muslim.

K C TYAGI WORKED HARD FOR SUCCESS OF GRAND ALLIANCE IN BIHAR

As the Nitish Kumar was leading the campaign in Patna, the chief architect of the grand alliance were Sharad Yadav, the president of JD(U) and his man Friday KC Tyagi. Both the JD(U) leaders worked silently behind the scene. While Sharad Yadav worked with alliance

teen number of complaints piling up against Joshi who was set to be dropped in the forthcoming Congress reshuffle. But his stars are on the zoom. He has been provided the breather by congress managing to win 27 seats in the Bihar assembly elections. Rahul Gandhi has indicated to journalists that the reshuffle will take place after the next round of elections. He has however dismissed the speculation that only young people will be inducted in the next AICC reshuffle. He told a group of journalists in an off the record conversation that these speculations are wrong as The Congress have to take everyone along. He said that his interest in youth was only when he was in charge of the youth congress but now he was no more the general secretary of the youth congress. Now he said that he was the vice president of the Congress He has to take everyone along.

RAHUL GANDHI NOT ALLOWED TO SPEAK IN THE MIDDLE OF PROGRAMME

Last Saturday, in the Congress conclave at Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Contemporary Studies (RGICS), party vice president Rahul Gandhi came and sat among the viewers even as historians like Zoya Hasan were on stage. After listening to some historians speaking, Gandhi stood up and said he wants to speak. But to the astonishment of many party supporters, session moderator Ghulam Nabi Azad-also in the dais bluntly told Gandhi that he can't speak now as he is slated to give a full speech at the end of the function. (IPA)

You're going to go through tough times - that's life. But I say, 'Nothing happens to you, it happens for you.' See the positive in negative events.

— Joel Osteen

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 103 SHILLONG, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2015

Battle for Nongstoin

WEST Khasi Hills and particularly Nongstoin is the last bastion of the Hill State Peoples' Democratic Party (HSPDP). The fact that the last sitting MLA died in harness makes this election more about sympathy votes than about real issues. One thing that is being played up by the HSPDP leadership is that the Party needs to be alive and kicking in its stronghold or it will lose steam elsewhere. There are many factors that have played out in this election, some of which are regular shenanigans. Analysts believe that Adviser Pariong's rebellion against the Congress Party followed by his expulsion from the Party is unlikely to affect the Congress negatively nor to win too many votes for the HSPDP. Voter behaviour is unpredictable. It is a complex mix of reason, emotions, the quest for development; the desire for personal gratification and lastly a personal rapport with the candidate. It is difficult for the candidates to be able to influence the voters on all the above points.

However, for many voters in Nongstoin the Lion is still a symbol that's dear to them and has won their allegiance times without number, never mind if development has bypassed them all these years. And that's the crux of the matter. Do people really want good roads, better electricity, water supply, health care, education et al? Do they even demand that these issues be discussed on election platforms? Do voters actually want a legislator who will work for the common good? Or they want an MLA who doles out personal assistance by way of hospital fees, money for school books and uniforms, or promises jobs by pursuing the path of nepotism? These are questions that are never discussed outside of the campaign period. In the heat and dust of elections these are issues that no one will give ear to. Yet the issues of development as are desirable and commonly agreed upon by the electorate through a process of participatory planning are imperative if the backwaters of Meghalaya are to catch up with their urban centres. And Nongstoin is a district headquarter which hardly looks like one, except for a few swanky buildings belonging to those who have managed to exploit the system.

Public memory being short, by the time 2018 arrives the HSPDP stalwart, HS Lyngdoh would have been forgotten and political equations would have changed under the new leadership. Perhaps by then the voters of Nongstoin might decide to opt for a change of guard. For now it looks like the HSPDP is all set to romp home to victory on November 24. But elections being what they are, no one can be absolutely sure about anything especially about peoples' choice of a representative because ultimately the winner has to be all things to all people.

LOOKING BACK

March 26, 1988

Minister asked to verify allegation of harassment by Assam

Meghalaya Health Minister Mrs. Maysalin War and Chief Executive Member of the Khasi Hills District Council Mr. Hoppingstone Lyngdoh will soon undertake a tour of the disputed areas with Assam where allegedly Assam Police have been harassing the local tribal inhabitants.

Disclosing this in the State Assembly on Thursday, Chief Minister Purno Sangma told that he was awaiting a full report from Mrs. War before taking it up with Assam.

Mr. Sangma said that

during the recently held National Development Council meeting at Delhi he held informal chat with his Assam counterpart Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta on the boundary issue. He said, Mr. Mahanta was equally keen on ironing out an amicable settlement of the problem. They have agreed that the Home Ministers of the two states would meet very soon for preparing the ground for the two Chief Ministers to clinch the issue.

The Chief Minister said that he personally foresaw no difficulty in findings out an acceptable solution.

Some lessons learnt from ITM 2015

By H H Mohrmen

The recently concluded International Terre Madre (ITM 2015) or the International Mei-ramew has been a great learning experience not only because it was the first international event of that scale held in Shillong, but also because of the dialogue and discourse that took place in the various plenary sessions and track meetings which are vital for sustaining the indigenous way of life in different parts of the globe. Also equally important are the small talks and private discussions of the delegates on the sidelines of the meetings, which has enlightened and hopefully empowered the indigenous people and their supporters to continue in their efforts to protect and promote the indigenous way of life.

The stage for the conference was set by the two important persons in the whole movement that is Mr Phrang Roy and Carlo Petrini. Phrang Roy the Coordinator of the Indigenous Partnership and Chairman of NESFAS in his opening remarks said, "Only by learning from these agroecological systems, can we begin to gather the building blocks we need to construct a "more humane and diverse world." Agroecological system is the new buzzword in the indigenous people's parlance and if one takes a closer look one can see that this system is at work even in the indigenous community here. To begin with we first need to unlearn the agriculture lessons we have learned from the government and to rediscover and relearn agroecological practices that have been practiced in the villages. We need to rediscover the traditional indigenous knowledge and practices which have sustained indigenous life since time immemorial.

Carlo Petrini, President of Slow Food International warned of the devastation that will result if we continue to worship the idol of money. He rallied those who were in the conference to fight the globalization of a "criminal" food system and made a call to defend our unique fruits and vegetables, animal breeds and processing techniques. Now this worship of money is in the rise even in our indigenous community, the commoditization of different aspects of indigenous life is an example of commoditization where everything under the sun has a price tag to it.

We have also witnessed the loss of local seeds and animal breeds and this is happening right here right now. Look at the kind of crops that

our farmers are cultivating; they are all hybrid or genetically modified seeds supplied by the government for commercial purposes. Where have our local indigenous seeds gone? Local rice is being replaced by commercial rice; our local cucumber variety is now being replaced by commercial cucumber; our local chillies/sohmynken/sohmrit is gradually missing from our dining table. Millet which was one of the traditional crops of the people, is not popular anymore. When we stopped millet cultivation we also lost parts of our culture and traditions like the 'Long hai' of the War Jaintia people which forms part of the jhum cultivation. We have recently been able to revive millet cultivation in Moosakhia village and it was a pleasant surprise when Anita Passah a relative from Shillong recently visited us and brought a cake made of millet. This is the kind of connection that we need to make to continue with our traditional farming for a better future of the farmers in the village.

The same is happening with chicken. Gradually local chicken breed is being replaced by broiler and kroiler chickens and now the government is introducing turkey and emu too. The hybrid and commercial breeds have invaded the market and in the process our indigenous chickens and pigs are gradually being abandoned. These are some of the crops and animals which are on the verge of extinction if we continue to promote hybrid and commercial seeds and animals. Watu Ferdinandus of the East Nusa Tenggara Local Food Farmers Association said, "Seeds are related to culture and identity; when the seeds are lost, culture is lost; seeds for the future to save our wisdom." Seeds that we use and the crops that we plant also define us.

The other important lesson learned from the plenary sessions and different track sessions was about food. Food to the indigenous community is not only about satisfying our hunger; neither is it about taste only. Food also defines our identity and culture but more importantly there is a spiritual aspect of food in the

indigenous community. The present generation might not connect food to the spiritual aspect but for the indigenous people spirituality is intrinsic to our planting and harvesting and also to eating. Food in the indigenous community maybe wild edible food that we collect from the forest or food that we farm but every kind of food we consume have their own stories to tell as much as they help replenish our nutritional needs.

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in his video address, expressed dismay at the stage we have reached where we no longer see ourselves as being within nature, but standing apart from it. Indigenous people from around the world also have another characteristic in common and that is story telling. Story telling is a very important part of any indigenous culture. Every story they narrate is about the nature which they call mother and which they also consider to be a part of. The indigenous people have different ways of telling stories; in the track session Prof Desmond Kharmawphlang started the session by introducing to the audience traditional methods of storytelling of the Khasi-Pnar people. The concluding part of this track session was when Edgar Hinge member of the Vanuatu tribe demonstrated the use sand drawing to tell their folk stories. Indigenous people use different mediums to tell their stories. Rita Banerji of Green Hub shared her experience of how she helped indigenous people in North East tell their stories using digital format or video. China Ching, an indigenous Hawaiian, summed up this track meeting by saying that storytelling should also be "a process of reclaiming culture." Since culture is neither linear nor static and our narratives are always evolving stories must continue to be told.

The second plenary introduced a preliminary research study into indigenous conceptions of and pathways to wellbeing that was conducted by the Indigenous Partnership, with the help of researcher Elizabeth Hacker. The study utilized storytelling as a methodology to identify priorities for wellbeing among agriculturalists in Meghalaya, North East India and pastoralists in

Isoilo, Kenya. The findings from the study in these two communities is that wellbeing is not the absence of problems; rather it stems from the combination of social harmony, cultural identity and the meeting of basic needs of the individual or the family.

Another important lesson learned from ITM 2015 is to use local products, eat local food and support the local economy. This perhaps is one of the ways to the future we want for the state of Meghalaya. It is only when local economy improves that we can see prosperity in the area grow and such growth will be inclusive. Growth should not be in the towns and cities only but it should also reflect in the more than 5000 villages in the state. Inclusive growth should be the mantra of the government and it must be demonstrated by state action.

The lessons learned and mentioned in this column are not exhaustive. They are only some observations from the plenary and track sessions that one can immediately recall. There are many sessions that one wished to attend but since the sessions were held parallel to each other one could not divide oneself physically and hence one had to attend only as many sessions as one possibly could. Also, these are lessons that immediately come to mind. One hopes to share more of what one learned from ITM in due course of time.

One lesson of great importance and that cannot be missed is that Shillong too can host international events and the credit goes to Phrang Roy, the NESFAS team and the 40 communities which co-hosted the ITM 2015. Perhaps another idea that one can also learn from the ITM 2015 is to sell Shillong as a convention or a conference destination. Many cities in the west with good convention centres, hotels and guest houses to accommodate visitors usually attract national and international organizations to organize important events in their city. We would do well if organizers select Shillong as venue for their future meetings. With the kind of climate we have and a welcoming community, Shillong could very well be a candidate for upcoming conferences and conventions. This has a cascading effect and could generate employment for several hundreds of young people.

The Ears and Lungs in a City

By Jeannette Street

The heart of a city is a vibrant and happy place, when the festival of lights occurs, once a year. The lighting up of a Chinese-cracker or a rocket patakha is traditional. A night sky lit up in large, water-fall-esque fireworks is beautiful to look at and is part of the Diwali celebrations, enjoyed by nearly all, regardless of creed. But times have changed.

In a New Indian Express article, dated 7th Nov, in a pre-Diwali message released through newspaper advertisements, New Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal advised people against bursting of fireworks and crackers. "On this occasion of happiness, I want to make an appeal. Our Delhi is struggling with an acute problem of air pollution, which assumes dangerous proportions on Diwali due to bursting of fireworks and crackers," Kejriwal said."

This is not the first time that State governments have put out public interest messages either, about not using fireworks, to celebrate Diwali or to reduce the use of crackers which cause large scale pollution. Yet very few, so far, have actually listened to their government's words and not bought the fireworks. With our recent Diwali celebrations, it is apparent, that the majority of us simply did not hear the message. We were told not to ... but did.

As a child, preparing for Diwali night, entailed dressing up in a rugged pair of jeans, gumboots and a jacket; to protect ourselves from the night air and also from the very fireworks, themselves! The lighting of a rocket firework, turned out to be a rather dangerous, health and safety hazard. Many times a rocket, which you pointed dutifully, up to the sky, (as instructed) didn't take off towards the night sky... Instead it would somehow turn and take-off aiming at you, or the people, you happened to be "celebrating" Diwali with. As it hissed into your space, you had to jump out of the way and many a time, sustained minor flesh burns. Hence, the parents' persuasive desire for us to wear heavy clothing to minimise the exposure to the "dangerous things!"

Undeniably, we love looking at fireworks and that is perhaps, the point here. We love looking at fireworks lit up in the sky, because they symbolise, what we hold light and good, celebratory and auspicious. Yet, who is it that suggests an aloo bomb patakha is a jovial way for me to symbolise light over dark...? When the very firework gives off no light, per se, just a dark sound...!

And something has changed for the worse. This aloo bomb patakha gives off a louder bang than can only be described as an "ear-popping, decibel-deafening and body-creeping, explosive sound" which is horrific and distressing to many, especially the elderly, children and pets. A dangerous incident took place on Diwali, when a friend was encouraged, to light their first aloo bomb patakha. This dreadful firework, in the short time it took to light its fuse and throw it, blew up in the friend's hand...they had to go to hospital for treatment. Imagine, this is what we have - light a firework and count your lucky stars that your fingers didn't get blown up in the process! Surely, this is more than bargained for!

Perhaps this lack of quality control is specific to fireworks; so let us take a cursory glance at some other products in our markets. For example, the Nestle India Maggie noodles saga, or the on-going Volkswagen diesel car, emissions scam? (The cost to the latter to rectify their lies is around \$90 Billion). Sadly, for India, according to an article in The Indian Express (29 Oct, 2015)

"based on initial reactions by Automotive Research Association of India executives, ... Volkswagen India might not be found culpable as the emission norms in India are lower than that in the US..."

We are not alone in celebrating Diwali. In Johannesburg, South Africa, an article, from Eye Witness News for this Diwali reads - "urged (its) residents to take caution and to comply with the city's fireworks by-law when celebrating Diwali this evening. Fireworks are expected to be lit between 7-10 pm. This is very civilized. Coming back to Shillong, something very offensive we had to endure during Diwali, was the fireworks continuing up to 3 a.m. This is unacceptable. Where was the State Pollution Control Board?"

Even more offensive and the first thing to greet our ears the next morning, were the bomb patakhas going off, once again! And so we were plagued with bomb explosions, incessantly, for three, painful days and nights. Again, the question, must be asked, where was the State's Pollution Control Board?"

After the horrifying serial bombings in Paris, the day before Children's Day and during Diwali "celebrations" - there is no city dweller, anywhere that wishes to hear a bomb sound going off. Perhaps the time has come for the bomb firework, to be a thing of the past.

In retrospect, State governments did try to spread the word for a fireworks free Diwali, yet failed in their objectives. They should have told us not to buy fireworks and then they should have followed their statement through - and seen to it that fireworks were not sold in the shops. Perhaps, a way forward is to legislate for the type and specification of fireworks that can be manufactured..

Coming back to Arvind Kejriwal's earlier message to Delhi, from an article on Livemint.com on November 13, air pollution across Delhi ... a day after Diwali, was categorized as "severe", with nearly six times the average levels of deadly toxins." The word - "deadly" and this deadly fact requires serious re-thinking in our ways. We are strangling the very air, we need to breathe and one day, our continued strangling will kill the air.

No one wants to spoil the fun...but we have to look at where we are.

The environmental damage we cause to our sacred oxygen ... during Diwali, especially in the case of Delhi, is getting to the tipping point ... and precious Time is running out...to correct it.

Yet, it is not Diwali that should be singled out. We may look to other incorrect practices that we as a State unacceptably endure - the burning of garbage outdoors every day of the year. Whether it is someone burning in their back garden, staff burning garbage on government premises, or a farmer burning a hill-side, in the name of jhum farming - these practices should be put behind us, as they pollute the precious air we need to breathe...every day of the year. Where is the State Pollution Control Board? Did they audit the pollution levels on Diwali? We have a right to know!

Over a week has passed since Diwali yet, shockingly, someone has just set off a big, bomb patakha, as I write this.

In conclusion, the point that sticks out the most, is the irony of this scenario. How is it, that the very air our lungs need to breathe, is the very same air, we choke, strangle AND burn? Yet in one instance, we say, we are "celebrating" prosperity...? And hark!! What about our ears!!!

TO THE EDITOR

Countering the ISIS terror

Editor,

Apropos the editorial, "Paris is not for burning" (ST November 17, 2015), while agreeing that Paris is not for burning, history tells us that it burnt in 1793 when the reign of terror swept across the city killing more than 2000 supposed enemies of the French Revolution. In 1871 the urban resurrection in Paris slaughtered nearly 10,000 Parisians followed by more than five decades of Terrorism in France (1962 to 2015). So history repeats itself and violent history continues. In the absence of a Unified Strategy it will not be easy to destroy ISIS. The success of ISIS has not just led to individuals joining them, but entire terrorist groups in Syria, Iraq and Egypt have folded under this new "Caliphate". They are also working hand in hand with some elements of al-Qaida in Syria. Anti-ISIS coalition is now made up of more than 60 countries but they are struggling to come up with a clear strategy. So far, they have done little to destroy ISIS aside from carrying out airstrikes and condemning their brutality. The New York Post reported that American

Military officials have stated that no amount of airstrikes will completely destroy IS and that ground troops will be required. A US State Department official stated that ISIS is worse than al-Qaida and represents a threat "worse than al-Qaida with the capability to create a sanctuary for global jihadists working to threaten American interests.

The Daily Beast states, "The self-declared Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is no longer merely a terrorist organisation, a top State Department official told House and Senate lawmakers, but "a full blown army seeking to establish a self-governing state through the Tigris and Euphrates Valley in what is now Syria and Iraq." Vice News documentary summarised the situation this way: "While no one knows exactly how to deal with the escalating crisis, the fighters of the Islamic State grow bolder." Their stated goal could be summarised in the following way: unification of all Muslims and destruction of the western route to global domination. An IS Press Officer in Raqqa told a Vice News

journalist: "I say to America that the Islamic State has been established. And we will not stop. Don't be cowards and attack us with drones. Instead send your soldiers, the ones we humiliated in Iraq. We will humiliate them everywhere, God willing, and we will raise the flag of Allah in the White House..." This dire warning portends a potential showdown between the unstoppable force (IS) and the immovable object (Christianity and the West). These dangerous times have caused millions of people, Christians and non-Christians alike, to wonder if mankind has reached the "end-times." Others believe without doubt that we are living in the "end of days."

However, China and Russia have rightly called for a global counter-terrorism front following Paris attacks. Both the countries have rightly asserted that UN Charter, International Law, and respect for national sovereignty should guide an international response to global security challenges. This view sharply contradicts the advocacy in the West of human rights driven approach for military interventions in

sovereign States, under the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect. President Xi Jinping has rightly observed that "both the symptoms and the root causes of the issue should be addressed. Double standards should not be allowed". The Russians have also rightly voiced full support for a "Universal anti-terror front" as the core instrument for combating terrorism, following the Paris attack. But despite the Sino-Russian advocacy for international legality to counter terrorism, France has now stepped up its air campaign in Syria, following the Paris attacks, without a UN Security Council resolution, or an invitation to do so by the Government in Syria. International alliance is imperative to counter the ISIS and this needs the support of US, EU, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran.

Yours etc.,
VK Lyngdoh,
Viaemail

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.

“Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”
— George Bernard Shaw

The Shillong Times

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Uproar in Assam

ASSAM governor P.B. Acharya was quoted as saying that “Hindustan is for Hindus”. It has triggered bitter controversy and Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi has demanded his removal. Acharya is deeply rooted in the Sangh ethos. He however later clarified that all people of Indian origin persecuted in foreign lands were welcome in India. For instance, if an Indian Christian is persecuted in Pakistan, he can come to India and Indian Muslims are free to go anywhere. He mentioned the case of Taslima Nasreen who had sought shelter in India. He added that all religious communities were persecuted. It is not clear what he meant by saying that if a Muslim is persecuted, he can go to Pakistan or to any other country but that Hindus had no other place. Acharya was jailed for 6 months in 1948 when the Sangh was banned following Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. He became President of the Sangh student wing, ABVP in 1969.

Tarun Gogoi has said that Acharya has broken the oath of maintaining the unity and integrity of the country which he has taken in the name of the Indian Constitution and has asked for his replacement. Acharya is reported to have appointed several RSS members to the Dibrugarh University Court, depriving efficient people and scholars. He is alleged to have converted Raj Bhavan in Guwahati into an RSS den. AGP leader Prafulla Kumar Mahanta has said that if the Governor had made such a controversial remark, it is very unfortunate. One thing is clear Acharya has violated the neutrality that a Governor is supposed to maintain. The Assam assembly elections are coming. Having tasted defeat in Bihar, the BJP will do well to redress Congress and AGP grievances against Governor Acharya.

LOOKING BACK

March 26, 1988

V.P.Singh L.S. elections will be put off

Jan Morcha leader Mr. V.P. Singh today feared that the government might put off the next Lok Sabha elections taking advantage of the 59th Constitutions Amendment Bill. Talking to newsmen along with other opposition leaders after presenting a memorandum against the Bill to President Mr. R. Venkataraman, Mr. Singh said the government had already postponed elections in Delhi.

whether the Bill affected the basic structure of the constitution.

Later at a joint press conference, the opposition leaders said the President gave them a patient hearing. However, he did not make any comment, they added.

On behalf of the opposition, Jan Morcha leader Mr. Singh handed over the memorandum to the President. Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, Mr. L.K. Advani and many were among those present on the occasion.

The former Defence Minister said public opinion should immediately assert against the “draconian measure”. The political parties should be take up the responsibility of mobilizing public opinion on the issue.

The memorandum said it will also nullify the 44th Amendment, which was passed in 1978 unambiguously, with an understanding between the Janata Government and the Congress (I) opposition.

He said it was an improved weapon in the hands of the government to curb fundamental rights. With this, the right to life would also be jeopardized.

What worried them most was that the bill would single out Punjab for denial of fundamental freedoms and, in the process, increase the sense of alienation among the people in the trouble-torn state. Consequently, the “Punjab problem will become more complex”, it felt.

PM to open DMs conference at Imphal on April

Earlier, both Communist and non Communist opposition leaders marched to the Rashtrapati Bhavan today to plead with President Mr. R. Venkataraman to withhold his assent to the 59th Amendment Bill empowering the Centre to impose emergency in Punjab.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi will arrive here on April 2 to inaugurate the third District Magistrates Conference.

During their hour long meeting with the President they submitted a memorandum requesting him to refer for reconsideration the Bill back to Parliament which had already passed the measure.

About 90 District Magistrates from all over the country are expected to attend the three day conference. The first conference was held at Bhopal and the second at Hyderabad.

They suggested that the President, meanwhile, seek opinion of the Supreme Court, under Article 143,

The Prime Minister who will be accompanied by cabinet Ministers and high government officials will fly to Agartala the next day. The Prime Minister is scheduled to address a conference of Congress workers here.

Nitish-Lalu Jugalbandi Cohabit, but for how long?

By Poonam I Kaushish

At the end, it was all about feel good. A two month long, five phase grueling election which culminated in anointing JD(U)'s Nitish Kumar as Chief Minister of Bihar once again. A 64-year old engineer-turned politician who rewrote the rules of the political game for the third time in a tough gladiatorial contest against Prime Minister Modi and became a cause célèbre.

Undoubtedly, Nitish has emerged as a political fulcrum around which all anti-BJP and anti-Modi political forces would converge, notwithstanding spoil-sport Samajwadi's Mulayam and BSP's Mayawati. Yet, he heads an inherently fragile coalition as both Lalu's RJD and Sonia's Congress are temperamentally and culturally different from each other.

How Nitish manages the pulls and pressures and extreme contradictions, time alone will tell. Both he and Lalu are identical in political upbringing but absolutely unlike in demeanour and track record of governance: Nitish's development and good governance vs. Lalu's Jungle raj.

Bets are being placed on how long the old rivals-turned-allies will continue to pull together, rather than drag each other apart. Given Lalu's disposition of always being *numero uno* and believing he is truly the king maker, which in this case he is, is a tough call. Add to this Rahul's Quixote ways, Nitish has an unenviable task of managing on his hands.

The RJD Chief has already made clear his intentions, *I-am-your-mai-baap* and extracted his pound of flesh. Got both his 9th and 8th class pass sons anointed as Number 2&3 in Nitish's Cabinet, no matter his elder son even failed in taking his oath of secrecy! Reminiscent of his *angootha chaap* mother Rabri's days as Chief Minister.

Moreover, once his sons grasp the nitty-gritty of governance, the RJD Chief is bound to extract his pound of flesh and assert himself with hyperbole that people have given him the moral authority, even as Nitish is Chief

Minister. One cannot put it past him to interfere in the day-day functioning of Government, like he did during *Rabri Raj*.

But being a shrewd politician, Lalu knows he has to first fend off his taint and that he cannot fight elections until 2021. His *ladlas* too are novices who would not be able to carry on his legacy. Besides, he realizes that if he puts undue pressure or is to demanding of Nitish, the Congress would hoot for the Chief Minister.

Further, if ever push came to shove Nitish, might go back to his erstwhile ally-turned-foe BJP as his 71+58 totals 129, a simple majority in the Assembly. Hence, Lalu is unlikely to do anything stupid and jeopardise the running of the Government.

Additionally, the RJD Chief is handicapped by the fact that 49 of his MLAs (50%) face criminal cases of which 37 are serious criminal charges and may cause him embarrassment. Thus, till Lalu rocks the boat, Nitish has won a hat-trick. Hats off!

True, Nitish is nobody's fool. By inviting the Prime Minister for his swearing-in he has left his door ajar for realignment with is former ally in the future if Lalu plays hard ball. That the BJP is not averse was apparent when two Union Ministers attended his mammoth swearing-in-ceremony.

For Modi he kills two birds with one stone, gets a foothold in Bihar and defuses Nitish's ambition as joint Opposition candidate for *Bharat's Gaddi* in 2019. The Chief Minister is savoir-faire and issued the invitation knowing that to fulfill his development agenda he has to work with the Centre and get it to open its purse strings.

Add to this, Nitish has his task cut out: He has to press on with policies that proffer educational opportunities, jobs and further

economic progress. Alongside, provide fiscal substance for upward mobility and social upliftment of his rainbow coalition of OBCs, EBCs, Mahadalits, Musahars, women and Muslims who voted for him. And continue focusing on *bijli-sadak, Suraksha and Nari Shakti*.

His game plan should be clear: Unemployment is 18.2% higher than UP's at 17.4%, Bihar boasts of the third highest BPL families, urban 33.6% and 32 % in rural areas. And the JD(U)'s vote share reduced by 5.9 per cent and its seats tally declined by 44 in 2015 *vis-a-vis* 2010.

This apart, having acquired a larger-than-life image of stopping Modi in his tracks, it remains to be seen if in the long run Nitish could emerge as the dark horse to challenge the RSS-BJP combine and if so how serious? As strengthening of castes does not translate into de-fanging communalism and caste consolidation by regional Parties of the Hindi heartland espousing secularism has often proved to be too vulnerable to rally people on communal lines.

This was amply demonstrated in UP where Dalits and Yadav deserted their political camps and voted for the BJP in last year's Lok Sabha elections in the post-Muzaffarnagar riot phase. Similarly in Bihar, the BJP got substantial votes of Yadavs in the Lok Sabha as Lalu was out of contest.

In the ultimate analysis, casteism has never proved to be an effective antidote to mobilisation for India's development and progress and would not change the grammar of Indian politics. The future discourse will move from a secular-communal path to Modi vs. anti-NaMo line which might continue to degenerate resulting in further radicalisation of society

Leadership is a sacred trust

Editor,

November 24, 2015 will be a historic event for the people of Nongstoin constituency as the votes of around 29,000 voters will be counted. With the exception of Dr Fenela Lyngdoh Nonglait, a PhD degree holder in Law who bitterly lost the 2013 assembly election to Bah Brolding from Mawthadrashan constituency, the three other candidates are first timers in this bye-election. As usual promises are made, rallies were held, debates were conducted in which the UDP candidate did not turn up. Door to door campaigns were carried out, speeches were made and we have to grant it to them that they worked hard work within the short campaigning period. But it's kind ironic when candidates make false speeches. For instance The UDP candidate Moslander made a slight mistake in his speech about “Ka bor ki Rangbah Shnong” (Powers of the Rangbah Shnong) in a common platform campaign where all four candidates spoke at Pyndengrei, a town with the largest number of voters in Nongstoin constituency. I interacted with one young, dynamic voter and

many common traits. Both are meticulous, honest, hardworking and come from humble backgrounds. In their respective settings, both are often accused of being “arrogant and authoritative”. Their politics may diverge but it leaves the scope of the twain meeting in the future.

All in all, Bihar's poll quake favouring the *Mahagathbandhan* promises to have repercussions at the national level for the BJP-led NDA, already battling a *kahain hain* the promised *acheche din* crisis at the Centre. Boosted by its victory, a resurgent Opposition could harden its position against the Government in the forthcoming Parliament's winter session, sparking off more legislative deadlocks and weakening the Centre's position in policy battles with the Opposition.

This would certainly create complications in Modi's reform agenda and development to propel India on the road to prosperity. As also damage its prospects to emerge as a force to reckon with in Eastern India and the Hindu heartland against the backdrop of Assam gearing up for polls next year and UP later.

Importantly, the Bihar elections could well be the harbinger of change, nationally. With half of India's population in the 18-35 age bracket the aspirational levels of a young democracy has changed dramatically. No longer are old clichés, Styrofoam promises and histrionics palatable. All demand an Obama-like “Yes we can” politics. Whereby progress is bound to overshadow *Mandal-Kamandal* politics.

In sum, the Bihar spark has ignited a new *chingari* and shown there are never any full stops in politics. Consequently, power-sharing will remain the name of the game, but it's the Nitish-Lalu's chemistry that will determine the success of the Government. What gives? — *INFA*

TO THE EDITOR

On dwindling readership Of Khasi literature

Editor,

When our tribal community was at a nascent stage myths, legends and folktales were passed down from generation to generation through the oral tradition or word of mouth. It was later when the Welshman Thomas Jones introduced the Khasi alphabets that Khasis learned how to write and learn in the language that they spoke. Writers and poets were then born like the great Soso Tham. At that specific period in history, there was a lot of enthusiasm and interest in reading Khasi literature. Now, sadly, with many pulp novels and classics from the west making waves, it seems that we have forgotten (or are uninterested in) our own literature.

From my observation, there are many old and contemporary Khasi writers and poets who are good in their craft. Their works, if translated with fidelity into English, would rank with the best of literary greats around the world. S.J Duncan, H.Elias, Wan Kharkrang, Bevan Lionel Swer, Streamlet Dkhar, Paul Lyngdoh-have all written excellent books/poems. It's sad that the readership dwindles with the passing of each year. I feel that in this world filled with complexities we should turn to the literature of our own for consolation, wisdom and morality. Khasi literature, as an art, mirrors life and is continually in a quest and search for meaning in it, which we must not lose touch

with. We should know and be proud of our own.

Yours etc.,
Willie Gordon Suting,
Shillong 1

Leadership is a sacred trust

Editor,

November 24, 2015 will be a historic event for the people of Nongstoin constituency as the votes of around 29,000 voters will be counted. With the exception of Dr Fenela Lyngdoh Nonglait, a PhD degree holder in Law who bitterly lost the 2013 assembly election to Bah Brolding from Mawthadrashan constituency, the three other candidates are first timers in this bye-election. As usual promises are made, rallies were held, debates were conducted in which the UDP candidate did not turn up. Door to door campaigns were carried out, speeches were made and we have to grant it to them that they worked hard work within the short campaigning period. But it's kind ironic when candidates make false speeches. For instance The UDP candidate Moslander made a slight mistake in his speech about “Ka bor ki Rangbah Shnong” (Powers of the Rangbah Shnong) in a common platform campaign where all four candidates spoke at Pyndengrei, a town with the largest number of voters in Nongstoin constituency. I interacted with one young, dynamic voter and

asked him how he felt about Fenela Lyngdoh. He replied, “Just because she holds a PhD in Law does not mean that she can win an election by showing off her academic achievements and promising the impossible. She exaggerated about going even to Delhi to stop Laws which violate the rights of the people. It's a distant dream.” I tend to agree with him because elections can only be won by those who understand harsh ground realities. And that pious and joyful word ended up saying, “It's better to vote for NOTA.” This election is the most unpredictable one ever in Nongstoin and undoubtedly the youth play a massive role in this election. Hope the victor will do the best and push for over-all development of Nongstoin constituency.

Yours etc.,
Micky Marwein,
Viaemail

Nongstoin by-poll

Editor,

Apropos the news item “Campaign at feverish pitch” and “Lapang sends Pariong packing” (ST 19th and 20th November 2015) the Chief Minister, Mukul Sangma while addressing an election rally on Wednesday called to vote for Gabriel Wahlang for change and development of Nongstoin. It is strange that the INC picked Mr Wahlang for Nongstoin who will clearly

not be able to make it against the Hill State Peoples Democratic Party nominee, Mr Diosstarness Jyngdang who is the right hand man of late Hoping Stone Lyngdoh. Since public memory is short let me remind that Mr Wahlang as President of the Meghalaya Pradesh Youth Congress in the last election to the Nongstoin Assembly Constituency canvassed against his own Party (INC) to favour HSPDP when Dr. Pariong was the Congress nominee. HSPDP with the booster shot ahead of Saturday's poll with Dr Pariong campaigning for Mr Jyngdang would dent the prospects of the INC. It is interesting to note the statement of the Chief Minister “if he (Pariong) speaks against the party, if he shows that he is against the Party, we have an internal mechanism to deal with it”. Will the Chief Minister kindly explain where the “internal mechanism of the INC” was then when Mr Gabriel canvassed for the HSPDP candidate in the last election? The MPCC President, Mr D D Lapang may have sent Pariong packing but if the latest public opinion of Nongstoin Constituency is correct the INC will certainly find it difficult to romp home victorious and could be sent out packing from Nongstoin. Come what may the Lion still reigns supreme in West Khasi Hills.

Yours etc.,
Gordon Wahlang,
Via email

Global slowdown hurting India's target

By K R Sudhaman

India's grim exports scenario this financial year has at last woken up the government from its slumber and rightly announced three per cent interest subsidy. With India's exports declining for the eleventh month running in October and no immediate recovery visible in the near future, the government decided to give a leg up to this declining exports by announcing the interest subsidy for five years providing that much head room for exporters to plan their strategy. This cheaper credit under the interest equalisation scheme, approved by the cabinet committee on economic affairs on Thursday will be available from April one this year for both pre and post shipment rupee export credit.

This timely bailout came at a time when India's exports fell 17.5 per cent year-on-year in October at \$21.5 billion. Exports in the first seven months of the year were about \$154.2 billion. In 2014-15, India's exports had totalled \$310.5 billion. Drugs and pharma, tea, cereal preparations, ceramic, minerals, electronics, textiles, carpets, jute, and plastics were the only sectors that posted a growth in exports last month.

“The decline in exports is worse than even that during the global slowdown. With this, reaching even \$300 billion of exports this year looks difficult,” said Ajay Sahai, director-general of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

In fact India's merchandise exports growth, which clocked rapid growth of 15-20 per cent for several years, the seems to have come to grinding halt throwing into the winds all ambitious medium term targets. India reached the annual merchandise exports of \$300 billion very rapidly but since then it seems to have got stuck around that figure with recession continuing to play havoc with the global economy. The rapid exports growth in previous years had made the earlier UPA government set an ambitious target of \$500 billion annual exports by 2014-15. That had gone awry.

The Narendra Modi government had in its foreign trade policy had set a new ambitious target of \$900 billion annually in the next years. Now that too appears to be virtually impossible as the economic situation stands today. The target was set while announcing new foreign trade policy in April last unmindful of the fact that merchandise exports in the year ended March 31, 2015 stood at \$310.5 billion, down from \$314 billion a year earlier and far short of the \$340 billion target set by the government.

One can't shift to domestic markets overnight and the benefits of the export incentive schemes are yet to trickle down,” Sahai said as outward shipments declined in 20 out of the 30 industries, led by Iron ore, the latest official monthly trade data for October showed. Sluggish global demand, an overvalued rupee, declining imports from China and devaluation of the Chinese currency have deterred India's exports from growing despite the commerce department expanding export incentive schemes for various products and markets.

Though tepid global demand has dragged economy recovery, a significant aspect is that India's imports too have been falling with sharp decline in global crude oil prices and other commodity prices helping to keep India's trade deficit under check. The decline in imports was more pronounced than exports in October at 21.5 per cent to \$31.12 billion. This ensured trade deficit of \$9.7 billion, an eight-month low and down from \$10.47 billion in September and \$13.35 billion in the year ago period. Non-oil imports fell to \$24.2 billion and were 9.93 per cent

lower on year. Non-oil, non-gold imports, seen as a measure of domestic demand, fell 0.57 per cent to \$22.75 billion.

Eighty per cent of India's crude oil requirement is imported. The falling crude oil prices has not only brought down trade deficit but also current account deficit, besides significantly reducing subsidy bill thereby keeping fiscal deficit and government finances under check.

“Even as overall exports continued to record a substantial contraction, the narrowing de-growth of non-oil merchandise exports and the rise in the number of such commodities reporting positive growth in October 2015 offer a sliver of relief. However, the slide in growth of services exports in September 2015 after the double-digit growth posted in August 2015 is disappointing.” ICRA's senior economist Aditya Nayyar said.

The fall in imports was led by a 60 per cent decline in the imports of gold, 55 per cent in cotton and 45 per cent in oil. Declining gold imports indicate a combination of rural stress and lower investment demand because of the possibility of lower returns.

Gold imports are expected to reduce due to three gold related schemes launched earlier this month. The Gold Monetization Scheme, Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme, and India Gold Coins are seen as a way to put the gold available with the country to productive use and thereby reduce imports and control the current account deficit. The current account deficit is now expected to narrow modestly to \$8.5-9.0 billion in the second quarter.

During 2008-09 global financial meltdown, India witnessed decline in exports for nine months in a row. This time it has been for 11 consecutive months. The sharp decline global crude oil prices was impacting India's exports as well. High value export item, refined crude oil exports have been declining sharply. In September the decline was as much as 60 per cent.

The restoration of three per cent interest subvention for exporters, which expired in March 31 by government was a welcome development as it would greatly help in salvaging the sagging exports. The 3 per cent interest equalisation would be available to all exports of MSME and 416 tariff lines. The scheme will help the identified export sectors to be globally competitive and achieve higher level of export performance. The scheme covered labour intensive and employment generating sectors like auto components, processed agriculture and food items, handicrafts, handloom products, fabrics and leather goods. This development is significant as it would help in kickstarting domestic economy as MSME accounted for 40 per cent of India's GDP and manufacturing besides 45 per cent of country's exports.

This was the third major announcement for exports in the last fortnight. On October 30, the government expanded support to various products under the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme followed by a revision of a duty drawback rates for exporters two days ago.

These developments are certainly reassuring to revive India's exports but a lot more is needed to be done, particularly on ease of doing business in the country to ensure Indian industries and exports grow to its potential. The picture however does not look all that rosy in the near term as it would be couple years before India returned to high growth path of 9-10 per cent including high exports growth. (IPA Service)

"To succeed, you need to find something to hold on to, something to motivate you, something to inspire you."

— Tony Dorsett

The Shillong Times

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Nongstoin results

THE Congress Party stalwarts worked over time to campaign for their candidate, Gabriel Wahlang but the Lion finally stole the show. The Hills State Peoples' Democratic Party (HSPDP) won the election with a respectable majority with the Congress coming in second. The elections, coming so soon after the demise of the founder of the HSPDP, Hoping Stone Lyngdoh were bound to be driven by subjectivity rather than the practical realities. Only by 2018 will the electorate of Nongstoin begin to realise that growth, development and progress are imperative as they drive the economy.

It is said that people get the MLA and the government they deserve. If Bihar voted for caste, we in Meghalaya are not too far behind in the manner in which we assess and weigh the suitability of a candidate to represent us. Most often personal considerations override pragmatism. Personal equations with a candidate and the manner in which he or she approaches the electorate are more important than the election promises made on the public platform. In fact public meetings are now passé. Not too many attend such meetings or are convinced by what a candidate says at such meetings. Often it is the clandestine meetings between the candidate or his agent and the voter, when money changes hands, that determine whether the candidate wins or loses.

The Congress is now at 31 seats, thereby making it the single largest party in the 60 member Meghalaya Legislative Assembly. But it also has the support of a few like-minded Independent MLAs which give it an edge over other parties. What has benefitted the Congress is the fragmentation of the regional political parties. Even this time the United Democratic Party set up a candidate instead of settling for a consensus candidate. This is the Achilles Heel of the Regional Parties. Hence a win in Nongstoin is hardly going to make a difference to the fortunes of the Regional Parties and nor will it dent the Congress morale. It is 2018 which will make a difference and which might also see new political equations emerging since the BJP is keen to make inroads into Meghalaya after having accomplished a win in the Garo Hills District Council elections.

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1988

PM's hour long meeting with President

Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had an hour long meeting with President Mr. R. Venkatraman at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here today.

A Rashtrapati Bhavan spokesman described the meeting as routine. However, the meeting assumes political significance, coming as it does in the wake of opposition protest over the controversial 59th Constitution Amendment Bill.

Mr. Gandhi is understood to have briefed the President on the salient features of the 59th Constitution Amendment Bill which had a stormy passage in both houses of Parliament before it secured its approval.

He is also understood to have informed Mr. Venkatraman that the Government will invoke the emergency powers, only if the need arises, to cope with the terrorist menace in Punjab.

Mr. Gandhi reportedly told the President that the opposition campaign against the Bill was politically motivated and raising the bogey of imposition of emergency was an attempt to malign the Government.

More than 100 members of Parliament marched to the Rashtrapati Bhavan yesterday and submitted a

memorandum to Mr. Venkatraman urging him to refer the Bill back to Parliament for reconsideration.

During their hour long meeting with the President the opposition MP's sought to impress upon him that the Bill in its present form posed a grave threat to fundamental rights than the Postal Bill which is yet to acquire Presidential assent.

In all certainty, the memorandum said, it would annul and eliminate the fundamental rights and freedom enshrined in the Constitution. Though it was passed ostensibly for the purpose of meeting the prevailing situation in Punjab, its political fallout could never be confined to Punjab only, the memorandum said.

Rashtrapati Bhavan has been the centre of political activity since yesterday morning when Steel and Mines Minister Mr. Mahan Lal Fotedar had a separate meeting with Mr. Venkatraman shortly before the opposition march.

After the opposition meeting, a high-level three member ministerial delegation also called on the President. Mr.P.V. Narshima Rao, Mr. Shiv Shankar and Mr. Chintamani Panigrahi's brief was to counter arguments raised against the Bill by the opposition.

Indigenous innovations for decent modern living

By Fabian Lyngdoh

We are interested to know what the future has in store for us. But the 'future' has always been an abstract and vague concept. It has an existence only in the mind, conjured up by hope, and sometimes by despair. The only events we can analyse are those of the past, and the only life we can possibly live is the present. Therefore, we have to be attentive to the present, because what we call a future is only a continuation of the present. It is in this context that Jesus said, "Take therefore no thought of the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." If we are not attentive to improve the present situation, then the morrow cannot take care for the things of itself. We can improve our lives by learning a lesson from the past, but taking the present, and not the past, as the base line. The past has already been overlapped by the present, and whatever value there was in the past, has become the ingredient of the present. If we miss out this point, then we will lose hold of both the concrete past and the prospective future.

Globalization with the broader objectives of universal economic and social development by the removal of barriers to trade and investment between nations with a view to achieve economic efficiency through competitiveness was not able to achieve the dream of a global village and a common culture of the world. The concepts and the activities have always been dominated by the developed nations of the West with a motive to globalise not knowledge or prosperity, but to expand the production and market networks for their branded products through patent regime at the cost of the natural resources of the poor societies. Hence, instead of a common culture, there arose a reaction on the part of the poorer societies to thicken their narrow domestic walls in defence against such onslaught. Organizations like the Terra Madre seek to empower the indigenous peoples to protect and promote the indigenous way of life, to rediscover the traditional indigenous knowledge and agro-ecological practices which have sustained indigenous life since time immemorial. The objective is to fight against the globalisation of a 'criminal' food system perpetrated by the multi-national

companies, and hence to ensure the food security of the poor indigenous communities.

Several years back in a training programme in the ICAR Institute at Umiam, I had a quarrel with one of the scientists of the institute. It was not his fault in condemning the indigenous methods of cultivation as outdated, and preaching the benefits of foreign hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and lots of pesticides because he was following the Government policy. Indeed, during those years all NGOs took pride in collaborating with the State Government's programmes to do away with the useless local seeds and adopt the high class imported seeds from Germany, Israel etc. That was the fashion then. At my turn to speak, I said that a few years of experiments in the lab of scientists cannot compare with millions of years of evolution in the lap of nature. So, it would be good if government institutions assist the farmers in land development and watershed management but not to encourage poisoning the country side with chemicals and not to interfere with the local biodiversity and indigenous seeds. At the end of the session, that particular scientist publicly rebuked me, saying that I should not speak out of turn because India is overpopulated and millions of mouths have to be fed. Being so rudely stung, I rudely retorted that if India is overpopulated, so let it be; but Meghalaya with only 79 people per sq.km is miserably under populated. I told him not to impose his common policy based on blanket statistics. The cordial relationship got destroyed. I wish I could meet him again now to salute for his sense of duty in discouraging indigenous organic farming.

On September 13, 2007, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the General Assembly, and 'Indigenous People's Rights' becomes a popular catchword. Though the idea of protecting indigenous people from exploitation is sound, but we should be able to

discern the difference between the ideas of 'traditional' and 'indigenous'. A sound indigenous agro-ecological practice may not be traditional, and a traditional practice relevant in the past, may no more be sound in the socio-economic setting of today. A modern institution or method can be indigenous if it is developed within the society and the local eco-system. The present-day dorbar shngong for example, has naturally evolved from within the society, so it is an indigenous institution of the Khasis even though it is not traditional as it has never been there in the past. Therefore, sustainable development depends not so much on the rediscovery of the traditional knowledge and agro-ecological practices which have been practised since time immemorial, but it depends much more on the discovery and invention of new indigenous methods relevant to the present needs but not foreign to the geographic conditions and biodiversity of the land. It is not the cultural patterns that determine the socio-economic activities of the people, but on the other hand, it is the socio-economic activities based on the prevalent conditions of existence that determine their cultural patterns.

Our ancestors were completely independent because they lived in isolation and their density of population was very low compared to the availability of abundant natural resources. In 1924 the total population of the 25 Khasi states was only 1,80,000 with a density of 17.24/sq.km, of whom, 1,63,000 were Khasis. Their population a hundred years before the advent of the British rule could have been extremely low that wild bananas would have been more than sufficient to feed their little ones. In 2011, the population of the same area under the 25 Khasi States is 14,68,040, and a density of 140.58/sq.km, which is more than 8 times the population in 1924. Looking at these figures it becomes clear that the traditional methods of production and the relations of productions among the people cannot be relevant with the present needs. New indigenous methods of production and new relations of

production must evolve and improved cultural patterns need to emerge. The tribe has to be capable of inventing new indigenous methods of livelihood and renovating improved cultural patterns from within, and not wait for a declaration from the UNO, or lamely return to the past or blindly accept the dictates of multinational companies.

Multi-national companies have the intelligence and the power to influence political authorities including the UN. Karl Marx is right in saying that in capitalist societies, the government is only the executive committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie. It could be that the industrialized nations realised that they had destroyed their natural environment, and to keep their lungs healthy they have to strategize to convince the so called underdeveloped societies and indigenous peoples all over the world to reduce their populations and convert all their habitats into reserve forests and wild life sanctuaries. They would readily finance such projects so that they can smoke the cigars there in America, while we live on roots, wild herbs and insects to protect their lungs here in the remote corner of India. They might even buy away the rights of underdeveloped nations to industrialise themselves through the so called 'carbon trading'.

Hence besides the right as an indigenous tribe, our people need socio-economic security. They still need to achieve a certain decent level of modern development, and there is nothing to romanticise about the paradise of a cowherd playing his flute in the rain while tending his cattle on the hill side and bitten by mosquito and leeches. That is good for poetry and spiritual contemplation, but not for socio-economic development. It would not be just for some of us to live in good dwelling houses with cushioned beds and sofas while others sit on 'ka knor ka phala' (log or bamboo splinter). Our indigenous culture may contribute to our cultural tourism, but other than that we need to encourage our youth to invent new indigenous methods along with modern scientific knowledge to improve the lives of the people.

Weakened Modi vs unsteady Rahul

By Amulya Ganguli

It will not be till 2018 that the BJP and the Congress, purportedly the two poles of Indian politics, will meet in a frontal confrontation in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. Before that, there will be a face-off in Assam next year, but the north-eastern state is not politically important enough for the outcome to make a significant impact on the national scene although it might show which way the wind is blowing.

Otherwise, the elections next year in Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Kerala - Puduchery, too, is not all that important - are likely to reinforce the prevailing regional trends with the AIADMK/DMK, Trinamool Congress and the UDF/LDF continuing to rule the roost.

The BJP's absence as a major political force in these states makes it a mere bystander while the Congress will sink or swim with the DMK in Tamil Nadu, maintain its No. 3 position behind the Trinamool Congress and the Left in West Bengal and be a winner or loser in Kerala as alternately in all these years.

Beyond these fairly predictable political currents, the enigmatic X-factor is the leadership of the two "national" parties - although they, too, have virtually become regional outfits because they do not exist in large parts of the country.

Where the BJP is concerned, the party's leadership question would have been considered settled till the Bihar results came out. Now, Narendra Modi cannot be totally certain although he will remain his party's best bet because of the TINA (there is no alternative) factor.

He may be able to ward off the charge of the veterans. But, unless there is a perceptible upturn in the economic scene, he will keep on losing the support of the non-saffron middle class which rooted for him last year and gave him the requisite push, along with the saffronites, to help him attain power.

Besides, there is no knowing what fresh problems will be created for him by Yogi Adityanath and Co. As it is, the Swadeshi Jagran Manch and other affiliates of the RSS are opposing his foreign investment initiatives.

Much to the delight of the prime minister's enemies, therefore, Modi will have to fight on at least three fronts - the party elders who are unhappy about their marginalization, the fundamentalists who fear that the BJP is turning away from the pro-Hindu agenda and the anti-reforms brigade who are against the opening up of the economy.

If Modi can overcome these challenges, who will be face as his primary opponent from the Congress because it is still not possible to say

whether Sonia Gandhi or Rahul will lead the charge.

Rahul may become the party president and be the prime ministerial candidate - there will not be another experiment with a docile regent to keep the seat warm for the crown prince. But how secure will be his political position three years down the line is difficult to say.

For one thing, the Congress is again likely to bring up the rear in the U.P. elections of 2017 behind the two big regional players - the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party. Such a status will not enhance Rahul's reputation.

For another, the period between now and 2018 is unlikely to refurbish Rahul's leadership credentials by removing doubts about his maturity or understanding of economics. For a third, the party itself may be somewhat unstable since it is unlikely to notch up any major electoral success in the next two years.

Is it possible, therefore, that Sonia will offer herself as the prime ministerial candidate since Rahul will be unable to assure a certain victory? Since the Congress cannot think beyond the Nehru-Gandhis despite their dwindling charisma, it has to project someone from the family with the best possible chance of winning.

The decline of the BJP and the Congress means that the political space will open up for the regional players even if their influences are confined to their respective states. At the moment, bets will be placed on Nitish Kumar as the most likely regional leader after H.D. Deve Gowda who can take a shot at the prime minister's position.

But, as in the Karnataka leader's case, he has to be the leader of a coalition. But, whether his party, the Janata Dal (United), can play the part of a unifying central force is hard to say. The Congress will have to be a part of such an alliance, as in Deve Gowda's and I.K. Gujral's cases. But that subsidiary role will be another sign of its declining status.

It is possible, however, that the BJP will remain the front-runner till the next general election. But, it will be under a weak Modi who will be nowhere near as powerful as he was in 2014. It will be hoping against hope, therefore, to believe that he will arouse the same level of expectations as he did last year.

Throughout its post-independence history, India has had the misfortune of muddling through because of the inability of its leaders to resolve satisfactorily the country's political and economic problems. This unfortunate trend is unlikely to end soon. (IPA Service)

enemies of India will be through this soft belly of Indian military establishment and one does not need to be a veteran military expert to understand this. With a new democratic government being elected in Myanmar, India should do everything doable to enter into some joint agreement with Myanmar for joint border management and enhancing security of the region. India must work towards establishing secure fencing in the region, develop regional infrastructure (building roads, railways, emergency landing strips, medical units, schools and bridges; initiate massive electrification programs, establish mobile towers and secure stringent satellite surveillance), increasing the presence of ground troops,

strengthening military intelligence network in the region and encourage socio-economic development in the border region. The remote, rural, border communities should be made stakeholders in the security network by employing them as informers, trackers and engaging them in infrastructural development projects in the border region. Unless a comprehensive developmental and security policy is initiated for the Indo-Myanmar border region with clearly illustrated pathways for the future, the soft belly of India may prove to be a costly mistake of Indian administration and military establishments.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada T1

TO THE EDITOR

How secular are we?

Editor,

We call ourselves secular but such words are contradicted by the fact that only a few privileged communities in Meghalaya enjoy the privilege of celebrating their festivals freely. I would like to bring to the notice of the readers that on the 25th of November this month the Sikh community around the world is celebrating Guru Nanak Jayanti. Every year, all states in India (except very few) observe a holiday on the the occasion of the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji as it is a central gazetted holiday.

It is absurd to note that our state with quite a number of Sikhs are denied a holiday. The Central government offices and central institutions remain closed but not the state government offices and educational institutions. I would like to ask, "Are we Sikhs not a part of this state or is the Government also considering us 'outsiders'?" Everyone knows the role of Sikhs in nation building but are we still not entitled to receive a day off on this very special occasion. Also I would like to add that most educational institutions in the state and particularly Shillong are conducting examinations. Can these institutions not spare a day for us to celebrate our

festival? I was shocked to see that Guru Nanak Jayanti is not even a restricted holiday in Meghalaya. Such partial behaviour on the part of the Government is not acceptable. The Sikhs of Meghalaya would be happy if from the following year i.e. 2016 the government would declare a holiday on this occasion. Also the Sikh students will be happy if they would not have to explain to their school authorities as to why they were absent on Guru Nanak Jayanti!

Yours etc,
Sanbeer Singh Ranhotra,
Via email

India's porous borders

Editor,

One of the highly unguarded and under protected as well as dangerously porous border area of India is the infamous and historic Indo-Myanmar border. A complex densely forested and hilly terrain with no clear marking between the two nations stretching over 1624 km (~1009 miles); and lack of modern electrified and well lighted border fencing is a huge security threat to both the administrative and military establishments of India. The border

adjoins the NE Indian sates of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram; all impacted with serious cross-border insurgency issues. The Assam Rifles, a paramilitary force in charge of guarding the Indo-Myanmar border is grossly short staffed; with poor funding, lacks modern military gadgets, communication system and advance training and experience to work in such dense forest and hilly terrain compounded with ground problems such as poor intelligence coordination among various agencies jeopardizing national security in a significant manner. The Indian defence establishment is engaged in capacity building in areas of space technology, naval and military hardware development and improving various missile technologies; however, a serious border issue has been left unattended for over 68 years making the region, a hot bed of innumerable insurgent groups. Most of these groups operate on the Indian side of the border and cross over to the Myanmar side for safe refuge in the adjacent forests and villages. The ground staff and the Jawans of the Assam rifles and related military units must be applauded that in spite of least available support from the government

they have been able to protect this huge border area with minimal infrastructure. The Indo-Myanmar border is one of the most dangerous regions of India and is an active hotbed of insurgent groups, human and wildlife traffickers, rampart prostitution, drug mafias, war lords and an important center for various cross border crimes like exchange of fake currencies, smuggling of contraband commodities, violent attacks on border villages and security agencies causing very high average annual death toll that is not disclosed by the government agencies or under reported due to remote localities. It is almost unbelievable that a major military power of the world such as India with huge ground troops could leave this vulnerable area to destiny and sleeping peacefully for decades.

This could only happen if this porous border has been filling the secret coffers of some local military bosses, politicians and some members of the administrative establishments of the adjoining NE Indian states. A secret arrangement between beneficiaries on either side of the Indo-Myanmar border must be under operation to facilitate this arrangement for decades after Independence. Any future strike if made by

"He who rejects change is the architect of decay. The only human institution which rejects progress is the cemetery."

--- Harold Wilson

The Shillong Times

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Singapore success

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Singapore was a great success. He emphasized the link between India and Singapore through historical, cultural, kinship and commercial ties. The city state has played a significant role in the story of India's growth and modernization. The bilateral relationship which started 50 years ago when Singapore became independent is now a strategic partnership. The small city state has achieved great success with scant resources which should be a lesson to India. Singapore is India's largest trading partner in South-East Asia. It is also the biggest source and destination for investment by this country. Singapore can contribute to India's development of projects like smart cities, clean energy and robust infrastructure. The city state is called "India's springboard to the world and gateway to the East". It should be of great assistance in promoting India's Look East policy in furthering good relations with all Asian powers including China, Japan and Korea and developing India's integration with Asean.

Delhi has concluded a new, enhanced bilateral defence co-operation agreement with Singapore. During Modi's visit, nine deals were signed on cyber security, civil aviation and shipping. Modi has said that the seas, space and the cyber domain should not be threats but roads to shared prosperity. The nine deals will help in lessening the differences over the South China seas which have been impediments to the easy pursuit of India's policy in the region. What is more, it should facilitate India's improving its relations with its huge economic collaborator, China.

LOOKING BACK

March 28, 1988

'Resource mobilisation'

Close on the heels of the Mizoram Budget for 1988-89 came two others, those of Manipur and Nagaland. Both these differed from the first in at least one respect which is that unlike Mizoram's there was no new tax proposal in either of the other two. The other fact which distinguishes the budgetary effort of Mizoram from that of Manipur and Nagaland is that despite a semblance of resource mobilisation, Mizoram is still left with a revenue gap where as the other two have just managed to avoid a big deficit despite absence of any fresh taxes being tapped. This only shows that a balanced budget is not necessarily dependent only on new taxes; the more important is cutting the coat according to cloth and limiting expenditure to the extent of what is permitted by possible receipts. At the same time, it may not allow to be that moderate balance can be worked out despite best intentions and efforts and Mizoram possibly comes under the category.

In this connection, we have to take note of a statement made by the Union Planning Minister, Mr P Shiv Sankar last week at the meeting of the National Development Council in which he criticised the States for "not showing any real effort at resource mobilisation." He made his remarks all the more pointed and stringent by adding, "It is somewhat disquieting to see from the Press reports that most of the State budgets presented in recent weeks have not shown any real efforts at resource mobilisation. I hope that the State will fulfill the promises that they have made."

"The promise" he alludes to must be that made by the States while accepting their part of the share of plan allocations and this of course gets reflected in the respective Budgets. This must be true of small States also like those in this region of the big ones to whom the Planning Minister's dig may have primarily been directed.

Spokesmen of some of the bigger States have replied to Mr Siva Sankar at the Council session itself that the Centre's economic strategy, evident in its approach to planning, made no serious attempt to alter the existing unequal distribution of assets and resources as between the Centre and the States. This was argued to be so because of centralised economic power and powers of decision-making in the hands of the Central government, with the result that this tendency had now culminated in nearly 60% of the total tax revenue raised in the country being retained by the Centre with only remaining 40% shared among all the State government of this 40 percent also, the share of the north-eastern States, particularly the Hill States would be found just minimal, considering the extreme economic backwardness of these areas. To enable them to be effectively contributing to resource mobilisation on a substantial effort has therefore, to be made by the Planning Commission itself among others. The Planning Minister and others of his like will for the time being have to bear with these smaller States crying out for all the more accelerated development, which only a sympathetic Centre can bring out under the existing circumstances.

Why it's silly to link FDI and intolerance

By Kanwal Sibal

course which detracts from his development agenda are not considered sufficient to clear the air.

Naturally, such an in-tentive debate in the country will be followed by local diplomatic missions - western in particular - and their assessment reports will reach their capitals.

Foreign correspondents will inevitably follow the domestic sparring over the issue and publish articles without being too rigorous in their analysis, as their target is newspaper readership and not policy-makers.

Indian or Indian-origin correspondents writing for foreign media are often inclined to write negative stories to make themselves more credible with head offices, besides catering to the biases of a few established US/UK newspapers who traditionally put the spotlight on some darker aspects of India's social reality.

The NGOs, domestic and foreign-funded, focused on community issues will be drawn into the debate on rising intolerance as part of civil society's increasing political activism. Indian scholars and Western ones involved in India studies are networked and influence each other on the choice of issues to study and analyse and shaping perspectives on them.

Some foreign scholars get unusually large space in our papers for airing views on sensitive subjects, which reinforce the impression of foreign concern about unwholesome developments at home.

In addition, sections of India-origin populations, principally in some Western countries, have grievances against India which find sympathetic echoes

in political, academic, media and religious circles there for a variety of reasons, including electoral. Incidents relating to minorities in India especially draw negative attention.

The debate on rising intolerance in the country is closely linked to Modi's rise to power, the political legitimacy that the Hindutva ideology is seen to have acquired as a result, and - what is anathema to devout secularists - the expanding influence of the RSS. Those mounting a campaign against rising intolerance have been in their large majority always politically opposed to Modi and the Hindutva ideology.

Despite the judicial process through which Modi has been wrung for years, this group has not forgiven him for the 2002 Gujarat riots - and it is this entrenched prejudice that found echo in the questions posed to him by the BBC and The Guardian journalists at his joint press conference with UK PM David Cameron during his London visit. Modi's opponents at home and India-baiters in the US/UK establishment in particular are complicit in denigrating the Indian PM, and both feed on each other's prejudices. The leadership of the Congress has begun to target Modi personally for the reprehensible crimes that have been lately in the news, holding him responsible for allowing an atmosphere to be created which has encouraged such acts.

Such accusations, made recklessly in the context of domestic politics, do not serve India's interests abroad as they give a handle to India's opponents there to project a picture of India that is actually far from reality.

To say that dissent or freedom of expression in

India is being suppressed overlooks the rampant criticism of the government in the media and the constraints that the judiciary has put on the power of the government and Parliament too. Attempts to impose some constraints on the social media as part of counter-terrorism efforts have failed because of public opposition.

The government cannot even implement crucial parts of its economic reforms agenda because of political opposition. Those making a connection between an intolerant India and FDI are widely off the mark.

Democracies by definition are tolerant and nobody is claiming that we are abandoning our democratic system. Most countries in the world are not democratic, and so by definition they should not be attractive for foreign investment.

China has received vastly greater amounts of FDI than India and continues to do so, despite its open rejection of democracy and Western values and active suppression of dissent at home. The Gulf countries are not paragons of tolerance, but corporate heads and governments too do not seem to hold back investments there for this reason.

Western businessmen are now thronging in Iran for economic opportunities. Singapore's authoritarianism is actually an explanation for its economic success. Our own investments abroad, especially in the oil sector, are not contingent on tolerance or lack of it in the countries concerned.

It would be correct to say that we can be our worst enemies. As an extension of domestic politics we want to leverage external forces to make a democratically elected government of a country of 1.25 billion inhabitants accountable for few sporadic crimes.

(The writer is a former Foreign Secretary)

Politics of changing leadership in Congress

By Sajay Laloo

The incumbent Chief Minister, Mukul Sangma under whose leadership Congress has managed to convince and impress voters that he is a real leader who means business, has provided political stability to Meghalaya. By giving a stable government which is the precursor to development, he has created history in leading his party to win the most number of seats in the last Assembly election. The enlightened and literate voters who have lost faith in the ideology of other parties, with great expectations have given full support to the present CM to run the State. They have given 30 MLAs in a 60 Member house enabling Dr Mukul to have the last laugh and embossed a magical number in the history of the Congress in Meghalaya. This shows that people have fully reposed their faith and confidence in his leadership to lead the state for a full five year term.

In the journey of a politician he will surely commit silly and sometimes serious mistakes. Dr. Mukul, in his journey too might have committed some mistakes, but that should not hinder or stall the progress and development of the whole State. One faulty policy should not hamper progress of the

2009 election of GHADC. Voters are the main tools of democracy; they are its silent but most powerful voice! They want to remind the CM of his mistakes and alert him of his few faulty policies by their mandate recently. So, one should not try to read too much from the outcome of this year's GHADC election results.

On the other hand, if one has to analyse the outcome of Nongstoin Bye Election, the victory of HSPDP shows that people of Nongstoin did not want the footprints of their great leader, late H. S. Lyngdoh to fade away. The Nongstoin Bye Election was also a litmus test for the HSPDP's new leadership. The ability of new Party President, Mr. Ardent Basaiawmoit to retain the seat in spite of the fact that the party is in the opposition, clearly proves his popularity, sealing the fact that he is an emerging Gen-Next leader.

The defeat of Congress Candidate in Nongstoin Bye poll this time is not at all new or unexpected for the Party which has never won this seat right from 1972 till today. But the good news is, the party base is still intact. This shows Congress party workers of Nongstoin

The recent announcement made by PM Modi in Malaysia with a mention that India will open ASEAN Study Centre in Shillong shows that our State, Meghalaya is progressing and the same is being noticed by the whole world. Development can come only when there is political stability in our State and for that the Congress MLAs along with like-minded political parties which care for development of Meghalaya should work together and strengthen the hands of the Chief Minister. As he has the mandate of the people, he deserves peace of mind to work freely and take Meghalaya to greater heights. Internal rumblings in the party are not inner-party democracy but dirty politics played by some vested interests to derail development.

whole state. Responsible citizens who care about the development of the state will come up with suggestions and remedial inputs and not simply shout and growl at every opportunity. If there is a caterpillar crawling on the leaves of a tree or branches, one will try to pick the caterpillar and throw it away rather than fell the tree altogether.

Nobody can deny the fact that, Dr. Mukul is at present the tallest and most feared leader in the State, be it from within the Congress Party or the opposition. He has reduced PA Sangma to an unimaginable micro size in the last legislative assembly and Lok Sabha election. PA Sangma's son Conrad is yet to recover from the state of shock he suffered with the defeat he faced in the last election. This time he did not have guts to fight the MDC election but chose to enter into the GHADC from the back door.

Dr. Mukul has tasted victory after victory in the last 2 years of his regime in the current term. Unlike other Chief Ministerial aspirants in the Congress party, practically speaking, he is the only one who has lots of followers/supporters within the Congress Legislature Party.

The GHADC election in 2009 was no different from this year's. Congress never won many seats even in the

are comfortable with the present Chief Minister. As for UDP, the election result appears to be somewhat worrisome and it has given the party lots of goosebumps. Its vote share has gone down drastically. So, for UDP it is a serious introspective time ere it becomes irrelevant and perishes like several other regional parties in the past.

The recent announcement made by PM Modi in Malaysia with a mention that India will open ASEAN Study Centre in Shillong shows that our State, Meghalaya is progressing and the same is being noticed by the whole world. Development can come only when there is political stability in our State and for that the Congress MLAs along with like-minded political parties which care for development of Meghalaya should work together and strengthen the hands of the Chief Minister. As he has the mandate of the people, he deserves peace of mind to work freely and take Meghalaya to greater heights. Internal rumblings in the party are not inner-party democracy but dirty politics played by some vested interests to derail development.

It's high time to rise above petty and selfish politics!

TO THE EDITOR

Question paper leak!

Editor,

The news report in your esteemed daily captioned, 'Class IX Question papers leaked in West Jaintia Hills (ST Nov 25, 2015)' poses a very real question for the future of our young generation. Why on earth should question papers leak? Is it because the Government is always too lenient when deal with such offences? Or is it because some people are so greedy that their conscience is blinded so they decide to make a few extra bucks through such offensive practices? The questions may go on and on. To me this points to the failure of the whole system. The MBOSE has no system to ensure that Question Papers are kept with supreme secrecy. The Government is always too busy dealing with the culprits, be it a staff of MBOSE, or a Government official or a teacher who sets these question papers. The crooks always get away with their crimes, be it question paper leakage, the infamous use of white-link by the Education Department to include the names of some who did not qualify to be teachers and to remove those that have qualified etc., the list can go on. But nothing substantial has been done from the part of the Government. Only the public at large is filled with disgust. Have we also as responsible citizens turned a blind eye to such crimes? I cannot imagine parents and guardians who are in the know of such leakage but who would encourage their children/wards to get hold of the leaked question papers and

write their examination. Are we not culprits too for keeping silent? It seems that our moral values have deteriorated beyond repair. We are happy so long as our children get through the exams even by unfair means. What value will they learn from us? Aren't we giving them a future based on cheating and falsehoods? Or are we going the BIHAR way where parents etc climbed up ladders to help their children practice maximum cheating.

My request to the authorities is to give exemplary punishment to whoever is involved in this heinous crime. This is not the first time that such an incident has happened. Even last year according to your paper the same thing had happened. Had the law taken its lawful steps such things would not have been repeated. To the parents, may I make this humble appeal; We should not encourage our young ones to use unfair means as we may be doing them more harm than good. And to the students: There is no short cut formula to success so don't be deceived. Let us fight together to make our state free from the practice of unfair means during examinations, because in the end ONLY HARD WORK PAYS.

Yours etc.,
M. Nongrum
Shillong 2

Cycling is healthy!

Editor

Recent clamping of bicycles by Police in Shillong is really surprising and unfortunate. The clarification by the Superintendent of Police is nothing but damage control only. People all over the world respect cyclists on the road. Almost all the big cities like Tokyo, London, New York have separate lanes for cyclists. Bangalore has one of the worst traffic problems but still one sees a lot of people using bicycles and people respect them. One can understand the amount of pressure on traffic police. Besides controlling the traffic, they have to do additional duties like checking of the drivers to ensure they wear seat belts, helmets etc. But punishing a cyclist by clamping is demoralising and unacceptable. As our SP says that most of our cyclists are in the age group of 10 to 15 years; children of this age group cannot be arrested for many crimes.

Shillong is a small place and most of the areas are accessible by cycle. We should rather encourage more and more people to use cycles. I also request the Traffic Police to keep areas for parking of cycles free.

Yours etc.,
Dr Ashim Kr Das,
Shillong

Blue rivers a cause for alarm in Meghalaya

Editor,

The national media reporting on acute acidity in riverine water turning them sky blue is a matter of great

concern for Meghalaya and her fragile ecosystem and environment. The Lukha (East Jaintia Hills District) and the Myntdu rivers (West Jaintia Hills District) have been critically impacted over decades and the acidity level have risen to alarming proportions to turn the river water blue. Such deadly acidity levels in the water will decimate the rare aquatic flora and fauna inhabiting these rivers. Even global media has been reporting of this incident. Unfortunately neither any concern nor any efforts are visible on the part of the Meghalaya Pollution Control Board nor the State Administration or the state Environment Department. It is unfortunate that a state so abundant in natural resources, flora and fauna is not taking any action to mitigate the adverse effects of exploitation of natural resources. The public should vehemently protest against this procrastinating attitude of the State Government and for neglecting such a serious environmental crisis that will certainly have severe long term impacts on both the lives and livelihoods of the local people of the State in the long run.

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

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 amazing how a competitive nature can turn a negative into something positive.”

— Barry Mann

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 107 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2015

The guns of Turkey

A Russian warplane has been shot down by Turkish forces along the Syrian-Turkish border. This incident has created mistrust among those fighting the ISIS. The gap had been closing between Russia and the US in Syria. But the Turkish attack has undermined the solidarity among the powers involved in the war on terror and proves why they have not yet succeeded in uniting against the ISIS which is spreading alarm even in South Asia. The Paris attack has not yet brought about a concrete international campaign against the militant organization with enormous financial resources. The jihadis are cashing in on the rift. The foreign players in Syria are gunning for the ISIS and at the same time fighting among themselves. It is time they tumbled to the fact that the ISIS is a more serious threat than their own internal differences. The Paris attack has not caused a closing of ranks. Something far more alarming like an ISIS attack on Washington may do the trick. And it is not mere soap opera fantasy.

An attack on Washington as threatened by the ISIS will be as catastrophic as the 9/11 terror strikes. It is argued that US intervention in Iraq which is acknowledged by the US administration as an error has given rise to the ISIS menace. The UN Security Council alone can handle the situation. It will legitimize military intervention against the ISIS. Along with that, the prolonged civil war in Syria should be brought to an end by UN intervention. Russia and China have to stop vetoing such a resolution. Otherwise, West Asia will continue to be dotted with killing fields.

LOOKING BACK

March 29, 1988

Move for economy measures

Chief Minister Purno Sangma has said that a variety of economy measures were underway to slash the non-plan expenses of the State Govt. Briefing newsmen after the presentation of the State budget on Monday, Mr. Sangma said that the uncovered gap of Rs 2.13 crore in the budget would be reduced by curtailment of government.

Asked what specific plans were being thought of he said that Travelling Allowance of Ministers and officers was one would be cut down. Similarly telephone was another area where the Government would fix an upper limit of free calls. Repair of govt vehicles was being completed.

Mr. Sangma said he had already directed his ministerial colleagues to avoid ostentations and frequent tour of Delhi.

He agreed with a questioner that the budget has been unkind to those who indulge in drinking and betting on archery. Since these cannot be prohibited we would like to make drinking and gambling more difficult. He said in the past betting on teer was banned but it did not work out. It was therefore felt that the State Government should tax it further so as to work as a deterrent.

On resources mobilization, the Chief Minister said we would not always depend on the Centre. He informed that a tax resource committee would be constituted towards the end of May for obtaining advice from it on how to mobilize resources. The proposed committee would comprise experts from the State and outside.

Vote on account budget passed

Meghalaya Assembly passed on Monday vote-on-account budget amounting to Rs. 90.87 crore for the first three months of the year 1988-89. The vote-on-account was

presented by the Chief Minister since there was little time for passing the whole budget before March 31.

Members stress need for having state archive

Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister D. D. Lapang shared in the State Assembly on Friday the anxiety of the opposition for the paramount need to collect and documents of historical, legal and administrative importance.

He told the house that the existing State archived Cell had already compiled three District Gazetteers and taken steps for reprinting monographs of historical value relating to Meghalaya.

Replying to a private member's motion, enabled by Mr. S. Loniak Marbaniang (HSPDP) the Minister said the State Museum Cell had also published monographs of indigenous institutions of Meghalaya and bulletins in regard to ethnology of Meghalaya.

He said the archived had taken steps for scientific preservation of records. Officials were being sent to West Bengal, National Archives in Delhi and even to London to collect historical documents, specially matters relating to the state's boundary. The State had so far collected about 60,000 various records belonging to the period 184-1970, he added.

He said alien rulers used to compile those documents meticulously and research scholars even had to go to London to collect data from those documents which should have been in our state itself.

Former Speaker E.K. Mawlong (HSPDP) participating in the debate, said without history “we do not have the past. Past could not be allowed to be lost in the mists of antiquity without keeping and record.”

Mr. Korbar Singh (HPU) said without proper documents and records the origin of any tribe could not be established.

So many laws to protect women...but???

By Patricia Mukhim

November 26 this year marks the 125th birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar who is referred to as the Father of the Indian Constitution. This day was observed by the Political Science Department, NEHU as Constitution Day. There was a reflection on the Constitution vis-a-vis women's empowerment.

The Indian Constitution guarantees women several rights that are enshrined in the Preamble, in the list of Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women to neutralise the cumulative socio-economic educational and political disadvantages they face. In India our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments which are committed to securing equal rights for women. The most notable one being the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) enacted in 1993.

Some of the signification features of the Constitution which are meant to provide equal opportunities for women are to be found in Articles 14 (ii), 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c), 42, 46 (ix), 47 (x), 51(A) (e) (xi). Then we have Articles 243 D(3) (xii), 243 D (4) (xiii) 243 T (3) and 243 T (4). Those interested in women's issues may like to look up these Articles in the Constitution and the provisions they make for women's access to power resources. To elucidate them in this article would take up too much space.

The State has enacted various legislative measures to uphold the Constitutional mandate. These legislations ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities against women and to provide support services especially to working women. Even when it comes to crimes like murder, robbery etc. those which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as ‘Crime against Women’.

These crimes may fall under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) or the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPc). For instance Rape is booked under (Sec. 376 IPC), Kidnapping & Abduction (Sec. 363-373) (iii) Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC) (iv) Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC) (v) Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC) (vi) Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC) etc., Some crimes falls under the Special Laws (SLL) and although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements.

Several noble initiatives for women have been initiated. The National Commission for Women a statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all mat-

ters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, was legislated in 1992.

(ii) The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 reserves one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.

(iii) The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000) ensures survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for her.

(iv) The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 directs the Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

The word ‘women's empowerment’ has been banded about for nearly two decades. But what really is empowerment? It means ownership and control over resources of power; economic resources over which there is collective ownership such as forests, water bodies, land etc., Women in general and uneducated women in rural areas have no access to these resources. So who owns and controls these resources even in a matrilineal society? The so-called male heads of traditional institutions control them. They have the right to allocate those resources to those they choose to.

So who will empower women and how? Ideally speaking no one empowers any one. A woman who has access to education, economic goods and services and opportunities empowers herself. The problem is that such women are very insignificant in number. Certain gender constructs and norms handicap women both structurally and culturally from empowering themselves. Hence they need an external trigger and affirmative action by the state and other agencies. However, women too can be their own worst enemies by refusing to take action where they can and by choosing to be ‘passive beneficiaries.’

The fact that the Women's Reservation Bill reserving 33% seats for women in parliament and state assemblies is still pending in Parliament and that it is aborted time and again shows that gender equality in this country is still a far cry. And parliament and state legislatures are where laws are passed and where compliance for their implementation can be demanded!

Now, while we talk of constitutional provisions, there are some issues which are private and domestic. For instance the

gender division of labour persists. Women still carry heavier domestic burden than men. Even when women are working outside the home, they still need to come back to their domestic responsibilities. And domestic work is “unpaid work” although it is often more strenuous than work outside the home. Our problem is that the Constitution still cannot enter the private domain. Personal is not yet political!

Hence women with careers suffer. Often they don't take promotions (banks) because that means being transferred out and they cannot leave the family. Their professional mobility suffers. In academia, particularly in the sciences which require rigorous research to keep up with evolutionary ideas, women are not able to devote adequate time. Their loyalties are divided between work and home. A man does not suffer such divided loyalties. Consequently many women today opt to remain single or put off their child-bearing responsibilities if they want to pursue career goals.

Women in academia stagnate at a certain level. So we don't hear of too many women heading scientific research institutions; you don't often hear of a woman Vice Chancellor. Usually women become principals in women's only colleges but most women's colleges are still headed by a male. Of course, all things being equal there should be no gender distinction at this level; however gender biases persists.

In the area of health and nutrition, the indices are very dismal for women. Urban women may not understand this but rural women still eat only what's left over. Women have to cook and serve hot ‘rotis’ to the family. They will only eat when everyone else has eaten. No one cares whether she gets enough food to eat, leave alone nutritious food.

It is in the social and domestic domain that the Constitution has least impact. Transforming mindsets which essentially means transforming worldviews accumulated over years from one's family, society, peers, media etc., is the most challenging task. The media too continues to stereotypes women. The most watched TV serials show women who are housebound and tradition bound who come from a certain social status. They keep scheming all day while their men work outside and are shown as wide-eyed innocents. The state needs to intervene and stop these regressive soaps.

Even panel discussions on issues of economic and political import mostly have men on the dais. The recent discussion on matrilineality/matriarchy at the ITM Conference at the NEHU Convocation Hall had three male panelists out of five. Then a recent panel discussion organised by Shillong

Press Club on Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) under which women suffer most as victims of rape, molestation etc. had an all male panel and a male moderator. So this is how gender sensitive the media in Meghalaya's matrilineal society is!

Media reportage on rapes and sexual harassment lack gender sensitivity. Most reports focus on the sensational part such as...how the woman was dressed...who she was with...what she was wearing...why she was late...was she inebriated...her family background etc. There is not much interest to know about the rapist and why he did what he did.

Most institutions in this country have not imbibed gender equitable norms. The police, judiciary, administration, politics, academia et al betray deeply embedded patriarchal worldviews. Unfortunately the Constitution cannot remedy this unless there is social transformation. We need selfless social reformers for this to happen. And social reformers are not loud-mouthed activists who spend their time hammering the entire world, blaming the entire system and castigating all institutions.

This world needs reincarnations of the likes of Jesus Christ (never judgmental about fallen women) Raja Ram Mohan Roy (who abolished Sati), Sri Aurobindo (who propounded women's education) and such likes to see women enjoying a better world.

To conclude, I would say that while the Constitution guarantees women their rights and these rights are self evident, they are not automatically implemented. The much touted free legal aid is not easily accessible. And while there is no dearth of enlightened laws to enable women to transcend their oppressive statuses it is also true that Khap Panchayats, Salisha Sabhas and other tyrannical medieval institutions are rearing their ugly heads in this country. Even politicians make disparaging statements against women to feed a regressive male mindset – a weird political economy in India. Otherwise, how can the Chairperson of the Maharashtra State Commission for Women, state publicly that women are raped because of the way they dress. Large sections of women in this country are nurtured in patriarchy and they feed into the male biases thereby look for approval from men in all of their actions. This is problematic. But how do we deal with such problems? The kind of education imparted today is not liberating. On the contrary our minds are imprisoned by biases, hence we don't use reason and logic sufficiently. Educators therefore have a huge challenge before them!

RSS BACKING SANJAY JOSHI FOR BJP PRESIDENCYSHIP

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in for a major setback. Sanjay Joshi the man whom Modi loves to hate, is all set to become the next president of the Bharatiya Janata Party replacing Modi's man Friday Amit Shah. This would be the first visible ramification of the Bihar defeat. Pressure has mounted on both the RSS and the BJP leadership from within the rank and file of the party particularly from states like Uttar Pradesh that Shah whose term comes to an end in December should be replaced with immediate effect. The thinking in the party is that Shah being a Gujarati does not understand the political dynamics of northern India. The RSS too is not very happy with the Gujarati duo of Modi ad Shah. In fact the RSS did not want both the Gujaratis to take over the reins of the party and the government but were helpless in the face of Modi's massive victory. But now after their failure in both Delhi and Bihar and with elections due in Bengal and Assam, the RSS feels it has become imperative to change the top leadership. Though there are many contenders for the post including Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari the RSS does not want any minister to become a party head. They want that Sanjay Joshi can be acceptable to all factions. He can emerge as a consensus candidate. The RSS has already organised two meetings between Joshi and Shah and some kind of understanding has been reached upon. Joshi has

(This is an extract from a talk delivered at the Political Science Department, NEHU on the occasion of Constitution Day, November 26, 2015)

is that no one had any intention of keeping. Facta non verba! Wish that some of our useless political VIPs take a page out of this experience and in future, during a public function, spare an innocent public from the agony of their meaningless sermons.

Yours etc.,
Toki Blah,
Via email

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

Political delicacies

By Nora Chopra

HAMID ANSARI HAS HIS EYES ON RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

The country is gripped with the raging debate on intolerance with both film icons Amir Khan and Shahrukh Khan reacting against intolerance. President of India Pranab Mukherjee has thrice warned the nation on intolerance. But one person who has so far not uttered a word. Is Hamid Ansari, the vice president of India. When a journalist asked him about his reaction on the debate on intolerance at a lunch hosted by him, he just avoided giving any reply. The question being asked in political circles is the VP being a Muslim himself is scared of saying anything. After all he is a diplomat and he just does not want to get into any kind of controversy. But the buzz around him is that Ansari is looking a third term. But why third term asked a Ansari supporter. He may be looking for higher to replace Mukherjee. His Muslim identity may be of help to him. It just suits the BJP to have a liberal Muslim as a president specially when it is facing charges of intolerance. The Congress has never had a Muslim President after Faqrudin Ali Ahmad. It was during the Vajpayee regime that APJ Abdul Kalam was made the president. Kalam was the most celebrated president of recent times if Ansari is elevated to the top post then his candidature will have the support of all political parties. The first time he became vice president, he was actually the candidate of the left. He was close to the then CPI(M) general secretary Prakash Karat.

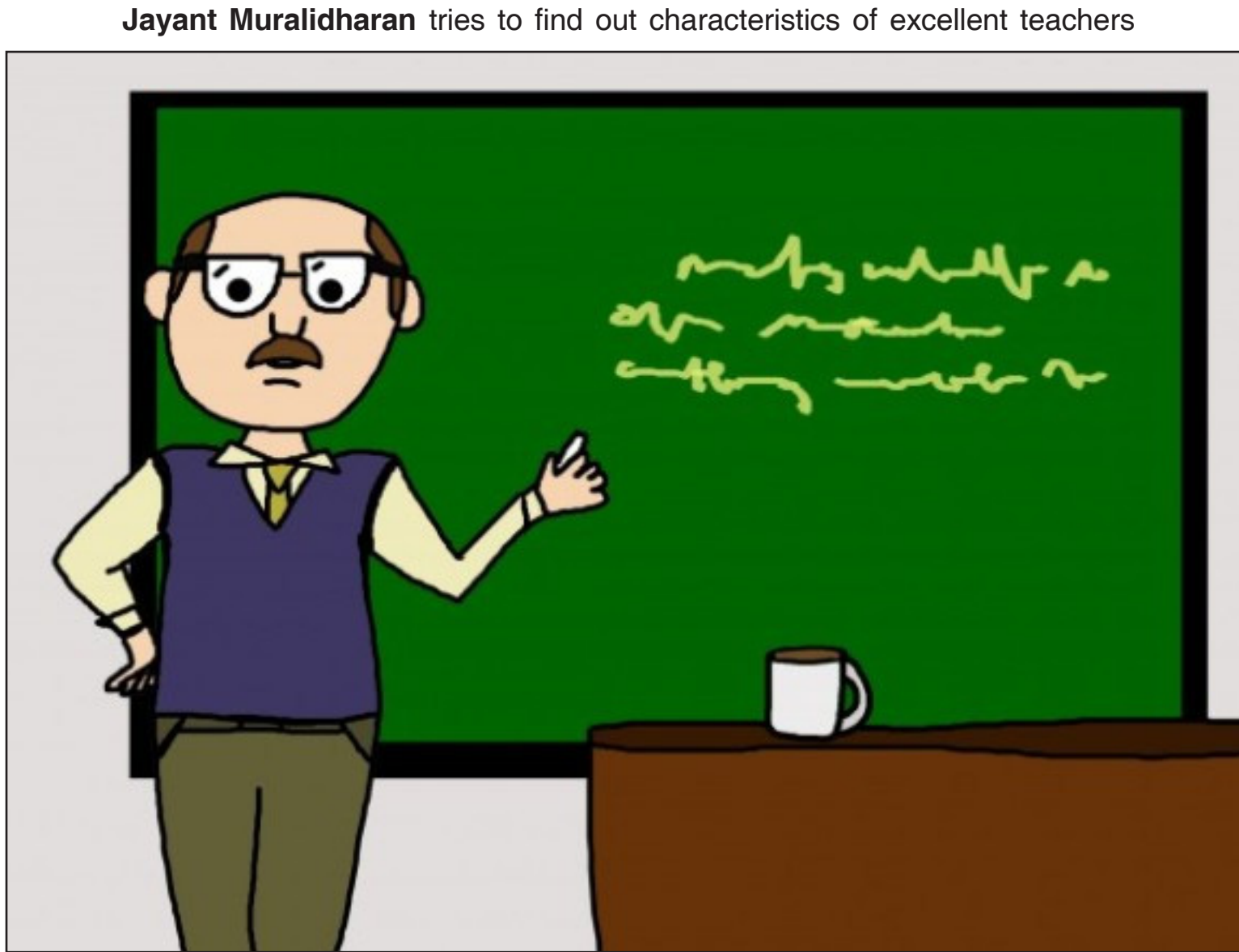
After the massive defeat in Bihar assembly elections, the BJP leadership has gone in a spin. Narendra Modi does not even know what is going on in the party. Soon after the defeat of the party there has been only rumblings within the party and the prime minister has become the target of all those who were isolated by Modi over one year ever since Modi became PM. The outburst came from the top leaders like L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Shatrughan Sinha and Yashwant Sinha but the worst came from some ministers of the Modi government who are supposed to have celebrated his defeat in Bihar. A cabinet minister is believed to have even distributed sweets at the Modi-Shah duo's Bihar defeat. Modi's supporters are gunning for those and they may be out when PM reshuffles his cabinet next.

KAPIL SIBAL YING FOR RAJYA SABHA NOMINATION FROM BIHAR

The morale of the Congress now is really high. The party is going to add one more MP to its tally of 65 in the upper house of parliament. Even though the election to Rajya Sabha is due only in February. The race for this lone RS seat has already begun. Among those who are in queue are the Congress general secretary in charge of Punjab Shakeel Ahmad He is also the Congress's Bihar face in Delhi. Each time there is a vacancy in the upper house, he has been a serious contender. But the party has always preferred a local from that state when the election was due. But this time his hope has actually risen as the party will not have any excuse to say that he does not belong to Bihar. Another very serious contender for the RS nomination is the AICC in charge of Bihar C.P. Thakur. He is busy taking the credit of the Congress bagging 27 seats in the state. Nikhil Kumar who was chairman Bihar election committee, is also a contender. The other serious contender is P. Chidambaram Though, he is an outsider, the party needs him in Rajya Sabha. Recently Rahul Gandhi too praised him that among the senior leaders he respects, P Chidambaram is one of them. Now everything depends on Rahul to decide. But finally it may be Kapil Sibal who may have the last laugh. Kapil has been lobbying hard to get into Rajya Sabha but the Congress leadership has yet to oblige him. But now the Congress president may not stop him as he is known to be Lal's man in the Congress. Sibal is known for his proximity to Lal's Yadav. He is Lal's legal adviser and had entered Parliament for the first time with Lal's support. (IPA)

A trip down the annals of history reveals that man did come up with ingenious methods of facing obstacles that puzzled the lives of people time and again. While kings and leaders resorted to politicking and wars, seers and godmen handled the crisis in their own way. It is interesting to explore a phase of mass education that moulded the thought process of India half a millennium ago via unconventional teachers. India was undergoing a phase of spiritual darkness and turmoil during the 15th century AD. There was insurgence of new religions into the mainstream of the country. The local masses were ignorant due to the lack of education and the looming presence of the caste system. People struggled with their thoughts and feelings and battled with the inequality that dampened their spirits. This phase caused a lot of concern to a section of people who sported rational thinking. They recognised the root of the problem. They realised that the common man was not in a position to comprehend the various tenets of Hinduism as they were not conversant with Sanskrit. Knowledgeable but greedy men exploited the situation to their gain and filled their coffers while lesser mortals wallowed in ignorance and poverty. It was during this crucial time that a galaxy of men such as Purandaradasa, Kanakadasa, Vijayadasa, Sripadaraja, Vyasaraja, Vadiraja, Gopaladasa and Jagannathadasa led the masses of southern states to realise a number of home truths at the social, domestic and spiritual levels.

The god men did not merely encourage the masses to understand the infinite compassion of God but also made them recognise values like integrity, compassion, fraternity and



Jayant Muralidharan tries to find out characteristics of excellent teachers

What makes them perfect ?

questions related to death, what happens in life after

tioned Haridasas were contemporaries, they followed

impact on the masses for it literally encapsulated just about every basic aspect of learning in the aural form.

ology cannot afford to overlook the contributions of the Haridasas. The contributions of these great walking encyclopedias on the subject of human life and its nuances have certainly stood the test of time.

cake walk. Apparently, that does not seem to be the case!

Teachers have not been able to identify the learning needs of the students and connect with them effectively. The reasons for this abstract gap in a conventional educational system zeroes in on some harsh realities.

A random survey points out to a total lack of the important package of commitment, passion and knowledge amongst the teaching lot. The parents are worried about the results while the students want to be "done with" studying as soon as possible!

Today's teachers could take a leaf from the lives of the Haridasas who seemed to be a composite whole of the perfect "teacher material." INAV



equality. They also helped the common man to ponder over profound, unanswered

death, the power of the creator, among other things. Though not all the men-

Devaranama format of singing adopted by most of these dasas had a mighty

The lyrics were certainly a wonderful blend of literature, music, and devotion. The very fact that they are comprehensible and relevant even today speak volumes about their validity and substance to a large extent. Scholars of literature, history, sociology and the-

The Haridasas, who enumerated the essence of life, shined as living examples of what they taught. They lived altruistic lives ideally tempered with humanitarian and ethical values.

The moot question at the end of this elucidation of the 15th century teachers is why are school teachers and lecturers today not able to recreate the magic of these great educators anymore? One would think that with the aid of modern science, state-of-the-art infrastructure, qualified teachers and a mission to elevate mankind through education, the situation would be a

Why dead men keep getting shot

A "Man develops breasts from eating chicken," said the headline of a report sent to me by a reader in China.

I was about to dismiss it as an urban legend when a journalist colleague said it actually happened. The guy lived largely on wings of hormone-filled chickens and doctors said they were the most likely cause of him having grown breasts large enough to cause his male friends to suffer from complex, confused feelings.

All of us were horrified by the story except for one guy who said that if it happened to him, he would have to keep sneaking off to "have another look".

This led to a conversation about people's favorite bizarre headlines. One colleague offered a recent one from the US: "Michael Jackson Impersonator Charged With Molesting Boys". He quipped: "I can only conclude that the guy took his profession very seriously indeed."

And of course, you can find lots of examples of amusing headlines on the internet, like "Dead Body Found At Cemetery" and the like. These tend to be from the US, but journalists elsewhere like to point out that the rest of the world has some intriguing ones, such as "Woman with arms held", a headline from the Times of India, and this one from Canada's Toronto Sun: "Woman's 'stomach bug' actually baby".

A good one, source forgotten, was this one: "Miners refuse to work after death", which conjures up images of mean bosses making departed spirits dig coal. And a paper in Hong Kong had this one: "China may be using sea to hide its submarines" - as if other countries hid theirs in the clouds or tucked them

up right behind trees. Then there are the typos.

A misspelt caption in a California newspaper, the Modesto News-Herald, was odd in that country but would have made sense in parts of Asia or Africa: "Here the bridal couple stood, facing the floral setting, and exchanged cows."

Harder to explain was a misprint in the Holland Evening Sentinel of Michigan: "It took

many rabbits many years to write the Talmud." Did the writer mean "rabbis" or was this the first miracle?

The most common odd headline is "dead man shot" which comes up all the time. In the UK Guardian recently, there was "Oklahoma cop shoots dead man" and in the Daily Mail: "Cambridgeshire police shoot dead man".

The curious thing is that a dead man WAS actually shot in Australia recently. Forensic scientists in that country discovered that the victim died just before the bullet arrived. However, the shooter was still charged with attempted murder because he THOUGHT the man was alive when he pulled the trigger. I assumed the phrase "It's the thought that counts" was what you said when grandma gave you a horrible jumper for your birthday, but apparently it also applies in law.

That means that when Google finally releases its mind-reading machine, all males on the planet are going to be in unbelievable

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

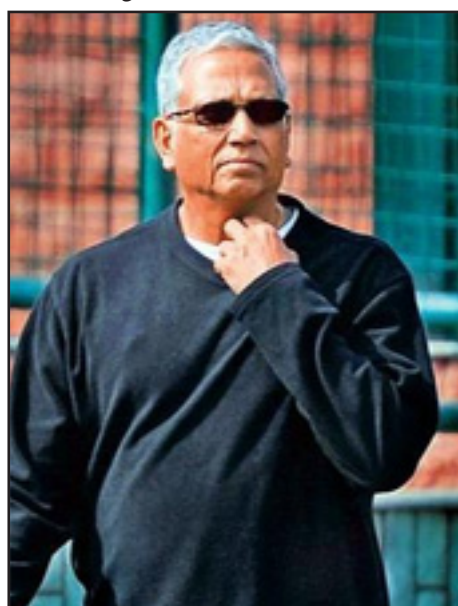
trouble. (They might as well jail us all now.) On the same lines, this writer was particularly worried by a headline in the La Crosse Tribune, a US newspaper: "Wisconsin woman takes husband to police for 'talking stupidly'." What, that's illegal now? Does writing silly columns count? (The writer an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send comments and ideas via his Facebook page)

By Veturi Srivatsa

Former as well as current players have plenty to talk about India's chances in the ongoing four-Test series against South Africa..

While the former players point out the deficiencies in the bowling attack and the

Perks are for all former cricketers



Mohinder Amarnath

unsettling batting order, some current players, returning from injury lay-offs, are desperate to dispel doubts over their fitness and their preferred batting slots or preferred nature of pitches to bowl on.

Most players have found a safer way to protect themselves by purveying their views through the cricket

board's website or talking at a media conference arranged by it. Of course, some senior players have their favourite reporters to protect their interests. Those who are working hard to fight their way into the India squad periodically use these media plat-

forms to remind the selectors that they are still around.

As for former stalwarts, they mostly find fault with the system. They attack the board, selectors, captains and the team management for all the ills of Indian cricket. They mostly blame it on the Indian Premier League (IPL) for the lack of



Sachin Tendulkar, Kapil Dev and Sunil Gavaskar

quality bowlers and the care-a-hang approach to batting.

Even as Indian cricket struggles with these routine

issues, two interesting developments have led to serious debates. One, Kapil Dev saying Sachin Tendulkar did not know how

to get double, triple and quadruple hundreds and two, the sudden discovery of conflict of interest in Roger Binny sitting on the

selection committee that picked his son Stuart to play for India.

Raising these questions is unfair to Kapil, Tendulkar

and Roger, who have all done India proud with their on-field exploits, and also poor Stuart for no fault of his.

Worse, former India captain, chief selector and coach Ajit Wadekar appears to have fallen

for the media bait by taking off at not only Kapil but the entire north Indian cricketers.

Kapil is entitled to his opinion and if he can't express what he thought of Tendulkar, having played with him and being the coach when the Mumbai captained the India team, who else is competent. Surely, Tendulkar will not take Kapil's comment made

spite possessing the ability to make them. He has qualified it saying he was reared in the Bombay school of cricket where batsmen are more disciplined and solid.

How could Wadekar jump to conclusion that Kapil's harmless remarks amplify his dislike for Mumbai cricket and cricketers. He stretched the argument to say that Mumbai greats (Contd on P-VII)



Roger Binny

in good faith amiss. What did Kapil say? He has only stated that Sachin was not ruthless enough to build huge hundreds de-

By
Ranjan K Baruah

Career opportunity in Psychology

We are aware of different subjects of studies and one similar subject is Psychology. It is the scientific study of the mind and behavior. Psychology is a multi-faceted discipline and includes many sub-fields of study such areas as human development, sports, health, clinical, social behavior and cognitive processes. Whether we agree or not but the fact is that many time we come across problems within ourselves when we need advice from others. It is not the same for all which means many of us may not need but there are people who need solution for their problems. With the increase in population there are many problem arise for individual in many perspectives. There are some conflicts which are within a person. Human's mind is most precious and it is powerful too. Good mind mean new creation and innovation which bring changes in the society.

Psychologists study the processes, motives, reactions, feelings and nature of the human mind. They do counseling and help people by bringing about changes in their thought process, thus improving their quality of life. Psychologists need not have a medical degree. But they have to study several years to specialise in various aspects of psychology. One can pursue Psychology at the plus two level, graduate, post graduate and doctorate level. There are specializing fields like clinical psychology and others. There have been increases in demands for

psychologists as there are problem amongst people. Many of us do not find solution to some of the problem and hence needs counseling. It may be for the young people like students, professionals or senior people. Lack of confidence or due to stress or some other problems some people are not happy these days or they have problem hence they consult psychologists and with the passage of time there would be more demand for psychologists and hence one can take up this subject as their career option. Courses are available in different educational institutes including reputed universities.

Some of the options are:

Clinical Psychologists - Clinical Psychologists work in counseling centers, independent or group practices, hospitals, community health centers or clinics. They help mentally and emotionally disturbed clients people.

Counseling Psychologists - Counseling is the skill of helping normal people, through discussion, to decide how best to cope in specific situations.

Social Psychologists - Social psychologists work with social organisations and institutions in research, systems design or other applied psychology fields.

Educational Psychologists - They work in schools and colleges with teachers, students, parents and administrators to resolve students learning and behaviour problems.

Industrial Psychologists - Industrial psychologists work for business, industry or government. They apply psychological principles and research methods to the workplace to improve the working conditions and productivity of employees.

Research Psychologists - As researchers, psychologists proceed like scientists. They investigate the physical, cognitive, emotional, or social aspects of human behavior. They use laboratory experiments and various kinds of tests, interviews, questionnaires and surveys.

Sports Psychology - Sports psychologists are concerned with the psychological factors that improve athletic performance. They also look at the effects of exercise and physical activity on psychological adjustment and health. Sports psychologists typically work in academic settings and/or as consultants for sports teams.

Scholarships Update: **Scholarships for Girls:** Pragati is a scheme of AICTE aimed at providing assistance for Advancement of Girls

participation in Technical Education. This is an attempt to give every young women the opportunity to further her education and prepare for a successful future by "Empowering Women Through Technical Education". Number of scholarships per annum is 4000 and is available for girls who are only child in a family and where the family income is less than Rs. 6 Lakh /annum. This is also to encourage families with single girl child. Last date for applying for this scholarship is 23rd November.

Saksham : (Scholarship to Differently Able Students) Saksham is a scheme of AICTE aimed at providing encouragement and support to specially abled children to pursue Technical Education. Number of scholarships per annum is 1000 and for Specially Abled students whose family income is less than Rs. 6 lakhs per annum. This is only for Differently Abled students having more than 40% disability. Last date for applying for this scholarship is 23rd November.

(The writer is a associated with North East Youth Foundation and he may be reached at 98640 55558 or youngmatters@gmail.com for career planning and further details)

By **Hrithwik Basu**

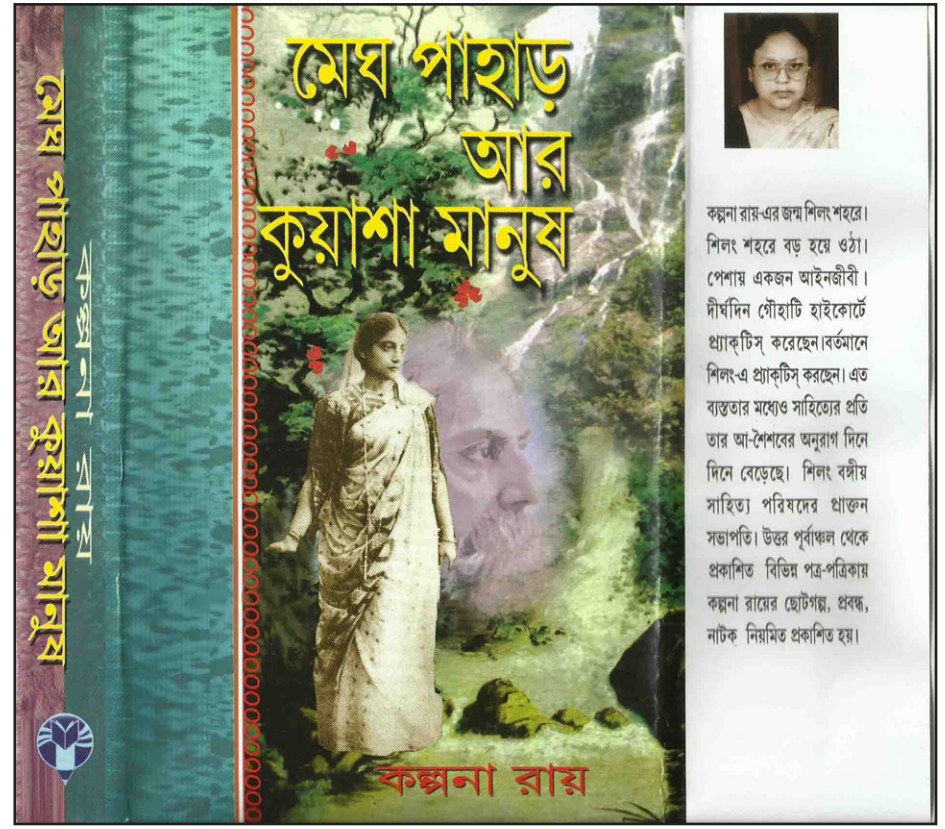
A vivid description on lives of greats

If there is a book that captures the stories of hilly greats from Shillong and their counterparts from the then undivided Bengal who came here, worked and eventually settled, then there is perhaps none other than the widely acclaimed "*Megh Pahar aar Kuasha Manush*" (Cloudy Hill & Misty People) by city based author Kalpana Roy. The author has tried to present the history of a particular period in chronological order in this book and attempted to bring out the characteristics of various communities, their customary and religious beliefs, cultural and social activities, their sentiments and emotional behaviors, which are by and large found in a period novel.

The book gives a vivid description on the lives and works of greats like U Babu Jibon Roy, U Soso Tham, Radhon Singh from the local milieu besides Brahma influenced and main protagonist of the novel Nalini Bala Devi; government bureaucrat Heramba Bhuyan; Brahma evangelist Nilomoni Chakraborty and importantly the visits by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, their interaction with the then local elites have been narrated with great proficiency and accuracy. The main story starts with some local Shillong residents including Bengali babus rushing in visible excitement on their face to the Quinton Hall, what is today known as the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Cultural Centre, to witness the lecture by Swami Vivekananda on 27th April, 1901. The Chief Commissioner of the then undivided Assam, Sir Henry JS Cotton, an avid admirer of Swamiji organized the lecture and was the presiding officer of that meeting.

In the centre-stage, appears the main protagonist of the novel, a young uneducated teenage girl from rural Sylhet (then a part of undivided Bengal, now in Bangladesh), Nalini Bala Devi, who came to Shillong after her marriage. Her receptivity, association and gradual assimilation with the educated elite of the then European Shillong transformed her into an accomplished woman. It is here young Nalini realized the value of education and knew what enlightenment meant. There was a marked gradual change in her outlook brought in by the immense influence of the cultured and educated group, particularly, the women of Brahma Samaj.

Nalini could feel the Brahma wave then due to the indomitable endeavor to spread the light of education by a Brahma evangelist Nilomoni Chakraborty from West Bengal. He came here and started imparting education amongst the Khasis in Cherrapunjee, opened a school to teach Bengali to the Khasi villagers. Nilomoni came to Shillong not for exploiting the natural resources of



কল্পনা রায়-এর ভাষা পিন্স শব্দে। শিলং শহরে বড় হয়ে ওঠা। পেশায় একজন আইনজীবী। দীর্ঘদিন সৌহার্দ্য হাইকোর্টে প্রাক্টিস করেছেন। বর্তমানে শিলং-এ প্রাক্টিস করেন। এত ব্যস্ততার মধ্যেও সৃষ্টি করেছেন 'মেঘ পাহাড় আর কুয়াশা মানুষ' নামের একটি উপন্যাস। শিলং-এর পরিবেশের আভাস দিয়েছেন। শিলং-এর পরিবেশের আভাস দিয়েছেন। শিলং-এর পরিবেশের আভাস দিয়েছেন।

Khasi Hills but to win the love and affection of the local tribal and preach Brahma religious beliefs. Prior to his arrival a Brahma Samaj centre was already established in Mawkhar area of the town. Later, a young Khasi man, Radhon Singh - initiated in Brahma Samaj - helped Nilomoni in translating the Khasi language. However, the demise of Nalini in a simple language is heart wrenching as the emotional presentation of the end of a dignified and fulfilled life has been justifiably done by the author, who is a lawyer by profession, in her book.

The book richly mentions about U Babu Jibon Roy, a legendary personality in Khasi community was a highly knowledgeable man with love and regards for the people of the soil, language and their all round elevation. He had a nationalist outlook since he believed in Khasi culture and tradition and made all out effort to take them along the mainstream nationalist culture and civilization of the then India. He thus translated the sacred

Hindu epic, Ramayana in Khasi besides translating Buddha Charit a n d Chaitanya Charit and also wrote on Indian history. The book also gives an account of his school, which he established with funds from his pocket and a printing press from where the first Khasi newspaper, U Khasi Mynta, was published. The book carries, too, a critical analysis of the

works of U Soso Tham, the legendary Khasi poet.

After completing his higher education from Calcutta University, Heramba Bhuyan, a brilliant student of rural Assam came to Shillong. The presence of this character, a bureaucrat in the then Assam Government, in the book provides an insight into the literature and cultural activities of Assamese society of Shillong in those days.

Apart from the lives of indigenous Khasis and those sourced by the British Raj to work in their establishment here, the book carry in its pages numerous colorful character of people surrounding neighboring and far flung areas who came and settled down in Shillong. Their stories have vivid description of the socio cultural lives of the Bengalis of the late 18th Century in this part of the northeast. Although the book is not a political history in itself, however the different characters have come up with their individual political views which collectively give an

The book also makes an elaborate mention about the visits by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore and Hassan Raja of Sylhet to Shillong. The knitting of small stories around the numerous characters makes interesting reading.

The preacher of Brahma religion, Nilomoni and wife of Rishi Aurobindo, Mrinalini Devi all are present with their respective individuality. The readers can gauge the emergence of the imaginary characters in the book coming alive before them and make their presence conspicuous, unlike a fact based historical narration, in this class work by the author.

She also gives a detailed picture on the early history as her novel dates back to 1866, the formation of Shillong town. The climatic condition, with authentic data, statistics and information on Shillong, the great earthquake of 1897, the then kingdoms of undivided Assam, the Khasi warriors and importantly how the British gain ground in this part of the country forms the beginning of this book.

The Ahom King in order to combat and control the rebellious Moyamria (fishermen) Community sought help from the British East India Company which deputed army under the command of Lord Cornwallis and Captain Wales, thereby paving the way for British dominance in northeastern India, heralding a new era in history. The book certainly deserves an English translation in order to reach the wider readers.

Book Review

the political situation, religious, cultural and social system prevalent in the 19th Century Shillong. One trademark aspect of this book is the discussion in social 'addas' which the Bengalis are known for has been intricately weaved in the main storyline by the author beautifully.

By Pt. Ajai Bhambani

'Star - Gazing'

Sunday, November 29, 2015

On your solar return chart Venus square Uranus indicates some mixed results. This is a time when you may need to adapt to situations and circumstances to make the best of what is available. Financially this continues to be a stable period. However extravagant tendencies need to be curbed. In general you fare well on the professional and academic front. Nevertheless some projects may not yield desired results. If you are in the midst of any dispute regard ancestral property then try to settle it amicably.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

This period brings glamour in your life as you make changes in your grooming as well in your lifestyle. You express your views, terms and conditions without hesitation and deal with many issues bravely and successfully. You focus on having fun, enjoying sports and expressing yourself efficiently. You may feel a bit defeated by situations at home and at work. Allow space and time for things to change on their own.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

The planetary configuration brings success and good fortune at work and opens new horizons for expansion. This phase also highlights friendship, love, romance and children in your life. It's a favorable time to open up conversations with loved ones, as intimate moments are most appealing both of you. This is a favorable time to go for higher learning and joining new courses to improve your professional skills and efficiency. Activities related to communications such as journalism, literature, speaking, etc., would figure more prominently.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

There will be heightened communication, creativity and authority in your life. You spend time with your beloved and enjoy the quality time spent as well as the activities that you do together. You may redecorate your home, especially your living room, and add decorations to give a new look to your room. This is the right time to participate in current events and share views, ideas and feelings with people around you to feel the part of whole, as this brings new opportunities and bring monetary gains. You have good team spirit and you are more tactful and obliging with your co-workers which in turn brings harmony at your work place.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

You show strength in your feelings of love and the power of attraction, which may open the doors to new romantic relationships. Your head rules because you have been highly motivated to make more money and improve your financial status. This is a favorable time for learning something new, feeling at ease in social situations, taking care of the details of daily life. Communications and business associates from overseas bring good news and offer lucrative opportunities. Take care of your health and adopt a routine of regular walk and exercise

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

This phase brings power, influence and authority. Personal relationships may be dreamy and transitory and commitments are made and promises are honored. You would maintain balance in the head and heart also in professional and personal matters. Its right time to concentrate on your career prospects and professional skills as a promotion or up-gradation in work area is likely to present itself. You have more energy for work and your daily routines tend to speed up now. Perhaps you have a larger workload than usual. It's a fabulous time for joining a gym or stepping up exercise and health routines. Talking, writing, and studying can be good ways to handle stress.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

There is a boost in your confidence as you handle conversations, seminars adroitly and express yourself more specifically about the subject. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering; you have to positively use your talents and efficiency. Be careful when expressing feelings and emotions others can misunderstand you. It might be hard for you to work with others in a harmonious manner, and disputes with co-workers are possible. If you feel especially angry, frustrated or restless, it would be great to find little more work and things to do so that you can channel excess energy constructively. Health and energy need to be conserved through a busy time at home and work. Obey traffic rules and exercise care while on the road.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

There is a burst of good-luck in the sphere of love and romance. You spend great time and listen to the inner feelings of your loved one. Your thoughts turn to children, pleasures, or romance during this expressive period. You might just find that this is a period when you are at your most gracious-as long as you are truly listening instead of reacting. An overseas or long distance journey is on cards.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

You exhibit sensitivity in your relationships as you feel they are more important to you than many other things. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental and emotional with your loved ones. You may be especially focused on pleasing your beloved and may discover new facets to your love life. You will be able to make best use of your talents, work experience and would insert your creativity into your work and projects in hand. You have more opportunities to improve relations with relatives and friends in your immediate environment. You are full of energy and indulge in sports and other physical activities.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You build new associations and there are beginnings in work areas as new opportunities and changes may come. You would improve your romantic and love life by bringing more sincerity, cooperation and humanity as unusual attractions and dreams could feature this time. You may explore new infrastructure and improve office as this brings more efficiency and continuity on your work. Family would be more supportive as this is the best time to bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships and feel more comfortable. You tend to entertain others with your conversation and your sense of humor. The desire for some form of recognition is going to be fulfilled.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

As the week brings more stability in relations and professional life; you have tendency to compromise and adjust and take a soft approach while dealing with people at work and home. You give a new approach to communications, projects, learning and self-expression. You may be especially focused on pleasing your family and are especially fond of family life. It's a passionate time, although you are unlikely to be displaying a whole lot of self-discipline. You would work in association of senior colleagues and people in authority and learn many more things at work place, which boosts your confidence and you use your best talents and co-relate all activities to upward the business and work opportunities. Give yourself a new fitness routine and healthy diet program to rejuvenate energy.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

The ability to build up financial and monetary pursuits and good returns from overseas business are on cards. You or your parents may finalize a marriage proposal. Sharing your interests and communication with loved one may be especially appealing to you. You might spend a lot of time in meeting friends and loved ones. Cooperation and a focus on harmony and understanding benefit you professionally and enhance your reputation and public standing. You are more attractive when you show your responsible, managerial, ambitious, and constant side in your personal and professional relations. You could be stressed while meeting people's expectations and approval. Eat healthy food, yoga and meditation recommended would help to overcome from such problems.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You exhibit wisdom and knowledge in your behavior and cooperation and harmony in personal relationships. People are attracted to you for your intelligent mind. You resolve an important domestic issue that has been causing problems in relations for some time. Centering within and witnessing inner truth and outer reflection is the best meditation this week. Cooperation and a focus on harmony and understanding benefit you professionally and enhance your reputation and public standing. You are strong and masterful while turning things around in a positive direction at work. You might also enjoy analyzing different health or nutrition programs. It's a great time to make improvements to your regular routines.

Perks are for all former cricketers?

(Contd from P-VI) Gavaskar and Tendulkar have played for the teams, not for their own personal glory. If someone infers that he is accusing cricketers from other parts playing for themselves.

Wadekar says just because they played for the team Mumbai won the Ranji Trophy 40 times. Yes, cricketers from other centres thought it was their arrogance in those years when they boasted it was easy to get into India team, not into Bombay squad, rightly gave them the air of superiority.

Ask Rajasthan players, who lost seven finals when Mumbai had their unbeaten run for 17 years from 1956-77 to 1072-23, and they will tell you how difficult it was to play Bombay even with some of the top professionals turning out for them.

The other topic that is being hotly discussed is the conflict of interest which is a pet subject of board president Shashank Manohar. At the top of his list of some 28 points to cleanse the board, he wants to make sure that none of the players or officials has any financial dealings that can smack of nepotism.

Manohar will soon realise how easy it is to say and difficult to implement the conflict of interest clause unless he is willing to sack a whole lot of influential former cricketers who have been successfully milking the board and state associations ever since they quit playing. The IPL has given

them another avenue to enrich themselves. Nothing can be more nepotistic than the chief selector acting as a brand ambassador of an IPL franchise.

After three years as national selector and a little over year since his son is part of the India team, Roger Binny's position as national selector has become untenable. He has just a year to go, but he may not get the fourth year under the new dispensation.

For public consumption, it is said both Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Virat Kohli are keen on having Stuart in the squad and the two also say they are still searching for an all-rounder at No 7.

Somebody should have reminded the board that great reader of the game M.L. Jaisimha quit as national selector once his son Vivek started knocking at the door for India selection. It is not Roger's fault. In any case, India team is selected before the selectors formally meet.

Once, former board secretary, the late Jayawant Lele was asked why a particular coach was being removed despite the team doing well under him and he quipped: There are so many former cricketers in the queue and everyone should get the opportunity to enjoy the perks!

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



ML Jaisimha

“Some of us have great runways already built for us. If you have one, take off. But if you don't have one, realize it is your responsibility to grab a shovel and build one for yourself and for those who will follow after you.”

— Amelia Earhart

The Shillong Times

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Modi's Pitch

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi has of late proved himself to be a prisoner of indecision, being at the cross-currents of sangh intolerance and political savvy. But his Tea Diplomacy last week shows that he was back on track. He talked to Congress President Sonia Gandhi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh over a cup of tea. His address in Parliament concluding the Constitution Day debate also emphasised a shared commitment to guiding principles. Modi's diplomacy marked a significant departure from the bitter animosities in Parliament over the stalled legislations on the GST, especially after the storm in Bihar. Modi rose above divisiveness saying that the Constitution pertained to faith in the concept of one nation, one country. This inspired B. R Ambedkar, author of the Indian Constitution to draw up a social compact which took it far beyond the legal document. The Indian Constitution has no use for resentment and retribution. Its main feature is expansiveness while it also makes for delimitation of powers.

Narendra Modi did not focus merely on B.R Ambedkar but also on Jawaharlal Nehru. He did not deny that previous governments mainly under Congress rule contributed significantly to the growth of the polity. Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad had once said political leaders could be friends outside the rock and roll of inter-party bickerings. Modi generated genuine optimism saying that the Lok Sabha could spread the message to the Jan Sabha, the Aam Aadmi. But can the spirit of the Prime Minister's unity campaign remain unsullied by Arun Jaitley indulging in a historical exercise comparing Indira Gandhi's emergency to the scourge of the swastika?

LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1988

Purno Sangma stresses on right manpower

Meghalaya Chief Minister Purno Sangma has called upon the universities in the North East to produce the right type of manpower for the hill areas. He did not think that what the universities were presently churning out every year was of much use for the development of the region.

Mr. Sangma was inaugurating a two day seminar on problems of hill areas development with special reference to the north eastern region at the NEHU campus here at Nongthymmai on Saturday.

He stressed the need for vocationalising education in the State and for having technical institution more relevant to the hill areas. The Planning has to be so fashioned as to take care of the recognized problem of skilled manpower shortage in the North East, he emphasized.

Mr. Sangma felt that agri-horticulture should form the core of the region's rural economy, and that is the area where the main thrust of activity should belong. About marketability of the agricultural and horticultural produce, he said a strategy should be adopted to setup small processing units of the agri-horticultural produce so that the farmers were not required to make any distress sale of their produce.

NEHU Vice Chancellor Dr. V.K. Mishra in his presidential remarks said that the Hill University would like to associate itself more actively with development process of the region. He urged for working out a device for involving the NEHU.

Dr. Mishra categorically expressed himself against extending railway network in Meghalaya. He said Shimla had turned into a slum following construction of railway traction in the town. The Vice Chancellor described the growing contractor culture in the North-East.

Prof Taher of Guwahati University in his keynote address pleaded for involvement of the people of the region for making the development real meaningful.

CPI delegation visiting China next week

A high level delegation of the Communist Party of India will visit China next week after a gap of 29 years.

The delegation of the CPI national council led by its general secretary Mr. C. Rajeswar Rao will hold talks with the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. Other members of the delegation leaving for Beijing on March 28 are CPI national council secretaries Mr. M. Farooqui and Mr. A.B. Fardhan, and its members Mr. Ramesh Chandra and Mr. N. D. Sundhriyal.

This is the first CPI delegation to visit China after 1959, a party release said today.

People's Participation in Democracy

By H H Mohrmen

November 26 is being observed as Constitution Day to commemorate the day the Constituent Assembly adopted, enacted and gave unto ourselves the Constitution and solemnly pledged to constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic. Now, even after 68 years of Independence and 66 years after we have adopted the Constitution a lot of work still needs to be done to achieve the goal that the founding fathers of the Constitution had set out in the Preamble to the Constitution. We are yet to achieve the goal of being a true democratic country in the real sense of the term because social, economic and political justice is yet to be available to all the citizens of this country. Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship is yet to be fully accorded to all the citizens of this country and equality in status and opportunity is still a distant dream for the majority in this country.

It is indeed ironic that the people who are responsible for denying Justice, Liberty and Equality to the citizens of this republic are none other than the public representatives who swore by the same Constitution to deliver the same to the public when they assume respective public offices.

In Meghalaya, the Public Works Department is one institution where nepotism is at its height. It is obvious that in this department democracy is working in favour of the haves and those in power and their cohorts only. This is one department where justice and equality is wanting and the possible outcome of such a situation is that people have to bear the brunt of having to travel on bad roads. There are many reports of sub-standard repairing of roads and the case in point where the headman of Sutnga village had to resort to filing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to ensure that people are provided the kind of roads they deserve. There were reports of a former MLA threatening to sue the Department for bad roads in his area. There are regular reports of bad roads from across the state. RTI replies on the repair of the NH 44 from Puriang to Mukhla has brought to light the blatant abuse of power by those who own a construction

company and also hold an important office in the government. RTI reports stated that substandard and untested bitumen were used by the Dhar Construction Company (DCC) to repair the very important road and this is the reason why the road did not even last three months.

The Executive Engineer of PWD Jowai Central had verbally informed the RTI seeker that materials and bitumen to be used for re-repairing of the mentioned portion of NH 44 were dispatched for testing to Assam Engineering College. He categorically stated that the company will be allowed to resume the re-repair work only after the test report is received, but surprisingly work was immediately started a few days after the meeting. When another RTI was filed to enquire if the department had received the test report, the reply was not forthcoming and the repair work is almost done now. The reason we have bad roads which do not last more than one summer is because of the contractor-politician-engineer nexus. All the contractors who were allotted contract work are cronies of the local MLA. The modus-operandi is that for every work in respective constituencies, contractors who owe their allegiance to the local MLA only are allotted work. In Jowai there is a story doing the rounds about the local MLA and his tiger five. Most of the contract works in the Jowai constituency are allotted to the five contractors who are very close to the MLA.

In the case of the DCC it is a different story altogether; the company is owned by the politicians' family who are in power and one of them is not even shying from saying in public that he more a businessman than a politician. This is also the reason why many of the major works in the state are being allotted to the Company and one cannot comprehend how can there be no conflict of interest when the politician

is also a contractor. This politician-contractor nexus or politicians themselves being contractors is a major threat to the development of this state. It is the prime reason why we have bad roads and in some cases road work already allotted but never constructed or half-done.

Roads in the minister's own constituency are in a bad shape. The Nartiang-Bamkammar-Khyndweso road which was only recently constructed is in a deplorable condition now. Take a ride on the main road in Wahajer (which is part of the Ummulong-Khanduli road) and experience the riding quality of this road. One cannot help but ponder that if this can happen in the PWD minister's own village and constituency then one can very well imagine the kind of roads in the rest of the state. This road is important not only because it connects Meghalaya with Assam via Khanduli and Hamren, but it is also the road which passes through Nartiang, famous for the monolith park and the Durga temple.

In this unholy nexus the engineers by commission or omission are becoming willing partners in providing sub-standard building and construction work in the entire state. The Engineers have no say or rather choose to turn a Nelson's eye and keep silent even when poor quality work is executed and construction is not done as specified in the work order, in spite of the fact that every month they draw a hefty salary from the state exchequer to serve the public interest.

The citizens are also partly to be blamed for the current stalemate for dearth or lack of public participation in making our country a true and active democracy. The saying goes, 'it takes two hands to clap,' therefore we cannot blame the public representative alone for not being able to achieve the goals which the founding father had set out 66 years ago in the Preamble to the Constitution. Public participation in democracy in the Indian context begins and

ends with elections only. There is a general consensus amongst the people that their role in the entire democratic process is to exercise their franchise only. They feel that their duty is only to vote and leave the remaining four years eleven months to their representatives.

The role of the general public in a democratic country is not a one-time affair. Neither does taking part in a democratic process in a one month affair of fun and merry making. It is a lot like farmers tending to their crops. Although they depend a lot on the vagaries of the nature but they still have to give constant attention to the crops to be able to get a good harvest. We cannot just go on complaining that democracy is not able to bring development or provide justice and equality to the citizens of this country. The citizens of the republic also need to play their role in ensuring that justice and equality is available for all.

In Meghalaya it is only recently that people have started to take active participation in the functioning of democracy and the most important tool in the hands of the public is the Right to Information (RTI). RTI is used to ensure that justice is accessible where it was denied. It is also used to ensure equality where none exists.

With regard to the various development projects in the state, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is being proactive now. The Committee under the leadership of Paul Lyngdoh took stock of the stalled water supply projects, incomplete slaughter house and many more government projects which failed to see the light of day for reasons best known to those involved in the execution of the projects. But the silver lining beyond the dark cloud is that people are beginning to take the Government to court for failing in its duty to serve the state as enshrined in the Constitution. This is good sign and many more PILs need to be filed on many failed or badly executed government projects. The public need to assert themselves to strengthen democracy.

TO THE EDITOR

Mayfair school clarification

Editor,
I wish to draw your attention to the news item appearing in The Shillong Times on November 25, 2015 under the heading, "City based school bars from appearing final exams." and on the following day, "Unidentified man pays school dues, pupils sit for exams." It is unfortunate that the newspaper has allowed the above two news items to be published without any obtaining the school version on the alleged grievances of fee payment.

I would therefore like that a clarification indicating the school version on this issue be published. Mayfair school is one of the well established and reputed schools in Shillong and this is the first time that such allegations have been made to smear the reputation of the school and the name of the Headmistress which has caused emotional and mental distress as the news items are not factually correct. Every school has some basic requirements with regards to timely payment of fees and it is a 'practice in every school that that unless fees are paid on time either student are not allowed to sit for the examinations or their results are withheld. Mayfair is no different from other schools where the Managing Committee has made this policy. Mayfair does not receive any Govt grant and it would be difficult to provide quality education unless fees are paid on time.

In the instant case, the parents had not paid their fees from July 2015 till date in spite of many reminders. The school allowed the children to con-

tinue their education but insisted that the fees be cleared before the examinations. However there was no written request for exemption nor did the parent plead for time but ignored our notice for clearing the fees. The school from time to time has given exemptions of examination fees to genuine cases of poor students as and when we receive any such request, hence to depict the school management and Headmistress in such a bad light is biased as the school's version of the matter was not taken.

The report in your news item that the students who could not pay the fees were pulled out from the assembly and ordered to stand outside the gate is absolutely false and intended to smear the reputation of the school and the good name of the Headmistress. It is made clear that no such action attributed to the school had taken place and the report is an absolute lie and defamatory. It is unfortunate that no verification was sought from the undersigned on the matter before publishing the news item. The report appears to be intended to gain sympathy for non payment of fees by the parent and to generate strong feelings against me and the school management.

Yours etc.,
Mrs. M.Syngai
Headmistress
Mayfair School
Shillong
&
Mrs. F.D. Syiem
President
(Managing Committee)

Editor replies: This incident was brought to the notice of the Meghalaya Child Rights Protection Council. Our story is based on the Council's version. Considering that the students had just lost one parent, it was perhaps the duty of the school to visit their home and find out the predicament of the family and assist them rather than wait to get a written representation from them. The news report led to the payment of the students' school fees by a Good Samaritan. That should rest the case. Preventing students from writing their examinations pending payment of fees is unethical to say the least, particularly in an age where the country promises Right to Education to all up to the age of 14 years.

MBOSE credibility at stake

Editor,
The class IX question papers set by MBOSE have leaked again. This is no surprise. The present system or absence of it encourages leakage. Questions are kept in selected deposit centres from where heads of other schools and other deputed persons in turn collect the questions. In following this 'system' the board simply believes in the integrity of the heads of institutions and others in storing and shifting the question papers. This is simply absurd. How can the Board expect everyone to be honest? Perhaps, this honesty cannot be expected even from the Board's employees too. If this

faulty system persists, leaks will continue to happen. Rest assured!

In the first place why is MBOSE conducting the class IX examination? Why can't it leave this task to the individual schools to conduct their own examination? The present practice is meaningless. MBOSE only sets the question papers. The corrections and the rest of it are done by the schools. The purported reason given is that many schools complete only two or three lessons of the class IX syllabus. But even now teachers can still manipulate (many are doing) with their correction if they want to. If MBOSE wants to ensure uniformity in class IX, then it should set questions, deposit question papers in police stations/outposts and also do the corrections. But I don't see that possibility. The process requires hiring teachers from different schools. It is time consuming, not to forget the cost involved.

Therefore, it is totally unnecessary for the Board to conduct the Class IX examination. Another unnecessary practice is the double registration of students in the same Board. Students who have registered themselves in Class IX have to repeat the same in class XI. What is the need? No University or Board registers its students twice over. These unnecessary practices, as many say, are for MBOSE to earn substantial extra bucks at the cost of the credibility of the State Board.

Your's etc.,
Albert Thyrianiang
Tura, West Garo Hills

Love all

By Madeline Tham

Tennis originated in France during the 12th Century. Its a game played only by the aristocracy. A servant would toss the ball into the court for the blue blooded men to hit back and forth, across the net. If a volley went out, the Lord would probably say, 'Service', and another ball would be tossed into the court for the game to continue. As it was below the dignity of the nobility to touch the ball, hence the word, 'Service' at the beginning of each game. Sprinkled with French terms like deuce, I love the game because it is one of the few sports where you earn points from the mistakes of others.

Tennis in Shillong is not as unpopular as one might think. I remember a neighbour friend of mine who would forget all domestic obligations and sit glued to the television during the Wimbledon. Though fond of basketball in her youth, she has never held a racket in her hand. Many like her, love watching the game and Federer, Djokovic, Sania Mirza, Leander Paes, Maria Sharapova, Martina Hingis to name a few, are household names. People have even named their sons and daughters after tennis personalities.

Growing up in Jaiaw one would have thought, what would those from the 'west', know about tennis. But though an almost unimaginable thought, the first tennis court I laid eyes on was at the then Welsh Mission hospital. It was right in front of the entrance to the European ward. Net and all intact, with the lines clearly marked. Signs that the court was still used by the doctors and nurses well into the seventies.

As one moved from junior classes to the mid-level section in Loreto we got more access to the school infrastructure. So from eating lunch in front of the junior classes, we could explore the campus and eventually reach the tennis court. We were fascinated by this huge empty space near the hall, where, during the day, girls would practise march past and in the late afternoons the boarders would play tennis. One of the sweetest memories of my years at Loreto was sitting in a circle with my classmates and sharing our lunches. We even called ourselves, 'The Traders'. From exchanging stinky goat cheese for deep fried roast beef to commenting on some, who had more parental attention and whose tiffins were so neat, that even the salt was folded in a square piece of paper and looked as though it had been ironed!

St Edmunds too had a court, on which the college library now stands. St. Anthony's College has converted its tennis court into a parking lot.

Not so long ago, one could spot a tennis court at every turn in Shillong. To name a few, there is a tennis court in Polo, one at the BSF Garrison; in the compound of a house in Motinagar at the Lindhurst Estate in Laitumkhras etc.. The Raj Bhavan has two well maintained courts; the residences of the DC of EKH, Jowai and Nongstoin, all had a tennis court each. Shillong Club had three, two clays and a grass court but now only the clay courts are in existence. There's one at NEHU campus lying unused. The armed forces based in Shillong, the Air Force, the Assam Rifles and others of course I would imagine have well maintained courts.

A few years ago when the Meghalaya Tennis association was formed, it consisted mostly of those players who played at the Shillong Club. But what a 'Motley Crew' they are! From not so well off families, who would manage to somehow get a racket, to the super rich and powerful. The love and pas-

sion for the game visible in every shot!

Tennis in Meghalaya has been denied its rightful place and the chance to produce great players for the country. Tennis could provide employment for people as coaches, ball boys, managers, staff for maintenance of the courts, promotion for the sale of tennis merchandise et al. But at present there is only a miniscule, almost pathetic amount of funding for tennis. There are no coaching facilities, hardly any visible infrastructure or hosting of any regional, national or international events.

Perhaps it is the only sport in the state that gets the least funding from the Government. The only indulgence that the government has shown towards tennis was the construction of two artificial courts in the Jawaharlal Nehru Sports Complex in Polo a few years ago. These were used for less than a year or so when they were broken down for the not so apparent reason that they were badly constructed and I believe new ones have been made, literally replacing new courts with new courts! When my fellow tennis players from across Meghalaya come and compete in the annual State championships, I often exchange polite pleasantries with them and observe that their game is as good if not better than regular players at the club. When I ask them where they practise their tennis, the answer is almost heart breaking and unbelievable. Majority of them play and practise in the streets of their home town and villages, while learning about the rules of the game, from the TV. Our friends from Mizoram pine at the attitude of Meghalaya's state machinery towards tennis. The present Sports Minister of Mizoram coming from an affluent background is a tennis buff. Therefore even in remote villages in Mizoram there are good quality and well maintained tennis courts. Other North Eastern states like Manipur and Assam have great infrastructure and a decent amount of the state budget goes towards this game. This has led to the production of players of great calibre where the quality of tennis is at par with the national level.

Strange are the ways of God and men, so too, the Shillong people. Golf as a game was started by bored shepherds in the highlands of Scotland, but at present considered very elite by the happening crowd, while tennis started by royalty in France is not ignored. Tennis in the twenty-first century is the most egalitarian sport. Anybody who can buy, beg or borrow a tennis racket can simply join in, unlike golf where the equipment is expensive and the playing area runs into acres. But of course when playing tennis one has to concentrate on the game unlike golf, which Mark Twain described as, 'a spoiled walk', where people can afford to play and do a lot of social networking too.

Tennis could provide an outlet for the pent up energy of our youth and their general angst against one and all. The Government should take the initiative to build courts in the rural as well as town areas of Garo Hills, Jaintia Hills, Ri Bhoi and West Khasi Hills to promote and encourage the players who already have a passion for the game. Maybe and just maybe we could replace guns with rackets and hatred for our fellow human beings with the love and passion to win fair and square at the courts. For tennis after all is a game that begins with the call, 'Love all'.

(The writer is Associate Professor of English, Lady Keane College)