

"The living need charity more than the dead."

--- George Arnold

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. III SHILLONG, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2016

National anthem in cinema halls

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled that the national anthem must be played in cinemas before movie screenings and all exits will be shut during that time. Governments are expected to implement this rule within ten days. The court stressed that everyone should rise for the anthem, with the national flag on the screen, because citizens, "are duty-bound to show respect to the national anthem which is the symbol of the constitutional patriotism." The idea of "any different notion or the perception of individual rights...is constitutionally impermissible," the Court further ruled. This ruling comes in the wake of a petition by an individual who runs an NGO in Bhopal. The ruling has created a stir since Indians are now expected to overtly express their patriotism even inside an entertainment auditorium. Questions have also been raised about the Court's order to close the exits of the cinema halls while the anthem is being sung since there could be emergencies such as the outbreak of fire or an earthquake. But the Court seems to have overlooked these exigencies. Lawyers for the petitioner had argued that the movement of people in and out of the hall in the middle of the anthem is disrespectful.

In the 1960s cinema halls in India used to play the anthem after a movie has ended, but people were often seen walking out in the middle. The practice faded with the arrival of multiplexes. Whether or not to stand in the cinema hall during the anthem has generated much debate and confusion. Last year, the Madras High Court had ruled that in cinema halls, people are not bound to stand for the anthem. The court was responding to the home ministry's directive to all states that standing would interrupt film screening and create disorder and confusion rather than add to the dignity of the anthem. But the recent apex court ruling seems to fall in line with the climate of rising nationalism in the country where the Government has ruled that all educational institutions too should put up the national flag of a certain dimension atop the highest point in the building. There is a feeling in the country today that judicial overreach has gone over the top. Indeed, the judiciary is increasingly intruding into the executive and legislative domain when its own judicial work remains pending for years. Time for a constitutional amendment?

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Mahanta invites pol. Parties, tribal bodies

Assam Chief Minister Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta has invited all the political parties and tribal organization including both groups of the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) to discuss the tribal problems here on March 29.

According to an official spokesman the meeting assumed special significance as all political and tribal organizations have been invited to the discussion table for the first time.

TO THE EDITOR

MUDAAffairs

Editor,
Apropos the letter, "Benami Transaction in MUDA" (ST Oct 16, 2016) by Jonathan Lyngdoh and responses to that by PK Dwivedi (ST Oct 16, 2016) captioned "MUDA Affairs" and subsequent letters on the subject and finally an article by Patricia Mukhim, "Is clean business possible in Meghalaya," I strongly contest the term "bartering the tribal name for monetary gains." How can a name tribal or otherwise be sold? If a tribal owner employs a non tribal as partner or on sales commission, as manager or on the basis of profit sharing, what is wrong with that? It is ridiculous to assume that "Benami" business or illegal trade is going on at MUDA shopping complex. This controversy of so called Benami business is being raised not by the common man, but by a few selfish people who for vested interests are trying to further widen the gap between the tribals and non-tribals.

After the commissioning of MUDA parking cum shopping complex, there were many young

unemployed non-tribal applicants for allotment of stalls, but not a single shop was allotted to any non tribal youth except a few old municipal stall owners. Why this discrimination? Tribals have been given never ending special privileges as SC/ST and OBCs, with quotas and reservations nationwide while the handful of non-tribal's who have no special privileges and want to earn an honest living in the state are deprived of their constitutional rights and looked at with suspicion. My tribal friends must realize that development funds for the state come from the centre. These funds are generated from Income Tax revenues contributed by the non tribal citizens of the country including those residing in this state. Just do a simple brain storming to find out the spectrum of development in last 44 years since statehood was attained and compare it with the quantum of money allotted by the Centre for the development of the state, to realize who is using whom for monetary gains.

A negligible percentage of genuine non-tribal population is left in Meghalaya. There should

"The worst thing in this world, next to anarchy, is Government." Undoubtedly, Henry Beecher was a futurologist who had November 2016 India in mind when he uttered these words. Which so aptly describes the turmoil on the streets, endless queues for cash, left people begging for their own money, disrupted the agricultural cycle, destroyed business even as Prime Minister Modi tom-toms his fight against black money and demonitisation is a success. Yet the show goes on.

Amidst this mayhem and turmoil as people debated the positive and negative effects of demonitisation, politically it saw the banding together of 13 disparate Opposition Parties to oppose the Prime Minister's scheme. Succinctly encapsulated by his predecessor Manmohan Singh: "Organised loot, monumental mismanagement and legalised plunder" of the common people. He warned of a drop in the GDP "by about 2 percentage points... an underestimate".

Undoubtedly, this Opposition onslaught during the ongoing Parliament session has disturbed the BJP and could upset its appellate in the near future. For nine days running both Houses have been adjourned without an iota of work over demonitisation by the largest Opposition unity seen even as the Government failed to create a divide amongst the Congress, Trinimool, AIADMK, DMK, NCP, SP, BSP, BJD, RJD and JD(U) by underscoring their inherent contradictions to their advantage. Notwithstanding that the NDA has an overwhelming majority in the Lower House.

Perhaps, what is agitating and worrying the Saffron Sangh is that not only did these Parties submerge their mutual conflicts by challenging the Government's well thought out counter-narrative but that "neutral" Parties like Jayalalitha's AIADMK,

be some empathy for them. Majority of elite, cultured and educated non-tribal citizens have been forced out of the state because of discrimination and inconvenience caused to their professional and day-to-day lives. One cannot deny their enormous contribution to the state.

I strongly disagree with the views of PK Dwivedi that a tribal manager or caretaker is often lethargic or alcoholic. Our present generation of young tribal boys and girls are very active and are competing in every field. Normally they don't instigate communal conflicts. They are open-hearted and educated and have a logical head on their shoulders as they mix with people from the rest of the country and are getting better socialized.

The poisonous mantra of "Non-tribal" or "Dkhar" is being injected by a handful of people for vested interests. These people take advantage of the innocence of the poor and backward classes for their vote banks and conspire and divide the society using caste, creed,

Unity Begins With U

Can opposition come together?

By Poonam I Kaushish

Mamata's Trinimool and Naveen Patnaik's BJD joined the Congress-led Opposition to vociferously challenge the Government inside and outside Parliament.

Given that till date both Parties have discreetly helped the BJP-led NDA by either staging a walk out at crucial times be it voting or registering their protest and joined by the Samajwadi when ever it suited it. Recall, during the furore over Lalit Modi and Vyapam scandal which washed out last year's Parliament's Monsoon session the AIADMK and BJD never joined the Opposition. Nor when many compatriots had boycotted the Lok Sabha in protest of Speaker suspending 20-odd Congress MPs, the two stayed put.

But for reasons best known to Jayalalitha, it is a mystery why the AIADMK has turned against the BJP in spite of many Ministers and the Party's top brass regularly visiting the Chennai hospital. Adding to Modi's discomfort is its Maharashtra ally Shiv Sena coming out against demonitisation.

Pertinently, despite being in a minority in the Lok Sabha the Opposition is rubbing in a reverse message: They might not have the numbers but are successfully putting the Government on the mat. The obverse holds true in the Rajya Sabha where the Parties are using their numerical strength to hold the house to ransom.

However, the biggest takeaway of this Opposition unity is that stormy petrel Mamata is clearly positioning herself for leading the Opposition charge against the BJP in 2019, dethroning JD(U) Nitish Kumar. She has not only emerged as a key strategist but also honed her political acumen. One, she banded them together, kept her ears to the ground advising them on what should be the next move.

Two, by reaching out to bête noir Left Brigade to join her anti-Modi bandwagon she has demonstrated that if the

cause is important she is willing to bury the decades-long hatchet and join forces for the collective good. Mamata takes advantage of Sonia's fondness for her and regularly keeps in touch with erstwhile Congress cronies, NCP's Sharad Pawar too has a soft spot for her, has built an equation with JD(U)'s, Samajwadi's Mulayam, AAP's Kejriwal and Udav Thackeray's Shiv Sena.

Further, realizing that not a few regional satraps are lily-livered cowards whose expertise lies in deal-making with the Government of the day she has got JD(U)'s Sharad Yadav, Samajwadi, NCP, AAP's Kejriwal's party and Abdullah's National Conference to join her protest in Delhi.

Her spit and fire and uncompromising posture have been visible for years. But Mamata came into her own after breaking from the Congress in 1998 and post her battle with the Tata's at Singur vis-à-vis land acquisition in 2008. She has won two consecutive Assembly elections after defeating the 34-year rule of the CPM in 2011.

Undeniably, it is early days but her Partymen and grudging rivals have nicknamed her the 'She-Modi'. Mamata like her rival is single and perceived to have the same skill set as Modi: Popular, great orator who 'connects' with people, rabble rouser, persistent, appetite for risk and is Teflon-like whereby no scandal or negative feature sticks to her. She has emerged unblemished post the Saradha and Narada scams, ditto Modi after Godhra in 2002.

In fact, some Congress and Janata old timers are comparing her Mandalite VP Singh when he galvanised the Opposition against Rajiv's Congress over the Bofors gun scandal in 1988. On the downside she is known to be whimsical who wants all her whims indulged, has a fiery temper and anybody who seemingly airs divergent views is axed from grace. Mamata is also transparent about wanting the crown.

Meanwhile former Prime Minister Deve Gowda head of Karnataka's minuscule JD(S) too has been pluming for opposition unity to

ensure the communal BJP's defeat. But he does not have Mamata in mind and instead made plain that all like-minded secular forces should rally behind Mulayam. Adding, this was imperative as they had paid a heavy price in 1997 when differences within the Janata Dal family led to their downfall and fragmentation.

Will and how this unity will hold remains to be seen. Would it dissipate post the Parliament session? Or hold during the forthcoming State assembly polls? Given that other than the BJP, Congress, Samajwadi, BSP and if one stretches it perhaps JD(U) and RJD as neither the Trinimool, the two Tamilian rivals DMK and AIADMK and Odesha BJD have any stake in either UP, Punjab, Uttarakhand

There is no gainsaying that the BJP has only itself to blame for the mess it is in. At the same time for any credible and proper Opposition unity, if not perfect, to survive and lead, it should be headed by the largest, second or major Party leader. With Congress's Rahul being dismissed as a non-serious political player sans respect by others and AIADMK's Jayalalitha unwell the sixth largest Party Trinimool' Mamata has taken it upon herself to lead from the front.

It is too early to say whether this unity will hold as it would depend on how long the cash crunch continues and how it affects the economy at large. Modi's emotional speeches of it serving the greater national good have struck a chord with the poor and middle class who seem to have bought his line that demonitisation is punishing the rich. No matter it has created a class divide for the first time.

Moreover, Modi's gambit will only be put to test next year during Assembly polls, so the idea still has time to evolve. Specially against the backdrop that a Government in power has a huge capacity to dole out patronage, win over enemies and influence people. However, either which way it is good for India's democracy to have the Opposition finally playing its part: Constructive opposition with the winner taking it all! ---- INFA

These feelings of mistrust and suspicion also affect the government's demonitisation decision and they will support the Bharat Bandh.

They forget that demonitisation has affected not only the common people of India but more so the corrupt, dishonest and black money holders. If the opposition really wants to work for the people of India they should know the ground realities first. People of India want clean, transparent and better governance and have full faith on the present government.

This Government does not think at all about the political outcome of demonitization and whether it will return to power in 2019. Moreover, this government is not hungry for power. The Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi believes that if it wants to change the system it will have to remain in the system. Only there will be change in the society and India will be like a New India, Corruption free India, Clean India, Digital India and head towards a cashless economy in India.

Yours etc;
Sandeep Ghosh
Shillong-4

A good shake-up

By Ananya Guha

No matter how divided the Nation is on demonetization, one thing is very clear. It has given us more than a jolt if not a shock. Black money as I understand it is money not accounted for, not shown in 'white' for income tax liability. So one way of protecting it is to hoard it and what better place could be the house that one lives in? It is also money received on account of bribes, which could run into prodigious sums. It may or may not be directly related to corruption. But it probably is. If you are not declaring your money you are evading tax. If you are evading tax and stashing money in the crevices of your house, which many do, and they are not only businessmen but professionals, then you are accumulating black money. So the country's super powers, those who think and thought they could get away from anything because of their money power were in for a rude shock. They were too numbed even to react. The poor were happy, because they thought that the corrupt

houses and what have you. The disparity of wealth in this country is vulgar and nauseating. This measure was needed. And it is good that the country got a shock, no matter how many erudite economic theories are bandied. The counter argument is that many will work out solutions and get their unholy money converted. How? As long as this is anticipated some embargo in some form or the other should remain. The root of the ills in this country is the crass inequity in wealth. This has resulted in militant movements and terrorism.. Naxalism is one such manifestation. The disruntlement in North East India is another such, as the classes developed in the societies with access to money power, are great friends with venal politicians or quasi politicians in the corridors of power. So what happens to the labourer, the street vendor, the vegetable seller, or the young graduate in search of employment? 'There are no jobs,' is the

The roads to compassion can never lie in exploitation. People who can afford to employ a retinue of domestic help are the ones who treat them callously. That unequal money is the source of a vicious cycle in India: poverty, unemployment, violence, indifferent health care is something that should be our next massive 'surgical strike'. And the sooner our classes realise it the better. The next stages for employment, welfare measures for the poor, must be carefully and methodically staged. Only then, will be there a semblance of hope, rather than listening to sermons from English educated babus, writing novels, indulging in media terrorism and sitting in a pivoted world of technology.

would have it. The middle class looked unperturbed, but many are vulnerable to making profits by wrong ways of course, but their conscience was probed. So they made frantic bee lines to deposit their money. The panic attack came more in the wake of a conscience attack what if this amount which I got was ill gotten, forgetting what he said earlier everyone takes bribes!

Those who store money in houses the petty traders, small shopkeepers also know that they can deposit the money slowly and safely. But if they have been avoiding income tax they better be careful. They need to solicit advice from their Big Bs. The fake currencies doing rounds with gusto must have been another reason for the government's move. Counterfeit notes stall circulation of good money and create a shortage of lesser denominations. That is why perhaps, getting hundred rupee notes in banks was a problem.

But the main target would be illicit money in general. While honest tax payers are earning honestly, the unscrupulous are thinking of hoarding and evasion. They must be taught a lesson, and the fear of the devil must be firmly injected into their minds. While a few in the country flaunt muscle power the poor have not even bank accounts to think of. The daily wage labourer, the vegetable vendor, the people who sell betel nuts or fruits on the road side, have almost nothing but their daily earning spent on a daily basis. What savings can they think of? And here we have doctors, engineers, lawyers, flaunting houses in different parts of the country as a grotesque prestige symbol. And of course who forgets the good old politician, who in order to make his money pristine white, even ventures into starting hotels, guest

reply. But paradoxically and sadly there is profusion of wealth and money.

So, this is exactly the rude shock that we needed. Ill gotten gains harm the economy. More so they are a virus in the flotsam and jetsam of a poor population, desperately trying to eke out a living, and climbing the ladders of social justice. No matter how much we talk about democracy, it cannot exist if there is no equitable or at least scaling down of wealth through illegal profiteering. The roads to compassion can never lie in exploitation. People who can afford to employ a retinue of domestic help are the ones who treat them callously. That unequal money is the source of a vicious cycle in India: poverty, unemployment, violence, indifferent health care is something that should be our next massive 'surgical strike'. And the sooner our classes realise it the better. The next stages for employment, welfare measures for the poor, must be carefully and methodically staged. Only then, will be there a semblance of hope, rather than listening to sermons from English educated babus, writing novels, indulging in media terrorism and sitting in a pivoted world of technology.

The shameless show of wealth has been illustrated recently in Shillong, on the aftermath of demonetization. Apparently forty to fifty lakhs of hard cash was found in the premises of a well known religious institution, committed to social service over centuries. The person who did it obviously thought that such an amount is dispensable for a show of false charity. It is these people who dreadfully need the spiritual antidote, and need to go more on the confessional way.

"If you take responsibility for yourself you will develop a hunger to accomplish your dreams."

--- Umberto Eco

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 112 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2016

Paresh Baruah's stand

ALTHOUGH ULFA activities have come down under the BJP government, progress towards talk with the pro-peace faction of the outfit under Arabinda Raj Khowa has been halted. The hurdle seems to be the enigmatic Paresh Baruah. He is said to be operating from Ruili town in the Dehong Autonomous region of Yunnan Province. He has however rubbished claims that China harbours ULFA militants to foment trouble in the north-east. He says that China, Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh have never been enemies of the ULFA but have never been its friends either. He specifically referred to an agreement between India and China on exchange of information on counter-terrorism. The national security advisors of the two countries made this agreement. In any case, China has never involved itself in terrorism in India under Pakistan. It may be recalled that Mao Zedong negated overtures from the Naxalites in the 1960s. Baruah emphasised that ULFA fugitives in China did not live under Chinese rule.

Baruah has said that China cannot be stopped if it wants to arrest him. He is however prepared to face any consequences. He knows the price of revolution. All this is empty rhetoric. What is more to the point is his admission that China has already said that it will not support the militant ULFA faction. It means he apprehends that China may arrest him and hand him over to India. His strategy depends on the geo-political situation. But his objective of achieving sovereignty has been worn out by time and isolation. If Baruah is handed over to India, that may spell the doom of the ULFA.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Govt to lay Thakkar Commission Report before Lok Sabha

Bowing to relentless opposition pressure, Prime Mr Rajiv Gandhi today announced the Government's decision to lay on the table the Thakkar Commission Report on the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi went he Lok Sabha reassembles after a 10-day recess on March 27. In a statement just before the house adjourned for the Holi, Mr Gandhi said the release of the report would no longer prejudice the coursed of criminal investigations as they have since been completed.

The Government decided to make Public the full test of the report since "a vision of what is alleged to be stated in a portion of the report has reached the press." This is fuelling willful distortion, malicious innuendo and irresponsible character assassination. To put a stop to this, it is important that the full test of the report be made public. Mr Gandhi told the house that when the Thakkar Commission was established it was expected that its report would be released as all reports under the Commissions of Inquiry Act had in the past been released.

He said it was Mr Justice Thakkar who recommended that his report be not made public. The judge cogently stated in his report the reasons for his recommendation. He was of the view that his report should not be made public as it could prejudice the criminal investigations that were then under way. The two houses of Parliament were thrown into turmoil on March fourteen when apportion of the Thakkar Commission Report was published in the Indian Express. The Indian Express story spoke of Mr Justice M P Thakkar's suspicion about the involvement of Mr R K

Dhawan in the assassination of Mrs Gandhi.

The confrontation between the Government and the opposition, which would not accept anything short of tabling of the entire report continued to rock Parliament throughout the week. While in the Rajya Sabha most of the opposition members walked out yesterday and announced their boycott of the session for two days, continued disorderly scenes in the Lok Sabha culminated in the suspension of 63 opposition members for the week. Opposition members yesterday sought President Mr R. Venkataraman's intervention in getting the commission report tabled.

Speaking with emotion Mr Gandhi recalled that on October, 31, 1984 the nation suffered a national tragedy. "I suffered a personal tragedy". He said the events of the past few days had caused the people of India immense distress. "I for my part, have relived the terrible trauma of the time."

Mr Gandhi said the Thakkar Commission investigated the events leading to the assassination of the nation's Prime Minister. "Those events are of the deepest personal concern to me and my family. She was my mother, I am her son." Mr Gandhi said the Government accepted Mr Justice Thakkar's recommendation and the house had been informed of the decision. The house had determined that it was "not expedient in the interest of the security of the State and in the public interest to lay (the report) before the house of the people." Now that the criminal investigations were over, the Government had decided to table the report.

Elections and the Khasi value system

By Patricia Mukhim

No matter how far human beings have progressed some values remain unchanged. The Khasis have a set of aphorisms from wise elders (Ki jingsneng tymmen) now translated to English by Bijoya Sawian, which are supposed to guide their behavior. These exhortations hold good even today because they touch the core of our being. Earning an honest living by the sweat of one's brow (kamai da ka umsyep), or the Khasi belief that life on earth is for earning righteousness through right living (kamai ia ka hok), etc., are some basic values which encompass a human being's earthly sojourn. These values preceded Christianity. They were like light posts that guided our lives as a largely agrarian population. With the advent of Christianity and its Ten Commandments based on the Jewish laws, the Khasi value system seemed to have been subsumed and subsequently lost in the cacophony of implanted religions.

When the Khasi speaks of "ka burom, ka akor" (personal honour and etiquette) she includes in those four words the entire range of human behavior which will not degrade her human person. Alas! The Khasi value system has eroded very rapidly. Hedonism seems to be the order of the day. It seems that politics as it is practiced in this country has corrupted the Khasi mind completely. Today people have learnt that candidates in the electoral fray are ready to pay money for their votes. Earlier on, there used to be a sense of guilt and shame to negotiate with candidates about money for votes. Today no one even blinks while talking business with those who come begging for vote. "Give me money and I will give you votes," is the standard conversation today. The niceties have long since gone out of our vocabulary.

Our elected MLAs/MDCs therefore reflect their constituents. A constituency that believes the role of the legislator is to make laws and to provide them good governance, for the collective good usually throws up a credible candidate. A constituency whose voters are largely corrupt and selfish and sell

their votes for short term gains will throw up corrupt MLAs/MDCs. It always takes two to tango. So before blaming the MLA who then becomes a minister and works ceaselessly at filling up his/her coffers, let's look at our own character flaws. What is the quality of our local village heads? If they are non-partisan and if they wish to enforce their diktat that anyone receiving money for their votes would be ostracized, I am sure the business of votes for money would be drastically reduced. Every constituency has some leaders who usually accept money from candidates for mobilizing voters and volunteers. It's a good time for making money. In this highly polluted political climate how can we expect change in electoral behavior?

Many refer to Meghalaya as a Christian state. I have a problem with such labels because we are a secular country. Moreover, this is a rebuke to Christianity because the most corrupt MLAs/ministers are also practicing Christians. It would in fact be more appropriate to say in our context that "Christianity hides a multitude of sins." If Christianity was giving the correct messaging how is it that regular church goers are also serious offenders whether it be in politics or the bureaucracy or business. The three are in fact inseparable. Christianity therefore is being used only as a badge of honour. It has ceased to challenge wrongdoers because those are also the main contributors to the church. One wonders whether Christianity has in many ways become the placebo for dulling our conscience. We are at a point in time when right wing politics is gaining ground. Several write-ups have appeared from members of certain churches castigating those in the current ruling dispensation in Delhi for curtailing our liberal spaces. It would have been much more beneficial for those same people to clean up the mess in their respective congregations and be more introspective,

rather than engage in finger pointing. How much has the church contributed in building up a culture of political consciousness and ushering in a clean election campaign in Meghalaya? I have stated times without number that the churches have the largest number of captive audience Sunday after Sunday. Why is the behavior of this audience unchanging?

Obviously Christian values are not taken seriously by church members. Hence they continue with their waywardness the moment they step out. This is what afflicts our political culture. It is time now to reclaim the native tribal values and rekindle these in our people. Perhaps the scourge in our society today is because we have abandoned these values which once brought social integration. Religion seems to have disconnected us as a society. To completely disregard the rich traditions laid down by our forebears is to throw away the most valuable weapon we have in our personal battle towards true enlightenment.

Ironically, we Khasis speak about tradition as if it is the most important thing in our lives next to breathing. So what did our tradition teach us? Did it teach us corruption? Did it teach us extortion? Did tradition teach us rent-seeking behavior? So why is tradition paraded as a coat of arms only for claiming certain rights and privileges and not as a guide to societal behavior? The reason why anything becomes a tradition is because A: It is useful, and B: People like it. The corruption creeps in when this becomes inverted, and humanity ends up serving a tradition. This is what has happened to the Khasi society today.

We are now at the cusp of the next election and as always there is a lot of moaning and groaning that we are not getting the representatives we need to build a vibrant Meghalaya in this 21st

century. The people we wrongly call 'leaders' are not worth their salt we say. Those in the Government are busy feathering their nests. Those outside it don't have a sense of direction. The state is in a sort of political wilderness whether one looks at the kind of Education imparted or the Health infrastructure in place. MLAs are simply enjoying their Rs 2 crore a year bonus which they use to buy votes at the fag end of the five year tenure. This is political corruption at its worst since no MLA till date in the MUA-2 Government has given an account in black and white of how the Rs 2 crore, MLA Scheme money has been spent. Mind you in a 5 year tenure each MLA gets Rs 10 crore. Multiply this by 60 and it's a whopping Rs 600 crore of public money used as a personal pocket money.

The MLA Scheme is meant to speed up the creation of public assets such as roads, bridges, footpaths, water supply systems, community halls, community toilets, to help repair schools etc. It is certainly not meant for buying chairs and tables or plates and pots and pans to be distributed to individuals. Our people were never so shameless as to expect their kitchen utensils from the MLA. But that is how low we have sunk. And the MLA is to blame because this is how he/she is bribing the electorate. And we the voters are allowing it to happen because of our reticence and our disinclination to ask pointed questions from our MLAs.

So are we ready now to ask for a full disclosure from every MLA about how the MLA fund of Rs 2 crore annually has been spent? And are we ready to ask the MLA to give the expenses incurred in black and white and then do a physical check to see if the claims are authentic? If we still hesitate to ask these questions then it is pointless to want change in the political system. It will not happen. Merely wanting change without working hard to bring that change is a pointless exercise. We will only be wasting our breath! So are we ready for action?

Short guide to the law about street vending

By Thma U Rangli U Juki (TUR)

Those following the mainstream media discussion in Shillong town, would be right to think that Hawking and Vending is an illegal activity which needs to be stamped out. But that is not the case. Illegality is a myth.

Unlike what is heard in the influential circles of Meghalaya, Right to Street Vending & Hawking is guaranteed by the force of Law. Based on the directions of the Supreme Court of India, in 2014, Central government made a law called THE STREET VENDORS (PROTECTION OF LIVELIHOOD AND REGULATION OF STREET VENDING) ACT, 2014 to protect the livelihoods of Hawkers and Vendors as well as to regulate vending in a just manner.

But Government of Meghalaya has failed to implement this law. Instead of notifying and framing the rules for the above-mentioned Central Act which received Presidential Assent on 4th March, 2014, Meghalaya government enacted constitutionally untenable, anti-hawker 'Meghalaya Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act in November 2014. Meghalaya Govt tried to enact its own 'unconstitutional' law because it realized that the Central Law breaks the 'autocratic', 'arbitrary' and 'corrupt' patronage and control, Meghalaya politicians, bureaucrats and police wield over the livelihoods of the people. So why is the Central Government law so frightening to the Government of Meghalaya? We have a done a handy short FAQ about the law to enable readers to have informed opinion about the situation rather than remain stuck with rumours and prejudice.

When did Government of India legislate the law?
The 'Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014' received the assent of the President on March, 4, 2014 and became applicable throughout the country except Jammu and Kashmir. The different state governments had been given one year from the date of notification of this Act to make rules for carrying out the provision of this Act (Chapter X, 36 (1)).

Who is a hawkler/street vendor?
Street vendor means someone who is engaged in selling wares to the public while standing on the footpath, pavement, public park (Chapter I, 1 (b)) or someone who moves from one place to another, i.e., mobile vendors (Chapter I, 1 (d)).
Defined in such a manner a street vendor also has right to the footpath or public places which has income earning potential.

Who shall regulate street vending and hawking?
The act provides for the constitution of a Town Vending Committee (TVC) in every local authority (Chapter VII, 21 (1)) which has the responsibility to maintain records of hawklers (Chapter VII, 26 (2)), provide certificate of vending (Chapter VII, 26 (1)) and carry out the necessary social audits (Chapter VII, 26 (3)). It is the TVC and no other authority, neither the Municipal Board or MUDA or the Urban Affairs department which has the power to decide on the eligibility of a hawkler to conduct his/her business or otherwise. This is to ensure that there is a proper authority which is specifically concerned with the street vendors.

Who shall be members of the TVC?
To make sure that the interest of all stakeholders is taken into consideration, the Act specifies the composition of the TVC and makes it inclusive.
· TVC, is to be headed by the Municipal Commissioner or Chief Executive Officer of Municipal board (Chapter VII, 22 (2) a),
· Hawkers representatives – not less than 40% (Chapter VII, 22 (2) d),
· Community based organizations – not less than 10% (Chapter VII, 22 (2) c),
· Government representatives, police, health, and local bodies 50% or less (Chapter VII, 22 (2) d).

This is important since it ensures that the decision making process has the input of all relevant stakeholders. Also unlike the Meghalaya Act, Central Act ensures proper participation of Hawkers in regulation of their Livelihood
How will the street vendors

and hawkers be identified?

The TVC has to conduct a survey every five years to assess the number of street vendors/hawkers doing business in the operating area (Chapter II, 3 (1)) and unless this is done and certificate of vending is provided (Chapter VII, 26 (1)) no street vendor should not be evicted or relocated under any circumstances (Chapter II, 3 (3)). This is done to ensure that without due process harassment of vendors is avoided.

How many hawkers can a town accommodate?

The survey undertaken by the TVC will also assess the holding capacity of the area (Chapter I, 2 (1) b), i.e., number of hawkers that can be accommodated in an area. The act specifies that any town/city can accommodate 2.5% of the total population as Hawkers (Chapter II, 3 (2));

Where can hawking and vending be done?

The TVC will also categorise various types of vending zones, viz., Restriction Free Vending Zone, Restricted Vending Zone and No Vending Zone (First Schedule 2 (c));

TVC will also identify natural markets (Chapter I, 2 (1) e) which cannot be declared as a No Vending zone under any circumstances (First Schedule 3, a) and heritage markets, more than 50 years old, from where street vendors cannot be relocated under any circumstances (Second Schedule, 2b (viii)).

This basically means that Hawkers cannot be totally kept away from commercial areas of Shillong.

How can an area be declared a 'No vending zone'?

The Act states that "till such time that the survey is done and a proper plan for street vending formulated, no area can be declared as No Vending Zone (First Schedule 3, a).

When can a hawkler/street vendor be evicted?

Till the time TVC has done the Survey to identify Hawkers, vending zones, categorizing markets and certificate of vending is provided to every eligible hawkler (Chapter VII, 26 (1)) no street vendor can be evicted or relocated under any circumstances (Chapter II, 3 (3)).

How should eviction be done?

The Act ensures that the eviction process is humane and just. In case there is to be eviction or relocation of any street vendor, the Act provides certain guidelines that are to be followed:

- No eviction or relocation unless 30 days' notice (Chapter IV, 18 (3)).
- Provide list/challan of items seized (Chapter IV, 19 (1)).
- Items to be returned within two days of claim after fine but same day of claim in case of perishable items (Chapter IV, 19 (3)).

How will the hawklers/stree vendors be relocated?

The Act ensures that relocation is not arbitrary and livelihood is protected. When relocation does take place, the Act specifies that it must again adhere to certain principles. Relocation should be avoided unless:

- there is an urgent need for land (Second Schedule, 2b (i)),
- vendors representatives should be involved in planning and implementation of the rehabilitation project (Second Schedule, 2b (ii)),
- relocation should improve the livelihood not bring it down (Second Schedule, 2b (iii)),
- new infrastructure development projects shall accommodate the displaced vendors (Second Schedule, 2b (iv)), and
- loss of assets should be compensated (Second Schedule, 2b (iv)).

So can hawklers/street vendors conduct their business?

Any street vendor who carries on his/her own business in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Act should not be stopped from exercising his/her right by any authority (Chapter VIII, 27). The Act ensures that law abiding, honest business people are not harassed for arbitrary reasons by invoking any unjust reasons.

(Contact email thma.urangli.juki@gmail.com)

TO THE EDITOR

Eat, drink, live hatred

Editor,
My daughter, working in Bangalore was subjected to verbal abuse which I want to narrate in this letter so that our loathsome tribal brethren learn from their mistakes. She joined a service based firm few months ago and was humiliated by her colleagues who wanted to know about the contributions of the northeast tribesmen to the national exchequer since they don't pay taxes. The northeastern region makes up only 8 percent of the total geographical area of the country and is surviving wholly on funds provided by the Union Government to the region. This money comes from the taxes paid by mainland Indians. Someone from her office even commented that the tribes of the northeast are "parasites" and it is high time that they pay income tax instead of "living off others". She was told that despite living off the mainlanders the tribes of the northeast deride and hate them in their region but cry foul when their own are at the receiving end in the rest of the country.
My daughter, who is a

taxpayer, thought of retorting but I persuaded her to face things calmly because running away is not the solution. So why do we tribals continue to bicker and spit venom on others even while those of us who live and work outside are made to suffer? Those who have not gone out of Meghalaya and the region must come out of their frog's-well and face reality. And what is this hatred against non-tribals all about? We hate them, then we hate our own Jaintia and Garo brethren, then we hate our own tribes on the basis of religious denomination and when it comes down to the domestic level we hate our family members too. Of late, some letters in these columns have been referring to non tribals as "dkhars" and some vested interests (looks political) have been crying foul over the allotment of stalls in MUDA. But we are also not happy even with our own tribal "dkhars" from Jaintia Hills whom we scorn for buying out the entire Shillong with their liquid coal cash. So where will we end up? Is our community and race all about hatred? And despite so much of hatred and the quest for ethnic superiority the reality is exactly otherwise. We tribals are

making a mockery of ourselves in the regional and national domain by our inherent hatred of the "other."

However, the positive side is what Sushit Choudhury had said in his letter "MUDA Affairs" (ST, Dec 1, 2016) that the present generation of young tribal boys and girls are active and do not foment communal hatred, are open-hearted and have a logical head on their shoulders as they mix with people from the rest of the country. I look forward to the day when more broad-minded youth lead the way in our society.

Yours etc,
A Lyngdoh
Shillong - 4

Public libraries

Editor,
A public library has manifold uses. David Morris, a renowned researcher, wrote a stirring piece in one of his articles stating that more than just books and computers, libraries are places where individuals gather to discuss, interact and imagine. Then Robert Putnam said, "People may go to a library mainly for

information but they also find each other. If I am not mistaken RR colony was a proud locality where a Public Library functioned up to the 1970's in the name of Vivekananda Smriti Grantagar. Individuals rendered free service and there was a moderate collection of books in the library. But due to lack of funds and other factors the library perished away leaving the book lovers of the locality disheartened and sad. Where have the books gone? The importance of a Library in community development is forgotten by everybody! Moreover, the locality does not have a proper 'SITTING CUM READING CENTRE' for elderly people. In our country, in nearly all localities there are such centres for senior citizens. Hence a sincere effort is expected in this regard from our appropriate bodies.

Yours etc.,
Anjan Kumar Das,
Shillong - 6

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

"A dream is a scripture, and many scriptures are nothing but dreams."

--- John Barrymore

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 113 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2016

Sharif-Trump Equation

PAKISTAN'S Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sprang a surprise by making an exception international call to the US President elect, Donald Trump Tower. It may have far-reaching consequences for South Asia. What remains to be seen is the aftermath. It is said that Hillary Clinton lost the race to the White House because of having a private email server. Donald Trump may have decided to quit his business but he appears to have a private phone which he uses as a private citizen for government to government communications. Though his election campaign was full of direct and hard hitting rhetoric, his conversation on his private phone may betray great imagination blended with a touch of mystery. Is the US President speaking on behalf of the US government? Or are the comments off the record? Only those he speaks to have his statements on record. For others, are these observations to be treated as off the record? Only the press wing in Islamabad may have got wise to what passed between Trump and Sharif. Was it a business call but if so, did it have a touch of show business?

Is it a fact that Trump who seemed anti-Islam has an intention to visit a fantastic country like Pakistan? The fraternal cordiality between Barack Obama and Narendra Modi seems to be past history. Now Trump and Nawaz Sharif seem to be old friends. "Sharif is a terrific guy" to Trump whose vocabulary is limited. And he has made it clear that Sharif is just a click away to cement a new relationship.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

1 killed, 34 wounded in Assam blast

A powerful bomb, planted by suspected Bodo extremists at a traffic signal post in Tinsukia exploded today killing one person and injuring 34, official reports said.

The explosion, in the major commercial town in Upper Assam, was the second such after Tuesday's blast in which 17 people were killed and 51 injured at Bongaigaon in Lower Assam. Police cordoned off the area soon after the explosion of the bomb, kept

in plastic bag and hung at the traffic signal post. The seriously injured were admitted to hospital.

Another official report said that a group of extremist attacked Batabari forest beat office in Nalbari district yesterday and snatched away two rifles from the home guards. Police recovered a handmade loaded revolver. The walls of the office were damaged in the firing a school teacher who was present in the office was injured.

The recent report of the annual of Global Carbon Budget, compiled by scientists from around the world, found that in 2015 the emissions of planet warming carbon dioxide stayed level at 36.3 billion tones (GtCO₂) and was projected to rise only slightly by 0.2 per cent in 2016. However, this was better compared to the annual growth of 2.3 per cent rate of emissions from 2004 to 2013. Though some scientists found this a healthy trend, with growth remaining strong in spite of controlled emissions, it has to be admitted that unless such emissions reduce, global warming will not come down.

Scientists are of the opinion that flat-line trends in global emission are encouraging but the report admitted that to achieve the global resolve to limit global warming to 20 C (3.60F) over pre-industrial levels, emissions must do more than level off. In fact, a decrease of 0.9 per cent per annum was needed to achieve this limit by 2030. The concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has continued to grow, the report warned, hitting a record level of 323GtCO₂ last year (2015) that looked to reach 25 GtCO₂ in 2016. It may also be mentioned here that the planet has already used more than two-thirds of the emissions quota to keep climate change below two degrees target.

As regards India, emission reduction will hinge on how quickly the country can expand its renewable energy programme, which includes a plan to install 100,000 MW of solar energy by 2022. But researchers expect the growth in emissions to persist and India's plans to double coal production by 2020.

The report does not present a rosy picture even after steps being taken by almost all countries, including US, China, the European Union, Japan, India, etc. to reduce emissions and

Alarm Over Emissions No rosy picture in sight

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

greenhouse gases. Meanwhile, a new study of the Grantham Research Institute of Climate Change and the London School of Economics released a recent report (on November 17) found that six G20 countries - Argentina, Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States - have not undertaken sufficient domestic efforts to match their pledged nationally determined to the Paris agreement.

Added to this is the fact that there are reports that the President elect of the US, Donald Trump, may come out of the Paris agreement as the conditionality may reduce jobs in his country, though this may not be quite easy.

Another report of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has found that 2016 is to be the hottest year documented. Phalodi village in Rajasthan set a new record with a temperature of 51.0 C on May 19, the report stated, while other places the temperature went even higher - 54.0 C in Mitribah (Kuwait), on July 21 and 53.90 C in Basra (Iran) and 53.0C in Delhora (Iran) on July 22. Thailand and many parts of Africa also experienced heat waves.

Scientists agree that while the rise in temperatures owed primarily to the emissions of greenhouse gases, El Nino helped in pushing the mercury even higher. Analyst said it was shocking that while the world faced a climate emergency, countries and humanitarian agencies had to cope with a funding gap of \$ 3.1 billion as they strove to meet the needs of the worst-affected communities. In fact, it is well-known that not much has been achieved in the realm of climate finance and the US may not come forward with the money in the coming years.

Considering all this, one is inclined to believe that the threat to the environment will aggravate in the coming years. In such a situation, it is the impoverished and economically weaker sections in the Third World countries that would be hard hit - whether it is floods or

droughts resulting in prices of food-grains, inundation of their settlements or village roads or heat wave resulting in deaths.

It may be mentioned here that droughts have been a big problem in India and in many other countries, specially in Africa. Meanwhile, water crisis has affected the western, some parts of northern India and the Prime Minister recently indicated a "permanent solution to drought", which is very much necessary at this juncture. But the crisis is expected to aggravate further as the World Bank indicated that an extreme wet monsoon has a chance of occurring only once in 100 years. Apart from all this, various types of pollution and water-borne diseases are increasing where again the poor are mostly affected.

However, the most important effect of increasing greenhouse gases would be on agriculture and food production and this would have a disastrous effect on South Asian countries, including India. Decreasing food availability along with water crisis - which is expected to manifest itself clearly in the next decade or even earlier with India becoming 'water stressed' - would lead to various types of health problems, including childhood stunting.

In this connection, one may refer here to a World Bank report, prepared by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Change Impact Research and Climate Analytics, where it was clearly stated that India would see a significant reduction in crop yields because of extreme heat. More than 60 per cent of the crop area is rain fed, making it highly vulnerable to climate-induced changes in precipitation patterns. It is estimated that by 2050s - or even earlier - with a temperature increase of 2.50C compared to pre-industrial levels, water for agricultural production in

the river basins would shrink further and may impact food adequacy for around 63 million people.

Meanwhile, the just concluded Marrakech summit has come out with an action proclamation (MAP) urging all countries for strengthening cooperation among nations to close the gap between current emission trajectory and the pathway needed to keep the average temperature rise within 2 degrees Celsius by 2100 from pre-industrial levels. Apart from this, a clear roadmap was drawn out for measuring and accounting emission reduction in all countries. It is heartening to hear that the rules will also have a mechanism to mobilize climate finance to help developing countries in taking adaptation measures.

At this point whatever may be said, action of respective governments lie on the intentions of their political leaders and the pressure they exert to curb emissions. Regarding realisation of the \$ 100 billion mobilization goal, which has been reiterated in MAP, the prospects of such money coming to the developing countries appears somewhat remote in spite of encouraging declarations.

The situation is thus quite grim judged from all angles. Though presently environment has received the maximum hype all over the world with innumerable research being conducted and conferences being held, the effect of all such actions has been not been quite encouraging. As is generally agreed, the onus would obviously be on the developed world which with a mere 20 per cent of the world's population accounts for over 50 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions.

The debate over environment and development will continue to bother respective governments, especially those who have high levels of industrialisation, but it goes without saying that urgent action is called for in keeping with their national pledges.---INFA

Embattled Farmers India's bitter harvest

By Moin Qazi

Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals, and happiness.--- Thomas Jefferson

Jefferson was one of civilizations wisest men, yet here he got it totally wrong. India's economy may be soaring, but agriculture remains its Achilles' heel, the source of livelihood for hundreds of millions of people but a fraction of the nation's total economy and a symbol of its abiding difficulties. In what some see as an ominous trend, food production, once India's great pride, has failed to keep pace with the nation's population growth in the last decade.

The cries of Indian farmers can hardly be neglected by the leaders of a country where two-thirds of the people still live in the countryside and are heading to cities in droves to escape the wrath at their farms. The demonetisation of Rs 500 and 100 rupees has regrettably added to their woes and the Government at best asks them to have patience. When India became independent, the contribution of agriculture to the economy was 50 per cent; now, it is less than 14 per cent. Employment in the agro sector was to the extent of 88 per cent; now, it is 66 per cent. Rural wages have fallen to their lowest in a decade.

Field stories from across semi-arid rural India reflect a now-recurring narrative of an agrarian crisis replete with crop failure, people moving out of farming, and increasing systemic vulnerability to climatic and non-climatic risks. Only farmers with irrigation infrastructure - access to wells, an engine to pump water, and pipes to channel it - can weather dry spells within the monsoon. No matter how much money the State invests, farming in India has bleak prospects.

To save themselves from farming, the rural young migrate to cities to perform menial tasks and live in conditions that are worse than in many prisons in the West. India is urbanising rapidly as young people from the countryside flock to cities in search of jobs and economic opportunities. The total population of farmers has declined by 7.7 million between 2001 and 2011 on account of heavy migration.

Parched fields, burned crops and wasted cattle have helped drive up the number of suicides by distressed farmers unable to repay their loans. Tens of thousands have left their farms in search of menial jobs, with many joining the ranks of the unemployed poor in the cities. Some estimates suggest that 30 Indians move from a rural to an urban area every minute. This is sobering stuff.

Worse still, women have suffered heavily in the process. Female farmers are particularly vulnerable, to agricultural decline. There has been an increase of 38% and 13% from 2001, respectively, in women as main and marginal agricultural labourers from being cultivators. The total number of female farmers has declined 14% from 2001 (41.9 million) to 2011 (36 million). This includes a 10% decline in the number of main cultivators. There has also been a 20% decline in the number of marginal female cultivators.

The lot of the embattled poor Indian farmer keeps deteriorating with the passage of time. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) during the last decade the bloated debt of Indian agricultural households has increased almost 400 per cent while their undersized monthly income plummeted by 300 per cent. Even the number of heavily indebted households steeply

increased during this period.

Most farmers have become victims of the endemic phenomenon known to economists as the cycle of poverty-that unavoidable process of descending along the social ladder by which the farmer became a sharecropper, then a peasant without land, then an agricultural labourer, then is eventually forced into exile. It was no use dreaming of climbing the rung in the reverse direction.

If it is true that coal does not change its colour when washed, it is equally true that poverty painted in even the most dazzling colours remains forever poverty.

A survey commissioned by NABARD and undertaken by Punjab Agriculture University has confirmed that 94% of the government subsidies are being availed by big and medium farmers, leaving the smaller farmers for whom the subsidies are actually meant sidelined. The survey has also indicated that the subsidies are not being given based on needs, but on political considerations. It has brought out startling facts that nearly 88% of farmers in the State are under debt and among the smaller farmers the percentage is far higher at 90%. Thus more, has smaller output and greater inputs making farming unviable for him. The marginalised and smaller farmers have six times higher debt than big farmers in Punjab.

Humans have an innate drive to work the land and produce food for their families and communities. Farmers take significant risks to satisfy that drive, and if they are unsuccessful, they develop a deep sense of failure. Farmers are motivated to hang on to land at almost all cost. When he was young he could walk out to his fields any time during the planting season "and your feet would sink into" the moist earth. "The soil was slippery and oily and it would stick to your legs and feet and you would have to scrape it off." Now, he said, picking up a clump of hard earth that has to be ducked with a tiny shovel, the soil is like a stone - it is not living anymore.

In fact, India has the second largest agricultural land in the world. As India Brand Equity Foundation, a trust established by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry points out: "At 157.35 million hectares, India holds the second largest agricultural land globally." Only, the United States has more agricultural land than India. What this means is that India has enough land dedicated to agriculture and even if some of it is taken away for other purposes there will still be enough land left for agriculture. Nevertheless, there are bigger problems when it comes to Indian agriculture.

India's first Prime Minister and the greatest visionary Jawaharlal Nehru had said in 1947, "Everything can wait, but not agriculture." Indeed the first Five Year Plan focused on agriculture. Now, after 70 years, things are not what was dreamt by him. The benefits of addressing the problem were understood long ago. An old Indian quotation poetically illustrates: "Tireless farmers, learned men and honest traders constitute a country. Wealth, large and enviable, and produce free of pests make up a country. The hallmark of an ideal land is where people voluntarily pay all taxes." India needs an economic movement that starts in villages, not one that bypasses them.

Short on empathy and a sense of responsibility, our leaders see even grave crises only through the lens of their own privilege.--- INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Suggestions for traffic movement in Shillong

Editor, I had earlier made some suggestions as regards traffic movement in Shillong particularly in Laitumkrah area which has not been taken note of. As mentioned in the letter speed limit of vehicles may be restricted, particularly in Laitumkrah area since there are educational institutions and hospitals located on both sides of the road.

Movement of heavy vehicles should not be allowed through narrow roads, although the road is one-way from Fire Brigade to Nongrim Hills junction towards Jingkieng between 7.00 am to 7.00 pm. This narrow road is used mainly as a shortcut by most pedestrians/small vehicles and sometimes even by heavy vehicles moving towards the same destination. It is an important issue because during working hours many students and office goers follow this route and also in the evening hours to reach their homes faster. If the heavy vehicles, particularly, are not restricted, it is likely that accidents may occur since heavy vehicles come from behind and the pedestrians have to take shelter against the nearby wall for their safety.

Therefore, constructing speed breakers of low height at the start of Fire Brigade to Nongrim Hills - junction-to Jyngkieng- may perhaps be helpful in curbing the problem, at least to some extent.

Zebra Crossings seen earlier in some parts of Shillong have faded away, but this marking is helpful for pedestrians to know where exactly to cross the road, as seen in other cities. I think there used to be a Zebra Crossing between DC's Office and Meghalaya High Court/GPO. There may be other routes also where it is necessary to have Zebra Crossings. Can the Traffic Branch kindly identify these routes?

Another important point to note is that Police Bazar, the heart of Shillong, does not have a Zebra Crossing. There are no systematic ways to cross the road which is choc-a-bloc with vehicles and pedestrians. Vehicles pass through the route at snail pace and during the gap, pedestrians take advantage to cross the road, although there is a traffic island in the centre of the road. This system of crossing the road has continued for many years. Why has not some system been evolved to for easier crossing?

As there is no scope for extension of road, construction of alternative roads and no infrastructure in sight, we need to improve the existing roads so that movement is not obstructed.

If movement is slowed we will lag behind in every sphere and, ultimately we may miss the bus. Sincerity and promptness of traffic personnel is well appreciated despite their limited resources, but there is still some scope of tackling the situation for easy flow of traffic in Shillong.

Yours etc.,
L Deb
Shillong-3

End all forms of slavery!

Editor, December 2 is indeed the lifeblood of democracy. The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery is celebrated every year on this very day. On being asked about the definition of democracy, Abraham Lincoln had said, "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy." This is the best explanation of why democracy can survive only after the abolition of slavery. It is an irony that India being the largest democracy of the world has the highest number of slaves. According to Global Slavery Index 2016 released by the Australia based human rights group, 'Walk Free Foundation,'

India has the highest absolute numbers of people trapped in slavery with 18.35 million slaves. It was 14.3 million in the last report in 2014. Indeed, 2 million more people have been enslaved during the last two years.

Recently, the Supreme Court of India has rightly termed the denial of the principle of equal pay for equal work as "exploitative enslavement". It is horrifying to see construction workers doing life-threatening jobs without having minimum safety protection and insurance coverage. Shop assistants in some malls are made to work more than eight hours a day. They are being forced to hand over their mobile phones during working hours. Being totally disconnected, they cannot be with their families in a sudden difficult situation. Sometimes, they are even denied a visit to the toilet.

When will they be allowed to enjoy the 'Fundamental Right against Exploitation' as enshrined in Article 23 of the Constitution of India? Unfortunately, there are some among us who give tacit support to slavery and child labour. They should remember what Lincoln had said, "Whenever I hear any one arguing for slavery I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally".

We should all take the pledge of not visiting those houses and shops where the working class is getting inhuman and degrading

treatment or where child labour is employed. After all, it is we who can change the world. The government must stop the juggernaut of slavery from trampling the democratic flowers of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Women and HIV-AIDS

Editor, 1st December is observed World AIDS Day - an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV. AIDS is a common unity problem that demands a community response. An HIV infected person can live a healthy social life but he has the social obligation of not spreading the disease. I would like to point out that AIDS affects women not only as individuals who are HIV infected but also in their multiple roles in society and the family, as health care providers, educators, wives, mothers and income providers. It is also clear that the impact of HIV-related diseases among women will, if no action is taken, inevitably worsen the situation everywhere, particularly in the poorer communities.

According to Government regulations on the prevention of infectious disease, a doctor who has discovered that his patient

is carrying HIV is required to try to obtain information on who infected him and what other persons the patient might have infected. No doubt, the WHO has issued guidelines on medical procedures to be followed in handling HIV infected people but as women will have to take upon themselves a large proportion of caring for HIV-infected persons and people with AIDS, it is imperative that they are provided with information, skills, knowledge and resources in order for their roles as providers of care to be less taxing, more humane and more effective.

Time has now come when victims need to be provided with information about the emotional and physical process of HIV diseases or AIDS, the ways in which HIV is transmitted. Educational materials must also be printed to accommodate differences in language, culture and education. The family members should also show willingness to care for a person with AIDS. The Government should take care to provide counseling, health education, treatment of infected persons, organising reporting of cases and establishment of surveillance centres. The active support of citizens, voluntary organizations and society is critical.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Via email

Time to give them level playing field

By Bidasiewdor L. Mawnai

The United Nations International Day for Persons with Disability is observed on December 3 every year since 1992. The theme for this year is "Achieving 17 goals for the future we want."

The theme notes the recent adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the role of these goals in building a more inclusive and equitable world for persons with disabilities. The goals are to address all three dimensions of sustainable development – environment, economic and social. Disability is referenced in parts related to education, growth and employment, inequality and accessibility of human settlements.

Who are persons with disabilities? The United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 1) states: 'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.

The Preamble of the Convention further states that 'Disability is an evolving concept, and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.

Sometimes impairment and handicap are used interchangeably, but these terms have different meanings. To promote appropriate use of these terms, in 1980 the World Health Organisation established the international classification of impairment, disability and handicap, which define these concepts: Impairment — refers to the



Kalki Koechlin played a teenager with cerebral palsy in the film *Margarita with a Straw*

loss or abnormality of psychological, physical or anatomical structure or function at the system or organ level that may or may not be permanent and that may or may not result in disability.

Disability — refers to an individual limitation or restriction of an activity as the result of impairment. Handicap — refers to the disadvantage to the individual resulting from an impairment or disability that presents a barrier to fulfilling a role or reaching a goal.

Throughout centuries, persons with disabilities have been marginalised and stigmatised in almost all societies. Children with disabilities are one of the most marginalised and excluded groups, experiencing widespread violations of their rights. Discrimination arises not as a result of the intrinsic nature of children's disability, but rather, as a consequence of

lack of understanding and knowledge of its causes and implications, fear of difference, fear of contagion or contamination, or negative religious or cultural views of disability. It is further compounded by poverty, social isolation, lack of services and support, and a hostile and inaccessible environment.

Disability results from an interaction between a non-inclusive society and individuals. People with disabilities face many barriers every day — from Physical, Social and Attitudinal barriers, barriers in education, low employment rate of people with disabilities and individual adjustment. Person using a wheelchair might have difficulties gaining employment not because of the wheelchair, but because there are environmental barriers

such as inaccessible buses or staircases which impede access. Person with extreme near-sightedness who does not have access to corrective lenses may not be able to perform daily tasks. This same person with prescription eyeglasses would be able to perform all tasks without problems. A person may have a physical, sensory or learning impairment, but it is often other people's attitudes and a lack of accessibility of buildings, transport and information that disables people.

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full participation) Act 1995 was enacted in 1995 with the aims to create a barrier-free environment and to make a special provision of the integration of persons with disabilities into the social mainstream by providing them equal rights and opportunities. The objective of the Act also

includes the responsibility of the state towards the prevention of disabilities, protection of rights, provisions of medical care, education, training, employment and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. Section 45 of the Act has mentioned the installation of auditory signals in public roads for the benefit of persons with visual impairment, kerbs slopes to be made in the pavement for easy access of wheelchair users, engraving on the surface of zebra crossing for the blind or persons of low vision and devising appropriate symbols of disability.

Though we have seen that not enough is being done on the part of the state governments in removing the physical barriers but we are hopeful that some initiatives will be taken in helping them 'achieve the 17 goals for the future we want'. Yet, often, the most difficult



barriers to overcome are the attitudes with which people with disabilities are regarded. It is often the social and attitudinal barriers and 'disability labels' they are facing everyday that hinders their effective participation in society. Too often, children with disabilities are defined and judged by what they lack rather than what they have.

The most pervasive negative attitude is focusing on a person's disability rather than on an individual's abilities. Even more damaging is the attitude — that society doesn't expect people with disabilities to accomplish such everyday things as going to work, socialising, participating in recreational activities and when people with disabilities do, they are viewed as courageous. Their exclusion and invisibility serves to render them uniquely vulnerable, denying them respect, even their right to life itself.

"Attitudinal barriers" are ways of thinking or feeling resulting in behaviour that limit the potential of people with disabilities to be independent individuals. It is the way of seeing the

person only in terms of his/her disability, not recognising the whole person and assuming that everything in his/her life — emotions, relationships, work and choices — revolves around the disability. This attitude impacts people's lives leading to under or unemployment and social isolation. Attitudinal barriers often lead to illegal discrimination cannot be overcome simply through laws.

Therefore it is our attitude towards them that can either lift them up or make them feel they are different. I remember one of my students when he said, "Whenever people look at me with pity, I feel as if I'm the only person with disabilities. They only see my disabilities in me. But I am hopeful that one day if not in the present world, I will be able to walk and run like the other children". They don't need our pity or our indifference towards them. It is our attitude towards them that matters. Do we prefer to look at them as 'glass half full' or 'half empty'?

"The longer I live, the more I understand the impact of attitude on life. Attitude is more than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures,

than success, than what other people say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skills. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for a day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way, we cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is to play on the one string we have and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% of what happens to me and 90% of how I react to it.

"And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitude." (Charles R Swindoll) — So it all depends on how we look at them. We are in charge of our attitude towards them and it is the positive attitude that some of the persons with disabilities have that keeps them moving and overcoming the barriers they are facing every day. On this International Day for Person with Disability, let us ponder what is the kind of attitude we have towards them? What can we do to build up the positive attitude in the children with disabilities that can lead to full and effective participation and inclusion in the society? They also have a life to live, a dream to develop and a thirst to do something wonderful. Let's look at what they can do rather than on looking on what they cannot. They have their own abilities too. They just need someone to help discern what is best in them; they need a helping hand and someone to lean on and someone to provide them with lots of opportunity to learn. Let us join a helping hand in removing the barriers they are facing and include them in the mainstream society.

(The author is a teacher at Mairang Vidyajyoti Inclusive School)

Adventure Arunachal on radar

By Bappaditya Chatterjee

Encouraged by a 50 percent growth in tourist arrivals over the past few years, Arunachal Pradesh, in the remote northeast of India, is seeking to promote itself as an adventure tourism hotspot to draw the young and the daring.

The state, abutting China, is already known for its natural beauty — picturesque hills and valleys, landscapes snowed white in winter, famous monasteries, unexplored passes and tranquil, high-altitude lakes — registered about five percent growth in tourist footfall in 2015. What was missing was adventure hotspots.

"With the focus on adventure tourism and showcasing exotic tourist spots, the state has been organising many theme-based events like Tawang festival, Ziro festival of music, Arunachal spring carnival, adventure at Mechuka as also the Kameng river festival. The objective is to create a buzz among local youth and tourists outside the state," tourism department Director K. Lekhi said.

A project has been sanctioned under the Swadesh Darshan scheme for integrated development of new adventure tourism with central assistance of around Rs 97 crore. According to tourism department data, arrivals in 2015 stood at 3,57,933 as against 3,41,178 in 2014. In the last decade, arrivals jumped manifold from 3,255 in 2000 to 2,31,252 in 2010. Between 2011 and 2015, inflows surged by 50 percent from 2,37,980 in 2011.

Being a sensitive state, foreign tourists visiting in groups of two or more require the Protected Area



SURPRISES AHEAD: The land of dawn-lit mountains is endowed with green forests covering over 80 percent of its 83,743 sqkm area, besides rivers like the Kameng, Subansiri, Siang and Tirap

Permit for a period of 30 days. Domestic tourists also require an Inner Line Permit. "We have eased the procedures for providing permits and one can carry out the process from Delhi, Kolkata and Guwahati," Lekhi said.

"Over the years, the number of tourist arrivals has been increasing. Theme-based festivals and events around the year helped to achieve sustained growth," Arunachal Pradesh Tourist Information Officer Takom Kena said.

The land of dawn-lit mountains is endowed with green forests covering over 80 percent of its 83,743 sqkm area, besides rivers like the Kameng, Subansiri, Siang and Tirap. Such resources make Arunachal an ideal place for adventure sports like trekking, angling, boating and rafting.

Gauging the potential for adventure sports, the Centre has set up the

country's first adventure sports institute — the National Institute for Mountaineering and Allied Sports (NIMAS) — at Dirang in West Kameng district to provide structured training in mountaineering as well as aero and aqua sports.

"Arunachal is the most suitable place for conducting air, water and land-based adventure sports. For example, Mechuka is best for paragliding and trekking, and Tawang for parasailing and river rafting. Apart from Mechuka, we are giving a thrust in Anini, Rupa and Tawang to adventure tourism," state Directorate of Youth Affairs' Adventure Cell in-charge K. Romeo Meetei said.

With a thin population density of 17 persons per sqkm, the state is trying to provide adequate

employment opportunities through adventure tourism, which is currently conducted only during the festival season.

"The state is trying to train local youths so that they can organise adventure sports and serve the tourists round the year. It will create employment opportunities for local youths. At present, facilitators are being brought from outside to conduct such events," Meetei said on the sidelines of the 4th edition of Adventure@Mechuka festival.

However, communication and transportation bottlenecks have been a major impediment in attracting more tourists. "At present, the condition of roads is not that good. Maintenance is by the Border Roads Organisation. The state government does not have much say. A trans-Arunachal road project has been taken up and once this fructifies, the problem will ease out to a large extent,"

Lekhi said.

Apart from improved road connectivity, tourist arrivals are expected to increase with better rail and air connectivity. Currently, Naharlagun, 15 km from Itanagar, is linked to New Delhi via Guwahati by an air-conditioned superfast express. There are also plans to connect Pasighat in East Siang district and Bhalukpong in West Kameng by rail. This is in the domain of the Railway Ministry, Lekhi said.

"The state government has approached the Centre to open up the advanced landing ground (ALG) at Mechuka (29km from the Sino-Indian border) for civilian purposes to strengthen connectivity in the Aalo-Mechuka circuit in West Kameng district. The landing ground is currently used only by the Indian Air Force," Mechuka's MLA and Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism P.D. Sona said. (IANS)

Face the world with confidence

By Ranjan K Baruah

International relations or international Affairs, depending on academic institution, is either a field of political science, an interdisciplinary academic field similar to global studies, or an entirely independent academic discipline in which students take a variety of internationally focused courses in social science and humanities disciplines. It is the study of an international system composed of territorial states which acknowledge no superior authority over matters which they consider of vital interest.

It studies the functioning of the international system — the forces, factors and interests, the customs, rules, norms, institutions and organisations from which the theory and history of its development are formed. Some of the specialised subjects or chapters when it comes to international relations includes American Studies, Latin American Studies, West European Studies, Canadian Studies, Diplomatic Studies, International Legal Studies, International trade and Development, Chinese Studies, Japanese and Korean Studies, International Politics, International Organizations, Disarmament Studies, South Asia

or South East Asian countries.

We are more aware of Europe or United States than Myanmar. We have immediate neighbours like Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, China and these bring opportunities to know about these countries and its international relations.

Students studying political science in graduation may prepare well to take this subject in masters. It is important to know about international events and happenings. Now a day's most events have youth participation and as students we must try to participate in global events which are held related to international relations.

We may choose to become expert on certain areas and we can explore more on those topics and issues.

The problem of our students is that most of them are not aware of many options. One must use internet effectively to collect information and stay ahead of peers. One may start learning foreign language for more advantage.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 9864055558 for any career related queries)



'The madness in me & Sujoy still the same'

While promoting Kahaani 2, actress Vidya Balan and director Sujoy Ghosh were at their vivacious, candid best, pulling each other's legs while talking about the film. Any signs of the supposed cold war between the two once upon a time are absolutely put to rest as the director tries to teach his actor snatches of Bengali nursery rhymes and she mocks him with them. Excerpts from a conversation with Tanushree Sen in Kolkata:

Only a few days are left before the release of Kahaani 2. How does that make you feel?

Vidya Balan: Wow. You just made us realise that (laughs).

Sujoy Ghosh: Bhoj pawachish keno re? (Why are you scaring us?)

VB: But I think it's a good feeling, a lot of excitement in the people, and in us of course. Everyone who's seen the trailer is waiting for December 2, and the thing is that they've all liked the trailer, and they're trying to figure it all out.

How are the promotions going? What has been the feedback so far?

VB: I'm thoroughly enjoying them. Unlike Kahaani, this time Sujoy and I are promoting equally, and I realised that he is not as boring as I thought and can be quite fun. Even with Arjun, it's been great fun. I like promotions to be a fun thing you know. And so far, the best feedback has been that people have been trying to come with their own little theories and their own 'kahaanis' of the trailer and they are all trying to figure it out. That is really exciting.

SG: You do promotions before a film, but after a film, you never find out how the film did. But now, during the



promotions, we are getting to find out what they thought of Kahaani, which is really nice for me. It is the greatest feeling on earth, when people actually tell you what they thought of the film, as they never got a chance to say it before.

So, are these expectations, this pressure more because of the success that Kahaani was? Is it because somewhere there is a need to live up to the first film?

VB: So, there was pressure, until about the trailer released, people kept wondering or asking "Is it gonna be as good?" But after the trailer, honestly, people have stopped asking questions. They know that it's a completely different story and they are trying to do their own

maths. That's taken a certain pressure off, and somewhere, they've bought into the plot of Kahaani 2. So that way, it's like the first step has been achieved. But I have to tell you, even before the trailer, I was not nervous. He (Sujoy) was, and I guess he would be, because if it's my baby, he is that much more when it comes to calling it a creation.

SG: Even when we started the film, I think one of the pressure points was to find the right story. But like we told people, we never set out to make the film that would be better than Kahaani. We wanted to make a film which we believe in, a story which we really wanted to tell, and that was the basic intention. It was the same intention which we had for Kahaani. Kahaani was never made to create history, or some iconic character. It was

just for making a film.

VB: And also, if we didn't rid ourselves of the pressure before we started Kahaani 2, we would have never been able to tell the story at all. If we had to constantly compare shots and everything, it would have been impossible. Because just as no two days are the same, these two films are definitely not the same.

But having said that, there will be a section of critics who will compare the two films, the characters, shots etc. Do you think that's fair or is it just inevitable?

VB: It's completely natural. It's human tendency to compare, so that's okay. But we're very sure of what we've put out.

SG: It's like a restaurant. Each restaurant has its own



STORIES THEY TELL TOGETHER: (From left) Vidya Balan and Sujoy Ghosh and a still from Kahaani

group of stalwart followers, no matter how good or bad the food is.

VB: Kya baat hai, what an analogy... waah. Kisi ko vada pao acha lagta hai, toh kisi ko biryani. (Wow, what an analogy. If someone likes vada pao, someone likes biryani.)

What took four years for Kahaani 2 to happen?

VB: Why the weight? Why have you put on so much weight? (Laughs)

SG: You saw how much I ate just now? No seriously, I don't know. I think just trying to find the right story, and maybe the excitement. I had to find something that would excite us. And that just ended up taking four years.

Was Vidya always your first choice?

SG: Yes, she was.

What was it like working with Arjun Rampal for the first time?

VB: I enjoyed working with Arjun. He's so easy. He laughs a lot, very easily, and he's exactly like that on set. And I'm like that too, I like to get along with people on set, and I laugh a lot too, so

finally I found someone who's exactly like me. And as an actor, he's wonderful. He's doing a variety of roles, and this will just add to that.

SG: And if I want to put it on record, if Vidya didn't talk or laugh so much on set, we could have finished the movie earlier. (Both laugh). No seriously, Arjun is a tremendous actor and even when we were looking to cast someone for his role, he was the first one who came to mind. And he has no airs about himself and he is a great person and a great actor.

How has the equation between you two changed in these four years?

VB: I'm much wiser, much more composed, and I handle myself with maturity and wisdom. (Quoting for him) and I don't get upset at all.

SG: And I don't get upset at all.

VB: And I must tell you one thing about Sujoy, he's reverse age. (Both burst out laughing).

What is the one thing that you like and hate about each other?

VB: I really admire the writer and director that he is, because I really think he borrows from life. And it's really interesting as in whatever he makes. Even the short film called *Ahalya* that released some time back, it has space, it has energy and I love it. I'm someone that is very impatient and restless and his films are very realistic and maybe even raw. But many a time films lack energy and space, and his films combine both beautifully so it's very potent and alive, and there's this palpable energy and I love that. What do I not like about him? The rest of it (laughs).

SG: I like the fact that she is a very good human being, and that is very important in being good at whatever you do in life.

It's been 11 years since Parineeta. What has changed? Do you treat success differently?
VB: What remains unchanged is my hunger, my passion for what I do. A lot else has changed. I don't treat success differently; I value both my success and my failures

as much.

SG: But I think our quota of experiences has changed. **VB:** Yeah, I was just going to say that my age and my marital status have definitely changed and the fact that our films are crash courses in human behaviour, because as an actor, I'm dealing with another person's life, and therefore living two parallel lives. And then you're meeting so many people. You get to understand people that much better, so your experience is far more deep and intense. And I am an intense person.

You've always done films that are very woman-centric. Was that a conscious decision?

VB: I think I'm at the centre of my universe, and I am a woman, so I'm automatically geared towards women-centric films and women-centric films gear towards me. And I'm getting such exciting, varied parts to play and such compelling stories, I don't feel the need to stray away from them, honestly. So it's not a conscious decision, but I'm just very happy with the kind of films that I'm doing. (IBNS-TWF)

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, December 4, 2016

Moon sextile Sun on your solar return chart indicates a good year. You have put in a lot in your career and it is ready to move on to the next level. Not only will your efforts pay off but luck too favours you so be on the lookout for opportunities taking you closer to your goals. Financially you can explore long term savings strategies. Investments in assets are also on the anvil in this year. By and large it is a peaceful and harmonious time at home. It's a good time to rebuild relationships. A long term romantic relationship can be initiated. Travels will prove very useful. 'This week for you'

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

The planetary configuration this week indicates that your efforts, confidence and courage brings success in monetary gains and your energy increases for projects at work. Your job environment is teeming with activity. You take small yet sure steps towards your financial goals. Domestic relationships and the home environment tend to be harmonious and peaceful. Children may need more discipline than they previously did. You may find your children at an age that requires more attention and or structure. There are some contentious issues that are laid to rest as you tackle them and take a bold stand.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

Some of you may have to make some critical decisions due to situations in your life that force you to make definitive choices; they could even be between career and family goals. Some of you may be promoted or your career will take a new direction. The challenge is to find a healthy balance-to improve home life, while at the same time tending to your career needs. Romantic and personal relations would be more practical than fun. For some, a romantic relationship stabilizes and becomes more serious as you look at it with a long term perspective. Some of you will meet a new romantic interest who is perhaps more younger and energetic as compared to you. Some changes in your social circle have been occurring of late, and you meet new and unusual people.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

New friendships are likely to emerge during this time: supportive and easygoing ones. Happiness and fulfillment through the expansion of your mind, widening your social circle, travel, and connections to people of a different cultural background than you are indicated. Your position of power and authority is maintained despite many changes all around. Do not allow personal feelings to influence professional decisions. An opportunity or investment to make quick gains is on the cards but analyze data at hand before you invest. Energy is high and things happen swiftly and decisively.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

You would be blessed with good health, love in relationships and harmony at the work place. You give and receive affection and love from friends and relatives. You connect with old friends and business associates. Being open and receptive, you attract opportunities which hitherto seemed out of reach. You desire to learn and improve on your practical skills. Realistic levels of optimism and confidence are with you that enable you to quicken the pace at your workplace. Tension could run high and reach an emotional peak. Do not get carried away without first getting the facts. Yoga and walking would prove to be beneficial.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

Your social life is likely to increase and bring you in contact with more influential, powerful people who could prove to be helpful as they extend a helping hand. Matters related to universities, higher education, organized religion, publishing, legal affairs, and foreign interests proceed smoothly. This is an excellent time to seek advanced training or to further your education. Happiness and fulfillment through close friendships and relationships is indicated. Your idealistic nature is stimulated, and you are likely to aim for a sense of belonging through connection to something larger than yourself.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

The planetary combination this week tends to change your outlook on life, perhaps stimulated by travel. Some changes in your social circle have been occurring and this brings about



a new awareness. You are more determined to achieve your personal goals, and are more strategic in the manner you go about doing so. New responsibilities are likely to present themselves and you would take them more seriously. New projects excite you but remember that bringing them to a completion is just as important. A little attention on fitness and health related programs would be helpful.

Libra : (September 23 - October 23)

This phase brings money matters come into focus for you. You would adopt a realistic approach to business and finance. Career and vocational issues may benefit from the increased clarity you possess. Much of your energy will be applied to vocational achievement and professional activities. The desire for some form of recognition and financial success is more intense. Being part of a community or circle of friends and building your social network is important to you at this time. You look to networking to leverage your contacts. You may be quick to anger and could antagonize someone whom you want to win over.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

This phase is good for money, status and enhancing your standing this week. Your entire focus shifts in this direction. You take on new responsibilities, but enjoy the challenges it presents. Your belief systems and personal philosophies are especially important to you, but do not often coincide with your methods. This dichotomy will inculcate new attitudes towards finances, and social relationships before you strike a balance. It is an excellent time for travel, higher education and communications. The family is supportive and helps you look at the larger picture.

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)

You may feel the need to be appreciated by family members and the need for togetherness with others this week. Events are such that you move towards a more objective approach towards your life and you cultivate true friendships. It is a time when you need to let go of things that no longer serve their purpose, and hold on to things that have a future. You would express your sympathetic and compassionate side. Others might find you less sociable, as you are busier than ever and you focus on your activities and your needs. You would stand alone, take action and start afresh during this week.

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)

You would be able to express a greater level of sensitivity and sensibility in personal and professional relations this week. You encounter people who are very considerate and understanding and are also likely to form relationships with people based on a deep level of mutual appreciation and understanding for each other. You are in touch with your more sensitive and spiritual qualities. You have to maintain a positive attitude and face life in a positive way. Communications from overseas are hopeful and exciting as business opportunities are extended to you. Financial transactions and professional projects go ahead smoothly with goodwill and profit this week.

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)

You feel on top of things in domestic issues and spend quality time with people you care about and in activities that are rejuvenating. You tend to be traditional and restrictive in family matters and may have to face opposition from younger ones. It is time to expand your social circle and to make more contact with groups and friends. Your unselfishness and willingness to listen will help boost your magnetic appeal. Your professional skills, wisdom and craft are appreciated and fresh opportunities for expansion are made available to you. Overseas visitors and news are positive and inspiring. Personal relationships gain a romantic and exciting quality. You need to tackle sensitive subjects and difficult people and get your point across.

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)

Business projects and associations are opening up and widening your horizons so you need to think expansively this week. Your financial situation looks promising if you manage it well on your own rather than place trust upon others. You are generous with friends, and loving in family situations. You come across as especially smooth and your good nature is bound to attract some attention. A business venture could be fruitful if you are willing to lend it some energy. You are involved in multiple tools of creativity that you possess. A gentle and softer approach can resolve an old conflict this week.

Chew on the hard facts of food dyes

By Maneka Sanjay Gandhi

Since the colour of food influences consumers, many food manufacturers use dyes in food ranging from meat, candies to wine.



The aim is to simulate a colour that is perceived by the consumer as natural, such as adding red to canned cherries, which would otherwise be beige. Food companies use more than 15 million pounds of artificial dyes each year.

How did this begin? In the early 1900s, as the industrial age got underway, workers became dependent on low-cost factory produced food. Food producers used the cheapest ingredients and adulterants and then, to hide this, they "restored" the colour.

Red lead was used to colour cheese and confection-

ery. Copper arsenite was used to colour used tea leaves for resale. The bulk of chemically synthesised colours were derived from aniline, a toxic petroleum product and coal tar. Manufacturers phased out natural dyes for economic reasons: chemically synthesised colours were easier and cheaper to produce. Their use spread from paint, plastic and clothing to food.

Processed meat, fish and sauce contained Armenian bole, red lead or sulphuret of mercury. Curry contained lead and mercury, pickles, bottled fruit and vegetables had copper, candies had a number of poisonous pigments and green tea had Prussian blue pigment mixed in it. Dyes entered all sorts of popular foods and drink. Many people died.

Gradually food dye regulations came, with each country developing their own legislation regulating the use of dangerous min-

erals, like arsenic, copper, chromium, lead, mercury and zinc, which were frequently used as colorants.

In 1962, the WHO and FAO created an international commission, the Codex Alimentarius, to work out the application of food additives.

However, this is not legally binding till today. In the US, the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 reduced the permitted list of synthetic colours from 700 down to seven. (The most commonly used dyes are Red 40, Yellow 5 and Yellow 6, which make up more than 90 percent of the market. These dyes are created synthetically by burning coal tar or are petroleum byproducts like tartrazine and erythrosine.)

Regulations differ from country to country even now. For instance Yellow, which is tartrazine (used in soft drinks, energy drinks, cake mixes, salty snacks, cereals, packaged soups,

and has been linked to asthma, allergies and behavioural changes, is banned in some countries and allowed in others. Orange B is banned all over the world but is still used in the US for hot dog and sausage casings.

Dyes used in meat, milk and candies, like Quinoline Yellow, Carmoisine, Ponceau 4R, Patent Blue V and Green S are not allowed in the US and the UK. Erithrosine, which was recognised as a thyroid carcinogen and is banned in cosmetics, is still used for sausages. Sunset Yellow, which causes adrenal tumours in animals and hypersensitive reactions, is still used in meats and gelatine desserts.

In all processed meats, fish, poultry, milk and eggs, dyes are used to mask quality failure and hygienic shortcomings. For instance, wild salmon has a distinctive pink colour that comes from the krill it eats in the oceans.

(To be continued)

ISN'T IT IRONIC?

himself out and switched off the light.

But neither of them take the top spot from possibly the most ironic case ever, one I followed closely in Hong Kong some years ago. A scary businessman was accused of intimidating witnesses, causing them to have sudden memory losses and withdraw from court cases. The case had barely started when the judge was told that all the witnesses had sudden memory losses and withdrawn from the case. In one stroke, the accused man secured an acquittal and provided strong evidence that he

was guilty. What more proof is needed that irony is the guiding principle of the universe?

A colleague just read the paragraphs above and told me about Choi Gap-Bok, the Slipperiest Man in the World. After a lengthy chase, police in South Korea caught him and threw him in the slammer. He asked a prison guard to bring him his "skin cream". He slapped it on and slipped through the tiny food slot in the jail door, just 5.9 inches high. It sounds impossible, but I totally believe it for two reasons: first, there are videos of him on the

Internet and second, I read a lot of superhero comics.

It happens in the West too. A foreign correspondent told me that in 2007 in France, gendarmes arrested members of the infamous Helicopter Gang and then let them exercise on the prison roof, where they were of course whisked to freedom in a helicopter.

But the US correspondent had the best tale. In 1947, cops caught Willie Sutton, Master of Disguise, and jailed him for life. He disguised himself as a prison warden and climbed up a ladder to get over the wall. When the spotlight operator shone a light directly on him, the Master of Disguise coolly called out: "It's okay!" and the watchman let him go.

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

THE FUNNY SIDE
Nury Vittachi

“Before your dreams can come true, you have to have those dreams.”

--- Les Brown

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 115 SHILLONG, MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2016

Cash, Cashless and the banking system

AT no time in the history of India has the banking system been under so much stress. If anyone was unprepared for the revolutionary Demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes then certainly the banking system was. Most nationalised banks are in the habit of working as Government Departments where staff come in and leave at certain fixed timings. Despite the poor services these banks are able to mop up a lot of deposits because they are lead banks in different states and districts of the North East. The advent of private banks has eased the plight of customers to a certain extent. But the work culture in a region not known to excel in the ‘public’ service still leaves a lot to be desired. The top officials of the bank are often non-plussed about dealing with their non-complying staff. There are several banks where managers come out of their chambers to attend to customers because the staff are either absent or incompetent in public relations and unable to deal with irate customers. It is also evident that banks are unable to handle the large number of transactions that have come in recently through the Jan Dhan Yojna, especially once these start to become actively transacted.

In the North Eastern Region people are as yet to develop the banking habit, leave alone the cashless transaction propounded by city folks. Those who speak of Paytm and other modes of payment forget that a smart phone is a pre-requisite for such transactions. Most people cannot afford a smart phone as yet. Hence the big jump expected from a hard cash transacting society to a cashless one would take some time. It cannot be imposed from the top. It should be demand driven to succeed. People must see for themselves the seamless manner in which Paytm, Wallet and other payment features work and they need to be convinced that these are safe payment outlets and cannot result in loss of money from their accounts. A mass awareness campaign is much needed. The Government, through the banking system, needs to employ millions of young business correspondents (BCs) who can help transform rural India into a cashless society and make maximum use of the Common Service Centres which are single point destinations for e-governance, e-banking and e-commerce transactions. Only then can India change into a cashless society!

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Mahanta should quit in NE interest: Apang

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Mr Gegong Apang today said his Assam counterpart Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta should resign in greater interest of the nation and specially the north eastern region. Talking to newsmen here Mr Apang said Mr Mahanta had “failed to establish peace in Assam and normalcy as prerequisites for the development of entire region. He further said Mr Mahanta had “failed to solve even a single problem” so far and invited rather more law and order problems for his state as the tribals were agitating for a separate land “out of frustration and long feeling of negligence”. As a result the situation in the border of the two states had become “highly explosive, he added.

Mr Apang said the All Bodo Students Union’s prolonged agitation in Assam had badly affected the supplies of essential goods and petroleum products in the entire region. In this connection, Mr Apang said the ABSU be invited for talks to solve its genuine grievances which feel under

the purview of the state government so that the tribals feeling of neglect was removed.

Papa Murray helps poor kids dream

They may have never met “Papa Murray”, but the 79 years old Canadian has tucked into bed at least 150,000 children in the Third World. From his quit home near Toronto, Canada’s most populous city, Murray Dryden the father of two former hockey superstar at least 10,000 bedkits a year to needy children in 27 nations including Ecuador, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India and Uganda. His ultimate goal is to provide one million kids with a bedkit.

I know it will be impossible: I’m getting old, but isn’t it nice to dream?” Dryden asked. “I am often asked; why bedkits?” he says. “Unless you have had to without bed, it isn’t easy to understand. But for children suffering from disease or the pangs of hunger, it helps to be able to just fall asleep and forget for a while.

Environment and Politics: A Game of hide and Seek

By H H Mohrmen

Perhaps my understanding of politics is very limited, hence I fail to understand politicians. Like almost every single one of them, politicians are hard nuts to crack. I must admit that with regards to the NGT interim ban on coal mining, I can understand when V H Pala goes gung-ho to lobby with the Central Government to intervene against the NGT interim ban. I also will not be surprised if the President of the BJP Shibun Lyngdoh also supports the move, because it is an open secret that the duo are involved in coal business. But it caught me by surprise to see reports in the press that this time around it was Conrad Sangma who took the lead in the move to withdraw the interim NGT ban.

Most of us see Conrad as a rare breed of politician and we have immense hope that the young tech-savvy politician, educated at the best University in the world would have a different perspective than the politicians we have here. Born and bred in a family where politics is like the air they breathe, one hoped that he would have a different take on issues as vital as protection of the environment, but is he any different?

During his last visit to Jaintia hills when I was informed of his visit to the coal mining areas in East Jaintia Hills, I knew that he would only meet those who are involved in the coal business. I also knew before hand the kind of information they would feed him. I had a preconceived notion of what was going on and was even able to guess that the visit would change his perspective. I purposely met him at the Jowai circuit house where he camped. After he had briefed the media on what he had observed and learned from his trip to coal mine areas, as expected, he sang the same tune as the miners. I asked him if he had made any attempts or plans to visit the village in the downstream of the rivers in both East and West Jaintia hills districts which were affected by coal

mining? He answered in the negative but I thought a politician of his stature would at least want to hear the other side of the story and try to understand the plight of those who lost their livelihoods for no fault of theirs. But such alas, is not the case.

I invited him to visit some villages downstream to see the polluted rivers and I even volunteered to take him to the area. I had also brought to his knowledge the videos on the issue of river pollution which were available online like ‘the broken landscape’, ‘fireflies in the abyss’ and loads of other video reports by international news agency like ‘Al Jazeera’ and others, the links to which are available at the ‘Save the caves and rivers of Jaintia Facebook page.’ I genuinely believed that a politician of Conrad Sangma’s standing would at least try to understand the situation by considering both sides of the story before taking any decision, but I was wrong. Lo and behold! Conrad seems to think that the lives of those who live downstream of the contaminated rivers are not as important as those of the mine owners.

I also wonder why Conrad did not take the trouble of meeting the academicians in the area because they would also tell him the other side of the story. I was invited to the two day (28 & 29 November) international seminar conducted by the Jaintia Eastern College, the first college in the region. And the theme ‘Impact of NGT interim ban on coal mining in the state’ and the timing of the seminar is both appropriate and relevant and deliberations on the subject is the need of the hour.

I was only able to attend the second day of the seminar which was supported by the UGC, the District Administration and the Umbrella organisations of Cement manufacturing companies of the Narpuh area of East Jaintia hills. The first day the seminar was devoted to discussions on the social, economic and other impacts of the interim ban on coal mining in the area. The second day of the

seminar was devoted to looking at other viable alternatives to coal mining. I think the very reason that the organising committee decided to devote one full day to looking at other livelihood alternatives to mining shows how optimistic and forward looking the college is and that the communities are and they are beginning to accept that mining has indeed had adverse impact on the society.

It was a pleasant surprise to hear Associate and Assistant Professors of the college and even the Principal of the College leading from the front in admitting that there are many positive impacts of the interim ban of coal mining in the area. The Principal Dr Phervison Nongtdu while presenting his paper on the alternative policy to traditional rat-hole mining also informed us about the positive impacts of the ban. He said the environment around is greener, the quality of the water has improved; people started using their land for cultivation or are at least doing kitchen gardening. Nongtdu also said that air quality has improved and during winter they now don’t have to wear masks to cover their mouths and noses anymore. Crime rate has also gone down and young people have started coming back to college. Earlier, they had problems retaining students in the college as the young men and women would easily get attracted to the lure of money but now all that has changed.

He also said that people are beginning to hear the birds’ singing and they have even sighted wild animals in some places and according to Dr Nongtdu these are some of the positive impacts of the interim ban on coal mining in the area. I give much weight to these observations because they come from an academician and a renowned educationist of the area who almost single-handedly started the Jaintia Eastern College. Nongtdu is also a native of the area who was

born and brought up in Khliehriat and unlike other educated youth of the region, he did not leave the area to work outside or choose to accumulate wealth but he came back to the place of his birth to promote higher education in the area. Dr Phervison is somebody who had seen from close quarters the changes that had happened in the last forty or fifty years of his life. In my opinion his views also assume significance because they come from a man who did his research on a topic related to coal mining and NEHU had awarded him a PhD for that.

The other academicians who presented their papers were young scholars who are from the coal mining areas and they all spoke on similar lines. They are trying to look at the brighter side of the problem - looking for light at the end of the tunnel. All their papers where on one general theme and that is - possible alternative livelihood opportunities to mining. For me, the statement of a student of St Anthony’s College Myndihati East Jaintia Hills District at the end of the presentation on the second day, summed it all. The young lady said ‘all the sessions we had yesterday make us feel like there is no hope and we are all doomed, but today we realised that all is not lost; there is still hope for us.’

If this is what the academicians and young people of the area feel about the interim ban on coal mining, then who are we lobbying for? At least I wish that as Conrad lobbies for withdrawing of the mining ban, he would also work as hard for reclaiming of all the water bodies affected by coal mining. But that is too much to ask from our leaders especially the same set of politicians who lobby for rescinding the interim ban, who will one day represent us at the international conference for protection of environment! Ironic isn’t it? At the end of the day, for the politicians, care for the environment and politics is like a game of hide and seek. One day they speak for its protection the next day they work for its destruction - all in the name of politics.

Shillong. In fact there is a mixture of introspective, enterprising, skill-intensive and motivational curriculum in this school and I encourage other schools too to take a leaf out from such schools so that we are able to bring out genius and talented youngsters in society.

Yours etc.,
Dominic S. Wankhar
Shillong-3

Is Shillong ready to be SMART?

Editor,
As we see the impact of demonetization of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 in every part of our country, I was very happy to know of a village named Dhasian, a few kms from Mumbai in a show of Zee News named DNA where this demonization has transformed the whole village. This village has come out as a cashless society. Every shop owner is provided with a card swiping machine and Bank of Baroda has made every effort to make the debit card available to every villager. The problem of ‘no change’ is completely removed. Even more surprising was that even for a chocolate for Rs.1, the debit card could be swiped. But even a shop like RB Store in Police Bazaar would not accept debit card payments if the amount is less than Rs 100. We see numerous shops displaying ‘Paytm accepted here’ in Shillong these days. This

brought a smile to my face and I was determined to buy stuffs only from these shops. But a visit to one of the shops in Keating Road, named Patanjali Store which also showed such a sign showed a dismal picture. I went to the shop, chose a few items, spent a few minutes on adding money in my Paytm wallet, and then when I proceeded to scan the QR code displayed, they stated that it was not working. I was very angry at the shop

owner and warned him not to show such a sign if they are not in use. Shillong has been unsuccessfully competing for the Smart City project for three times in a row. I believe that if the Government could put up an effort to educate people regarding the usage of debit card and cashless society which a village could achieve, that would be our first step towards the Smart City project. This would further remove the queues in Banks and ATMs. I believe cashless society can only solve the problem of ‘getting a chocolate or kwai when no change of Rs 1, Rs 2 or Rs 5 is unavailable. So again I ask, “Are we ready to be Smart?”

Yours etc.,
Suraj Neupane,
Via email

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

Modi trying to control irreversible damage Cash-deprived nation in emergency-like era

By S. Sethuraman

Barring the infamous emergency of 1975 enforced by Ms. Indira Gandhi, India’s millions had not been thrown into a convulsion on a scale wrought by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s demonetisation with its chaotic impact for the entire population and a distressed economy, neither job-creating nor inclusive.

Nobody would grudge the altruistic Mr Modi his noble intent to end corruption and black money, but his “surgical strike” as his Ministers take pride in characterising his November 8 action in illegalising 86 per cent of money in circulation, had deprived the people, at all levels, of much-needed cash in time. This has pushed the poorest among them to the veritable brink of survival.

Ultimately, at some point of time, we would hope to get to know the outcome of such an arbitrary exercise of power in relation to its ostensible purpose. It could prove to be a pittance for the assumed hoards of tax-evaded cash for nefarious purposes. Thus, it could set a train of more desperate moves to bring out the elusive black money, whatever the consequences.

The Modi Government seems to have moved into

credit requirements of the economy. The Governor said the situation was gradually easing.

On the disruption of trade and business in the country, Dr Patel said it is “very rare to remove 86 per cent of the currency in circulation in one go” and then listed the steps taken by RBI to meet the situation on a daily basis.

An acute financial stress or money black-out is continuing to take its toll in several ways. The masses, urban and rural, line up for wherewithal after surrendering whatever they hold in the banned currency.

With the arrested flow of cash, economic activity is grinding to a halt in many places, the most affected being the vendors of vegetables, fruits and other perishable goods, retail traders who are witnessing steep fall in sales, and the small-scale industrial units facing demand constraints. Workers are not getting paid their dues and migrant labour has become the most vulnerable in this cash squeeze, thousands of them returning home without being able to realise their earnings. The end of a gigantic social misery is not in sight, at this stage.

With the people’s money

The economic adventurism underlying the demonetisation has to be viewed in the political context, with the forthcoming elections in Uttar Pradesh, a crucial pathway for 2019 when Mr Modi would be aiming at his second term. Whatever that may be, he could have mitigated the unbearable sufferings of the middle class and poor in having access to their hard-earned cash for day-to-day transactions.

gear of decisiveness, with the majoritarian streaks of some of its Ministers, ignoring canons of our proud Democracy. Instead of the promised “Achhe Din”, the people of India are bearing economic pain in the third year of the Modi Government.

The economic adventurism underlying the demonetisation has to be viewed in the political context, with the forthcoming elections in Uttar Pradesh, a crucial pathway for 2019 when Mr Modi would be aiming at his second term. Whatever that may be, he could have mitigated the unbearable sufferings of the middle class and poor in having access to their hard-earned cash for day-to-day transactions.

That would have necessarily involved the Prime Minister at least consulting close confidantes including economists who would have spelt out ways of achieving his objectives with less pain for the people at large. And expert advice would have spelt out a phased approach and ensured technical advice on preparations needed for such an assault.

That the country’s monetary authority was itself caught unawares is clear from the pre-arranged interview with its head, Governor of RBI Dr. Urjit Patel, who breaking his silence thus far, said demonetisation involved “mammoth logistics”. RBI was taking necessary action “to ease the genuine pain of citizens who are honest and who have been hurt”. There was no indication in the interview as to how long it would take for normalcy in the banking system to be restored to be able to meet genuine needs of honest customers and for fulfilling

locked up with the ill-prepared banking system, it could be a few months – not Mr Modi’s ‘fifty days’ even after demonetisation has played out devastatingly for 20 days – before one could go to a bank for cash with some confidence. This again is subject to the Modi Government not coming up with ‘fatwas’ on how banks regulate business. In the guise of relief, a gradual remonetisation has been taking place through RBI with a series of relaxations.

It would be months before the printing of new notes of the required quantities is completed. Given the huge amounts poured into banks by genuine customers, RBI has announced an incremental CRR till Government issues market stabilisation bonds.

In effect, this puts Government at greater fiscal comfort, enabling it to set apart a certain amount for recapitalisation of stressed banks while generally it should boost some development expenditure such as on infrastructure. The first charge on it for Finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley would be to make up the shortfall in keeping fiscal deficit at the budgeted 3.5 per cent of GDP.

But the Modi Government plans to turn the adversity for the masses into an opportunity for its grandiose plan to march toward a “cashless economy”, even if the required logistics for it in far-flung areas of the country and preparing the people, with high illiteracy and ignorance, to get used to digitalisation would take a long period. But Mr Jaitley wants India to get used to the “new normal” as a result of demonetisation. (IPA Service)

"A lot of people do not muster the courage to live their dreams because they are afraid to die."

--- Hervey Allen

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 116 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2016

End of an era

THE news of Tamilnadu Chief Minister, J Jayalalitha's death at 11.30 pm last evening has set to rest all speculations about her health which took a turn for the worse after she suffered a cardiac arrest on Sunday evening. Her health status has been discussed by media channels and newspapers in this country and in the neighbouring countries for the last 24 hours. In her own state, Jayalalitha enjoyed a cult following and is at times even deified. Perhaps her being catapulted to politics from a film star has added to this cult following. Jayalalitha's followers don't accept the corruption charges levelled against her. They believe she is a deity and no mud sticks to a deity. That such arguments can be advanced in the 21st century shows that India is still trapped by feudalism. However, politicians and film stars in south India do enjoy the status of gods and goddesses. MG Ramchandran who mentored Jayalalitha was literally worshipped; so too NT Rama Rao. Film star Rajnikanth too enjoys huge cult following. People believe these cult figures can do no wrong; can't fall ill or die. The manner in which crowds have been milling in all around the Apollo Hospital, Chennai, since Sunday evening and praying for her recovery is proof of her wide popularity. But the problem with such great personalities is that they leave behind no clear successor.

The AIADMK is in a huddle to zero in on a credible successor. For now they have agreed to continue with O Panneerselvam, a trusted aide of the late AIADMK supremo. But it is also learnt that Thala Ajith has Jayalalitha's blessings. And then there is her companion Sasikala Natarajan who has been by her side during her illness. It remains to be seen how these probable successors hold the party together.

Cult figures tend to leave behind a vacuum that is difficult to fill and the AIADMK will have to tread cautiously to avoid any split in the Party, thereby giving an upper hand to the DMK led by the patriarch of Tamilnadu politics, K Karunanidhi who has been waiting and watching to make his moves. This is a crucial time for Tamilnadu politics.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Press freedom

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has reaffirmed his government's commitment to safeguard the freedom of the press. Inaugurating the centenary celebrations of the Kerala daily "Maalalya Monorama" here today, he said that the press must show corresponding responsibility towards the profession. Mr Gandhi renewed his call for evolving a professional code of conduct. The press should itself draw up the code he suggested. UNI adds: The freedom of the press, the Prime Minister said. "To be committed to India's

democracy is to be committed to the freedom of expression. Every right carries with it a responsibility. Every freedom carries with it an obligation," he said. Congratulating the Malayala Manorama on its centenary Mr Gandhi said these centenary celebrations would have served a great national purpose if they have sensitized all sections of the press to the tenets laid down by Mr K C Mammen Mappilai and others who have raised Malayala Manorama to its present status of the largest selling newspaper in India.

Understanding the reality of social change

By Fabian Lyngdoh

Life is manifested in a process of change, and social change is part of the process of human collective life. Social order in every human society is established on the balance between individual freedom and the collective order within a particular set of conditions of human existence. But changes in the conditions of human existence such as environmental changes, change in demographic structure, scientific inventions, economic changes, cultural diffusion, military invasions, accumulated base of knowledge etc., shift the point of balance between individual freedom and the collective order this way and that way because these coordinates of social order are never in perfect equilibrium. Society evolved, developed and undergoes constant changes to accommodate the swing of the point of justice, to restore the balance and relief the tension.

Social change is a universal phenomenon occurring in human community as an essential law for modification or replacement in the social structure to accommodate emerging circumstances. Social control at a particular point of time always seeks to maintain status quo and resists change, while the whole society and its structure is being pulled and pushed constantly by the process of social change imperceptibly yet constantly exerting conflict with status quo. And, as social change is persistent; it always overcomes status quo unconsciously and imperceptibly through a time span transcending the perception of individual member or of a particular generation. People living in particular era conceive social structure as permanent and unchanging while social change is taking place all along escaping their perception.

There are two forces acting on any social system: (i) the inertia of rest that resists change exerted usually by those who are in control of the institutionalized collective order. This force which projects cultural tradition as God-given and immutable is a conscious force exerted by those who benefit more and living advantageously from the prevailing system. (ii) The inertia of motion exerted by individual freedom ever seeking for readjustment of the balance of justice. This inertia of motion for change is the summation of unconscious force

exerted by individual freedom in different forms of deviation from traditional values and norms. Deviations from traditional norms are followed by those who feel disadvantaged, or not in a position to achieve fulfilment in the normative setting. It is the feeling of advantage or disadvantage which determines conformity or deviation. If there are wide spread deviations in any normative setting, there must be more people feeling disadvantaged in that setting and hence that normative setting has become unjust and needs readjustment through social change.

General deviations from traditional social norms should not be conceived of as deviant behaviour against the social order. On the other hand, in a changed set of circumstances, some aspects of traditional social norms may have become deviations from the point of justice. Hence, no social norm should ever be taken as permanent and immutable. It is this fixed and immutable concept of social norms which legitimizes State's authority even in oppressive dictatorship or burdens the society with tyrannical redundant customs.

The Khasi society established on the basis of the balance of justice between individual freedom and collective order remains the same from the beginning till today. But its social structure and institutions including all its values, norms, customs, beliefs and practices as the superstructures that evolved for the maintenance of order in society, did not remain static but keep on changing and modifying from generation to generation in response to changes in the conditions of human existence. This is evident in the general deviations from traditional norms observed in the Khasi society today.

Though reckoning of surname through matrilineal lineage is still maintained by majority of the people, yet all other aspects of the traditional Kur system are no longer in practice and the society is re-established on the basis of the nuclear families. With regard to the religious life, believers of the indigenous faith have instituted new forms of religious organisations in place of the Kur with units in the villages to supervise the moral and spiritual life of their members, through new forms of religious rites relevant to the present circumstances. Christianity among majority of the Khasis who adopted the faith not under any external persuasion or compulsion

but out of their own free will, has become integrated with the Khasi traditional values and ideals.

The 'Raid' which was the basic political commune has declined in authority when its 'Kyntoit' (hamlets) became transformed into modern villages; and the 'Matabors', 'Pators' and 'Tymmen Shnongs' in charge of the hamlets were replaced by the modern Rangbah Shnong, and the Dorbar Shnong emerged more powerful than the Dorbar-Longsan of the Raid.

The Dorbar Shnong governing a Khasi village today is a new governance institution evolving out of the amalgamation of the Khasi clan-based democracy and the individual-based modern popular democracy. It is a modern replica of the powerful traditional Dorbar Raid operating in new social situations. In the modern Dorbar Shnong all the Khasi inhabitants became the 'binong-bishon' with political rights, and the non-Khasi inhabitants take over the place of the 'shongthap-shongbiang', who can avail equal rights in civic welfare services but with no political rights. Unlike the Dorbar-Longsan of the Raid, the Dorbar Shnong is no more a clan-based institution but open to all the resident adult males of the village. With this new development, community religions connected with socio-political life have long been abandoned in most of the Raids and Himas.

All these changes became integrated in the society in response to changing conditions of human existence. Balance in the social order is maintained and the Khasi society is still alive and kicking in a new avatar. There is nothing to lament about these changes because they are taking place to re-establish the balance of justice in a changing society. If these social changes did not take place with the shift in the point of justice, there would be tensions and conflicts in the social order; and if these changes are curtailed by the force of law, violent revolutions would be the outcome.

The balance of social order is continuously influenced by the current general will, which itself is being shaped by the changing conditions of human existence. The relevance of social norms and customs does not depend on their inherent values but on the general acceptance of the members of society living in the

current generation; and their acceptance or rejection can be observed in the degree of conformity and deviation from particular norms or customs. The coming generation would establish its base on the conditions of human existence of the current generation. What shall be transmitted to the next generation is not the spirit of the distant past but the standard and values of the current generation. The wish, the need, and the aspirations of the current generation are the sign posts for assessing the relevancy of social norms, institutions and customs. It is the aspirations and standard of the current generation that shall be transmitted to the next generation not the spirit of the distant ancestors.

In this situation of change, there is an ungrounded feeling that the cohesion of the Khasi society is weakened due to the general deterioration in the character of the people. But in reality, despite many changes, the social order in the Khasi society is still strong and comparatively more peaceful and more accommodative than any other tribal society in North East India. General deterioration in people's character as assessed in the light of existing moral standards is not caused by internal social changes, and not a peculiarity of the Khasi society alone, but it is a worldwide phenomenon. It is happening among all communities in the world due to the weakening of traditional systems of social control, when the universal materialistic outlook is conquering all the cultural systems bringing with it the norm-less and value-free understanding, with the system of social control leaning more and more on the external and formal controlling mechanisms provided by the State such as law, police, court, prison etc.

The new global culture is a transitory culture emerging with the development of modern industrial system and information technology. We call it 'western culture' only because the industrial system started in the western countries. But even western societies today are facing social problems under this transitory culture. Today, the world becomes one 'mental-place' like a newly discovered land. People of all races do not need a physical migration to this new found land; but mental migrations are now taking place incessantly to the attraction of this brave new world. Whether this trend is for better or for worse, only the future can tell.

It Is Only A Song Much ado about National Anthem

By Poonam I Kaushish

What's in a song? Everything if it is the national anthem. This was strummed by the Supreme Court last Wednesday to instill "committed patriotism and nationalism". Its another matter that the beautiful and melodious Jana Gana Mana is being turned besura by our judicial drumbeaters.

The Apex court ordered the "national anthem to be played before the start of a film in all cinema halls with all present obliged to stand up to show respect as part of their secret obligation to abide by the ideals engrafted in the Constitution" on a PIL filed by a retired engineer from Bhopal. Sic.

Underscoring that "Bharat is the epitome of gyaan and vigyaan...people must feel this is my country...You are an Indian first." It further prohibited the anthem's "commercial exploitation" for incurring commercial benefits or using an abridged version. However, it did not impose penalty or punishment for not standing when the 52 second long Jana Gana Mana is played. Yet what is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander as the court turned down the plea to play the anthem in courts as it would be "an overreach".

Predictably, the Saffron Sangh and its cohorts are rejoicing by stating this order was long overdue as the national song is just another prop to celebrate the nation State and undue importance mustn't be given to it. Others aver that singing Jana Gana Mana must neither be made a test case of patriotism nor should people be obstinate about not singing it. Unfortunately, why does not a sense of patriotism kick in where it should for most people? The fact that six women are raped every minute or that we are famous for littering does not bother our so-called desh-bhaktis.

Not a few argue that legal intervention in promoting and inserting national pride amid people is a problematic idea. As the notion that was playing the National Anthem before a movie screening would instill some sense of national pride is debatable at best. Either which way, in one fell stroke the Court has put curbs on individual freedom in the name of nationalism. Raising a moot point: Should the Court entertain such issues? Is it the learned judges' function to go into whether a person is patriotic or not? How can they decide whether an aam aadmi's loves his country?

Is standing up for Jana Gana Mana the sole barometer for judging one's patriotism and showing respect to the national anthem? Does singing it define and decide nationalism, national identity, integrity and Constitutional patriotism? By that token any rascal can stand up without believing in the Constitution or the national flag. What of him?

Besides, does one wear patriotism on one's sleeve? Can one force people to be patriotic? What of people who might not want to stand up for intellectual or religious reasons as they believe that their religious beliefs prevent them from doing so? If a terrorist's stands up for the national song to fool security forces does that make him patriotic? And is a desh bhakt who does not adhere to the Court order a desh drohi?

Undoubtedly, the Court's intent might be good but the manner in which it has gone about it is not. Also true the Constitution's Article 51(A) enjoins: "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem".

Questionably, how and who will implement this order "in letter and spirit"? Who will oversee how many people are standing or sitting while the anthem is playing? And who will do a head count? What about the physically disabled, infirm

and aged? And if somebody urgently needs to go to the washroom will a cinema hall owner be responsible? Moreover, by asking the cinema owners to close the exit doors while the anthem is being played does not smack of reason. What if a fire breaks out? Remember the Uphaar tragedy where over 59 people lost their lives because the exit doors were closed by the management.

Clearly, this is an instance of judicial overreach specially against the backdrop that the "Constitution practises tolerance" while the Supreme Court is the custodian of our Fundamental Rights and Constitutional freedoms. There are so many Fundamental Duties which they give directions to enforce them? Also, it is not judicially enforceable.

Pertinently, the Apex Court seems to have forgotten its own order in the Bijoe Emmanuel & Others vs State of Kerala & Others in 1986, wherein it ordered a Kerala school to take back three children it had expelled for not singing the national anthem as it was a violation of the Fundamental Right to Freedom of Conscience and freely to profess, practise and propagate religion adding there was no legal provision that obliges anyone to sing the anthem. The children didn't sing the anthem because of their conviction that their religion did not permit them to join any rituals except in their prayers to Jehovah.

In fact, the practice to play to play the national anthem in cinema halls was first introduced after the 1962 India-China war. Those were the times when national fervour was high and it was played at the end of the movie, no matter the aam janata simply walked out when the film's 'The End' flashed on the screens. Perhaps this is the reason why the practice of playing it slowly faded and was eventually discontinued, until 2003 when a NCP MLA lobbied and got the Maharashtra Government to order cinema halls to do it again. Undeniably, forcing someone to stand up for the national anthem is an insult to its very idea and promise. More so as people go to see cinema as a form of entertainment and recreation, seek solace from rozi-roti problems or just passing time. Think. Even as the Constitution allows one freedom of expression it simultaneously calls for respect of the freedom of expression of thoughts which one might not agree with. Consequently, this order should not be incitement to vigilantism and violence wherein people are targeted for their unwillingness to adhere to a certain belief. Recall, an AIMIM MLA was suspended from the Maharashtra Assembly for refusing to chime Bharat Mata ki Jai.

The Supreme Court could take a leaf out of its US counter part. In a 1989 case of Texas vs Johnson it shot down a law which prohibited the desecration of certain venerated objects, such as State and national flags and proscribed the State from criminalising or penalising any action that did not satisfy the more tearing concept of either allegiance to the state or respecting national honour. According to the court, these acts were shielded by the First Amendment, which guarantees citizens the freedom of speech. The American law, unlike the Indian law, does not cite a 'reasonable restrictions clause on these freedoms.

In sum our judiciary needs to realise its limitations, practise what it preaches and stick to the lakshman rekha. Ironically, written by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali the underlying message of Jana Gana Mana is pluralism. INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Reclaiming our Roots!

Editor,

Let me start by shedding some light on our history. Most people are perhaps all too familiar with the theory that the Khasi people migrated into India from somewhere around Cambodia since the assumption is that our language has the same roots as the Khmer language which is spoken in Cambodia. But very few people I guess know about another theory which is supported by a vast section of academicians. The Khasi people are the only tribe in the whole of North Eastern India that belong to the Proto-Austroloid race and there is some consensus among historians and linguists alike that the Khasi language basically belongs to the same group of languages spoken by some of the tribals in Central and Eastern part of India. The close similarity between the

Khasi language and the language spoken by the Munda tribe that resides in Jharkhand is a case in point. The German scholar Schmidt is a passionate supporter of this theory.

The Supreme Court in a landmark judgement passed a few years ago came to the conclusion that the tribals residing in mainland India are the original inhabitants of India and that every effort must be taken for their economic upliftment since this group of people are the most deprived and oppressed lot in the whole of the country. If we piece together the puzzle we can safely say that out of all the original inhabitants of this great country of ours we are the most advanced in terms of human development. When the more powerful Dravidian and Aryan race arrived in India we took the migration route to finally settle in this part of the country and there has been no looking back ever since. We were one of the first people in the region

to have access to good quality higher education. The fact that the only tribal member of the Constituent Assembly from the North East is a Khasi speaks volumes of this fact. But the main problem with the rest of us today is that we chose to remain stagnant while others leaptfrogged ahead of us. We still love to play the part of the neglected adopted child. A captivating serial, "This is Us" is currently running on American television in which the adopted son is shown to be doing as well if not better in life than the biological son and the serial brilliantly captures the conflict and camaraderie that exists between the two. In one of the episodes, the foster father was put to a test of doing push ups with the adopted son on his back by the son's karate trainer as part of a practice of inducing a trainee into the training program and at the same time testing a father's love and loyalty towards

his son. And in a heart wrenching effort the foster father showed that he is more than willing to carry that burden by pouring his heart and soul into the exercise thereby reassuring the foster mother who was watching, that her husband is really serious of raising the boy as one of his own. Time for the Khasis to reclaim their past and re-think their future.

Yours etc.,
Gary Marbanianang,
Via email

Debate not disrupt

Editor,

Preventing the Parliament from functioning is a profound governance issue. Every wasted minute of parliamentary debate burns a big hole in the exchequer. Maintaining discipline, decorum and dignity of the Parliament is of paramount importance for the Indian democracy. Political establishment must engage in a dialogue and resolve

their differences. There is a spread of political power between the opposition and the Government in Indian Parliament. Both have an important role to play. Both have responsibility to discuss and resolve the core issues. Political consensus represents the best practice in Indian democracy. Debate and dissent are cornerstones of a vibrant democracy and a strong opposition is meant to represent the necessary check and balance on government functioning. Disruption shows the weakness of our democracy, and also exposes a negative intent to stall the house and our country's growth. We are at a such point of time when we need a plethora of new legislations to propel us into the next phase of economic development. GST is one such key legislation, which needs to be enacted. The implementation of this crucial tax reform can add 1% to India's GDP growth.

Apart from this, there are a number of other legislations that are urgently needed to kick-start our economy. India is now at a stage where it needs dialogue between the ruling party and its opponents to progress. Political parties should present a credible agenda for engagement in Parliament; it may turn out to be much better for running the Governance and Politics. There is no substitute for a healthy debate in a democracy. It's time for the people to reclaim their right and authority by demanding from all political parties that they realize their responsibility to the people and do justice to the mandate given to them. To quote President Pranab Mukherjee, "Parliament should function through three D's - Debate, Dissent and Decision and not Disruption."

Yours etc.,
Akash Kumar,
Jagraon, Punjab

“Attitude is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than what people do or say. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill.”

--- Arthur Schopenhauer

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 117 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2016

Tragedy of suicide

THE news of yet another death by suicide of a bright, young lady student of IIM Shillong is tragic to say the least. One question we all ask when a person dies by suicide is, "Why?" Why did the friend, child, parent, spouse or sibling take their own life? Even when the deceased has left a suicide note absolving anyone of any blame, questions linger. The person may have felt enough despair to want to die, but why did they feel that despair? Most often a person's suicide takes the people they leave behind in a state of shock and disbelief. It also leaves behind a sense of guilt in the survivors, for failing to see it coming. Those who have survived suicide attempts nearly always say that it not so much that they wanted to die as to stop living. Indeed for some, it is the pain of living which is unbearable in their fragile mental state.

In recent times students of IIMs and IITs seem to be among the most common candidates for suicide. Is it the pressure of studies? Expectations from parents? A love affair gone wrong? The answers would delude the living since those who have left and gone never really explain the circumstances that push them to take that final step. Institutions of higher learning like IIMs and IITs which demand higher than average intelligence even to get admission into them, need to recognize, that students are highly strung in this extremely competitive environment, hence a one-stop crisis centre where counseling is made available is imperative. In fact, these institutions need many counselors to deal with a group that lives on the edge. It would be naïve to believe that super intelligent people are able to sort out their lives. Mental health problems afflict people across intelligences and professions. Yet mental health is not yet given the importance it deserves. Depression is the most common reason that pushes even bright, young people to suicide. Can Governments both state and central give more thought to this modern scourge?

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Tinsukia blast toll now three

The death toll in the Tinsukia bomb explosion has gone up to three following the death of two of the injured in hospital at Dibrugarh today. One person was killed and thirty four others injured in the blast that occurred yesterday, it will be recalled. Meanwhile, The All Bodo Students Union (Upendra) faction today condemned

yesterday's bomb blast at Tinsukia in Upper Assam. In a statement here, ABSU vice-president Mr Pradeep Kumar Daimari alleged incident was planned by government to malign the non-violent and democratic movement" of ABSU. The ABSU express grave concern over the explosion in which one person died and 34 were injured, he said.

Shillong: A Heartless City

By Bhogtoram Mawroh

Every day when I walk to my Office in Lummawrie (commonly known as Fire Brigade because of the presence of a fire station), I would stop near a momo stall on the roadside where one can have a sumptuous snack for ? 30. The delight is available after 2 pm when most of the college and school students have returned from their places of study. Shillong has for a long time been known as the education centre of North East India, with students from different parts of the region flocking to it every year. Most of the renowned educational institutes like St. Edmund's, St. Mary's, St. Anthony's, etc., are based in and around Laitumkhrah, the locality adjoining Lummawrie. After the classes get over, the young people would flock to this tiny stall treating themselves to momo, egg roll or soup. The customers, however, are not limited to young people. People of all age groups, also enjoy the meal, especially when they don't have the money to eat in the fancy restaurants that dot the whole area.

The owner of this small establishment seems to have some kind of mutual agreement with the shop keeper from under whose verandah he operates. Presumably he has to share whatever profits he makes with the shop-keeper. Also, since the momos are hot and spicy, people would often end up buying a bottle of water from the shop behind after a meal. I myself used to do it in the beginning. However, lately I have got used to the spiciness and feel no use to buy any more water. Therefore, the shop-owner does not always seem to enjoy my ubiquity. From time to time he would remonstrate to people not to stand in front of his shop in spite of their being non-obstructive. There is an uneasy alliance between him and the momo-seller which, however, is not replicated across the city. In other parts of Shillong, street vendors like the momo-seller are being harried by the Municipal and the Police. Goods would be

confiscated and not returned or if they are ever returned most of the products go missing. Recently, a woman vendor with two young children was asked to go to the High Court and pay a fine for selling edibles on the footpath. However, when she reached the Court, she was told that she is not among the witness list, i.e., there was no need for her to come. The farcical nature of this whole episode was made more tragic by the fact that the people who picked her were the ones who often buy food from the roadside. There is a whole disruption of livelihood and trust which the anti-hawker attitude of the current government has created. The repercussions of all this disruption has been devastating for the hawkers.

Outside the Civil Hospital, there is a 70+ years kong (lady) who has been selling goods out of her small basket for the last 50 years. When I asked her how she started, she answered "My mom used to sell kwai (beetle nut) on this spot. The moment I began to learn counting money, I started helping her and eventually I also started doing the job." Her sister who is above 60 herself also used to sell kwai and newspapers sitting alongside her. She also joined her elder sister in protesting against the eviction drive of the government. They stood outside the hospital gates with signboards asking the government to recognize their right to earn a livelihood. The most remarkable thing is that under the Central Law passed by the Parliament in 2014, they have been given the right to do business with proper certification subject to a survey. Before the completion of said survey no hawker can be evicted. The state government, however, has decided to ignore the Central law and come up with their own state law which gives no such protection to the hawkers. These old ladies were joined by other ladies, young and old, khasi and dkhar who have been prevented by the authorities from doing their

business.

For three days, hawkers in different parts of Shillong stood with a placard where their name, items of sale and the years spent on their particular spot of business. They stood there waiting for the Government to send officials to conduct the survey and take their names for record. However, the administration sent SOT (Special Operation Team) squads instead, armed with automatic weapons and accompanied by the Police and Municipality to see to it that no hawker could do business on the footpaths. One hawker was detained in front of me. He was selling clothes on the staircase on the way up to Dreamland Multiplex. I watched as they took the items, stuffed them into gunny bags. At the same time, the cops and the magistrate berated the onlookers and asked them not to make a crowd. I stood my ground and retorted, "Can't I just watch?", "No!" was the answer with a stern look on their faces. The power to snatch away an important part of people's life and still be arrogant about it was on full display. As for many of the hawkers, the loss was not just about a few goods but the loss of "bread" for their family, rent for their house and fees for their children.

The hawkers stood in different locations around the city for three days waiting for the administration to come and take their names for registration. The High court had directed the Government to identify the 'genuine' hawkers and start the registration. Since the government has driven away the hawkers from their place of business it has become difficult to recognize them. Therefore, in order to aid the identification process, the hawkers stood in their place with their details written large on placards. But the government officials never came. I stood with a group of hawkers outside the Reliance Shopping Mall in Khyndailad. Sometimes some people would come and ask the hawkers about

their problems while many would have a look at the placards and continue on their way.

My group was composed entirely of dkhar, mainly from Assam and Bihar. One kong came and sympathized with the group but also commented that Khasis should be given preference. She kept asking about the residential status of those ones standing; when somebody answered that he/she has an EPIC from outside Meghalaya, she got agitated. I tried explaining to her that "more than 70% of the hawkers in Shillong are Khasis and according to the calculation given in the Central Act, more than 5000 hawkers can be accommodated in the city. Currently, the potential number of hawkers will not exceed 2000. There is place for everyone". The paranoia of being overwhelmed by an alien population is so intense that oppression on the poor (mostly Khasi and women) is tolerated and sometimes applauded.

After the protest got over in the evening, I went down to Polo to get a cab to go back home. I was very tired and just wanted to get back home as soon as possible. So I decided to pay extra for two seats and got into a cab. Suddenly, a traffic policeman thrust his hand inside the car and snatched away the key. Apparently, the car had lingered a moment too long. The driver got down and went to talk to the policeman. He came back angry, slammed the car's door and drove away in a huff. As he was driving he told us that the policeman had actually asked for a bribe of ? 100. Fortunately he had a spare key which he could use. But he would still have to go back for the key. "Wait till I meet that policeman alone!" he thundered. Then he calmed down a little and narrated how he saw the various vegetable-selling kongs take to their heels when they heard police arriving. The sadness and frustration was apparent in his voice as he talked about the high-handedness of those in authority. Will all this anger and frustration lead to something better or something very dark? Time will tell.

R....I...P... Jayalalitha

By Ananya S Guha

In India politicians are both icons and villains. It all depends on where the god head is placed or misplaced. People criticize them and laud them according to whims, fancies and crass personal gains. And if they happen to be in close proximity to them they flagrantly boast about it. The very persons, who speak eloquently on corruption, do not have the slightest qualm in moving them for favour, alms or employment. It is the accepted thing to call them venal, dishonest and totally corrupt. Of course the honest ones remain disembodied figures, like characters in a fairy tale, sung but almost with condescension. No one remembers a Promode Charaborty these days, which lived and died in his party office. Nor Harkishen Singh Surjeet; nor Nripen Chakraborty. If politicians are austere, honest and

Amir Khan, or both of them posing coyly for a photo. Then you know that the film world and the political world are at perfect tandem. You heave a sigh of relief don't you because you want Pakistani actors to be supported? They are, of course, listening to the political will. Hey hey Pakistani actors, we also indulge in idol worship. We have our politicians. But not people like Lal Bahadur Shastri. Not even Gandhi now. Slowly he is losing his charisma. See how they make fun of him on mobiles, because of those two thousand rupee notes. What a shame. And about Subhas Chandra Bose, they have not exactly forgotten him, but archaeologically trying to discover his bones- did he actually die in the crash, or did he live for two more minutes, or even ten minutes? Historians are blushing, his relatives are cantankerous and the

The icons of Indian industries are film makers and actors. Followed of course close on the heels by the cricketers. They even switch roles. The latter takes up acting and reality shows, and the former play cricket on chosen days. Theirs is a shared world. They act together, play the comedian together and generally sometimes make me not laugh, but weep when they are together. Hope their white or black money is carefully assessed. Then of course you have the occasional riposte between actors and politicians. Sometimes friendly, sometimes not so. But they hit it off well generally. Sometimes you hear our Prime Minister praising Amir Khan, or both of them posing coyly for a photo. Then you know that the film world and the political world are at perfect tandem.

TO THE EDITOR

On the issue of CMD, NEEPCO

Editor,
The news item in your esteemed daily (ST Nov 29, 2016 & Dec 6, 2016) on Mr. A G West and the Hon'ble Union Minister, Mr Rajen Gohain needs further pondering, since both appeared to be "inspired" news items and concern the development of the North East States as NEEPCO is one of the premier PSUs based in the region. To begin with, out of the 7 (seven) candidates who were shortlisted and called for interview by PESB, Delhi, for the post of CMD NEEPCO, only two candidates viz. Mr. West, then Director(Finance) and Mr. Borgohain, Director(Personnel) appeared. It is a mystery why five other candidates decided not to attend the interview. Mr. A.G. West, or as he decided to later write Mr A.G. West Kharkonger who had applied for the post of Director (Finance) in 2009, has no experience of working at project sites. His appointment was not considered for over two months after the retirement of the previous CMD perhaps considering the various issues over his candidature. It is widely

known among NEEPCO employees that on his pleadings for help and commitments/promises to do justice and protect the interests of the Arunachal people, where NEEPCO's present and future projects are located, the local Arunachal leaders and employees requested the Union Minister from Arunachal Pradesh to intervene and Mr West was given the appointment.

The Arunachal employees were shocked when two Arunachal tribal officers were denied due promotions in the DPC held in the third week of November 2016 - this being the first DPC under him. The perverse show of contempt for the Arunachal tribal employees and the leaders has become incomprehensible since it was because of them that he holds the present post. The Khasi Students' Union should consider issues carefully so as not to hurt the sentiments of their fellow tribal people of other States. The NEEPCO headquarters being at Shillong, almost all jobs are taken by Khasi people in the name of tribal people though there is no single NEEPCO project in Meghalaya. On the other hand, the Arunachal people are

deprived of jobs and now even regular promotions.

KSU may also like to know that 22 acres of land was purchased for NEEPCO HQ at Shillong but the local people have not allowed them to start work. The All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union has been demanding the shifting of NEEPCO HQ to Itanagar since all important present and future projects are located in AP. This demand shall continue and is now under active discussion among the Arunachal people considering such ungrateful backstabbing by prominent Khasi officers. Further, NEEPCO is a central PSU and any other citizen should work freely and without fear to speak the truth. All the more reason for NEEPCO to shift its HQ to Itanagar! I humbly suggest the Khasi brothers and sisters to rethink their attitude

Yours etc.,
Taba Sharon,
Doimukh, Papum Pare Dist, A.P.

Thadwang-Pyndengrei Road

Editor,
We wish to express our deepest regrets with

regards to the worsening condition of the road at Thadwang - Pyndengrei for over two years now. Since the opening of FCI at Thadwang and the transportation of at least 10 to 15 truck - loads of rice a day it has done a massive damage to the road. Don't get us wrong but we are not against the coming of the FCI in the 'Shnong' for it has been a huge blessing to the locality and it's people as a whole. The condition of the road during summer is muddy and during winter it is so dusty and a big challenge to pedestrians, local taxis and particularly students passing by this road. Hence we request the 'Dorbar Dong', 'Dorbar Shnong' and the Government Authority to take up the matter seriously and repair the road as soon as possible.

Yours etc.,
Mickey Marwein & Overness Lyngdoh,
Via email

Unemployment scenario in India

Editor,
In his timely article, "India's bitter harvest" (ST, December 3, 2016), Moin Qazi has, rightly, said, "India

needs an economic movement that starts in villages, not one that bypasses them". Indeed, villages are citadels of employment which is the panacea for solving all the problems of hunger, malnutrition, food wastage, farmer's agony and market stagnation. But India is fighting shy of job creation. According to recent Labour Bureau data, India created only 1.35 lakh jobs in 2015 in comparison to 4.19 lakh in 2013 and 9 lakh in 2011. It shows that instead of growing, livelihoods are being lost in India on a daily basis. India has been losing 550 jobs per day in the last 4 years. On the basis of this report, a Delhi based civil society group, Prahar predicted that employment would have got shrunk by 7 million in India by 2050, while population would have grown by 600 million. Instead of protecting labour intensive sectors like farming, unorganized retail, micro and small enterprises that mostly contribute to current livelihoods in the country, we are going gaga over capital intensive technology. This has lowered the percentage of employment in agriculture

from 60 per cent in 1994 to 50 per cent in 2013 (World Bank report). The employment to population ratio is a clear indicator of what is the general outcome of big - investment - little - employment syndrome. While employment to population ratio was 58.6 per cent in 1994, it has, alarmingly, come down to 52.2 per cent in 2013. This syndrome helps carry coal to Newcastle leaving suicide door open for the unemployed who have, now, become almost half of the employable persons in our country. Unemployed persons receive a handsome allowance from the state in the countries like the United States of America but there is no such security in India.

India badly needs a paradigm shift from the city centric, capital intensive "Make in India" to village centric, labour intensive "Make in Bharat" to relieve her unemployment pain in the neck.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

committed then it is almost a travesty of the truth. Corruption and dishonesty are yardsticks on which our political systems work and are measured. So when a politician dies, then there are the usual monosyllabic comments. "A Great Leader" or "We will miss him/her". There are longer eulogies, which very few people read. Very few are able to come out of political differences and see the man as he were. Perhaps Jyoti Basu's case was an exception, and a few more. But some are not forgotten (or forgiven) even after death, the greatest leveler.

The icons of Indian industries are film makers and actors. Followed of course close on the heels by the cricketers. They even switch roles. The latter takes up acting and reality shows, and the former play cricket on chosen days. Theirs is a shared world. They act together, play the comedian together and generally sometimes make me not laugh, but weep when they are together. Hope their white or black money is carefully assessed. Then of course you have the occasional riposte between actors and politicians. Sometimes friendly, sometimes not so. But they hit it off well generally. Sometimes you hear our Prime Minister praising

government is unearthing files and files. But he is not much of a hero. He is and was simply a Bengali recalcitrant who was opposed to the politics of femininity and crafty bourgeoisie machinations.

Now this was a pretty long background. Against this backdrop we can see how the politico actor survived with aplomb in South India. Acting was and is a passion there. And politicians act, most of them and very well at that. Moreover, you know the South is a bit cut off from the rest of the country. That is why they were one of the first to want to secede. Then the image of the actor blended very well with the politician. Both were hero worshipped in two contexts. One in life, the other in celluloid. And, the two images shuttled to and from, from real to reel and vice versa. So much so that one could not distinguish between the real and the reel. The real became reel and the reel real. But to make the reel real you had to enter the halcyon world of politics. Of course to continue acting would be so much the easier. NTR, MGR did this with felicity. Now with the sad passing away of Jayalalitha we are waiting with bated breath for a one more typical replacement. RIP.

“One should, I think, always give children money, for they will spend it for themselves far more profitably than we can ever spend it for them.”

--- Bob Hope

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 118 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2016

Amritsar conference

The Heart of Asia Conference in Amritsar was a landmark event. It was aimed at coordinating efforts for peace and development in Afghanistan. Pakistan was very much under fire for supporting terrorists who threatened Afghan security and stability in the region. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani put Pakistan in the dock and said that its pledge of 500 million dollars for Afghan reconstruction could be put to better use in wiping out terrorism with its base in Pakistan. Pakistan plays a pivotal role in the Afghan situation. It has directly or indirectly helped the Taliban which is at war with the Afghan government. It has also used terrorism to put India in the backseat in the Afghan theatre. The conference criticized Pakistan for working against the war that South Asian nations are jointly fighting to eliminate mass poverty in the area.

The Amritsar meet did a fairly good job by putting all terrorist groups threatening peace and security in Afghanistan on its hit list. Lashkar-e-Taeba and Jaish-Muhammed were most put on the list of offenders. Pakistan was indeed under considerable pressure. Of course it has faced such flack even before without reacting to it. Much hope rests on General Qamar Bajwa who has succeeded the extremely anti-India Raheel Sharif as Pakistan's military chief. But will that curb Pakistan's state-sponsored terrorism? India should keep its fingers crossed while trying to generate international pressure to isolate Islamabad through persistent diplomatic maneuvers.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Assam tribal day authority may be an elected body

The AGP subcommittee on tribal unrest is reported to have recommended that Tribal Development Authority now comprising all the tribal MLAs be converted into an elected body chosen from the areas under tribal subplan. It is also known to have suggested that this body should be entrusted to deal with the entire budgetary fund under tribal subplan through the normal departmental channels.

The subcommittee headed by former minister Mr Thanesar Boro has reportedly considered twenty two areas to be the primary units to serve as constituents of the electoral college to constitute the Tribal Development Authority as the executive agency under the overall guideline of Tribal Affairs Department of the govt.

The subcommittee is known to have considered formation of elected bodies at the lowest level replacing the presently nominated tribal advisory committees but paucity of fund stands in the way.

The AGP subcommittee feels that elected advisory committees to suggest and supervise local programmes of tribal subplan could be possible only if central assistance to bear the expenditure of those establishment are ensured.

The subcommittees which have broadly formulated the recommendations for submission to the AGP high command hopes that an acceptable solution to the present tangle could be worked on this line of entrusting the entire tribal subplan fund to an elected body of policy makers representing the tribal subplan areas without duplicating the implementing agencies.

Bid to end Rajasthan Congress(I) crisis

The high-power

Congress(I) coordination committee for Rajasthan, headed by Communication Minister Mr Bir Bahadur Singh had separate meetings with at least 75 legislators here today to sort out the differences in the State Congress (I) legislature party. Mr Singh who along with Minister of State for Education Mr L P Sahi, reached here early this morning and immediately began closed door meetings with legislators belonging to both the pro-Shiv Charan Mathur faction and the one opposed to him.

Later talking to newsmen Mr Singh declined to comment on the issue of any leadership change. He said the issues such as the change of the Chief Minister and PCC(I) chief were not in the agenda. Mr Singh also declined to comment on the spurt in the dissident activity in the state commenting on the reactions of the legislators, Mr Singh said some of the members waned the removal of the Chief Minister and the PCC(I) chief but the majority had no specific opinion in this regard.

The members of the committee, after completing their meetings with the MLAs by tonight, will meet the party leaders and office bearers of the PCC(I) and other tomorrow.

Gold bars worth 73 lakh recovered

The Air Intelligence Unit (AIU) has recovered 200 gold bars valued at Rs. 73.69 lakh from a Tanzanian lady who arrived from Hongkong recently. She had tied five cloth belts around her waist with the help of safety pins and each belt contained four packets with ten gold bars in each said AIU yesterday. She has been remanded to judicial custody till March 31.

Challenges to the defence industry

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

The Indian defence industry is at a critical juncture at this point. For several years running India has been the top importer for conventional weapons with abysmal indigenisation and virtually non-existent exports. Thus it has become important to have a reevaluation of defence policies in terms of both the procurement mechanism as well as the extent and scope of indigenisation in the defence industry today.

The Defence Procurement Policy which started in 2001 with subsequent amendments has become not only elaborate but more comprehensive in its approach. Yet for an evolving subject like defence the DPP too has to keep up with changing times. In the present context a major problem with regard to the DPP is the pricing mechanism. There is no relation between the actual cost and the price. There is a lack of commercial intelligence with regard to understanding what price must be paid for a particular product. The time factor in the process involved adds to the escalation of the costs which makes it imperative that better cost management policies are evolved. There is a need for a realistic qualitative minimum cost benefit analysis which and a situation where there are multivendor options available for the end user.

There is also pricing uncertainty in terms of spare parts and the uncertainty of costs of upgrade and overhaul adds to the quagmire of not being able to decide an effective price mechanism. The focus of the policy has to be the development of a strong industrial defence base with critical value addition in the country. Efforts must be made to develop key process in the country indigenously. Today the Defence PSU's (DPSU's) have primarily started operating as aggregators or assembly units sourcing components from private producers. Most of it is outsourced to foreign countries which warrant the need for a proper

outsourcing policy for the DPSU's. While further evaluating the DPP there is a need to differentiate between critical and non-critical Services Qualitative Requirements (SQR's). There is a need to stress on the critical sectors and keep redefining the critical SQR's with changing defence environment.

Policy and ideological issues sometimes act as a major hindrance towards evolving a realistic defence policy and eventually a better defence procurement procedure. For example it is important to understand and evaluate the need for the necessity of 10000 battle tanks to cut of Pakistan's supply lines in case of war. Such conventional thinking perhaps does not take into account the fact that both India and Pakistan are nuclear states and thus in a nuclear South Asia the needs of tanks in warfare is questionable. There is also absence of goal and an empowered structure in the defence policy mechanism.

Today in a changed industry environment it is important for the Defence Ministry to state its long term plan and objectives in a more transparent manner. This would help the industry to prepare itself and develop its capacities in accordance with the long term goal of the Defence Ministry. Often the backgrounds of the proposals are not evaluated properly and this is one aspect one needs to look at while preparing the policy proposal. The proposal has to be forward looking and must encompass a long term vision as well. The DPP procedure has no clear cut policy on when to have "India" and when to have "Buy and Make Indian" options among other. Such classifications should be laid out well and "Indian" should be the default option for all proposals so that it acts as an impetus for development of our own nascent defence industry. There is also a need to defend decisions which are made in good faith, very often when decisions are question the machinery goes into back-foot. Such

positions are not desirable and the government should stand by these decisions. There must also be a mechanism for suggestions of improvement at the trial stage. As the policy evolves there is a need to address issues as they arise and a proper mechanism must be developed to address this issue.

The processes under the DPP must be streamlined as well. On an average a contract takes 8 years under the present policy regime with 4 years on the policy formulation and 4 years for effective weapons procurement. And by the time 8 years pass the equipments need new set of upgrades. Thus we are stuck up in a perpetual "catch-up" policy. There is a need today to involve the end user the soldier too in formulating new policies. It has to be joint effort of all parts of the security apparatus to produce strong and tangible results. Field trials are a lengthy and cost consuming process for industries involved in the defence sector. A solution to this can be found in a cost sharing mechanism where government and industry share a small corpus towards conducting the field trails so that there are stakes at faster completion of field trials.

Rigid compartmentalisation of the defence apparatus has made decision making slow and painful. There is a need for better understanding and coordination among the various agencies working under the ambit of the security apparatus. Successful strategic nations across the world have been able to achieve this coordination among its various agencies and India too needs such a mechanism today. Exchange rate variation too sometimes add to the escalation of the costs of projects hence there is need to fix a price variation clause which is composed of both fixed and variable cost components.

There must be efforts to incentivise the domestic defence industry. Today

India lacks a pure domestic defence industry. Efforts must be made to support them by tax incentives among other measures. Various committees formed by the government have repeatedly listed out defence industry as one which is of critical importance to us. Thus it is imperative that the defence production industry is boosted by incentivising it in the lines of other industries like telecom etc.

Today the defence industry needs a "strategic defence review" which eventually can produce a realistic and proactive "war fighting doctrine". India has already missed two cycles of modernisation and if the defence policies are not set right there is a chance that India might miss the next cycle of modernisation as well. Indigenous technology is the key to achieving this goal. Indian companies often miss deadlines and the Defence PSU's work at an abysmal pace. This warrants the need for a restructuring of the defence PSU's and other industries in this field especially in the public sector. Foreign OEM's are often seen being favoured over Indian companies in terms of defence procurement. This policy needs a reevaluation there must be efforts to ensure a level playing field for both domestic and foreign industries.

No industry today can survive without state of the art R&D technologies as well as a pool of specially trained people manning their specified positions at different levels. There is a need to create a pool of trained individuals who can work in a cohesive manner to produce tangible results. This pool should consist of not only systems engineers and defence personals but also lawyers and technocrats so that policy understanding and evaluation is done in a proper manner by trained individuals. Industry ties up with universities can act as a big boost in this regard.

The defence industry stands at crossroads today and it is important for national security and integrity that it embarks on the right path.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

TO THE EDITOR

CMD, NEEPCO issue

Editor, The controversy regarding the appointment of Mr. AG West Kharkongor as CMD, NEEPCO, continues perhaps with valid reasons. I have close friends working in NEEPCO and am alarmed at these developments.

It is learnt that on taking over office, he immediately gave his first cousin brother Mr. Malcolm David Roy charge of three important offices - Corporate Planning Department, Corporate Finance Department and Corporate Monitoring Department. These offices were always held by three separate Executive Directors. In 2009, when he was appointed as Director (Finance), Mr Malcolm Roy was transferred to another Wing from Finance, perhaps to remove any scope of manipulation by members of a close family.

Another close relative of his wife Mr. M.S. Jyrwa is the Executive Director of project operations. This gives rise to the fear of manipulations so common and famous in our State. I

have learnt that senior officers of NEEPCO are not happy with the same since these were done by delaying the promotions of other eligible senior officers. The above three officers will retire by 2019 and there is no other senior Khasi officer eligible to take their place. The local employees are learned to be very unhappy with the functioning of Mr Kharkongor since his taking over considering the future implications. The letter from one Arunachal citizen in your esteemed daily of the Nov 7, 2016 is a wake-up call and deserves to be seriously contemplated by both these officers and KSU. Is such an attitude good or fair for the image of our people? Will it be in the interest of our people and State if the HQ of NEEPCO is shifted to Itanagar?

Yours etc.,
G Nonglait,
Via email

Demonetisation, good or bad?

Editor, Much has been written and discussed about demonetisation in the press and social media but none of us are in a position to know what exactly the impact would be on the economy. Even the RBI Governor, Urjit Patel wants to avoid

functioning. There are all kinds of speculations that the Demonetisation effort has actually failed to achieve its objectives since almost about 85% of cash has returned to the chequer till date. More is likely to be deposited by Dec 30. So are the gains nil? I would like to believe that political parties which actually hoard cash are affected. So too the black money hoarders! Demonetisation will affect elections in UP and Manipur. Let us wait and watch the real impact on the economy which we are told is likely to slow down and suffer a recession which will take seven years to recover. There are different economic theories floating around and it depends which side of the divide the economists are on. Bibek Deb Roy for instance believes all is good. But Amartya Sen calls this a financial emergency. Ordinary citizens are left wondering. How long will they take this rationing of money from their own accounts?

Yours etc.,
GR Nongrum,
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.

Firm appraisal of Demonetisation effect will take time

Technology must reach last mile for its success

By Nilanjan Banik

Considering 30 December as the deadline for exchanging old 500 and 1000 rupees notes, we are halfway through the days of demonetisation. Those in favour of demonetisation say this is a great move to unearth black money. Black money is disproportionately cornered by the rich and corrupt politicians. This demonetisation move will in fact bring back a smile in the face of the poor.

In fact, recent estimate suggests increase in income inequality - gap between the top 10 percentile and the poorest 50 percentile of the population - has been on the rise since 1995. The richest 1 per cent of the Indian population control 53 per cent of the country's wealth. Going by India Development Survey Report, India is more unequal in comparison to Russia, the US, China, and Brazil. The inequality is aggravated by the fact that the costs of healthcare and education - the two basic necessities of life - has grown faster than the growth in per capita income.

Therefore the proponents have their points. Quite contrary, the critics argue that demonetisation move is not going to affect the rich and powerful, as they know a way out. It is troublesome for the common man, especially when 90 per cent of all transactions are paid in cash. The brunt is more on those associated with the informal sector where 85 per

provided by Vodafone) are better equipped to absorb negative income shocks arising from poor health, crop failures, and job loss. Statistically comparable the household not availing MPESA service are likely to experience a 6 - 10 per cent reduction in consumption in response to similar income related shocks.

How well these inflows will be utilized towards economic growth, remains to be seen. Access to formal banking will increase saving rates, which will enable capital investment in sectors such as roads, ports, and railways. India needs to invest over USD 400 billion in infrastructure. As capital is scarce, a perfect capital market will ensure a higher return for each additional dollar of saving invested for building India's infrastructure. Importantly, access to banking will increase the productivity of the MSME sector, and aid the Make in India initiative. It is worth noting that only 5 per cent of the MSMEs have access to institutional finance, underscoring their need for financial inclusion, and to drive India's inclusive growth agenda.

People are reluctant to try new things unless these become necessary. The demonetisation will nudge a larger number of individuals to lessen their dependence on cash transactions and resort to digital modes.

The richest 1 per cent of the Indian population control 53 per cent of the country's wealth. Going by India Development Survey Report, India is more unequal in comparison to Russia, the US, China, and Brazil.

cent of the workers are paid in cash and accounts for 80 per cent of all jobs.

Notwithstanding the above critique, there is no doubt that the move creates a tremendous impetus towards greater financial inclusion. Demonetisation has operationalized the Jan-Dhan bank accounts, with around INR 64,000 crore deposits, based on recent statistics. It may be recalled that the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) was launched in 2014 to achieve greater financial inclusion, and has increased the bank account penetration from 35 per cent to 53 per cent during last three years. But around 74 per cent of these new accounts remained non-operational with zero balances.

Financial exclusion imposes a very high cost on people. 98 per cent of the people use non-banking channels such as hawala, and pay exorbitant costs to remit or receive money from their family member living in other countries. A survey of Indian migrant workers shows average commissions of 4.6 per cent when transferring money through informal routes, whereas money transfer in a formal banking system comes with little or no cost. Similarly, a meagre 10 per cent of Indians avail loans from banks. A person who is economically poor and does not have a bank account must access micro-finance - many times at usuriously high rates of 50 per cent or more; store his money in form of cash, livestock, or jewellery. The value of cash withers with inflation, jewellery runs the risk of theft, and livestock is perishable. All these adversely affect flow of income, and hence affect consumption smoothing. A study involving households in Kenya found people availing M-PESA service (banking through mobile, and the service is

Downloading of Paytm wallet (a mobile ecommerce company with a user base of over 150 million users) has tripled since 9th November. The earlier attempt of Reserve Bank of India granting permission to 11 Indian companies such as India Post, Reliance Industries, Airtel, Vodafone, etc. to venture into payment banking space came with limited success.

On its part the government needs to facilitate this transition into digital economy. The year on year growth rate of registered Internet users in India stands at an impressive 32 per cent. India has the second largest Internet user base in the world with more than 350 million users, after China with more than 600 million Internet users and the US with an estimated 279 million users.

For a populous country like India future strategy for financial inclusion will call for technology to reach the bottom of the pyramid. To facilitate use of Internet and digital transaction, the government can consider forming a Digital Sevak Dal - a network of young people to educate and support the Indian public in cities and rural areas to a cashless economy. Given the large unemployment, and that it requires minimal investment in education, the initiative can create large positive spin-offs. The Ministry of Telecommunication can join hands with Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, and facilitate laying of fiber cables to achieve greater digital inclusion. The initiative can pay for itself, since bringing people on digital banking platform will prevent leakages from subsidies. A study by McKinsey finds online payment of social benefits can save USD 22 billion per year. (IPA Service)

“To give real service you must add something which cannot be bought or measured with money, and that is sincerity and integrity.”

--- W. C. Fields

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 119 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2016

TN without Amma

J. JAYALALITHA, AIADMK Supremo and Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu died leaving a political void in her state and causing uncertainty nationwide. The seven time General Secretary popularly known as revolutionary leader, Jayalalitha took the party to new heights. Last May, she led the party to a historic win. The party cadres now feel orphaned. O Panneerselvam, a trusted lieutenant of Jayalalitha, has been accepted as stand-in CM but he hardly matches his leader’s stature. The major test for the ruling party is the upcoming local body polls. A political analyst has said that for unity to become strength, the party has to go through a presidium of sub-regional leaders. The jockeying for power in the AIADMK will be of advantage to the DMK though that is weakened by infighting. There is also uncertainty over the role of Sasikala, Jaya’s aide whose faultlines are now becoming prominent. She played a key role during Jaya’s illness, controlling access to the leader and will be a vital factor in ensuring stability in future. Panneerselvam may be designated in a formal manner but only support from Sasikala will preserve his strength and enable him to maintain relations between the government and the party. On the other hand, it may lead to a power struggle.

It is not clear if legislators will accept a new CM chosen by Sasikala. Challenges will arise in the near future. The caste equation will come into play. There may be a split and a breakaway group which may go over to the DMK. All this is speculation. The AIADMK will of course be dependent on its close ties with the Centre. Support of the Raj Bhavan is a must. The BJP will do its best to dig in the state to fill the political space. The Congress does not seem to be on a good wicket in the race for a stable position.

LOOKING BACK
March 16, 1989

To be or not to be competitive

Right through the fortnight fare of fun, frenzy and films the one question that repeatedly popped its head in the just concluded international film festival at New Delhi was: Is it wise for the Indian festival to go non-competitive when it was beginning to claim a modicum of respectability in the cinema capitals of the world? India has hitherto been hosting competitive fetes in Delhi every alternate year, with the non-competitive film-otsavs in the intervening years in different films cities.

However, the Government took a policy decision in August last to have only non-competitive festivals in future. The decision-based on various considerations including consultations with filmmakers and critics-was a part of the Government's efforts to streamline the affairs in the field of cinema. The Government gave several reasons for its decision among them the inability to get food films in view of the timing of the Indian festival, the preference of filmmakers to go to more prestigious festivals like Cannes and Berlin, and the saving of about a million rupees spent on the jury and the competition.

The decision had been taken after consulting those filmmakers who generally attended film festivals abroad and therefore knew what Indian festivals had to contend with. The announcement of the decision expectedly stirred up a hornet's nest, with both filmmakers and film critics protesting vociferous. Among the filmmakers who came out against the decision were Mr GP Sippy, Vice-President of the Film

Federation of India (FFI), and Mr Tijay Anand, president of the All India Film Producers Council. A number of critics wrote to the Prime Minister urging him to reintroduce competitive in the film festival.

The Government constituted a five-member sub committee to look into the matter afresh, simultaneously making it clear that it decision to keep the 12th festival non-competitive will remain unchanged. Meanwhile, the International Federation of Film Producers' Association (IFFPA) accepted the Government decision. And despite the government's announcement of a re-think on the issue, the debate overshadowed the Twelfth IFFI itself, and the matter was discussed every day at some forum, public or private. Divergent views were expressed and both Government officials and filmmakers and film critics participated in these discussions.

Personally, he said, he did not see any future in competitive film festivals, especially within the present budgetary allocations. However, he said that the government's mind was open on this issue and competitive fetes may be introduced later, if found necessary. The government spokesman claimed that the non-competitive character may have contributed to better audience response this year. Meanwhile, in interviews conducted during the festival, Indian and foreign delegates generally favoured limiting the competition to Asia while throwing open the other sections to world cinema.

Demonetisation: The good, the bad, the ugly and the sinister

By Patricia Mukhim

No matter what happens to our old notes, how they are shredded and how they are converted to cardboard, ordinary citizens have not lost money. It has been replaced by more colourful currency. Yes, we have lost time and patience at having to queue up to withdraw our own money and this is humiliating. Prime Minister Modi has left the people of this country with no option but to grin and bear. And no, we as citizens don't have time to join this war on black money. That's the brief of a Government who, if we recall, was elected on the plank of minimum government, maximum governance. But minimum government today is a farce. We are told how much of our own money to withdraw. Every day new rules emanate from Government and the Reserve Bank of India. Now we will need the Aadhar card for Paytm and other online banking transactions! We don't really know what we have got ourselves into. And yes, some people with already frail health died while in the ATM queues for which the NDA Government and the BJP in particular will have to answer big time, come election time.

Demonetisation will definitely affect the UP elections. It will also curtail the fun and frolic associated with elections in our own state where bye-elections to the two autonomous district councils are taking place after the passage of the Prevention of Disqualification (Members of Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya) (Amendment) Act, 2015 last year which seeks to put an embargo on holding of dual posts by the MLAs. It remains to be seen how this bye-election plays out – the first since demonetisation.

While the short term impact of demonetisation is immediately visible and it's not a happy story, we are repeatedly coaxed to wait for the long term impact. The short term impact has hit those in the suburbs and villages the hardest because they don't know how to make the transition from purely cash transactions to what is now touted as the new "cashless" mantra. Those using words like "cashless" don't even know what they are talking about. Many people I know don't yet have bank accounts despite the Jan Dhan

adventure. There are those whose accounts have been deactivated for want of documents to prove their identity and who have failed the "Know Your Customer (KYC) test. How will they make their daily transactions? Would anyone like to listen to their stories? Those who claim the villagers are going back to barter are hallucinating. Farmers need to buy soap, oil, and other groceries which they cannot exchange with their produce. How does a butcher exchange groceries with meat? Crazy suggestions! Yet people question your patriotism when you are not exuberant about Mr Modi's November 8, "surgical strike."

The short term impact is that tourism has suffered a hit. Tour operators and hotels have reported heavy cancellations. Tourists caught in the November 8, emergency have had a harrowing experience and might think twice about visiting India where legal tender prior to November 8 have become pieces of paper the next day. Tourists carrying old cash have had to struggle to exchange it at banks and queue up at cashless ATMs. A foreigner rightly remarked that demonetisation could make the Indian public lose faith in their currency. But the obverse is also true. There are people who are so paranoid about the rationing out of their own money from ATMs that they now prefer to keep cash at home as they used to do with the old notes.

For the long term impacts we need to hear what Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia had to say two days ago. He says the government expects the entire money in circulation in the form of currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 which have been scrapped to come back to the banking system so that the tax authority can trace the transactions and tax black money hoarders. What does this translate into? It effectively undermines the prospect of any windfall gains accruing to the government arising out of part of the demonetised currency remaining outside the banking system. Soon after the government announced the note cancellation, some experts had projected that part of the demonetised currency notes amounting to Rs 14.17 lakh crore at the end of March 2016, would not return to the banks but a substantial amount has.

An estimated Rs 11 lakh

crore has been deposited in banks so far and if the all the high-value notes in circulation comes back to the banking system as the Revenue Secretary indicated, Mr Modi may have to answer to the nation about the cost and impact of the demonetisation exercise spread over 50 days. The Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), an economic forecasting agency, has put the cost of demonetisation for 50 days from November 8 to Dec 30 at Rs 1,28,000 crore which includes loss of business or sales, cost to households, the expenses for printing fresh currency notes to the government and the RBI and also loss of man hours/days for banks. The onus will be on the government to show that the gains, including the stiff penalties on those found violating rules, negate the cost of the exercise. It remains to be seen how the Government explains this queer phenomenon.

As of December 6, the banks have received Rs 11.55 lakh crore as deposits of the demonetized high currency notes. This works out to 82.5% of the Rs 14 lakh crore that was rendered illegitimate by midnight of November 8 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 bank notes. The Modi Government had calculated that something like Rs 3 lakh crore in bank notes may not come back, thereby wiping out that amount of black money held in cash within the country. But the latest report that 11.55 lakh crore has come back as deposits with the number expected to rise as we get closer to December 30, 2016 is mind boggling. It means that black money has returned into the system through the Jan Dhan account route. This in turn has alerted the Enforcement Directorate to scrutinise those accounts that suddenly became active. So while people try to evade the law, stricter laws are being imposed on ordinary citizens. The discretionary powers of the government have only expanded to touch more aspects of our private lives.

Indeed this living at the edge has taken a toll on all of us even as we deal with new regulations every day. On November 9, we were told that we could not withdraw more than Rs 2,000 from ATMs till

November 18 and Rs 4,000 after that. Then on November 13, we were told that the cash withdrawal at ATMs had risen to RS 2,500 per day in the recalibrated ATMs. But many of us could not access that cash especially those of us living in the periphery.

Then we had Finance Minister Arun Jaitley saying that smaller deposits of Rs 1.5-2 lakh in Jan Dhan accounts would not be scrutinised. But on Nov 15 the upper limit for deposits into the same account is reduced to Rs 50,000. On November 18, Government cautioned account holders that they would be prosecuted under the I-T Act for allowing misuse of their bank accounts through deposit of black money in Rs 500/1,000 notes during the 50-day window till December 30. The directive came against the backdrop of reports of misuse of accounts of tribals who don't pay income tax or the Jan Dhan accounts.

The Government now claims that deposits into Jan Dhan accounts have reduced after it warned people of stern action if the account holders allowed their accounts to be used for converting black money into white. The total amount deposited during November 8-15 were Rs 20,206 crore, while during November 16-22, people deposited Rs 11,347 crore in such accounts. This came down to Rs 4,867 crore during November 23-30 and to Rs 410 crore on December 1 and Rs 389 crore on December 2. Hence the average per account deposit in Jan Dhan accounts so far is Rs 13,113. According to the Central Board for Direct Taxes this is not so alarming given the need to bring all cash to banks. The Income Tax Department has identified the local clusters and bank branches where the inflows of Jan Dhan deposits have been more than normal, in order to investigate deposits belonging to someone else in those accounts.

The sinister part is that some person called me up past midnight December 7 to ask me to write an article against demonetisation and Modi. He claimed to represent the Times of India (ToI) but the only correspondent of that paper in Shillong does not know this person. Quite likely he is someone badly hit by demonetisation and his moves are sinister indeed.

Time will tell what how the demonetisation actually unfolds and whether the gains exceed the losses so far.

Tamil Nadu politics at crossroads after Jayalalithaa

Panneerselvam will face tough test to prove his worth

By Amulya Ganguli

It is a paradox of the Indian social and political scene that in a country where female infanticide is a scourge there have been women leaders who have attained the status of goddesses. Indra Gandhi was one of them, who still comes out on top in popular polls on prime ministers. Now, Jayalalithaa will join the ranks of those who are revered for their achievements for decades.

Although like Indira, the Puratchi Thalaivi or the revolutionary leader of Tamil Nadu, was also known for her authoritarianism and was not free of the taint of corruption, she was still seen as someone who had dedicated her political life to the welfare of the poor. A standard way of

member state assembly, the DMK is not a pushover.

Its disadvantages are, first, the advanced age of its supreme leader, M. Karunanidhi (he is 92), and, secondly, the sibling rivalry between his two sons, M. K. Alagiri and M.K. Stalin. But if the party gets a sniff of power in the event of a factional strife in the AIADMK, the differences in the DMK might simmer down. After all, there is only a nine per cent difference between the two Kazaghams.

Whatever the outcome of these equations, there is little doubt that the period of two-party rule in Tamil Nadu politics is coming to an end. For one, the void in the AIADMK caused by Jayalalithaa's death will not

The other minor local parties like Vaiko's MDMK or Vijayakanth's DMDK are likely to remain what they are with the likelihood of some of their cadres looking for fresh pastures in an unstable AIADMK and an equally shaky DMK. Overall, therefore, the political scene in Tamil Nadu will be wobbly in the foreseeable future. To a considerable extent, Jayalalithaa can be held responsible for this unwholesome state of affairs because her autocratic and domineering style – she liked her followers to lie prostrate before her while paying their obeisance – ensured that there will neither be a second rung of leadership in her own party, nor allow promising talented politicians to emerge elsewhere in the political field.

consolidating a person's political position, populist schemes initiated by her had ensured her party, the AIADMK's electoral success.

It goes without saying that her successors will have no option but to follow her policies as diligently as possible. However, they will have to remember that these include not only freebies for the needy, but were also aimed at ensuring Tamil Nadu's development in the fields of industry and information technology.

Those who will now take the reins of power in their hands will have to see to it that this twin process of providing succour to the less affluent sections while continuing industrial growth does not falter in Jayalalithaa's absence.

Obviously, this is a tall order and neither the present chief minister, O. Panneerselvam, nor anyone else who may succeed him may be up to the mark. But this is not the only reason why Tamil Nadu can be said to be entering a rocky period. For a start, it is not known how long Panneerselvam will last in his office, or whether he will feel totally secure during his tenure.

As long as it was assumed that he had Jayalalithaa's approval, he was safe from other challengers. But they are bound to come to the fore after a few months. Among those about whom there is already some speculation is Jayalalithaa's companion of many years, Shasikala Natarajan. Then, there is Munisamy Thambidurai, deputy leader of the Lok Sabha, who may assert his claim after a while.

Much depends, of course, on Panneerselvam's talents in governance and in keeping other aspirants at bay. He will also be aware that the AIADMK's arch-rival, the DMK, is waiting in the wings. It has to be remembered that with 89 seats and 31.6 per cent of the votes in the 234-

be easy to fill; and, for another, the DMK under an aged Karunanidhi and his sons who do not have their father's popular appeal will never be as dominant as before.

It is by default that the two parties will continue to play a major role for some time because there is no other outfit which can challenge them. The Congress, which has played second fiddle to the two Kazaghams all these years, will be unable to rise to the occasion if only because it is in a sorry condition even at the national level and does not have either the leader or the ideology to make its presence felt.

The other minor local parties like Vaiko's MDMK or Vijayakanth's DMDK are likely to remain what they are with the likelihood of some of their cadres looking for fresh pastures in an unstable AIADMK and an equally shaky DMK. Overall, therefore, the political scene in Tamil Nadu will be wobbly in the foreseeable future.

To a considerable extent, Jayalalithaa can be held responsible for this unwholesome state of affairs because her autocratic and domineering style – she liked her followers to lie prostrate before her while paying their obeisance – ensured that there will neither be a second rung of leadership in her own party, nor allow promising talented politicians to emerge elsewhere in the political field.

Just as Jawaharlal Nehru was sometimes described as a banyan tree under which nothing grew, Jayalalithaa, too, was someone whose presence had a stifling effect on others.

As for the rest of the country, the hope will be that there is no pause in Tamil Nadu's industrial progress, for it is a matter of considerable interest all over India. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Rules made to be broken?

Editor,
Talk about flouting of rules and regulations by those in authority and there you have it being displayed by the highest authority in the bureaucracy, the IAS in our state. It is really sad that those in power and authority are usually the ones that display optimum disregard of rules and laws. Just as the reporter correctly pointed out that the IAS officers are the ones who are to set examples instead they are seen vehemently disregarding rules. At this juncture, one wishes to state another such defiance of rules seen on the road especially at NO ENTRY, No Parking points.

Government vehicles are usually seen flouting rules and ignoring various prohibitions like NO Entry, No Right Turn, No Parking, etc. They would simply ignore these sign

boards that are to be strictly adhered to by the general public. It is common knowledge that common citizens do try to slyly break these signboards but once caught they are shouted out and are reminded of rules and laws that government vehicles and officials are exempted from. Ironic isn't it?

However one only wishes that the wrongs would be set right. One only wishes that those in the helm of affairs and those who are blessed with utmost education and literacy would be more law abiding.

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Via email

SC ruling on national anthem

Editor,
The Supreme Court of India has cited Article 51A (a) of the Constitution of India which says, "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to abide by the Constitution and respect its

ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem", in its recent order directing all cinema halls in the country to play the National Anthem before the show. The Article 51A of the Constitution of India deals with our Fundamental Duties. It is a pity that while 51A (a) of our Constitution is always being highlighted, 51A (h) has been consigned to oblivion. The latter says, "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform." The need of the hour is to monitor and censor those advertisements and programmes in powerful electronic media (TV and Internet) that are spoiling for a fight with the spirit of this article. Those regressive propaganda are trying to embed in our mindsets all sorts of prejudices, superstitions and backwardness. They are creating such an

environment where we cannot discharge this very Fundamental Duty which is the lifeblood of our Constitution.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Rejoinder

Editor,
Apropos the letter, "Agonies of St Rose School" (ST Nov 28, 2016) the management after thorough introspection and discussion felt that the allegations are unfounded and baseless. However the Managing Committee has noted with concern the allegations levelled and necessary action is being taken so that such criticisms are not made public but dealt with internally. However, we welcome suggestions, advise etc., for the betterment of the school.

Yours etc.,
T Nongdhar,
Secretary,
Managing Committee
St Rose Secondary School

“To sit in the shade on a fine day, and look upon verdure is the most perfect refreshment.”

--- Jane Austen

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 120 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2016

Another defence scam

After several rounds of questioning, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Friday arrested former Air Force Chief, SP Tyagi, his cousin Sanjeev, and a lawyer in the sensational Rs 450 crore bribery case for the procurement of 12 VVIP helicopters from a UK based firm Agusta Westland during the UPA-2 government. Air Chief Marchal Tyagi who retired in 2007 was called for questioning at CBI Headquarters along with his cousin and Chandigarh-based lawyer Gautam Khaitan, who were taken into custody after nearly four hours of grilling. These are the first arrests in the case by CBI which came three years after it registered an FIR in 2013 to probe the allegations following details of the scam emerging in Italy where the prosecutors levelled allegations of corruption in the deal against the chief of Finmeccanica, the parent company of Agusta Westland. Ironically, SP Tyagi was also a member of The National Security Advisory Board in 2010-12 during the UPA regime.

CBI spokesperson, Devpreet Singh has stated that in 2005 the Chief of Air Staff (CAS) had entered into criminal conspiracy with other accused persons and agreed to change the IAF's consistent stand that service ceiling of VVIP Helicopters of 6000 meters was imperative for smooth operational necessity and reduced the same to 4500 meters instead. This change in Operational Requirements (ORs) made it eligible for the UK based company Agusta Westland to participate in the Request for Proposal for VVIP Helicopters. The CBI found that undue favours were shown to Agusta Westland in lieu of illegal gratification from the vendors through middlemen who included Tyagi's cousin and an advocate who accepted the bribe for exercising influence through illegal means and using their personal influence over the Air Chief at the time.

Over the last three years Tyagi and his cousin have denied having taken any bribes to influence the deal. Air Chief Marshal Tyagi even stated that the change of specifications, which allowed Agusta Westland to participate in the bid was a collective decision in which senior officers of Indian Air Force, SPG and other departments were involved. While the investigation into this deal continues, questions cannot but be raised about the airworthiness of India's air defence installations and equipments if high ranking defence officials are lacking in integrity.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Bodo militants killed 2 VDP s 1 cop

Bodo militants killed two Village Defence Party (VDP) members and a police constable and injured four others in two separate encounters yesterday in the trouble torn Udalguri subdivision and Kokrajhar district of Assam, Police said today. Two VDP members Mr Chetan Chowhan and Mr Dinabandoo Kalita were killed and another member injured when Bodo militants fired on a patrol party last night at Dandupaara village last night. The injured person was admitted to the hospital police said.

A police constable was killed and three other injured when the extremists ambushed a police patrol party at Maupani under Kokrajhar police station yesterday. The injured policemen were admitted to the hospital. Meanwhile, the centre has agreed to release 14 more companies of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) soon on request of the state government to run trains and maintain law and order during the proposed 15 day "Assam bandh" called by the All Bodo Students Union (Upendra faction) from March 27.

The ABSU has also called a 48-hour statewide bandh from five am tomorrow in protest against the centre's "reluctance" to sign an accord to create a separate

Bodoland . The Northeast Frontier Railway has announced cancellation or regulation of a number of long distance trains tomorrow and the day after in view of the bandh. The ABSU, however, established contact with the state government through a mediator and reiterated their demand for the presence of central representative during their talks with the state government. They informed the state government that they were keen to have negotiations with the state and central governments.

City host to National Conf. on Nehru & tribals

The Gujrat Chief Minister Mr Amar Singh Chowdhury will deliver the keynote address at a conference on "Nehru and Tribal Wealth" to be held in Shillong on 16-17 March Meghalaya Chief Minister Mr Purno A Sangma will preside over the inaugural function. The conference, which is being organized under the auspices of the Union Welfare Ministry in collaboration with the North Eastern Council and the Meghalaya Government will be inaugurated by the Union Minister of State for Welfare Mrs. Rajendra Kumari Bajpai.

Narendra Modi's gamble will face test in Uttar Pradesh assembly poll

Demonetisation and 2017-18 budget proposals to form BJP agenda

By Nitya Chakraborty

The people of Uttar Pradesh through BJP in the next state poll in early 2017 and before that in the election campaign, he will test his popularity by making the

to project Modi as the Messiah against the black money and the rich and the impression will be given that in Uttar Pradesh, all other parties including Samajwadi

One month is already over since Prime Minister Narendra Modi singlehandedly went for the gamble by demonetising the high value Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 notes from the midnight of November 8. The opposition parties have been paralysing the Parliament proceedings on the issue while hundreds of people are still queuing before the ATMs and the banks with a large majority failing to withdraw their own funds. It has been a total paralysis in the banking system and all seasoned economists are saying that the demonetisation with the objective of unearthing black money, has been a thoroughly wrong step and the Prime Minister made a massive blunder by taking this unprecedented step without adequate preparations at the RBI and the commercial banks level.

On December 7, at the monetary policy committee meeting of the RBI, Governor Dr. Urjit Patel failed to give any indication when the situation will be normal. He only gave some general observations that the situation was improving. Rather former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, with solid facts on the basis of his information from sources in the Government came out with the startling observation that the situation would not return to normalcy even after six months and the objective of unearthing of black money will be defeated as fresh channels will be created for generating black funds from new notes. What was the need for giving such serious pains for a long term then? What is the objective of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi?

Herein comes the crucial issue. Narendra Modi is not a fool. He might have gambled and has taken risks but there is a method in his madness. He has some calculations and he is working in that direction by focusing all the attention on cashless society and digitisation instead of unearthing black money. His focus is now the assembly elections in the five states and especially Uttar Pradesh. Narendra Modi wants to get political sanction from

demonetisation and the budget proposals to be presented on February 1 as his campaign plank.

There are two aspects of the Prime Minister's planning. Modi is preparing a plan to make use of the Jhan Dhan deposits available with the Banks by filling the coffers of these small depositors with a minimum amount of Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 40,000 as one time deposits from the Government. This will be put as one time deposits for nearly 250 million bank depositors and this amount, Prime Minister will claim, has been mobilized from the additional funds which have been made possible as a result of his demonetisation move. This decision of the Government might be a part of the so called pro-poor budget proposals to be unfolded by the Modi government on February 1.

Simultaneously, the PM's people have a feeling that as time will pass and the present strains are minimized, the campaign level of the Government and the BJP will be stepped up

“The Congress has to launch massive campaign for Uttar Pradesh polls and there is a need for an understanding with the SP in Uttar Pradesh. UP poll is the litmus test for both Modi and the opposition. If the BJP wins in Uttar Pradesh polls, there is no way Narendra Modi can be prevented from winning Lok Sabha polls in 2019.”

Party, BSP and the Congress are depending on black funds for electoral campaign and they are most bitter as a result of demonetisation. BJP under Narendra Modi, is the only Party which has effectively fought the black money evil and organized substantial bank deposits for the poor from the ill gotten wealth of the rich. If the JDY borrowers really get bulk amount from the Government before UP and Punjab polls, that will have some impact in influencing the sentiment in favour of Narendra Modi.

That way Modi is looking at the coming assembly elections as a referendum in favour of his programme. This is a make or break situation for him. He is agog with the idea that he is on the verge of building a cashless digital highly industrialized India and he will be remembered for this pioneering role in leapfrogging India. This is his political planning right now but can it click? The economics of the decision on demonetisation goes

against the hard ground reality. Investments cannot pick up with this massive liquidity crunch. The informal sector is starved of funds resulting in loss of huge employment. The rural demand is not picking up and the industry can not expect demand push in the current fiscal. So on what Mr. Modi is depending for the success of his gamble?

Yes, Narendra Modi is getting confidence because of the precarious condition of the Congress and disunity among the anti-BJP parties. The Congress is yet to focus its attention on UP polls which are crucial. Sonia Gandhi is ill and Rahul Gandhi has not yet taken over officially. The Congress has to launch massive campaign for Uttar Pradesh polls and there is a need for an understanding with the SP in Uttar Pradesh. UP poll is the litmus test for both Modi and the opposition. If the BJP wins in Uttar Pradesh polls, there is no way Narendra Modi can be prevented from winning Lok Sabha polls in 2019.

Perhaps it is high time that ailing Sonia Gandhi calls a meeting of the senior leaders of the former Congress Parties like Trinamool Congress, NCP and the YSR Congress and few others belonging to the original Congress Party and work out active collaboration. The BJP can be defeated only by joint efforts of the opposition based on a sound programme. The process has to start from Uttar Pradesh. Ways have to be found out to prevent BJP from winning the largest populous state of the country which is the gateway to power at the centre. Narendra Modi has thrown up a challenge of demonetisation which is his own agenda and he is determined to make it a success for ensuring his own political future. If he succeeds, the way will be facilitated for the full takeover by Hindutva forces. The very concept of Indian nation is under threat. For the Congress, other non Left opposition and the Left, the time is running out. If BJP can be defeated in UP and Punjab, Modi juggernaut can be halted for the time being. The opposition, especially the Congress can neglect this task only at its own peril. (IPA Service)

It is now an item of faith for planners that for addressing gender issues we need to change social dynamics, and this won't happen without women's fuller involvement in all major spheres - education, economy, politics and governance. We have for long made paternalistic decision to "protect" these women, thereby eliminating their ability to solve issues they decide for themselves how to address their issues? Why couldn't we equip them to make their own decisions? Panchayat Raj is another name for this agency or power.

The devolution of power was not so seamless and was beset with several hassles and it had to ride several storms before it could settle down. This is not unusual. All revolutions are marked by tremors and seismic changes. But the growing pains now seem to be ebbing. Elected women heads of village councils have been gaining control and several of them are now able to bring about visible development.

Women have catalysed change in large swathes of rural India. This is despite the fact that female leaders had low literacy levels and socio-economic status, and little experience, ambition or political prospects until they assume leadership positions. During my recent visit to villages, where I had worked as a banker almost a decade back, I found local campaigns to share basic resources like land and water, to build schools, trading co-operatives and credit movements, and to make the Government accountable at the highest and lowest levels. These are the small revolutions that are changing the world. Women leaders today are more than just mouthpieces for their politically savvy husband. For most women reserved posts offer the only real opportunity to bring change to their communities.

In Wanoja village in northern Maharashtra, Nirmal Ghehate, a development activist whom I mentored, was elected as Sarpanch without a contest. I was wonderstruck by the transformation she has brought about. There's a bank, a school, women are out of the house and

one of those big cable dish. So the after school period in those years were spent in taking instructions from my big brother to move the antenna so as to make it point towards that big cable dish as far as possible in the hope that our TV set might be able to catch our favourite channels like Channel V and Star Movies. Seeing Bryan Adams strumming his guitar in those days was like heaven to us and we kept on waiting for our favourite Richard Marx song to appear on TV. On a more serious note we should be ashamed of ourselves that the only visible impact that the reforms of 1991 left in our lives are memories of watching cable television. If good politics is all about good governance and good governance is all about effective economic policies and clean governance, then where is Meghalaya as a State at this very moment? Yours etc., Gary Marbaniang, 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.

Social Change

A taste of women power

By Moin Qazi

If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman. ---Margaret Thatcher.

It has been over 20 years since the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts - termed as post-Independent India's most revolutionary exercise in democratic decentralisation and devolution of power - were passed by Parliament. These mandated that one-third seats in all local governments be reserved for women. The biggest significance of women's reservation was that it unlocked the power, talent and determination of millions of women for driving a new social change that would redefine the contours of rural society. Today we can see visible gains of that piece of legislation -- 1.2 million village women are making their entry into public life every five years. Many of them are unlettered but they use their quotidian wisdom and sharp instincts to steer development in their communities. As Gandhi stated: "Panchayat Raj represents true democracy realised. We would regard the humblest and the lowest Indian as being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land." Gandhi wanted to see each village a little republic, self-sufficient in its vital wants, organically and non-hierarchically linked with the larger spatial bodies and enjoying the maximum freedom of deciding the affairs of the locality.

It is now an item of faith for planners that for addressing gender issues we need to change social dynamics, and this won't happen without women's fuller involvement in all major spheres - education, economy, politics and governance. We have for long made paternalistic decision to "protect" these women, thereby eliminating their ability to solve issues they decide for themselves how to address their issues? Why couldn't we equip them to make their own decisions? Panchayat Raj is another name for this agency or power.

The devolution of power was not so seamless and was beset with several hassles and it had to ride several storms before it could settle down. This is not unusual. All revolutions are marked by tremors and seismic changes. But the growing pains now seem to be ebbing. Elected women heads of village councils have been gaining control and several of them are now able to bring about visible development.

Women have catalysed change in large swathes of rural India. This is despite the fact that female leaders had low literacy levels and socio-economic status, and little experience, ambition or political prospects until they assume leadership positions. During my recent visit to villages, where I had worked as a banker almost a decade back, I found local campaigns to share basic resources like land and water, to build schools, trading co-operatives and credit movements, and to make the Government accountable at the highest and lowest levels. These are the small revolutions that are changing the world. Women leaders today are more than just mouthpieces for their politically savvy husband. For most women reserved posts offer the only real opportunity to bring change to their communities.

In Wanoja village in northern Maharashtra, Nirmal Ghehate, a development activist whom I mentored, was elected as Sarpanch without a contest. I was wonderstruck by the transformation she has brought about. There's a bank, a school, women are out of the house and

working on village improvement projects such as sanitation systems and vegetable gardens. They have started small businesses. People eat more nutritious food, they use mosquito nets and repellents to ward off mosquitoes. They know they must boil water for drinking to protect the family from water-borne diseases. Even more remarkable is the social transformation that the movement has wrought. No one drinks. Only a handful smoke! There hasn't been a crime here in years. Even the practice of untouchability has weakened. The village is brisk and prosperous. Signs of rural modernity abound.

"We think this is due to a role-model effect: Seeing women in charge persuaded parents and teens that women can run things, and increased their ambitions. Changing perceptions and giving hope can have an impact on reality", says Nirmala. It is not that women are purer than men or immune to the pull of greed. But there is almost a certainty that women will channel money into solving more fundamental issues and avoid grandiose schemes that may be for the good of just the elite. When men control all the levers of money there is more likelihood that it will be invested in big-ticket construction projects such as road building where corruption is rife, rather than in schools or clinics.

It's about changing the gender imbalance and then we could do a better job of tackling our problems. From what we can glean, you can tell this would have a salutary effect," repeats Nirmala. Anecdotal evidence supports the view that with more women in public office the quality of government improves, and with that corruption falls. The World Bank's annual World Development Report has credited the new governance for increasing the provision of clean water, sanitation, schools and other public goods in the villages, and for lower levels of corruption. The communities with women as pradhans (head) had larger quantities of key public services overall. Nor was quality sacrificed for quantity—facilities in the women-led villages were of at least as high quality on average as in the communities with traditional male leadership.

The lesson of PRI is clear: if the wisdom of women at the grassroots is to become policy, it will have to be by restructuring of a political system that brings their voice on the dialogue and negotiating table. Bringing women into power is thus not only a matter of equity but also of correcting an unjust and unrepresentative system. Many believe that the removal of poverty, the improvement of particularly female literacy, improvement in health of girl children, the achievement of full employment and social integration cannot be effectively addressed without the kind of democratisation of the representative process that we are seeing in rural India. Political restructuring is key to economic growth with justice. During my entire professional life in which I have connected with a vast spectrum of communities of women, I found they have both the instinct and determination to bring about a change in their own families and in communities around them. All they need is opportunity. Everyone is born equally capable but lacks equal opportunity. These women inspire us, and they serve as good examples of how millions of brave and industrious women are working their way up the ladder, with dignity and pride. --- INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Well played game!

Editor, We want to congratulate the Pyndengrei Sports Club for the triumphant victory of the NDSA football tournament super division 2016 which was held on 8th of December 2016. The hard work of all the players and the office bearers of the club as a whole has genuinely paid off. The return of the former secretary of the club, Phirat Marwein to the field to manage the team once again and his tactic of exchanging of players on the right timing was truly his masterpiece and a stroke of genius. The goal scored by Teiborlang Sohlngpiaw a senior player of the team and the efforts put the captain and by all the players has led the team to this massive victory. We also want to congratulate the rival team Nongpyndeng FC for having worked so hard to reach the Finals and face off with the Champion team Pyndengrei SC. We would like to thank the NDSA for this beautiful tournament which truly resonated the beauty of

football and sports which has united the Nongstoin locality as a whole.

Yours etc., Mickey Marwein & Pilez Lyngdoh, Marhillong, Via email

25 years of economic reforms & Meghalaya

American country superstar, Alan Jackson released a beautiful touching song, "Where were you when the world stop turning" as a rallying song for the American people in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. The American nation was shaken to the core and the whole world sympathised with them through their moment of grief and loss. 25 years on after the biggest economic reforms in our own country, can we ask ourselves another question? Where were we when the wheels started spinning for the Indian economy? 1991 was the year that India experienced the mother of all crisis which in turn led to the biggest economic reforms in the country and India has not

looked back ever since. As a young toddler I was still singing nursery rhymes and learning to write a,b,c in nursery school when that momentous occasion took place. The rest of you reading this letter might not have been born or some of you may have gone through the most important phases in your lives like starting a family or watching your children graduate from college during that period. The pertinent question we should ask ourselves this very moment is whether we are even aware that such a change took place in the country or are most of us so caught up in our own small worlds that we even failed to realize the fact that India went through a life changing experience in 1991? The one visible effect of 1991 that all of us who grew up in an urban setting might have experienced but never knew that it was the side effect of what happened in 1991 was the onset of cable television. I grew up in a middle class family in the heart of the city. My parents had purchased a new colour TV a few years after I was born and immediately after 1991 a rich neighbour who lives just a few metres from our home had just installed

Let the world experience Ahom history

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

The history of the great Ahom dynasty can be traced nearly 785 years ago when in the early 13th century, Sukaphaa, a Shan prince, began his journey with about 9,000 followers, mostly men. He crossed the Patkai hills and reached the Brahmaputra valley in 1228. He moved from place to place, searching for a seat. He decided not to attack the local tribes like the Morans and the Barahis but befriended them instead. His followers married into the local ethnic groups.

Sukaphaa finally established his capital at Charaideo near present day Sivasagar in 1253 and began the great task of state formation. The great Ahoms ruled for 600 years giving peace, tranquillity and building a stronger state which was able to withstand even the mighty Mughal army for 16 times. Apart from the kingdoms in the Deccan no other kingdom had ever been able to stand up to the mighty Mughals as the Ahoms had done. Like every great kingdom the Ahoms too had build some magnificent architecture as a testimony to their might and power. Some of the famous architectural marvels include the Rang Ghar, the Talatal Ghar and the Shiva deol, among others.

In modern times these monuments have been a sign of the greatness of the Ahom kingdom and also a source of pride for the Assamese people. These monuments stand testimony to the might of the kingdom that ruled for 600 years.

The Ahom kingdom gave the very definition of the greater Assamese society weaving a multi-ethnic mosaic of Assamese culture with different tribes coming together to form the very basis of the greater Assamese society. As citizens of Assam, it is our duty to honour the dynasty and there is no better way than showing their architectural marvels to the world.

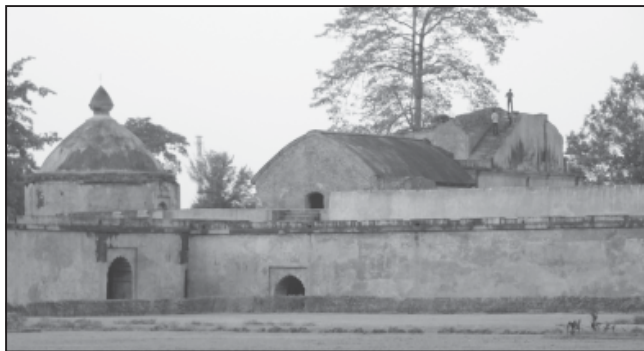
It is in the light of the above mentioned condition that a proper roadmap is needed to preserve the ancient Ahom monuments.

Assam has for long not been able to exploit its tourism sector owing to the lack of a proper development model. It is time a new approach is taken up with emphasis on eco-friendly tourism and delivering package based models instead of mere sightseeing tours.

While discussing about the tourism model in Assam, we must identify the major constraints in monuments conservation and tourism today. It may be classified into four major areas — lack of proper conservation techniques, lack of awareness, problem of infrastructural maintenance funding and linking up tourism with these monuments.

In the first case when we talk of problems plaguing the tourism industry in case of preserving monuments, the first thing that comes to our mind is the lack of knowledge

Assam govt should preserve ancient monuments & promote them for tourism



(Above) Rang Ghar and Talatal Ghar stand testimony to the might of the Ahom kingdom that ruled for 600 years. In modern times these monuments have been a sign of the greatness of the Ahom kingdom and also a source of pride for the Assamese people

regarding proper conservation techniques. Generally the methods employed by ASI (Archaeological survey of India) are not on a par with modern conservation techniques. Second, there is a dearth of local expert officials who possess wider knowledge about the local conditions. Third, the manpower itself in this sector is very low.

To combat these problems, first of all ASI must equip itself with the most modern technologies. These include the latest chemical methods for monuments restoration and the methods employed by European countries for painting restorations. Also, the environmental threat to the monuments must be accounted for and proper steps should be taken to mitigate this problem.

The ASI officers must be properly trained. Better pay scale and job opportunities must be compounded with trainings and workshops on a regular basis so that it is able to attract some of the best minds of the nation tomorrow. These officers must also interact with local officials who can be made to work with the ASI teams. The local officials will help in understanding the nature of the work the officers have to undergo while performing restoration of any monument.

To compound the manpower in this sector, the State and central

governments must give adequate grants to local universities running courses in archaeology so that they are able to improve their existing infrastructure. Their course module must be upgraded keeping in tune with the latest developments complete with field trips and on site experiences. Furthermore, students in this field must be provided with ample employment opportunities once they pass out so that this sector is seen as a viable source of employment.

The second major problem that the growth of tourism industry faces is lack of awareness among people. Any region with such a rich cultural history like Assam must take extensive steps to educate the world about the rich cultural heritage of the state. In this area, the tourism department must make efforts to take the cultural heritage outside. This can be done through street plays, talks, documentaries and also using the internet as a medium to showcase the heritage of the state.

Assam must participate in tourism fairs and along with ecotourism, the Ahoms' rich legacy must be specially mentioned. In this regard, an exclusive "Through The Footsteps Of Sukaphaa-The Ahom

Legacy" tour can be promoted. All historical sites built during the Ahom reign can be covered in this programme and the whole experience should be made available to tourists as a package. This can be done along the lines of the Palace on Wheels train of Rajasthan. Such a step will make it easier for people to understand and experience the Ahom legacy at one go and this will make for an exhilarating experience.

The third major problem is funding for the maintenance of these sites. Sometimes maintenance of these monuments takes a much heavier toll on the state exchequer and the state just lets it wither away. To combat this, an interesting PPP growth model can be accepted. The state government can sign MoUs with public sector as well as private sector companies. This will bring in revenue for maintenance of the monuments. The companies can sign these MoUs either under their CSR (corporate social responsibility) commitment or they can be reimbursed by sharing a part of ticket collections with them. The government and the companies can equally divide the work of maintenance of monuments and this will lead to a far more efficient system.

The final problem that this sector faces is the problem of properly tying up tourism itself to these sites and making itself marketable. In

this regard, the state government must make a number of interesting propositions.

First and foremost, a voracious awareness campaign must be built up to educate people worldwide about the rich Ahom legacy of Assam. Next the government can encourage literary and cultural festivals on the courtyard of the famous monuments, for example a "famous musical folk nite" in the courtyard of Rang Ghar. If such festivals are televised worldwide then it will be beneficial for the sites itself as awareness will rise about such sites.

The government can also encourage cluster development of some of the major Ahom monuments construction sites like Sivasagar, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur and Sonitpur and promote these areas as one package. In these sites itself, proper tourist lodges (with stress on budget lodges rather than five-star ones) must be constructed so that tourists have a comfortable stay. Efforts should be made to retain an Ahom flavour in these tourist resorts in cuisine, styling etc so that visitors have a wholesome Ahom culture experience.

The entire rich Ahom legacy must be showcased with special emphasis on its monuments which will be a fitting tribute to the dynasty which gave the Assamese society its identity today.

(Views expressed are personal)

Home-stays get popular in NE

The Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Ministry is keen to promote the concept of "home-stay" tourism in the North East.

Citing the success of such experiment in the states of Sikkim and Meghalaya, DoNER Minister Jitendra Singh has said such exclusive and personalised approach not only increased tourist inflow, but also generated new avenues of livelihood for local youth and families.

Manipur's Tourism Department, in collaboration with private players, has already started home-stays in far-flung areas. "Home-stays are going to be a big boon for Manipur tourism and will change the face of the industry here," said Manipur Tourism Director N. Bandana Devi, adding, "We are inviting tour operators, hospitality firms and other private players to set up home-stays in the hilly region of the state."

Home-stays will, besides offering a chance to explore the kaleidoscopic beauty, local cuisine and culture, give a distinct feeling of seeing Manipur from the local perspective.

"Tourists will be able to explore local cuisine, local culture and the pristine beauty of the place at home-stays in different parts of the state. We have found out a few places for home-stays but it has to be increased manifold. It should not be restricted to a few selected areas. We are exploring more places for home-stays," Bandana said.

About the home-stays in Meghalaya, DoNER minister Singh said

he came across many tourists from outside preferring an accommodation within the home premises of local households which not only gives them a feeling of homeliness and privacy but also familiarises them with the local ambience. At the same time, for the household family, this concept of 'home stay' tourism becomes an added as well as substantial source of income.

Manipur's Bandana Devi said only 10 percent of the tourism potential has been realised and 90 percent remains to be done.

"We have planned that every month we will identify one remote place and develop that area into a tourist destination. There we could explore for home-stays and ethnic tourism. Different tribes of Manipur live in the hills, which are yet to be explored," she said.

Last year, 146,169 domestic tourists and 3,250 international tourists — mainly from Japan and South Korea — visited Manipur. Bandana hoped that with the help of home-stays, these numbers will rise.

She said the department has tied up with several tour agents or operators for home-stays. Tourists can approach these government-approved tour operators for booking home-stays. "We will make it online but it will take another year. We have five to six home-stays in Senapati district, more than 10 home-stays in Bishnupur district near Loktak lake and a few in Ukhrul," Bandana said. (Agencies)



(Top) A traditional Manipuri tribal Hut and artistes perform traditional dance

By Ranjan K Baruah

We have been publishing articles and information related to subjects from arts and science stream quite often. So far, we have published less articles related to commerce stream and today we shall publish about a subject which is very common for commerce students.

Accountancy is a subject which is being studied by all commerce students. Trade and commerce or business is important and hence this subject is important in many different aspects. Accounting or accountancy is the measurement, processing and communication of financial information about economic entities like corporations.

Accounting can be

divided into several fields, including financial accounting, management accounting and auditing. Accounting information systems are designed to support accounting functions and related activities. Financial accounting focuses on the reporting of an organisation's financial information, including the preparation of financial statements, to external users of the information, like investors, regulators and suppliers; and management accounting focuses on the measurement, analysis and reporting of information for internal use by management.

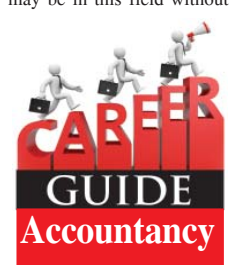
The recording of financial transactions is known as bookkeeping, of which double-entry bookkeeping is the most common system.

Learn to keep accounts right

accountants are required by all organisations as they must maintain systematic records of all transactions. Without this department, recording financial transactions, proper maintenance of staff salary and books of account, balance sheets preparation, calculation of various taxes etc are not possible in a firm.

When we look at career perspectives then some of the terms that come to our mind includes Chartered Accountancy, Company Secretary, Banking, Actuary and Cost and Works Accountants,

among others. These are advanced fields in accounting which require specific qualifications. One may be in this field without



doing these courses too. One can take up this subject from senior secondary level and to make it as career one may

start from the graduation time. The basic educational qualification for pursuing a career in Accounting is taking 10+2 with Commerce as the main subject, followed by a bachelor degree in Commerce. For Post-graduate courses like M.Com one needs to have B.Com at the graduate level.

There are many colleges that offer degree related to commerce. Most of the universities have commerce as stream and they offer graduation or post graduation degrees apart from some special diplomas or certificates. Some of the courses are B.Com, B.Com Taxation, M.Com, M.Com in Cost accounting, M.Com

Computer Application, M.Com Taxation, M.Phil and Ph.D, Certificate in Financial Accounting, Certified Advance Business Accountant, Certified Public Accountant, Certified Management Accountant and Diploma in Financial Accounting, among others.

There are some short-term courses, like Tally, which are linked with IT. After completing B.Com many students opt for courses like MBA and many appear for various banking exams.

There are many career options for the aspirants. Some of the options include auditors, financial

accountants, tax consultants, etc. The main task of auditors is to ensure the credibility of any financial accounting data and financial statements in government sector undertakings as well as private sector companies. Some may choose to be budget analysts whose responsibility includes developing and managing an organization's financial plans. They forecast expenditure incurred, analyses records of present and past operations. We will publish about other options like 'Chartered Accountancy' course in our next edition.

Updates: Interested students may apply for admission to four-year undergraduate and two-year post-graduate professional programmes for the academic year 2017 in

National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT). The last for applying for the admission test is January 10.

The Young India Fellowship: YIF is a one-year multidisciplinary postgraduate diploma programme in Liberal Studies. The Fellowship brings together a group of bright young individuals who show exceptional intellectual ability and leadership potential from across the country and trains them to become socially committed agents of change. Last date for sending application is December 18.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 9864055558 for any career related queries)

Chew on hard facts

(Continued from next week)

But the salmon you get in restaurants is raised in crowded ponds and fed artificial food in order to make it fatter faster. This salmon is grey. So fisheries use artificial dyes to make it pink. The dye is a chemical, Canthaxanthin, which has been linked to retinal damage in humans.

Nitrates and nitrites are used to cure meat and poultry. They help kill bacteria and give meat a pink, or red, colour. Nitrite is highly toxic (the lethal dose in humans is about 22mg/kg body weight). The use of nitrites is controversial because nitrosamines are formed when it is cooked at high temperatures and these are carcinogenic.

The meat industry keeps the raw meat packaged in carbon monoxide. This is called "modified atmosphere packaging" (MAP) so that it can last longer in shops. When meat is exposed to carbon monoxide, it gives the meat a bright red colour. As meat ages it becomes brown or grey, but carbon monoxide keeps it looking artificially fresh for up to a full year.

Anatto is a commercial dye produced from the red pulp of the seed of the achiote tree. It is used in cheese, butter and smoked fish. Betanin, or beetroot red, is a red glycosidic food dye obtained from beets and used for colouring meat and sausages to dark brown.

Caramel is one of the oldest and most widely-used food colourings and is found in almost every kind of fish, shellfish, roast beef, ham, pastriani or chicken.

Carmine, made of killed insects, is routinely added to food products such as meat, yogurt and ice cream.

Carotene, which is a pigment found in many dark green, leafy and yellow vegetables, like collards, turnips, carrots, sweet potatoes and squash and in the fatty tissues of plant-eating animals, imparts the yellow coloration to milk-fat and butter. Turmeric is used as an agent to impart a rich, custard-like yellow colour to dairy products and yogurt.

Synthetic astaxanthin is not approved for human consumption, but is permitted to be used in fish feed that humans ultimately eat.

Consumers like yellow yolks. But birds that don't eat fresh grass, or see the sun, cannot produce eggs with yellow yolks. So egg producers put various dyes into the poultry feed. There are eight dyes registered as feed additives for poultry.

Illegal dyes are used as well in poultry. Sudan IV has been detected in hen and duck eggs. Sudan dyes are carcinogenic. Under the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, colour additives may not be used to deceive consumers, or to conceal blemishes or inferiorities in food products. Usage is prohibited "if it is found to induce cancer when ingested" by people or animals.

Both these conditions are violated. The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) released a 68-page report "Food Dyes: A Rainbow of Risks," detailing the potential of artificial food dyes to contribute to hyperactivity in children, increase cancer risk and other health problems. In CSPI's summary of studies on food dyes, some of the most commonly used food dyes could be linked to cancer.

CSPI revealed that nine of the food dyes, currently approved for use in the US, are linked to health issues ranging from cancer and hyperactivity to allergy-like reactions.

As CSPI reported: "Almost all the toxicological

studies on dyes were commissioned, conducted and analysed by the chemical industry and academic consultants. Ideally, dyes (and other regulated chemicals) would be tested by independent researchers. Furthermore, virtually all the studies tested individual dyes, whereas many food and diets contain mixture of dyes (and other ingredients) that might lead to additive or synergistic effects."

Research suggests that some children may be susceptible to even tiny amounts of artificial dyes, but that a significant number of children were affected by amounts over 35mg/day. It was estimated that many children are consuming 3-4 times the 35mg amount per day. Food colorants sometimes cause allergic reactions and anaphylactic shock in sensitive individuals.

Even natural colouring agents can be potential hazards and include annatto, cochineal and carmine. An important study, published in the journal The Lancet in 2009, concluded that a variety of common food dyes, and the preservative sodium benzoate, cause some children to become measurably more hyperactive and distractible. The results of this study were what prompted the British Food Standards Agency to issue an immediate advisory to parents, warning them to limit their children's intake of additives if they notice an effect on behaviour. In July 2010, most foods in the EU that contain artificial food dyes were labelled with warning labels stating the food "may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children". No other country has done so. What food dyes are used in India? Does anyone know or care?

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

Say hello to the witches!

As the Harry Potter books are getting introduced in the new school syllabus in India, Surangama Guha Roy takes a look at the women characters in the series and the author's portrayal of them



It is one of Rowling's great achievements that she manages to refrain from making Hermione another of those run-of-the mill heroines and makes her into a powerful witch who is the brain behind much of the trio's daredevilry

"What's interesting about the wizarding world is if you take physical strength out of the equation, a woman can fight just the same as a man can fight..." — J.K Rowling

As Harry Potter, along with a bunch of other popular fictional characters, prepares to appear in the ICSE school syllabus, children rejoice and those who missed it while in school are getting justifiably green with envy. The wizarding world of Harry and his friends had the entire Muggle (non-magic) world going bonkers until not so long ago.

As Rowling admirers usher in the twentieth anniversary of the first Harry Potter story and welcome the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry into schools for Muggles, it would be interesting to take a look at the women who play an important role in the phenomenally successful Harry Potter series. He is the hero, no doubt, but there is a range of female characters that becomes his greatest strength as he goes through his many escapades.

For example, the exceptional young witch, Hermione Jean Granger, who makes her entry in the first book as an insufferable little know-it-all with unkempt hair and oversized teeth, and whose proud moralistic compass often threatens Harry and Ron who habitually end up getting into more trouble than they care for.

Ron describes her as a nightmare in Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, but she becomes their firm friend half way through the first installment. With her clear logical thinking, a brilliant academic mind and thirst for knowledge, this bookish girl is a far cry from our usual heroines who are mostly stereotypically defined by their physical beauty and usually end up as the hero's object of romance in the broader scheme of things.

Not the most attractive of girls, Hermione fails to draw attention to herself as a woman until the fourth installment where Rowling hints at a possible something brewing between her and Ron. Till then, and even later, Hermione remains indispensable not because of her gender but because of her intellect, quick thinking and her excellence in performing magic that ensures the trio's survival on more than one occasion.

From an annoying little class topper, Hermione blossoms into a woman of rare integrity and is willing to make huge sacrifices for the greater good and friendship. It is one of Rowling's great achievements, among others, that she manages to refrain from making Hermione another of those run-of-the mill heroines and makes her into a powerful witch who is the brain behind much of the trio's daredevilry.

Modelled on the author herself (Rowling admitted in an interview), this young character is not just Harry Potter's friend, but has become something of an icon herself for her extraordinary qualities, and her unflinching loyalty.

Look also at Rowling's embodiment of a mother's love. Orphan Harry finds two strong maternal figures in his life, one is his biological mother Lily Potter who protects him with her love, fighting to save the one-year old from the curses of a formidable wizard; the other is Molly Weasley who treats him as her son.

Lily Potter continues to be integral to Harry's story though she is dead before the story takes off. Molly Weasley on the other hand is the plump, fussy and protective mother, who very spontaneously comes to think of Harry, her young son's best friend, as one of her own. In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Molly encounters a boggart (magical shapeshifters that show a

person's greatest fears) that appears as the lifeless bodies of members of her own family, including Harry, embodying her fear of losing her loved ones, including Harry.

Molly's affections for Harry are implied throughout the series as she is one of only very few people who sends Harry yearly Christmas gifts, and even presents him with an old watch of her own late brother, a gesture that one would only make towards family. She also treats him more gently than she does her own family.

Lily, even in death, becomes central to Harry's survival. Described as "a singularly gifted witch" of uncommon kindness, Lily, together with the slightly dowdy yet thoroughly competent, spirited and kindly Molly, symbolise Rowling's portrayal of the love, sacrifice and devotion of the tigress mother protecting her brood.

In contrast, hatred, one of Rowling's most intriguing women characters is a squat woman, strangely toad-like, in hideous girlish attire, with a fake honey-sweet voice and a fascination for cats. This "twisted, mad" female who goes by the name of Dolores Jane Umbridge is pure evil with her revolting sense of justice and sickeningly sweet smile.

For young Harry especially, Umbridge is monstrosity per se. She draws sadistic pleasure in punishing him — she actually forces him to write his lines with a pen that uses his blood for ink. Umbridge is Rowling's personification of ruthless malevolence in a woman.

While on the subject of women with dubious morals, there are two other women who are unsympathetic, but who reveal certain sides of their nature that might redeem them.

From the very first chapter, the author generates a sense of hatred for Harry's family, the inimitable Durs-

leys. Petunia Dursley is Harry's aunt, and Lily Potter's sister.

When Harry is first introduced, to the moment when he bids his aunt goodbye, there is absolutely nothing that justifies Petunia's thoroughly obnoxious behaviour towards her orphaned nephew, unless perhaps the flashes of memory that reveal itself, and indeed a lot more. As the reader finds, as does Harry, Petunia hated magical people whom she considered 'freaks', but her hatred might have sprung from a deep-seated jealousy towards her only sister.

But why would a woman who so detested a child, provide him with food and shelter, however pathetic, for sixteen years? Was there, after all, a trace of sisterly affection left in her? What else could it have meant when during the final goodbye, Petunia had "stopped and looked back. For a moment Harry had the strangest feeling that she wanted to say something to him. She... seemed to teeter on the edge of speech, but then... she bustled out of her room after her husband and son." Had the author, at the last minute, toyed with the idea of revealing a softer side to cruel Petunia? After all, she did feel maternal towards her own son, albeit in a slightly twisted way.

And then there is Narcissa, mother to Draco Malfoy, Harry's arch enemy at Hogwarts. Narcissa is the wife to Lucius, a villainous Death Eater. Though peripheral to the main storyline, Narcissa Malfoy is an interesting study. Sister to Bellatrix, a fanatical disciple of Voldemort, Narcissa loves her son. She yearns to protect him, and for that she is willing to lie to Voldemort, no longer caring for her own life, or for her master's victory.

Rowling's women range from being thoroughly upright to being quite depraved, from the sprightly to the more sedate. There is little that she does not try her hand at. (TWF)

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, December 11, 2016

It's the right time to concentrate on furthering your career prospects as Moon sextile Neptune on your solar return chart. Take hold of the plans you have made and infuse them with passion. Bring a breath of life to your dreams and act with confidence. Communications is the key so arm yourself with the information you need and apply your skills. Try to curb your tendency to overspend and look at consolidating your funds. It is a good time to invest. You are far less inhibited when it comes to expressing yourself creatively, and you are a lot more fun to be around. Children may be a stronger focus as well. 'This week for you'

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

Your efforts, confidence and courage bring success in monetary gains and your energy increases for projects at work and your job environment teeming with activity. You take small yet sure steps towards your financial goals. Domestic relationships and the home environment tend to be harmonious and peaceful. If you have children, they may need more discipline than they previously did. You may find your children at an age that requires more attention and or structure.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

You may have to make some critical decisions due to situations in your life that force you to make choices; they could even be between career and family goals. Some of you may be promoted or your career takes a new direction. The challenge is to find a healthy balance—to improve home life, while at the same time tending to your career needs. Romantic and personal relations would be more practical than fun. For some, a romantic relationship stabilizes and becomes more serious. For some you will meet a new romantic interest who is perhaps more younger and energetic as compared to you.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

New friendships are likely to emerge this time, supportive and easygoing ones. Happiness and fulfillment through the expansion of your mind, widening your social circle, travel, and connections to people of a different cultural background than you are indicated. Your position of power and authority is maintained despite many changes all around. Don't allow personal feelings to influence professional decisions. An opportunity or investment to make quick gains is on the cards but analyze data at hand before you invest. Energy is high and things happen swiftly.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

You would be blessed with good health, love in relations and harmony at the work place. You give and receive affection and love from friends and relatives. You connect with old friends and business associates. Being open and receptive, you attract opportunities which hitherto seemed out of reach. You desire to learn and improve on your practical skills. Realistic levels of optimism and confidence are with you that enable you to quicken the pace at your workplace. Tension could run high and reach an emotional peak.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

Your social life will likely increase and bring you in contact with more influential, powerful people who could prove to be helpful as they extend a helping hand. Matters related to universities, higher education, organized religion, publishing, legal affairs, and foreign interests proceed smoothly. This is an excellent time to seek advanced training or further your education. Happiness and fulfillment through close friendships and relationships is indicated.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 23)

The planetary combination tends to change your outlook on life, perhaps stimulated by travel. Some changes in your social circle have been occurring and this brings about a new awareness. You are more determined to achieve your personal goals, and more strategic in the manner you go about doing so. New responsibilities are likely to present themselves and you would take them

Libra : (September 23 - October 23)

During this period money matters come into focus for you. You would adopt a realistic approach to business and finance because. Career and vocational issues may benefit from the increased clarity you possess. Much of your energy will be applied to vocational achievement, professional activities, during the week. The desire for some form of recognition and financial success is more intense. Being part of a community or circle of friends and building your social network is important to you at this time. You look to networking to leverage on your contacts. You may be quick to anger and could antagonize some whom you want to win over.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

This is a time which is good for money, status and for enhancing your standing. Your entire focus shifts in this direction. You take on new responsibilities, but enjoy the challenges it presents. Your belief systems and personal philosophies are especially important to you, but do not often coincide with your methods. This dichotomy will inculcate new attitudes towards finances, and social relationships before you strike a balance. It's an excellent time for travel, higher education and communications. The family is supportive and helps you look at the larger picture.

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)

You may feel the need to be appreciated by family members, and the need for togetherness with others this week. Events are such that you move towards a more objective approach to your life and you cultivate true friendships. It is a time when we need to let go of things that no longer serve their purpose, and hold on to things that have a future. You would express your sympathetic and compassionate side. Others might find you less sociable, as you are busier than ever and you focus on your activities and your needs. You would stand alone, take action and start afresh during this period.

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)

You would be able to express a greater level of sensitivity and sensibility in personal and professional relations. You encounter people who are very considerate and understanding. You are also likely to form relationships with people based on a deep level of mutual appreciation and understanding for each other. You are in touch with your more sensitive and spiritual qualities. You have to maintain a positive attitude and take life in a positive way. Communications from overseas are hopeful and exciting as business opportunities are extended to you. Financial transactions and professional projects go ahead smoothly with goodwill and profit.

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)

At this time you feel on top in domestic issues and spend quality time with people you care about and in activities that are rejuvenating. You tend to be traditional and restrictive in family matters and may have to face opposition of younger ones. It's time to expand your social circle and to make more contact with groups and friends. Your selfishness and willingness to listen will help boost your magnetic appeal. Your professional skills wisdom and craft is appreciated and fresh opportunities for expansion are made available to you. Overseas visitors and news are positive and inspiring. Personal relationships gain a romantic and exciting quality. You need to tackle sensitive subjects and difficult people and get your point across.

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)

Business projects and associations are opening up and widening your horizons so you need to think expansively. Your financial situation looks promising if you manage it well personally rather than trust upon others. You are generous with friends, and loving in family situations. You come across as especially smooth and your good nature is bound to attract some attention. A business venture could be gainful if you are willing to lend it some energy. You are involved in multiple tools of creativity you possess.

Great vanishing of mythic proportions

My children: "We'll only eat it if it's Haagen-Dazs." Me: "When I was a child I lived on dirt until I was eight and I was deeply grateful."

Today's youngsters have no idea how lucky they are. Luckily, they receive fascinating lectures on the subject from parents like me. "We evolved from apes and fought in two World Wars to give you the freedom to watch 20 episodes of 'Teen Wolf' back-to-back," I said, the "we" in that sentence referring to the Adult Species in general, not me specifically.

The next day I was at my Hong Kong office complaining about the young generation when a visitor from India told me that her country had suddenly gone back in time. "Imagine going back to being an all-cash society, and then a wizard appears and waves a magic wand, causing all the money in the land to disappear," she said. "What would you do?"

The obvious answer

would be for breadwinners to move to a barter economy, although I don't suppose my wife would get much for a set of three extremely spoiled children and a writer husband.

But before I could say anything, she launched into an eyewitness account of The Great Disappearing

event (officially called the demonetisation of 2016) when around 84 percent of Indian banknotes lost all value, banks shut and ATMs stopped working. "Well, I don't remember when I last saw an actual banknote," I told her, though that's probably something to do with the fact that my wife controls the money, severely limiting access to it by her "five helpless dependents" — three children, a dog and a husband.

The Indian visitor told me that the move by the

government to flush out hidden cash reserves had numerous unexpected repercussions. Folk holding cash turned out to be a much more varied group than expected, and many were women.

Receptionists and secretaries ended up consulting the accountants for whom

they worked, sometimes successfully. "Hide my stash, sir, or I may have to share what I know about your egregious personal habits to the authorities, compliance officers and your wife."

Some say the Indian plan should be tried in other places where folks don't pay tax. You only have to spend five minutes in Brazil, Italy, Greece and Russia to notice that the "unemployed" people all wear Prada and drive Lambos, while working middle-class folks dress in rags and live off cappuccino

Or perhaps we should go for China's simple way of discouraging tax dodgers. They execute them.

Anyway, the conversation made me happy that I used electronic money instead of physical money — but a few days later I saw the blockbuster movie "Pacific Rim", in which the evil monster uses an electromagnetic pulse to destroy all electricity in Asia. I told the kids that they would be wise to occasion-ally skip the Haagen-Dazs and practise eating dirt from time to time. "It's not that bad once you get used to it, especially if it's properly seasoned, and presented Masterchef style, with a smear of raspberry coulis."

They glared silently at me, unsure of whether I was joking or not. That's pretty much how I spend my whole life.

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



"One half of the world cannot understand the pleasures of the other."
 --- Jane Austen
The Shillong Times
 Vol No. LIX, No. 122 SHILLONG, MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2016

Obama on Russia
 POST-MORTEMs are of no value and Barack Obama's last ditch effort before he quits office will have no political fallout. But it is of interest that Obama has ordered American agencies to produce a full report on Russian efforts to influence the 2016 Presidential elections. He also directed them to develop a list of "lessons learnt" from the broad campaign the US has accused Russia of carrying out to steal e-mails, publish their contents and probe the vote-counting system. Obama expects to receive this report before he quits office. The report is supposed to trace the attacks on the Democratic National Committee and on prominent individuals like John Podesta, Chairman of Hillary Clinton's Presidential campaigns. Intelligence agencies and the FBI are unlikely to make public any of their findings as that would expose Russia's involvement. President-elect Donald Trump has consistently questioned whether hacking happened and if so whether Russia was responsible. It may on the other hand be an effort to discredit him and his endeavour to cement relations with Russia. He has rejected the allegation.

The accusation stemmed from a joint statement issued by the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper Jr. and the Secretary of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson. They said that Russia was behind the hack of the Democratic committee and had the approval of the highest levels of the Russian government. There is no doubt that before the election, Trump went out of his way to cozy up with Vladimir Putin. Hillary Clinton has however issued a stern warning against the proliferation of fake news.

LOOKING BACK
 Poll strategy
Cong-I to woo new voters, women

He said all units from the level has been asked to assign one general secretary to look after the performance of party's cells and organizations. Similarly, one general secretary at each level would be assigned for ensuring that the government's programmes were suitably published among the people Mr Gadgil said. Mr Gadgil said the conference also decided in favour of setting up a cell on small traders at the AICC (I) level.

He said party president Mr Rajiv Gandhi had invited suggestion on how to increase the party's effectiveness from the grassroots level. In this connection, he said Mr Gandhi had pointed out that Kerala PCC(I) chief Mr A K Antony, along with other party leaders, had toured the entire state to establish contact with the people. They also collected funds as part of the campaign for revitalizing the party.

New telephone connections in Tura by May-end
 The Tura Telephone Exchange has released a list of subscribers who will receive connections after the expansion work on the Tura Telephone Exchange is completed within a two-month time span. Extension in Dibrugarh district, while on Tuesday laid at Bongaigaon Bazar in Kokrajhar district 17 people were killed and 51 injured in another explosion.

Empowerment: The tool for strengthening Democracy

By H.H. Mohrmen
 One must have all heard of the "quote" which politicians use during election campaigns. It is also a saying which people involved in development activities use profusely when they try to emphasise on the need of empowering a person more than anything else. The saying, "If you want to feed a (wo) man for a day; give him/her a fish and if you want to feed him/her the whole life, teach him/her how to fish," is a profoundly powerful statement which not only helps distinguish the kind of leaders we have, but also makes us realise the need to empower the communities at large. It is up to us, therefore to say if our political leaders fall in the category of those who only feed us for a day or the latter set of leaders who help empower us for life.

Generally, the political representatives who seem to believe in robbing us of our self esteem by doing out money and/or goods and thereby crippling our ability to fend for ourselves. They actually want u to be dependent on them so that they can use us. So they provide us one-time monetary doles because it is easy and they feel good because they are at the giving end. They hate to see us empowered because then we would start asking questions. We see daily reports in the media, especially before elections of representatives distributing utensils and other knock-knacks. Utensils are no doubt important but since when have we become beggars and who has turned us into beggars?

The current style of political representation is easy. It makes the representatives feel like they are doing charity to the people. So they are not duty bound to see that people are provided their basic rights. During elections, they make the people to beg for votes, but once they are elected, they swap places from servants to masters. They behave like the real masters and whatever they do for the welfare of the people is considered as a big favour they are doing to their constituents. Empowerment is still not

TO THE EDITOR
Restoring public faith in MPSC

The news item in your issue dated (ST Dec 1, 2016) where MPSC threatens a five-year ban on candidates who canvass for jobs during the recruitment process of the MPSC, is a welcome step. It will curb corruption and bring transparency in the Commission using the Commission's efforts to bring transparency in the future job seekers. This is highly appreciated. The MPSC needs to take measures to restore public faith in its functioning.

Social media lies!
 Editor, Given the magnitude of false news items that are being spread in social media during the 2016 US Presidential campaign; a part of Facebook, Twitter et al., appear to be in the shoes of Joseph Goebbels who said, "A lie told once remains a lie but a lie told a thousand times becomes the truth."

The chemistry of a repeatedly told lie becoming truth is inherent in our potentiality for obedience. According to American psychologist, Stanley Milgram, human potential for obedience is the prerequisite for social

The Defence Dynasty Security slashed out

By Poonam I Kaushish

History repeats itself a la Bofors. Today the Rs 64 crore has magnified to the Rs 3,600-crores Choppergate. Both standing testimony to military perfidy, leaving one irate and astonished about the power of greed, over and over again. In a sinking morass of 'daji'! Predictably, all hell broke loose in New Delhi Friday when the CBI arrested former Air Force Chief SP Tyagi, his cousin and lawyer-businessman Gautam Khaitan in connection with the Agusta Westland VVIP helicopter deal. His crime? Changing the IAF's service ceiling of the helicopters from 6,000 metres to 4,500 metres. The first time that a military chief, retired or serving, has been arrested for corruption totaling Rs 362 crore in defence procurement.

Recall, in 2010 India signed a contract with Westland, Finmeccanica's subsidiary for procurement of 362 to ferry VVIPs but cancelled the deal in January 2014 "on grounds of breach of the pre-contract integrity pact and the agreement". But the opening of bids was stalled due to complaints of technical deviations and corruption charges. The company said: "Thanks to the Italian Government arresting Finmeccanica's CEO for paying Rs 362 crore as bribes to bag the deal. Undeniably, Tyagi's arrest has again opened the Pandora's Box on murky defence deals and the uncomfortable questions: Who finalised and signed the VVIP chopper deal? Does the helicopter deal refer to the Congress? Is this one part of BJP's agenda of Congress-mukt Bharat?"

How is Tyagi connected to the deal? It is not only the fact that he is a member of every hie still seem to stick their hare-brained agenda of providing people their one time need than to empower them. But the day will not be too far when the community will be able to decide and differentiate a good and effective leader from a self-styled, unintelligent businessman. One day politicians who do not have education and lack awareness of development must be culled from the educated members of the village will know more than them. Therefore empowering and capacity building is not only the community but for the political representatives too. A day is soon coming when politicians will have to perform and educate the community.

Plastic notes a welcome decision
 Editor, The then Union Minister of State for Finance Namo Narain Meena in a written reply in Rajya Sabha on 12.03.2013 had stated that the Union Government and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had decided to issue polymer/plastic currency-notes of rupee-ten denomination on trial basis in five select cities namely Kochi, Mysore, Jaipur, Bhuneshwar and Shimla with varied geographic locations and climatic conditions. It is a matter of regret that the experiment could not be completed on time, otherwise new currency notes would have plastic/polymer with long life and least chances of being printed as fake

Techno booth Soon, charge your smartphone with a finger swipe: Scientists

By Poonam I Kaushish

Charging your smartphone with just a finger swipe may soon be possible, thanks to a new low-cost, film-like device that can harvest energy from human motion. Using the device, known as a nanogenerator, scientists successfully opened an LCD touch screen, a bank of 20 LED lights and a flexible keyboard, all with a simple touching or pressing motion and without the aid of a battery. "We're on the path towards wearable devices powered by human motion," said Nelson Sepulveda, an associate professor at Michigan State University in the US. "What I foresee, less the capability of not having to charge your cell phone for an entire week, for example, be-



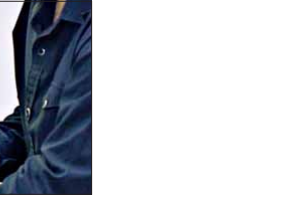
The device is as thin as a sheet of paper and can be adapted to many applications and sizes.

The innovative process starts with a silicone wafer, which is then fabricated with several layers, or thin sheets, of environmentally friendly substances including silver, polyimide and polypropylene ferroelectric. Ions are added so that each layer in the device contains charged particles. Electrical energy is created when the device is compressed by human motion, or mechanical energy. The completed device is called a bio-compatible ferroelectric-nanogenerator, or FENG. The device is as thin as a

sheet of paper and can be adapted to many applications and sizes. Advantages such as being lightweight, flexible, biocompatible, scalable, low-cost and robust could make FENG "a promising and alternative method in the field of mechanical-energy harvesting" for many autonomous electronics such as wireless headsets, cell phones and other touch-screen devices, according to the study. Remarkably, the device

also becomes more powerful when folded. "Each time you fold it you are increasing exponentially the amount of voltage you are creating," Sepulveda said. "You can start with a large device, but when you fold it once, and again, and again, it's now much smaller and has more energy," he said. "Now it may be small enough to put in a specially made heel of your shoe so it creates power each time your heel strikes the ground," he said. Researchers are developing technology that would transmit the power generated from the heel strike to, say, a wireless headset. The study was published in the journal Nano Energy. (PTI)

Now, 3D printed affordable prosthetic hand



\$15 prosthetic hand created by a student at Ithaca College here can offer a helping hand to a person who still has the ability to move their wrist.

By moving their wrist, they can control and use the hand's fingers to grab and hold various objects. Unlike electronic hands, which are typically made from metal and are generally expensive, Ryan Bouricuis's prosthetic hand is mostly plastic. "The nice thing about 3D printing is that the price only has to do with the amount of plastic used, not the complexity of the piece," Bouricuis said. Bouricuis derived the idea for his innovation from a YouTube video but through testing and tinkering he made changes to his original design to give the

hand more functionality. "So even though my modified pieces are trickier shapes, since it is the same amount of plastic, it's the same amount of money," Bouricuis noted in a statement released by Ithaca College. This is especially important for families with children who need prostheses. Because children outgrow them quickly, the costs of

Cyware launches cybersecurity tips in five Indian languages

Cyber awareness platform Cyware has launched its new service to educate the Indian public on cyber security through SMS and WhatsApp in five different regional languages.

The "free" service has been launched keeping in mind the emerging challenge of "Cyber Suraksha" that a common man in India is going to face as an unintended outcome of digitalisation, the company said. "In India, people keep the same default ATM card pin as provided by the banks and never change it. The trainer cycle is such that for many people PIN does not stand for 'Personal Identification Number' rather they treat it as 'Public Information Number,'" Co-founder of Cyware said. To start receiving cyber hygiene tips through SMS, one just needs to simply give a missed call on 7676610000. (IANS)

Monkeys have vocal chords to speak, lack wired brain

Monkeys have the vocal tracts to produce human speech sounds, but what they lack is a speech-ready brain, a new study has found. The study, conducted by researchers from the US and Europe and published this week in the US journal Science Advances, used X-ray video to see within the mouth and throat of macaque monkeys induced to vocalise, eat food or make facial expressions. Xinhua news agency reported.



The study, conducted by researchers from the US and Europe and published this week in the US journal Science Advances, used X-ray video to see within the mouth and throat of macaque monkeys induced to vocalise, eat food or make facial expressions.

However, the researchers noted that while monkeys would be understandable to the human ear, they would not sound precisely like humans. "The results showed that monkeys could easily produce many different sounds, enough to produce thousands of distinct words. For example, monkeys could produce comprehensible vowel sounds -- and even full sentences -- with

Wind turbines may favour crops growing condition

Corn and soybeans that are close to wind turbines grow in more favourable conditions as turbulence creates a wind influences temperature and carbon dioxide concentration, a new research has revealed. The researchers from the Iowa State University (ISU) installed research towers on a 200-turbine wind farm in Iowa and collected data from 2010 to 2013 on wind speeds and directions, temperature, humidity, turbulence, gas content and precipitation.

"An important part of understanding human uniqueness is to know what our relatives do," he said. "This study shows the anatomical capability to make a variety of sounds, as we do with speech, was present long ago. This is useful for understanding the starting point for the evolution of language." (IANS)

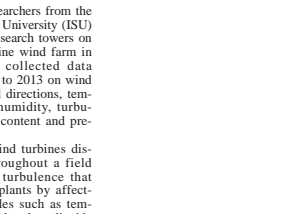
Over 100k people challenge Einstein in global experiment

Over 100,000 people from laboratories around the world for the first time have conducted a unique global experiment that verified the laws of quantum physics, thus refuting Albert Einstein's understanding of the microscopic world.

Twelve laboratories from around the world came together to put in motion the BIG Bell Test. The experiment - coordinated by ICFQ - The Institute of Photonic Sciences in Spain - powered by human randomness is aimed to demonstrate that the microscopic world is in fact as strange as quantum physics predicts. Predictions such as particles behaving in a random way, determining their properties around the world for strange instantaneous interactions at a distance - were all questioned by Einstein, who rejected them completely. Endorsing the 48 hours in which it was November 30th at different place on the planet, participants contributed to the initiative, generating a credible system without eliminate scope for any suspicion. Another way is to allow Parliament's Defence Committee to look into every deal confidentially and by taking strong action on the CAG audit. In sum, not only is negating a defence contract with a multi-million-dollar kickbacks between our netas, businessmen and intermediaries. Will it end the well-oiled entrenched middlemen in India's defence dynasty story? Who knows, as the tender and money is still being awarded. However, may I ask the Government to put a price for the stress, strain, high BP, anxiety and mental anguish that would be able to participate in meetings to help the company they represent, since it will not be possible for a middle class citizen to attend all meetings in India. Yet the NDA concealed the purchase of mine sweeper ships - which the Navy needs

HEALTH

Bacteria in undercooked chicken may lead to paralysis: Study



study aggravated neurological signs, lesions and the number of immune antibodies that can mistakenly attack a patient's own organs and tissues. "These models hold great potential for discovery of new treatments for this paralysis," Mansfield said. "Many patients with GBS are critically ill and they can't participate in clinical trials. The models we identified can help solve this," she said.

Assam: 8 hurt

At least 11 people were injured when a powerful bomb, planted by suspected Bodo militants exploded at Kalaigaon Bazar in Udalguri today, an official report here said. All the injured were admitted to hospital.

Those suffering from GBS can initially experience weakness and tingling in the feet and legs.

Gradually, paralysis can spread to the upper body and arms, and even a respirator may be needed for breathing. The research was published in the Journal of Autoimmunity. (PTI)

Those suffering from GBS can initially experience weakness and tingling in the feet and legs.

Gradually, paralysis can spread to the upper body and arms, and even a respirator may be needed for breathing. The research was published in the Journal of Autoimmunity. (PTI)

Those suffering from GBS can initially experience weakness and tingling in the feet and legs. Gradually, paralysis can spread to the upper body and arms, and even a respirator may be needed for breathing. The research was published in the Journal of Autoimmunity. (PTI)

“Everybody likes to go their own way--to choose their own time and manner of devotioin.”

--- Jane Austen

The Shillong Times

Vol. No. LXIX, No. 122 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2016

Whither Sixth Schedule?

ON November 27, 2016, the Supreme Court came up with a ruling that could have far reaching implications on tribal land ownership and perhaps nullify the respective state Land Transfer Acts. The apex court, in a case involving the United Commercial Bank vs Dipak Debarma, a tribal from Tripura held that banks can sell tribal land mortgaged to them to non-tribals, even if prohibited by state laws. The Court held that according to the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, the bank is allowed to sell off mortgaged property to anyone, tribal or non-tribal, for realisation of its dues. The 2002 Act will prevail over the provisions contained in Section 187 of the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 and by extension to similar laws in other tribal majority states.

Here the Court has relied on the supremacy of the Parliamentary legislation over the provisions of the Tripura Act, which prohibits the bank from transferring the property which has been mortgaged by an ST member to a non-ST person. Thus far the banks could sell property mortgaged by a tribal only to another tribal. This ruling should have jolted all the tribal states of the North East. The Land Transfer Acts in scheduled areas was meant to be a protective mechanism so that affluent non-tribals would not be able to buy land in tribal areas. The November 27 ruling has now put paid to the Land Transfer Acts and also reduced the limits of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. It is ironic that this issue is not being deliberated by the candidates contesting the by-elections to the District Council in Meghalaya or by different political parties. This ruling is dangerous as it would enable unscrupulous tribals to exploit the loopholes in the parliamentary statute relied upon by the apex court, to sell off land which they could hitherto not do, on account of the Land Transfer Acts, by stating that they had mortgaged the land to different non-tribal entities. This ruling effectively debunks the efficacy of the Sixth Schedule in protecting tribal land and customary practices, since a tribal's very existence is linked to his/her land.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Commission on resource mobilization submits first report

The Commission on resource mobilization submitted the first part of its report to the Govt on Monday. The Commission Chairman Mr P R Kyndia handed over the report to the Chief Minister Mr Purno Sangma. Later talking to newsmen Mr Kyndia said that since the final report is likely to take time because of the wide terms of reference, the Committee decided to submit the report in parts to facilitate the examination of various issues and recommendations by the Government.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Mr Kyndia said that Meghalaya Transport Development Corporation is one of the Public Sector Undertaking currently under review. The State Government had constituted the Meghalaya Commission on Resource mobilization in June last year with the object of making an in-depth study of the entire resource structure of the State and to forward recommendations on encouraging economic growth and the elimination of wasteful expenditures.

Hawkers – Myths and realities

By Angela Rangad

Hawkers and street vendors have been an integral part of any vibrant city. They stand testimony to the ability of a city to support its own two livelihoods. And yet, the hawking community has been demonized by the urban elite. Their presence is considered a throwback to an underdeveloped past and thus an impediment to the smart urban future that the elite classes crave. Adjectives like criminals, dirty, shifty, pushy, rude, lawless, scary, space grabbers are used to push the State into a constant cat and mouse game with the hawkers. So who are these hawkers? Where do they come from and why do they do what they do? As someone who has been a part of efforts to organize the hawkers and demand for implementation of already existing laws about hawking, the following stories and insights on hawking give us realistic perspectives of the Shillong we live in.

Not nameless and faceless
Evicted roadside vegetable seller T. Marwein tells us that she dropped out in her 3rd BA due to financial reasons. She once heard the Chief Minister urging them to start their own two feet. She is doing exactly that and yet finds the authorities hounding her and others like her to shut their enterprises down. They are asked to stand on their own two feet only to be rapped on the knees when they do. Not just the government but the ‘advisers’ ‘think tanks’ and the ‘development brigade’ decry that the marginalized and the poor are holding the country back with their ‘freeloading’ dependency culture and subsidy grabbing. When grants, subsidies and tax holidays are extended to the affluent and the rich and influential corner majority of the cheques meant for livelihood enhancement of the poor and marginalised be it the MIDC, KVVC start up loans etc. Even funds meant for the welfare of hawkers have been diverted to create assets for the powerful (hawkers’ shed becomes a bus bay and others a parking lot) and bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

Another vendor at Motpohan comes from Mawpuh. She vouches that hawking is not the sweetest oranges that one would ever taste. A pride in her products is similarly shared by a group of women who have for the last forty years sold ‘solphres’ or loofa at Motpohan.

There is a group of women and men from Mawbang who sell mortars, pestles and Khasi knives in Matpaw. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

Another vendor at Motpohan comes from Mawpuh. She vouches that hawking is not the sweetest oranges that one would ever taste. A pride in her products is similarly shared by a group of women who have for the last forty years sold ‘solphres’ or loofa at Motpohan.

There is a group of women and men from Mawbang who sell mortars, pestles and Khasi knives in Matpaw. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

Another vendor at Motpohan comes from Mawpuh. She vouches that hawking is not the sweetest oranges that one would ever taste. A pride in her products is similarly shared by a group of women who have for the last forty years sold ‘solphres’ or loofa at Motpohan.

There is a group of women and men from Mawbang who sell mortars, pestles and Khasi knives in Matpaw. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

Another vendor at Motpohan comes from Mawpuh. She vouches that hawking is not the sweetest oranges that one would ever taste. A pride in her products is similarly shared by a group of women who have for the last forty years sold ‘solphres’ or loofa at Motpohan.

There is a group of women and men from Mawbang who sell mortars, pestles and Khasi knives in Matpaw. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

Another vendor at Motpohan comes from Mawpuh. She vouches that hawking is not the sweetest oranges that one would ever taste. A pride in her products is similarly shared by a group of women who have for the last forty years sold ‘solphres’ or loofa at Motpohan.

There is a group of women and men from Mawbang who sell mortars, pestles and Khasi knives in Matpaw. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

Another vendor at Motpohan comes from Mawpuh. She vouches that hawking is not the sweetest oranges that one would ever taste. A pride in her products is similarly shared by a group of women who have for the last forty years sold ‘solphres’ or loofa at Motpohan.

There is a group of women and men from Mawbang who sell mortars, pestles and Khasi knives in Matpaw. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

rentier class and subtle for a handsome sum. Given a chance politicians and bureaucrats will even auction off licenses and sacred spaces for hawking. For many hawkers the capital for setting up shop the next day is what is earned the previous day. This means that when they often include only the weights and measures as was the case with a fishmongers’ family whose fish, cutting knives and weighing scales were recently looted by authorities in the name of eviction.

A portable ‘dull’ to store their products and where they sell from is one capital investment that hawkers pride themselves in. But these have been targets of the wrath of the eviction crew that stamp and destroy them forcing most hawkers today to resort to using the Andhra fish packaging thermocol boxes - these being not only cheaper but light weight and easy to lift and move.

Entrepreneurial Culture of Street Vending
Most hawkers have over the years turned into small businesses. Many begin small by selling ‘wildong’. They save and maybe try fruit and vegetable vending and sometimes move into the clothing/shoe business. The sheer hard work and financial management that they display are those that development and livelihood projects vainly peddle through SHGs, microfinance etc. Their saving and investment acumen is the envy of overpaid development consultants who also use development jargon such as ‘organic farming’, ‘homestead gardens’, ‘farmers markets’ etc. These ‘experts’ will try to co-opt the hawkers when they realize that they practice many of these ideas without much fanfare.

A group of women sellers at Jai Road have for years been bringing ‘tyro’, ‘muli’, ‘sha sula’ and other seasonal greens that they grow in their gardens in Mawpat. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

Another vendor at Motpohan comes from Mawpuh. She vouches that hawking is not the sweetest oranges that one would ever taste. A pride in her products is similarly shared by a group of women who have for the last forty years sold ‘solphres’ or loofa at Motpohan.

There is a group of women and men from Mawbang who sell mortars, pestles and Khasi knives in Matpaw. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

Another vendor at Motpohan comes from Mawpuh. She vouches that hawking is not the sweetest oranges that one would ever taste. A pride in her products is similarly shared by a group of women who have for the last forty years sold ‘solphres’ or loofa at Motpohan.

There is a group of women and men from Mawbang who sell mortars, pestles and Khasi knives in Matpaw. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

Another vendor at Motpohan comes from Mawpuh. She vouches that hawking is not the sweetest oranges that one would ever taste. A pride in her products is similarly shared by a group of women who have for the last forty years sold ‘solphres’ or loofa at Motpohan.

There is a group of women and men from Mawbang who sell mortars, pestles and Khasi knives in Matpaw. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

Another vendor at Motpohan comes from Mawpuh. She vouches that hawking is not the sweetest oranges that one would ever taste. A pride in her products is similarly shared by a group of women who have for the last forty years sold ‘solphres’ or loofa at Motpohan.

There is a group of women and men from Mawbang who sell mortars, pestles and Khasi knives in Matpaw. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

Another vendor at Motpohan comes from Mawpuh. She vouches that hawking is not the sweetest oranges that one would ever taste. A pride in her products is similarly shared by a group of women who have for the last forty years sold ‘solphres’ or loofa at Motpohan.

There is a group of women and men from Mawbang who sell mortars, pestles and Khasi knives in Matpaw. Because of the recent illegal evictions they bring fewer of these goods to the market leaving the ‘tyro’ in their fields to turn yellow and go to waste.

the internal walkway near Bijou Cinema. They tell us their village is skilled in making wooden mortars. They also source knives from Mylliem. When asked how it is that so many of them from the same village sell in that spot, they castally say, we need to help each other, so when we saw that the sale in this spot was good we encouraged others to come along’.

It is obvious that it is not malls but the hawkers who support our very own local small scale industries like the iron smelting and production units in Mylliem. Even M. Sangma And G Momin travel every alternate day on the night supply from Garo Hills bringing with them local forest produce, herbs, green leafy vegetables, fruits, crabs etc that they further supply to the many A.chik sellers at Polo.

Congestion Myth
If there is one common refrain about hawkers, it is congestion. But facts speak otherwise. In a nation with approximately 3000 Hawkercars in Shillong, there are 1,60,000 private vehicle licenses in the district. Data says that on an average approximately 50 new vehicles get added to the roads daily. So please direct your angst about congested Shillong to its root cause.

Are public spaces for people not more worthwhile than having cars and bikes parked bumper to bumper taking up all our precious city space? It is the vehicles that have encroached into the spaces where we sell and buy, where we walk and where we rest. The truth is that vendors have not overrun this town. Their carbon footprint is not even the size of a dot compared to what is left behind by the lifestyle of Shillong’s minuscule elites.

At Motpohan a historic monument was belittled and cut down to size supposedly to ease congestion. And yet the area continues to be as chaotic as ever. The road opposite Maharaj and towards Stand Jeep has been turned into a bike and car parking zone. The vehicles are parked so tightly together that it is impossible for pedestrians to access the footpath! The municipality has contracted out the running of these parking sites for a 100 meter stretch that boys who collect the parking fees have to hand to about Rs 2000 per day to the contract holder.

More than a few MLAs to support the government. The fact is that hawkers as a group have for long been victims of ignorant/malicious opinions of the local elite and the party footloose in law by the government. Time has come to call the bluff.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

day. This 100 meter stretch could have supported at least 10 hawkers contributing much more to our economy than lifeless stationary vehicles. The roads have been narrowed not by the hawkers but by encroaching buildings and the parking mafia. Is the easy money and rather a flexing from parking cartels along with the economy of extortion of hawkers the reason behind the resistance to regulate vehicles and spaces in favour of hawkers?

Public Spaces for All
Social media feeds of foreign returned Shillong dwellers are full of their experiences of street shopping and farmers markets. They gloat about these while failing to appreciate our very own indigenous markets. They instagam foreign street foods, but do not acknowledge the makeshift mobile stalls or ‘standing mess’ as they are locally known, as being part of exactly the same culture.

Constitutional Right
The fact is that hawkers are not more worthwhile than having cars and bikes parked bumper to bumper taking up all our precious city space? It is the vehicles that have encroached into the spaces where we sell and buy, where we walk and where we rest. The truth is that vendors have not overrun this town. Their carbon footprint is not even the size of a dot compared to what is left behind by the lifestyle of Shillong’s minuscule elites.

At Motpohan a historic monument was belittled and cut down to size supposedly to ease congestion. And yet the area continues to be as chaotic as ever. The road opposite Maharaj and towards Stand Jeep has been turned into a bike and car parking zone. The vehicles are parked so tightly together that it is impossible for pedestrians to access the footpath! The municipality has contracted out the running of these parking sites for a 100 meter stretch that boys who collect the parking fees have to hand to about Rs 2000 per day to the contract holder.

More than a few MLAs to support the government. The fact is that hawkers as a group have for long been victims of ignorant/malicious opinions of the local elite and the party footloose in law by the government. Time has come to call the bluff.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Security challenges to a Cashless Economy

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

ON November 8, the NDA Government announced the new demonetisation policy. Barring a few exceptions the Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 currency notes ceased to exist as legal tender thereby losing their value. This move announced by the Government states one of its stated objectives, (a) to curb black money and (b) to push India towards a cashless economy. Since then there has been a massive drive towards opening of accounts as well as payments and receipts through cashless medium including online payments and plastic cards. In a nation where 86% of the transaction happened in cash this indeed is a brave stance as well as a tectonic shift.

Since the declarations, much has been written on the aspects of whether this move would be effective towards curbing black money or not. Others have spoken about how some countries of the world rely heavily on plastic money for example the US where national equally developed nations prefer the cash route like Germany. Steps have been taken by the government to promote cashless economy further by announcing rebates when payment is made by plastic money. The Ministry of Human Resource Development has unveiled a plan to enrol Digital Ambassadors. The NITI Aayog has plan to incentivise districts that promote cashless economy. A Chief Ministers’ Group to boost digital payment and prepare a roadmap has been formed.

In the backdrop, however, one issue that has not evoked much interest is the security challenges to what is left behind by the lifestyle of Shillong’s minuscule elites.

At Motpohan a historic monument was belittled and cut down to size supposedly to ease congestion. And yet the area continues to be as chaotic as ever. The road opposite Maharaj and towards Stand Jeep has been turned into a bike and car parking zone. The vehicles are parked so tightly together that it is impossible for pedestrians to access the footpath! The municipality has contracted out the running of these parking sites for a 100 meter stretch that boys who collect the parking fees have to hand to about Rs 2000 per day to the contract holder.

More than a few MLAs to support the government. The fact is that hawkers as a group have for long been victims of ignorant/malicious opinions of the local elite and the party footloose in law by the government. Time has come to call the bluff.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

most be looked at in the safety of the RBI so that money cannot be siphoned off. Recently attempts were made by the Bangladesh siphoned off \$800 million from the Central Bank of Bangladesh. While the heist could not be completely successful it does bring into sharp focus of central banks. Stronger digital safety measures should be introduced and organisations like RBI, SEBI and other major agencies should have a dedicated cyber security staff off its own including a Chief Cyber Security Officer.

Thirdly while India has been a powerhouse when it comes to software technologies its contribution towards homegrown cyber safety softwares has been negligible. The Make in India would be a good platform for start-ups to focus on cyber security.

Others have spoken about how some countries of the world rely heavily on plastic money for example the US where national equally developed nations prefer the cash route like Germany. Steps have been taken by the government to promote cashless economy further by announcing rebates when payment is made by plastic money. The Ministry of Human Resource Development has unveiled a plan to enrol Digital Ambassadors. The NITI Aayog has plan to incentivise districts that promote cashless economy. A Chief Ministers’ Group to boost digital payment and prepare a roadmap has been formed.

In the backdrop, however, one issue that has not evoked much interest is the security challenges to what is left behind by the lifestyle of Shillong’s minuscule elites.

At Motpohan a historic monument was belittled and cut down to size supposedly to ease congestion. And yet the area continues to be as chaotic as ever. The road opposite Maharaj and towards Stand Jeep has been turned into a bike and car parking zone. The vehicles are parked so tightly together that it is impossible for pedestrians to access the footpath! The municipality has contracted out the running of these parking sites for a 100 meter stretch that boys who collect the parking fees have to hand to about Rs 2000 per day to the contract holder.

More than a few MLAs to support the government. The fact is that hawkers as a group have for long been victims of ignorant/malicious opinions of the local elite and the party footloose in law by the government. Time has come to call the bluff.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Many of these vendors are not new to the city. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era. They have been there since the British colonial era.

Women who are so cially isolated are far less likely to survive breast cancer and have higher rates of recurrence, a new study claims.

The study found that more socially isolated breast cancer survivors had higher rates of recurrence. Breast cancer survivors had higher rates of recurrence, a new study claims.

The study found that more socially isolated breast cancer survivors had higher rates of recurrence. Breast cancer survivors had higher rates of recurrence, a new study claims.

The study found that more socially isolated breast cancer survivors had higher rates of recurrence. Breast cancer survivors had higher rates of recurrence, a new study claims.

The study found that more socially isolated breast cancer survivors had higher rates of recurrence. Breast cancer survivors had higher rates of recurrence, a new study claims.

"Nothing amuses me more than the easy manner with which everybody settles the abundance of those who have a great deal less than themselves."

--- Jane Austen, Mansfield Park

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX, No. 125 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2016

India triumphant

INDIA under 28 years old Virat Kohli are doing wonders. They have gained a 3-0 lead against England in the fourth test at Mumbai. If they win the last test at Chennai, it will be a record. Kohli has scored a few great centuries and former England captain Atherton has attributed a touch of genius to his batting. Kohli himself has called this series win India's best against England. India had lost 3 successive series to England between 2011 and 2014. If India can perform equally well in away series, it will be at the top in the game. India's victory in the Mumbai test by an innings and 36 runs was the best against England in home series. Kohli has led India to victory in 5 test series beating Sri Lanka, South Africa, West Indies, New Zealand and England. He has also hit up 1000 sparkling runs in a calendar year. Only Rahul Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar had done it before. Truly, he has been compared to the illustrious Donald Bradman. In the series against England, Ravi Chandran Ashwin excelled himself with 71 test wickets under his belt. But India still needs a fast bowler and spinners like Bedi and Chandrashekhar.

Kohli has decidedly engendered team spirit. But individuals still prove decisive for success. That of course has often been the case. At one time West Indies meant Worrell. Weeks and Walcott or Ramadhin and Valentine. Kohli as skipper combines skill with leadership quality. The Indian team is infused with young blood. It remains to be seen how it fares in Australia, England and South Africa on their pitch.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

The Bodo impasse

Displeasants by the ABSU, the massacres in bomb blasts at Bongaigaon and Tinsukia appear to be extensions of the violent of the All Bodo Students' Union (Upendra Group). The blast killed over 17 persons in Bongaigaon and 3 in Tinsukia. While Bongaigaon falls well within the plains tribal area where violence has been festering since the movement for Bodoland began, the blast at the non-tribal area at the other end of Assam far from the troubled tribal areas was the least expected and, therefore, raises grave concern that the ABSU really mean business when they recently threatened to create trouble in major towns of Assam. The AGP Government, which was generally accepted of all parties in the Bodo agitation to grow by its mastery inaction, has now convened a meeting of all political parties and tribal groups, including the ABSU, on March 23 for talks on the Bodo problem. Unfortunately, the ABSU is reported to have declined to attend the meeting. If ABSU is initiating the GNLFP in this regard also, they can well draw a lesson that GNLFP at the end could not achieve their original demand. The resignation of the Assam Minister of State for Agriculture and Irrigation Mr Holiram Terang accusing the AGP Government of being anti-tribal and killing innocent people bloodedly on the pretext of encounters with terrorists has clearly put the Assam Government, the Chief Minister, Mr Mahanta for not trying to solve the Bodo problem politically when ABSU was trying for a negotiated settlement at the time the movement was peaceful. Mr Terang's resignation was obviously prompted by major political considerations mainly the movement for autonomous statehood for his district Karbi Anglong by the Autonomous State

Cash crunch likely to continue for six months

By TN Ashok

banks while distributing the new currencies. Sample this. Even after one month of demonetisation, 70% of the 2,20,000 ATMs are not working to their capacity. Though government has allowed withdrawal of Rs 24,000 per week, many Public Sector Banks allow only withdrawal of Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000. This is due to alleged shortage of currencies. Some public sector bank branches have been forced to give cash on alternate days.

On the contrary, private sector banks such as ICICI, HDFC, and Axis Bank have reportedly received adequate stock of currencies to hand out to their depositors. Banking industry sources suspect some by RBI officials have bungled the distribution of currencies of the newly printed ones.

These sources point out that in Tamil Nadu, where cash crunch seems more severe than in other states, of the 9000 branches in public sector and 900 branches in private sector, the three private sector banks ICICI (402 branches), Axis (200 branches) and HDFC (273 branches) received Rs 6100 crore of new currencies since demonetisation on November 08 this year. Public sector banks having over 9000 branches with a huge customer base was given only Rs 7800 crore of the new currencies. In terms of proportion, the PSU banks got only Rs 0.85 crore per branch as against Rs 7 crore per branch of the said three private banks, alleges a leading NGO from Tamil Nadu.

Also, there has been a very strange phenomenon in the south, particularly Karnataka. While law abiding tax paying citizens have struggled to exchange say Rs 5000 of old notes, black money holders and tax evaders have successfully been able to convert their treasure trove of black money into the new currencies. Media has reported several seizures of vast amounts of money stacked in terms of Rs 2000 notes just printed. The highest seizure being about Rs 7 crore from an IT professional in Bengaluru. How did this happen? It appears the NGO

alleges that tax evaders have been able to pull this off with the connivance of some senior bank officials particularly in the private sector. The CBI has been able to nab some officials across the country, but it's suspected that there are lots of such officials who are not working to their capacity. The CBI has been able to nab some officials across the country, but it's suspected that there are lots of such officials who are not working to their capacity. The CBI has been able to nab some officials across the country, but it's suspected that there are lots of such officials who are not working to their capacity. The CBI has been able to nab some officials across the country, but it's suspected that there are lots of such officials who are not working to their capacity.

When RBI held its monetary policy press conference, its deputy governor R Gandhi said that the total money pumped into banks has exceeded Rs 11.5 lakh crore. Speculation was rife that most of the Rs 14.95 lakh crore of withdrawal high-denomination bank notes would be received to banks in terms of deposits. RBI had already supplied bank-notes of various denominations worth Rs 3.81 lakh crore and was continuing to pump in more Rs 3 to Rs 4 lakhs was black money in circulation and about 75% of this would come back. But more than 100% has come back into the banking system. Has all the black money been converted into white then and if so how?

To this there seems to be an interesting point of view being offered by a former senior executive of a public sector bank. K. Srinivasan of Prime Point Foundation, an NGO, says that it's quite possible that only Rs 7 to Rs 8 lakh crore of currency has only come into the system and not Rs 12 to Rs 13 lakh crore as claimed by banking circles. Here's how RBI has announced that 11.5 lakh crore of demonetised currencies have returned to system, black money holders and tax evaders have successfully been able to convert their treasure trove of black money into the new currencies. Media has reported several seizures of vast amounts of money stacked in terms of Rs 2000 notes just printed. The highest seizure being about Rs 7 crore from an IT professional in Bengaluru. How did this happen? It appears the NGO

interbank deposits and deposits of legal tender! The net deposit mobilised by the bank since November 10 is understood to have touched Rs 3.5 lakh crore. We are not releasing our numbers because we believe that there is a possibility of double-counting. Post offices and cooperative banks have accounts with us and we also started receiving new deposits as deposits," Arundhati Bhattacharya, chairman, SBI said. The research wing of SBI claims there is a possibility of double-counting of 10-15% in bank deposits.

When RBI held its monetary policy press conference, its deputy governor R Gandhi said that the total money pumped into banks has exceeded Rs 11.5 lakh crore. Speculation was rife that most of the Rs 14.95 lakh crore of withdrawal high-denomination bank notes would be received to banks in terms of deposits. RBI had already supplied bank-notes of various denominations worth Rs 3.81 lakh crore and was continuing to pump in more Rs 3 to Rs 4 lakhs was black money in circulation and about 75% of this would come back. But more than 100% has come back into the banking system. Has all the black money been converted into white then and if so how?

To this there seems to be an interesting point of view being offered by a former senior executive of a public sector bank. K. Srinivasan of Prime Point Foundation, an NGO, says that it's quite possible that only Rs 7 to Rs 8 lakh crore of currency has only come into the system and not Rs 12 to Rs 13 lakh crore as claimed by banking circles. Here's how RBI has announced that 11.5 lakh crore of demonetised currencies have returned to system, black money holders and tax evaders have successfully been able to convert their treasure trove of black money into the new currencies. Media has reported several seizures of vast amounts of money stacked in terms of Rs 2000 notes just printed. The highest seizure being about Rs 7 crore from an IT professional in Bengaluru. How did this happen? It appears the NGO

Demonetisation Row UPA inactive on Pak designs

By Proloy Bagchi

The e-mails had been doing the rounds for sometime carrying the supposed facts regarding reasons for the sudden demonetisation, but one couldn't really believe all that was conveyed in these. True, Modi had in his election campaign promised he would fight the menace of black money and bring back a bank still needed to be in the broad. But, two- and-a-half years had gone by and yet nothing was seemingly moving on that front. He was, therefore, being backed and necked by the Opposition inside and outside Parliament for his extravagant unfulfilled promises.

Perhaps, they were all wrong. He was waiting for an opportune moment. What the e-mails contained was indeed alarming and, if things would have been allowed to be left as they were, the country would have been in serious trouble. There is a furor over the problems created by demonetisation of high value currency notes at every level of Indian society, more so for the poor and deprived classes. There is a German company - was found to be supplying currency paper to Pakistan, which was printing high quality fake currency notes and pushing them into India from all directions over land and by air. The Home Ministry barred it from selling bank note paper to the RBI. Pakistan had jacked up the printing of FCIN and pushed them into India with vigour and confidence that its economic and financial sabotage would go undetected.

If one goes by what security expert Gen. GD Bakshi has to say then an idea would be got of the extent of damage that could have been caused by unchecked infiltration of FCIN from across the border. He says India had around Rs.16 trillion worth of Rs 500 and Rs. 1000 currency notes in circulation. Pakistan was already printing 15 trillion of these notes to smuggle them into India as it had established five sophisticated presses for the purpose. This, as Gen Bakshi says, would have unhinged" the Indian economy with runaway inflation, steep price rise and unlimited terror funding. In fact, under these circumstances demonetisation came rather late. It would have done much damage could be done. With the ban on high value currency notes frequency of terror strikes have gone down and the stone-pelters of Kashmir are out of business. Even the Hurriyat, which used to distribute (counterfeit) money received from Pakistan, has now invited tourists to visit Kashmir as it is fearful of losing relevance in the absence of the old and now-banned high value currency notes. Even the Pakistani kinglypin of FCIN committed suicide in 2011 after the breach of security seriously enough. Now that they are caught on the wrong foot they have raised merry hell and have disrupted virtually the entire winter session of Parliament. Even Rahul Gandhi, has been threatening an earthquake or bursting the balloon were he to be allowed to speak in Lok Sabha. Can it be bigger than this? In fact, the government's inaction subsequent to detection of major security breach? ---INFA

reportedly inserted only to distinguish their from genuine Indian currency notes. Investigations in the matter had proved that the mischief was being done at the UK-based company De La Rue from which the RBI was buying 95% of the currency paper. The company was also supplying paper to Pakistan. Shutting of the company reduced it to bankruptcy. Later printing of currency notes was outsourced to three foreign companies but soon there was an anonymous complaint around 2011 from Ministry of Finance officials who seemed to have said it was not De La Rue alone which was compromising the security of the bank notes, but other foreign companies too were doing the same. One does not know what action was taken by the Government but it seems this information was withheld from the Union Finance and Home ministries.

Sometime later, on Modi's initiative in 2015 another foreign firm -Louisenthal, a German company- was found to be supplying currency paper to Pakistan, which was printing high quality fake currency notes and pushing them into India from all directions over land and by air. The Home Ministry barred it from selling bank note paper to the RBI. Pakistan had jacked up the printing of FCIN and pushed them into India with vigour and confidence that its economic and financial sabotage would go undetected.

If one goes by what security expert Gen. GD Bakshi has to say then an idea would be got of the extent of damage that could have been caused by unchecked infiltration of FCIN from across the border. He says India had around Rs.16 trillion worth of Rs 500 and Rs. 1000 currency notes in circulation. Pakistan was already printing 15 trillion of these notes to smuggle them into India as it had established five sophisticated presses for the purpose. This, as Gen Bakshi says, would have unhinged" the Indian economy with runaway inflation, steep price rise and unlimited terror funding. In fact, under these circumstances demonetisation came rather late. It would have done much damage could be done. With the ban on high value currency notes frequency of terror strikes have gone down and the stone-pelters of Kashmir are out of business. Even the Hurriyat, which used to distribute (counterfeit) money received from Pakistan, has now invited tourists to visit Kashmir as it is fearful of losing relevance in the absence of the old and now-banned high value currency notes. Even the Pakistani kinglypin of FCIN committed suicide in 2011 after the breach of security seriously enough. Now that they are caught on the wrong foot they have raised merry hell and have disrupted virtually the entire winter session of Parliament. Even Rahul Gandhi, has been threatening an earthquake or bursting the balloon were he to be allowed to speak in Lok Sabha. Can it be bigger than this? In fact, the government's inaction subsequent to detection of major security breach? ---INFA

All About Health 'Yoga may boost physical, mental health of kids in care homes'



Practising Kundalini yoga - which involves meditation, breathing exercises, chanting mantras and other activities - may help improve the health and psychological wellbeing of children in care homes, a new study has claimed.

Researchers from the University of Nottingham in the UK found that children in care homes have a higher degree of physical and mental health needs than their non-in-care counterparts, and in comparison to children who are in other forms of care, such as foster care.

The study was carried out under the belief of 'creating a sense of community and practice as mutual recovery', and looked at the idea that shared creativity, collective experience and mutual benefit can promote resilience in mental health and well-being among communities that have been traditionally divided - for example children's home staff and children.

Researchers tested a 20-week Kundalini yoga programme in three children's homes situated in the East Midlands. The programme was evaluated according to recruitment and retention rates, self-reporting questionnaires from the participants and semi-structured interviews.

The study shows that yoga practice in children's homes, especially when participation is high, has the potential to encourage togetherness and mutuality and improve health and psychological outcomes for children in care, as well as within the workforce. All the participants reported that the yoga sessions helped to

meanwhile experienced both individual - like feeling more relaxed - and social benefits - for example feeling more open and positive.

Individuals reported that the yoga sessions helped to meanfully and experienced both individual - like feeling more relaxed - and social benefits - for example feeling more open and positive.

Individuals reported that the yoga sessions helped to meanfully and experienced both individual - like feeling more relaxed - and social benefits - for example feeling more open and positive.

Individuals reported that the yoga sessions helped to meanfully and experienced both individual - like feeling more relaxed - and social benefits - for example feeling more open and positive.

Pokemon Go's health benefits moderate, short-lived

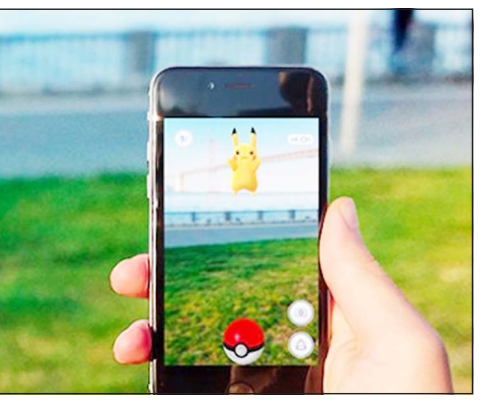
The health benefits of playing the popular augmented reality game Pokemon Go are moderate and wear off after just six weeks, according to a new Harvard study. Pokemon Go improves physical activity among adults who use the game, but the effect is moderate and not sustained over time, researchers said.

Results show that the daily average steps during the first week of installation increased by 955 additional steps - equivalent to half of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommendation for physical activity per week. The following weeks saw a gradual reduction in the number of steps, and this effect was lost after six weeks of game playing. Pokemon Go is an augmented reality game that

projects graphics onto the real world using augmented reality game Pokemon Go are moderate and wear off after just six weeks, according to a new Harvard study. Pokemon Go improves physical activity among adults who use the game, but the effect is moderate and not sustained over time, researchers said.

Results show that the daily average steps during the first week of installation increased by 955 additional steps - equivalent to half of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommendation for physical activity per week. The following weeks saw a gradual reduction in the number of steps, and this effect was lost after six weeks of game playing. Pokemon Go is an augmented reality game that

GO at "trainer level" of five or more, which is reached after walking for around two hours. Data was analysed from automatically recorded step count from the participants' phones and used to estimate the change in daily steps after installation of the game. The findings show the daily average steps during the first week of installation increased by 955 additional steps. Assuming steps of 0.8 metre at a pace of four kilometres per hour, the change would translate into 11 minutes of additional walking daily - around half of the WHO's recommendation of 150 or more minutes weekly. However, the number of steps gradually decreased over the following five weeks, and by the sixth week the number had returned to pre-installation levels. (PTT)



Antarctic Ice Sheet is affecting climate change: Scientists



Proof of alien existence found on Red Planet

Three tall "towers" standing in a perfect straight line on our neighbouring planet Mars in a recent image are claimed by some unidentified Flying Object (UFO) and alien enthusiasts as clear evidence that highly intelligent beings exist there.

They further explained that when people on Earth see those "towers", their brains tend to look for familiar artefacts to explain the mystery around them, a phenomenon called pareidolia.

The scientists gave another example of the famous "Face on Mars", which in fact does not really look like a face at all when seen from another perspective. (IANS)

Quake-detection app detected nearly 400 temblors worldwide: Study

A smartphone app developed by scientists has successfully detected nearly 400 earthquakes since its launch earlier this year, paving the way for a warning system that can alert users before a disaster strikes.

The MyShake app, developed at University of California, Berkeley, harnesses a smartphone's motion detectors to measure earthquake ground motion, then sends that data back to the seismological laboratory for analysis. The eventual goal is to send early-warning alerts to users a bit

farther from ground zero, giving them seconds to a minute of warning that the ground will start shaking. That is enough time to take cover or switch off equipment that might be damaged in a quake, researchers said. To date, nearly 220,000 people have downloaded the app, and at any one time between 8,000 and 10,000 phones are active - turned on, lying on a horizontal surface and connected to a wi-fi network - which was aimed to respond. An updated version of the MyShake app is available, providing an option for

To date, nearly 220,000 people have downloaded the app

push notifications of recent quakes within a distance determined by the user, and the option of turning the app off until the phone is plugged in, which could extend the life of a single charging in older phones. The notifications will not be fast initially - not fast enough for a tsunami warning - but it puts into place the technology to deliver the alerts and we can then work

Sleep helps process traumatic experiences

Sleep during the first 24 hours after a trauma can have a positive impact on highly emotional distress and memories, according to a new study which may help develop new therapies to prevent post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Researchers from the University of Zurich in Switzerland showed a traumatic video to the subjects. The recurring memories of the images in the film that haunted the test subjects for a few days were recorded in an electroencephalograph (EEG); the 'waker group' remained awake.

One slept in the lab for a night after the video while their sleep was recorded via an electroencephalograph (EEG); the 'waker group' remained awake. "Our results reveal that people who slept after the film had fewer and less distressing recurring emotional memories than those who were awake," said Birgit Klein from the University of Zurich.

"This supports the assumption that sleep may have a protective effect in the aftermath of traumatic experiences," said Klein. "On one hand, sleep can help weaken emotions con-

nected to an existing memory, such as fear caused by traumatic experiences, for instance. On the other hand, it also helps contextualise the recollections, process them informationally and store these memories."

However, this process presumably takes several nights. According to the researchers, recommendations on early treatments and dealing with traumatised people in the early phase are few and far between. "Our approach offers an important non-invasive alternative to the current attempts to erase traumatic memories or treat them with medication," said Klein.

The use of sleep might prove to be a suitable and natural early prevention strategy," he added. The study was published in the journal Sleep. (PTT)

necting to an existing memory, such as fear caused by traumatic experiences, for instance. On the other hand, it also helps contextualise the recollections, process them informationally and store these memories."

However, this process presumably takes several nights. According to the researchers, recommendations on early treatments and dealing with traumatised people in the early phase are few and far between. "Our approach offers an important non-invasive alternative to the current attempts to erase traumatic memories or treat them with medication," said Klein.

The use of sleep might prove to be a suitable and natural early prevention strategy," he added. The study was published in the journal Sleep. (PTT)

necting to an existing memory, such as fear caused by traumatic experiences, for instance. On the other hand, it also helps contextualise the recollections, process them informationally and store these memories."

However, this process presumably takes several nights. According to the researchers, recommendations on early treatments and dealing with traumatised people in the early phase are few and far between. "Our approach offers an important non-invasive alternative to the current attempts to erase traumatic memories or treat them with medication," said Klein.

The use of sleep might prove to be a suitable and natural early prevention strategy," he added. The study was published in the journal Sleep. (PTT)

necting to an existing memory, such as fear caused by traumatic experiences, for instance. On the other hand, it also helps contextualise the recollections, process them informationally and store these memories."

However, this process presumably takes several nights. According to the researchers, recommendations on early treatments and dealing with traumatised people in the early phase are few and far between. "Our approach offers an important non-invasive alternative to the current attempts to erase traumatic memories or treat them with medication," said Klein.

The use of sleep might prove to be a suitable and natural early prevention strategy," he added. The study was published in the journal Sleep. (PTT)

TO THE EDITOR MPSC's laudable warning

The warning announced by the MPSC Chairman LM Sangma on 30th November that if any candidate applying for the vacant posts as advertised by the MPSC is found to have been involved in canvassing, directly or otherwise, with either the MPSC members, its officers or staff thereof, he/she would automatically stand debared for a spell of five years from applying and appearing for any examination or personal interview. This bold step would in no uncertain terms send a positive message across the board that the MPSC has resolved to adopt a policy of uncompromising transparency in the recruitment process, a move which is indubitably a major step in the right direction.

somebody's palm, would be appointed to their respective applied posts. Significantly, through this caveat issued by the incumbent MPSC Chairman, this Commission could earn huge public endorsement after so much of brickbats it has been at the receiving end of, for a slew of allegations leveled from different quarters. Either way, this remains to be seen how far this noble crusade of MPSC to usher in credibility is sustained in its true perspective, hereinafter.

Yours etc., Jerome K. Diengdoh Shillong - 2

Did we hear cashless? Editor, Cashless transactions say over Rs.50,000 is welcome. But 100 per cent cashless transactions will only add insult to injury. In that case, we cannot even use a pay toilet whatever may be the urgency if there is a link / tower failure. When countries like the USA are not 100% cashless with 99 per cent literacy, it will be ludicrous if India tries it with only 74.4 per cent literacy. Without hurting the wounds of the poor, the Government should now clean 95 per cent of the black wealth in the form of benami property, gold and foreign bank deposits abroad off our economy. Otherwise, the ongoing economic Swachh Abhiyan will only be reduced to jumla theatrics in the end. Yours etc., Sanjay Deo Kolkata

Saturdays as banking-holidays. Bank-employees can be given two holidays per week by rotation to compensate for banks being opened on holidays. It may be recalled that banking was smooth even on a day of Holi in Delhi when banks kept open to the festival of colours due to some confusion regarding holiday on the Holi-day. Paying an extra incentive to bank-employees working on Saturdays, Sundays and public-holidays can also be considered to pacify them.

The same system should be enforced on post-office employees. Much-awaited plan of merger of public-sector banks subsequently followed by merger of nearby bank-branches can generate a large force of banking-employees to fulfill seven-days per week banking in the country even though some may opt for voluntary-retirement schemes (VRS).

Yours etc., Madhu Agarwal (Guinness Record Holder for letters in Newspapers) Delhi - 6

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

"We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be."

--- Jane Austen

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 126 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2016

Congress, high on rhetoric

CONGRESS Vice President Rahul Gandhi has been making broad allegations of corruption against Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. He addressed a press conference on Wednesday and threatened to expose the Prime Minister and burst his "balloon." A section of the electronic media have dared Rahul Gandhi to spill it all and not wait to make those disclosures only in parliament and that after setting conditions. Some media anchor have even accused the Nehru-Gandhi scion of practising shoot and scoot politics, meaning, in short that Rahul Gandhi would make allegations that cannot be substantiated. It is difficult to guess what damning evidence Rahul Gandhi has against the Prime Minister other than the allegations already lying with the Supreme Court and filed by Prashant Bhushan in November this year. Bhushan had stated to the court that he had valid documents to prove that Prime Minister Modi had received bribes from the Sahara Group and Aditya Birla Group company during his tenure as the Gujarat chief minister. However, the documents also claimed to have made similar payments to the Congress Party as well in 2012 and 2013-14. The documents were sent to Bhushan's NGO, Common Cause anonymously.

The Supreme Court while hearing Bhushan's petition on Wednesday told him to bring clinching evidence to back his charges of corruption against the Prime Minister who was, at that point of time the Gujarat Chief Minister. The contention of the apex court is that they are dealing with a very high functionary of the country. If this is the same case that Rahul Gandhi is about to disclose then not only is the matter sub-judice but it also appears prima facie that there is not enough evidence to nail down Narendra Modi. But taking on Modi on this particular case would also mean that the Congress would have to reckon with its own partymen/women such as Sheila Dikshit who are also implicated in the documents in the possession of Common Cause. Rahul Gandhi had better have solid evidence of the Prime Minister's malfeasance else he will be letting down the nation, the Congress Party and himself.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

British Ministers' chorus denial of Link with Pamela

A string of Cabinet Minister not unused to controversies have come out with a "not in chorus" after reports that a member of the British Cabinet was among the amorous victims of Italian beauty Pamela Bordas. "I've never met her," said Chancellor Nigel Lawson, news of whose latest budget has been overshadowed by that of Ms Bordas exploits. "I meet hundreds of people each week and have not recollection of meeting her." Added Education Secretary Mr Kenneth Baker, whose proposal to privatise education is a hot controversy in Britain. Meanwhile, Ms Pamela Bordas was today reported considering coming out of hiding as reports of her alleged sexual exploits linked her with a British Cabinet Minister and sparked off a new security scare.

Going Cashless: Going Right?

By Debasish Chowdhury

Ever since Prime Minister, Modi hit the roads of India seeking and eventually securing a mandate for the Gujarat model of development; development discourses seem to have become a familiar feature in almost all forms of gatherings whether that be a tea party at home or a public seminar. Generating much heat and little or no light, such debates usually end up bruising or boosting the ego of the participants.

With more than half of her citizens below 25 years and about 65% of her total population having an average age of 35 years or below, the decisive response of India in the last general election purportedly for development was along expected lines. The huge contingent of young citizens certainly equips India with a demographic positioning unparalleled elsewhere in the contemporary world. With her 65 million plus young voter, India gives the right opportunity, indeed is a power packed nation competent to redefine her destiny.

Yet, development for the many use and abuses of it is a hackneyed term in India. Poly cultural, multi-ethnic multi-religious India defines development using the lens of social identity thereby according identity concerns play a significant role in contextualising the developmental agenda to be put in place. Put naively, development understood in India and that for matter in most of the developing countries, is political articulation of the occidental scheme of addressing poverty and related issues through non-socialist measures. Post-Eisenhower and his rather ephemeral period of developmental agenda managed to only nominally expand the population base that could find access to, through fair or unfair means, increasingly larger national resource bases thus paving the foundation for making more and more primitive accumulations. Such primitive accumulations are often a consequence of activities that, by and large, count as legally and/or morally unacceptable. The large scale corrupt practices that describe the socio-economic canons in most such developing nations have, almost without exception, contributed to generate few filthy rich at the cost of the larger majority. India's evolution to a post-independence fits well into this scheme of things. As such, even though India houses one third of the world's poorest, the count of her representatives in the Forbes list of hundred richest of the world too attracts

attention. India's tryst with development as such had to travel a course that has been zigzagging in many ways but was hardly a smooth ride. The latest move on demonetisation perhaps would count as one such bumpy turn. Not the first ever of its kind though, the demonetisation drive that delegitimised almost 86% of the available currency this time at one stroke indeed was a massive exercise. The move, we were told, would at one go unearth black money, cleanse the system from fake currencies and ensure stoppage of terror funding. A month down the line since the November declaration, if officially released records are to be believed, much of that massive exercise, it seems, has yielded pretty little. With 80% of the delegitimised cash already tucked into the banking network with still a couple of weeks to go before the 50 days deadline expires, it appears that either bulk of the black money has found its way to legitimate uses or the volume of black money anticipated was actually far less than what is being told. The Nagrota terror strike, which recovered from terrorists killed in encounter, firing across the loc almost on a regular basis post the November announcement effectively undermined the claim that terror funding is history now. The only silver lining one may see in this exercise is that circulation of the bank currencies might have at least been temporarily curbed. That, by itself, is not a small thing to achieve though the price it attracted from the nation, even on a reserve estimate, appears far too incommensurate.

The loss from the lull, hopefully not a prolonged one, in the marketplace, the anticipated fall in the GDP of the year (CMEI estimates that the GDP will take a hit of about 1.28 lakh crore and may touch even 1.5 lakh crore mark by the quarter end), the huge loss of manpower days, the cost of reprinting and redistribution of the notes standing at a whopping 20000 crores if taken together, the net cost of the exercise would stand at around an outgo of 2.0 lakh crores from the state exchequer. India's tentative recovery of about 80000 crores. Meanwhile, the serpentine queue at banks and in front of ATM kiosks, the near hundred lives lost in the bank counters in quest of cash seems to have erased the tangible gain from the

Curbing black money, eradication of fake currency, terrorism, among other things, were the immediate reason for the Union government to take a decision to demonetise currency. The principal sources of black money generation in activities like political funding and election expenses, real estate transactions, construction, banking and bureaucratic corruption will continue. Black money and corruption are the biggest obstacles in eradicating poverty. When the quantum of black money was so enormous that it had created a parallel economy, making monetary policy, a key instrument of government's effort is commendable.

Debasish Chowdhury is presently working as Controller of Examinations, Sikkim University.

NARENDRA MODI GAVE A BUMP TO PANEERSELVAM FOR CM'S POSITION

Paneerselvam, the new chief minister of Tamil Nadu over Jayalalithaa after her death, is actually a puppet of the NDA government at the centre. Soon after Jayalalithaa suffered cardiac arrest, the prime minister's deputy N. Chandrababu Naidu in Chennai and ensure that a pro NDA government was formed in Tamil Nadu in case Jayalalithaa while Modi campaigned in Delhi, assured that Paneerselvam a pro BJP man (who was appointed CM even by Amma whenever she was in crises), got the top seat thus scuttling all the plans of Sasikala, the heir to Amma's heritage by virtue of being Amma's only companion and closest friend. Shashikala who wanted to be CM, Modi had wanted a CM who belonged to a different caste than herself probably because she was enjoying a personal relationship. They would exchange DVDs and novels. (IPA Service)

Demonitisation cannot stem corruption

The media is full of reports about serpentine queues outside banks. Demonitisation of Rs.500 and Rs.1,000 notes has some benefits, but it cannot stem the flow of unaccounted income generated in the future. Demonitisation has very little impact on the processes of bureaucratic and political corruption. The markets for gold and property are highly concentrated, with relatively few sellers exerting considerable control over supply. When the demonitisation of the two currencies as part of its efforts will help to tackle the triple menace of black money, fake currency and deal with this serious matter with alacrity?

Yours etc,
Vinoth D.Dixit
Almeda - 15
Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

RAGHURAM RAJAN REFUSED NARENDRA MODI'S DEMONETISATION PROPOSAL. The former RBI governor, Raghuram Rajan, had to leave because he refused to follow the Government diktat. Rajan was asked to stay but on the condition that he would have to do away with the thousand rupee and the five hundred rupee notes. But Rajan opted out of the job and refused to comply with the prime minister's orders, which warned the government of the dire consequences and the havoc it can create. Even when he was leaving, he warned the government to at least spare the country of demonetising the five hundred rupee notes. He was totally against demonitisation but if the government was so adamant then at least it should first have the alternative cash ready before it went ahead with the adventure. Even the BJP leaders were sceptical about the move but nobody had the guts to oppose it. Even the finance minister Arun Jaitley who was made to do was reluctant. When the PM briefed his cabinet members there were many who had doubts about the success of the move. But nobody dared to utter a word except Nitin Gadkari. He spiked the idea by asking him, have you thought of the implications.

KEJRIWAL HAVING TALKS WITH PRAKASH AMBEDKAR FOR PUNJAB POLLS

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal is leaving no stone unturned to win Dalit voters in Punjab Assembly election and who can be best choice other than Dr. Prakash Ambedkar, the President of Republican Party of India. Dalit voters matter a lot in Punjab assembly election. They are not happy with ruling Akali and BJP and main opposition Congress. Ambedkar has not been invited by Congress in the past when assembly elections were held and he is against Rahul Gandhi's style of functioning over dalit issues. Under these circumstances, only choice is Aam Aadmi Party. Suresh Kanjwa, National President of Akhil Bharatiya Dalit and Muslim Mahasangh and a close associate of Ambedkar informed that a meeting between two leaders is likely to be held at Delhi by December end or in New Year. Joint rallies by two leaders will give boost to AAP. If AAP emerges victorious and forms the next government in Punjab, Ambedkar may get Rajya Sabha berth from Punjab when it will fall vacant.

NARENDRA MODI GAVE A BUMP TO PANEERSELVAM FOR CM'S POSITION

Paneerselvam, the new chief minister of Tamil Nadu over Jayalalithaa after her death, is actually a puppet of the NDA government at the centre. Soon after Jayalalithaa suffered cardiac arrest, the prime minister's deputy N. Chandrababu Naidu in Chennai and ensure that a pro NDA government was formed in Tamil Nadu in case Jayalalithaa while Modi campaigned in Delhi, assured that Paneerselvam a pro BJP man (who was appointed CM even by Amma whenever she was in crises), got the top seat thus scuttling all the plans of Sasikala, the heir to Amma's heritage by virtue of being Amma's only companion and closest friend. Shashikala who wanted to be CM, Modi had wanted a CM who belonged to a different caste than herself probably because she was enjoying a personal relationship. They would exchange DVDs and novels. (IPA Service)

Parliament's Winter session on verge of washout

NEW DELHI: With only one day left, the Winter session of Parliament is on the verge of a washout as it failed to transact any business again on Wednesday due to the standoff between the government and Opposition over demonetisation, AgustaWestland scam and other issues.

Even on the penultimate day on Wednesday, both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha continued to witness deadlock that began with the start of the session on November 16 over the independent India that the ruling party is not allowing the House to function," he said.

Parliament's Winter session is on the verge of a washout as it failed to transact any business again on Wednesday due to the standoff between the government and Opposition over demonetisation, AgustaWestland scam and other issues.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

The Opposition, led by Congress, said demonetisation along with vagaries of weather had hit the farmers and demanded farm loan waiver to give relief to them.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

On the other hand, BJP members shouted slogans while displaying copies of a news report which claimed that some people in the erstwhile UPA regime had allegedly received money in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal. They wanted to know sharp exchanges between Treasury and Opposition members as they tried to outshoot each other over different issues, throwing the House into pandemonium.

Leader of the Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad said the ruling side was not allowing Parliament to function, which was allowed to speak whenever they wish to speak.

To Naqvi, he said the ruling side can give a notice to raise a discussion on the issue they want, and asked Azad to make his submission. Kurien said but BJP members did not heed.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Union ministers too interjected as Azad rose to speak with L&B Minister M Venkaiah Naidu wanting to know what he wanted to say and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying the members of the ruling side want a discussion on the corruption issue.

Question Hour, pandemonium prevailed as members of both Congress and BJP were on their feet raising slogans and counter slogans.

With both Opposition and Treasury benches creating uproar, plans by Chairman Hamid Ansari to allow the Question Hour went unheard. He also warned members displaying some posters.

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Amid the continued uproar, Ansari adjourned the House initially for 30 minutes. When the House met again, there was ruckus with Opposition members again on their feet raising their issue. (PTI)

Opp seeks meeting with President to raise demonetisation woes

NEW DELHI: Taking their protest on demonetisation to the President's doorstep, Opposition parties on Thursday sought a meeting with Pranab Mukherjee to convey the problems caused by the measure to the common man and "over not being" allowed to speak in Parliament.

At a meeting of the opposition held in the chamber of Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, representatives of various parties decided to raise with the President the problems of the common people, including the poor and farmers arising out of demonetisation. Leaders of various parties said the entire opposition has decided to approach the President to "complain" against the ruling party for not allowing them to speak in Parliament.

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

The leaders said they were elected representatives of the country and had every right to speak in Parliament and it was "unconstitutional" to not allow them to speak in both Houses. (PTI)

Apex court bans liquor shops on national, state highways

NEW DELHI:

Protecting Innocence

By Smita Deodhar

Childline is India's first, and the world's largest 24x7 tele-helpline for young victims of all forms of abuse

For months, 14-year-old Sunny would get thrashed by his teacher in a government school in Mumbai. Anything could trigger the violence — indiscipline, not running the teacher's personal errands, not attending his private coaching classes.

Fed up, Sunny sought the help of a volunteer at a children's activity centre, who directed him to call the Childline 1098. Within an hour, a team member from a field partner of Childline India Foundation, which runs the helpline, reached the centre. After verifying the details of the abuse, she visited the school and, posing as a stranger, spoke to the principal about the erring teacher as well as the laws on corporal punishment and child abuse. A few days later, a threat of legal action later, the school finally issued a warning to him. These days, a much-relieved Sunny is only too eager to tell his friends: "If anyone abuses you, just call 109-8."



Childline 1098 is India's first, and the world's largest, 24-hour tele-helpline for children in distress. In 2014-15, around four million called in for help. Of these, 42,111 were requests for protection from various kinds of abuse.

Need to make the perpetrator accountable," she observes. Reporting child sexual abuse is mandatory under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. Any case of abuse, sexual or otherwise, can be reported to the police, the CWC, or Childline 1098. Additionally, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights has launched the e-portal on its website in August 2016, which facilitates easy and confidential online reporting of sexual abuse. A call on 9868255077 during office hours is another option.



Calls made to 1098 are answered by a trained contact officer. A case report is generated and forwarded to the field partner in the city from where the call came. A member of the field partner contacts the affected child within one hour.

Of these avenues 1098 remains the preferred one. Childline, which intervenes on the entire gamut of child rights, currently operates in 366 cities in 24 states and union territories. It is supported and promoted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Calls made to 1098 are answered by a trained contact officer in one of its six call centres. A case report is generated and forwarded to the field partner in the city from where the call came. A member of the field partner contacts the affected child within one hour. Post intervention, the field partner reports back to Childline.

technology partner TCS (for the call centres) that provide them services on a non-profit basis. Space, technology and manpower expenses are financed by the WCD ministry or through self-generated funds.

However, even as agencies grapple with the challenges surrounding child protection, another potent avenue for abuse has emerged — internet and social media, which demands a different set of responses, infrastructure and regulation.

Reddy reveals, "Every case of child sexual abuse we have handled in the last five years has had some technology input. Either pictures of the child are taken, or the child has been shown sexual content."

Though actual numbers of children being abused online or via mobile have not been compiled so far, there are some indications of what the future portends. UNICEF's 'Child Online Protection in India' report states that there are about 400 million internet users in India, a majority of which are young.

In 2016, as per the telecom regulator's countrywide mobile subscriptions crossed the one billion mark, and it is expected that a major chunk of these will soon

shift to smart phones to access internet; many of them will be children. According to a survey commissioned by Intel Securities India in 2015, 43 percent of children active on social media said they had witnessed cruel behaviour, while 52 percent admitted to having bullied people themselves.

"Despite our limited internet penetration and quality, Indians are among the top three consumers of porn in the world and the most searched keyword term is teenagers. There is a predilection towards the younger age group," says Siddarth Pillai, co-director and communications manager of Prerana's Aarambh initiative. Dr. Debarati Halder, MD of Centre for Cyber Victim Counseling, says, "Adult abusers lure children with games, etc. and then slowly expose them to obscene activity. But sometimes, the perpetrators themselves may be children," she says.

Reporting of cyber abuse, she says, is far from satisfactory. "Whereas children may not be able to discern the abuse the older ones are usually ashamed to disclose. In the public sphere, we will launch awareness campaign about our hotline, so there is a momentum," says Pillai.

It, clearly, is going to be a long, hard battle. (WFS)

Living in an insane world

North Korea's government banned sarcastic comments against it (they actually did, this is not a joke); so I sent them an email: "Great idea, you bunch of geniuses." They're sure to thank me.

The world's gone mad. A reader sent me a news story about police checking so-called "backpacks" of taxi drivers in the United States recently revealed that after Wall Street took over pharmaceutical firms, ordinary prescription pain pills cost six times as much as illegal drugs from your local pusher. Both make you feel better, but the cheaper one comes with a trip around Jupiter on a pink space elephant from using sprinklers on their lawns — and then were exposed using sprinklers to water their own grass. Officials pointed out that their lawn was not grass, but plastic turf, which benefited from regular cleaning.

I did find one example of modern reverse-logic that was actually positive. On a visit to Kampla, I saw posters advertising "ladies" shape" pills: "Bottom not big enough? Now you can increase its size easily and quickly." Every year, \$1 trillion is paid in bribes while an estimated \$2.6 trillion is stolen annually through corruption — a sum equivalent to more than 5 percent of the global GDP. In developing countries, according to the UN Development Programme, funds lost to corruption are estimated at 10 times the amount of official development assistance.

Corruption is a serious crime that can undermine social and economic

THE FUNNY SIDE

Nitty Vutchi

No, wait. I just read the item again. What it actually says is that the driver told police he was moving dead bodies but shocked officers discovered that the bundles were really — (creepy pun) — dead bodies.

No, wait. I just read the item again. What it actually says is that the driver told police he was moving dead bodies but shocked officers discovered that the bundles were really — (creepy pun) — dead bodies.

No, wait. I just read the item again. What it actually says is that the driver told police he was moving dead bodies but shocked officers discovered that the bundles were really — (creepy pun) — dead bodies.

No, wait. I just read the item again. What it actually says is that the driver told police he was moving dead bodies but shocked officers discovered that the bundles were really — (creepy pun) — dead bodies.

Water and Power banned people from using sprinklers on their lawns — and then were exposed using sprinklers to water their own grass. Officials pointed out that their lawn was not grass, but plastic turf, which benefited from regular cleaning.

I did find one example of modern reverse-logic that was actually positive. On a visit to Kampla, I saw posters advertising "ladies" shape" pills: "Bottom not big enough? Now you can increase its size easily and quickly." Every year, \$1 trillion is paid in bribes while an estimated \$2.6 trillion is stolen annually through corruption — a sum equivalent to more than 5 percent of the global GDP. In developing countries, according to the UN Development Programme, funds lost to corruption are estimated at 10 times the amount of official development assistance.

Corruption is a serious crime that can undermine social and economic

Demand for fair price by small tea growers

A group of small tea growers' societies, who are engaged in collective leaf trade in Assam and other tea-growing states, has written a joint letter to Minister of Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman demanding fair price for their produce by strong and participatory enforcement of price-sharing formula, ensuring better price for better quality of leaf supplied and making certified organic manure and pesticides available to them.

Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, President of the Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers' Associations (CISTA), endorsing the demands of the small tea grower collectives, says, "The Government of India must extend crop insurance scheme to all small growers without any delay and extend universal social security and health coverage for the workers working in their gardens."

The joint letter has sought policy directives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry that facilitate collectives of small growers having 100 acres of land, quality leaves and compliance to Plant Protection Code to set up factories to manufacture organic green specialty tea and market their products.

According to the Tea Board of India, in 2015-16, small farmers contributed 33.85% or 417.42 million kgs of 1233.14 million kg tea produced in India. In 1999 small growers' contribution was only 1.16% of the total production.

Bijit Basumaty of All Bodoland Small Tea Growers Association, says, "The financial situation of the Tea Board of India are not in proportion to STG's contribution; greater share even now goes to the estate segment". The joint letter urges the Minister to ensure that the declared subsidies to small growers including leaf collection shed, leaf weighing machine, leaf carrying bag, pruning machine, plucking machine, irrigation equipments and computer are not reaching deserving small grower societies.

J. John, Executive Director, Centre for Education and Communication in New Delhi, says, "It is high time that we recognise that small tea sector contributes to employment generation in the rural areas, uplifting hundreds of thousands of people from poverty and preventing distress migration." He recalled that many are now an empowered lot, and "are willing to move up the value chain."

Echoing this sentiment, Aji Gira of Rangagora Tea Development Society in Tinsukia, says, "We are willing to set up our own manufacturing unit, but there are no clear policy directions from government." Kukhol Boro of Rkwidmsha Small Grower Society, Udalguri, added, "Manufacturing tea is a high quality job, but we face obstacles at every stage of setting up a manufacturing unit by small growers."

The 12th International Tea Day was celebrated on December 15. India is the second largest tea producing country in the world with a production of 1233.14 million kg during the financial year 2015-16. The sector has more than 1.3 million regular workers and an equal number of temporary and non-resident workers, of which more than half of the workers are women. Statistics show growth in tea production and increase in tea export, but the condition in which the tea workers live are appalling.

Ashok Ghosh, International Tea Day Convener and West Bengal General Secretary of United Trades Union Congress, says: "Demomnetisation cannot weaken our spirits in coming together for raising our concerns. Fighting all odds, we observed ITD, since it is the day to voice our rights."

Unite against corruption

We are familiar with the word corruption. In India, we have been hearing this since childhood and will continue to hear till death. Some people may be optimistic about a corruption-free future, but I think it will continue for years as it has become a way of life for many. What we can do to act against corruption is to minimise the same.

Every year, \$1 trillion is paid in bribes while an estimated \$2.6 trillion is stolen annually through corruption — a sum equivalent to more than 5 percent of the global GDP. In developing countries, according to the UN Development Programme, funds lost to corruption are estimated at 10 times the amount of official development assistance.

Corruption is a serious crime that can undermine social and economic

Dynamic, challenging & rewarding option

By Ranjan K Baruah

We have come across a common term 'CA'. It is a common term mostly for the students of commerce stream. With the rapid development in economic careers in finance and accounts have been in demand in many places. We pay taxes and maintain our audit and other financial expenditure. Big corporate, small business person or even institutes all need to update the financial statement at the end of the year.



The term CA is connected with all these. CA stands for Chartered Accountant and the course related to same is called Chartered Accountancy course. It is a dynamic, challenging and rewarding profession. All the countries have their own Accountants Association that regulates the quality and quantity of the professionals in this field.

Chartered Accountancy course is a professional course in Accounting introduced in our country in 1949 with the enactment of the Chartered Accountants Act. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) was formed in the same year. This institute is both an examining and a licensing body. During its 64 years of existence, ICAI has achieved recognition as a premier accounting body not only in the country but also globally, for its contribution to the fields of education, professional development, maintenance of high accounting, auditing and ethical standards. ICAI now is the second largest accounting body in the world.

Chartered accountant is one who is specialised in accounting, auditing and to be held, viz., students registered on or before April 1/October 1 will be eligible to appear in June/December examination.

After completing CPC one may join Intermediate (IPC) Course/ATC after passing CPT and 10+2 examination. Students need to undergo orientation programme and also 100 hours of IT training. Student may appear in Intermediate (IPC) Examination/ATE after completion of eight months of study course as on first day of the month in which the examination is to be held and join articulated training after passing either Group I or Both Groups of Intermediate (IPC) Course.

There are courses related to management and communication in this stage for different days. After completing all the stages, one may go for the final course. Before appearing in final courses, there is other training and a time period to appear for the final examination. After passing the final course one may enroll with the institute and practice as CA. We shall publish more about the course in our next edition.

Further details and updates may be collected from the official website of ICAI.

[Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkrjanjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries]

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambhani

A good year awaits you as Moon time Uranus on your solar return chart and will provide you with the best of opportunities as you focus on professional commitments. The planetary energy will create wonderful environment all around you as you develop contacts. Efforts and turn of events will lead to success in endeavours, for some of you long distance travel is certain so be prepared. You impress people with your talent and charisma and invite fresh opportunities. Professional transactions and business deals could be conducted effectively. Just the right time to keep going on the small but effective changes that you have brought into your lifestyle, the results will soon be yours to see. This week for you

intense, passionate, and focused this week. You are more enthusiastic and ready for adventure. The way you present your ideas, certainly helping to smooth over differences in your personal relationships.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)
New associations and beginnings as well as new opportunities and relationships that enhance your spiritual and personal growth. Your popularity increases and efforts to smooth over challenges in partnerships are more likely to succeed. This is an excellent influence for negotiations, marriage, and business partnerships. You are likely to be actively involved with teamwork and big-hearted than usual. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation from others. This is a sociable, and perhaps self-indulgent, time when the pursuit of pleasure is one of your high priorities. Financial benefits may come your way. You may find that you have the right information at the right time. You could also have big ideas and plans. Work successfully in communications, goes well.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)
You have to get yourself organized, work to build your resources and keep things under control. There are several financial returns you may have. You are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of comfort and status. You are likely to get rid of bad habits. A new project or goal begins now that has a good chance of being successful and long-lasting. You would like to find a way to strike a balance between your self-actualization and the obligations of daily life.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)
This phase brings success and good fortune at work and opens new horizons for betterment and expansion. People are bound to recognize your leadership skills and talents. You want your life path and your objectives to reflect what you really do. A balanced approach to life, in terms of realistic expectations, is the best approach for maximizing success. You benefit from being more decisive than usual, and your ability to concentrate and focus helps you to achieve what you set out to do in the coming weeks.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)
There will be harmonious relations in professional and personal life. Positive new relationships are formed. You are instinctively starting a new phase in your life. It is time to give your life a makeover, a time of new beginnings and fresh energy. It is a friendly time, when it is easy to enjoy life and other people's focus is on personal freedom. You are making new friends and expansion. A new project begins with a good chance of being successful and long-lasting. You are more enthusiastic and ready for adventure. You have to get yourself organized and work to build your resources.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)
This period brings good financial returns as you communicate well and present cordial relations with co-workers. You are inspired and could even inspire others with your words. You think more creatively and express yourself with more sensitivity, compassion, and warmth. You want your objectives to reflect what you are really about, and you are likely to rid yourself of unattainable goals. You benefit from being more decisive than usual and your ability to concentrate and focus helps you to achieve what you set out to do. You possess a strong artistic sensitivity, and you are able to express your feelings openly and candidly.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)
This is a period of work and development and a boost to your self-confidence. It is a time to deal with practical matters, and it is not a time to be lazy or especially gregarious. It can be a time that feels hard, monotonous and lonely. Try to get yourself organized, work to build your resources, keep busy. Your main focus is on personal freedom, reaching out to others, making new friends, and expansion. You are more enthusiastic and ready for adventure. It is also a good time for expressing your creativity. Reach out, but avoid scattering your energies.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 23)
The planetary configuration brings unusualness and curiosity in your relationships as you feel they are more romantic to you. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental. This is a good time for reflection, prayer, and meditation. Higher powers are looking at you, and you seek, and you rely more heavily upon your intuition in order to achieve it. Your physical activities tend to be more

Flavours of India in US

Do you think food plays a role in strengthening people-to-people relations between countries? Food is a very important part of culture. Food is what brings people together wherever they are. They always say, "Let's break bread together."

Introducing food and flavours from different countries to a new country always helps bring people closer because one of the most personal things you can do is eat together. Having two different cultures and using that to bring people together is just fantastic.

What are the most difficult ingredients that you have worked with?
I don't think there are any difficult ingredients. The issue is more how people treat them, understand them and store them. If you understand and respect an ingredient, you can make it work for you.

What defines comfort food for you?
Comfort food is something that takes you back to a place where you are happy. For me, it's Goan fish curry and rice.

What are the challenges that you have faced as a chef in India and the US?
One of the biggest challenges that I faced in the US was people not thinking that being an Indian chef, I could do what I wanted. A big challenge that I face in India is that people don't understand the breadth of Indian food and what can be done with it.

How similar or different is the business side of being an entrepreneur in India and in the US?
Being an entrepreneur in the US and in India is pretty similar yet pretty



Closed the restaurant and opened The Bombay Canteen a year-and-a-half ago. On my trips to India, I realised that Indian food is not being celebrated. Indians were going for other cuisines forgetting their own. I thought, what if we made a restaurant that is fun, approachable and inexpensive, with great hospitality. I decided to do so. I went to a hospitality school and loved cooking. So I decided to go to the kitchen. I landed up in the US in 1988 for college and job, and stayed on. Here I am, 28 years later, having spent most of my life there.

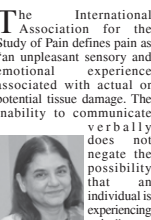
What inspired you to start The Bombay Canteen?
I was quite successful at Table in New York, where I did Indian food through the eyes of an American. It came very popular, and I slowly started growing closer to Indian food. After 12 years, we

restaurants back here — the menus never change. While travelling in India I've seen so many different cuisines, use local American ingredients and make them popular.

What kind of Indian cuisine is preferred in the US?
Indian cuisine in the US today is like Italian food was 30 years ago — white sauce, red sauce, pizza. That's not Indian food as we know today. Indian food in America now is mainly chicken tikka masala, saag paneer and chicken makhani and naan. We all know that's a small part of the Indian food. That being said, people love it. There are also people who hate it and hate curry. With trade and many foreign nationals working in companies coming to India, people are more exposed to India. I feel they are ready for something different, something more exciting, more fun and something approachable. That's why food, Indian restaurants in New York are like

Think again before you hook a fish

By Maneka Sanjay Gandhi



The International Association for the Study of Pain defines pain as "an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage. The inability to communicate verbally does not negate the possibility that an individual is experiencing pain."

It seems extraordinary that it has taken us so long to ask the question — do fish feel pain. Accepting that an animal has the ability to suffer pain changes the way we choose to interact with it. It should influence the moral and ethical judgements we make.

Victoria Braithwaite, in her book "Do Fish Feel Pain?", presents scientific evidence that fish are smart and cognitively competent beings. This coincides with hundreds of studies showing that fish are intelligent and have both accurate and long lasting memories, which in some cases, such as migrating salmon, can span years. Fish don't audibly scream when they're impaled on hooks, or grimace when the hooks are ripped from their mouths, but they do show clear evidence of their suffering — if we're willing to look.

Fish have all our senses and more. A thin lateral line runs along the flank, with special sensory receptors, which allow the fish to detect nearby objects. Blind-cave fish, living in underground caverns in Mexico, use this "seeing". The electric eel, with a specialised organ located towards the end of the tail, can generate enough electricity to stun prey. Knife-fish, or elephant-nose fish, generate weaker electric signals used for communi-

cation. Are fish so different from humans? Conspicuous parallels emerge. Apart from the backbone, their 'stress response' is strikingly similar to that of mammals. Trout are "neophobic" — they actively avoid new objects. But those injected with acetic acid showed no reaction to the brightly coloured Lego towers placed in their tank, suggesting that their attention was focused instead on the pain. In contrast, trout injected with saline as well as those who were given painkillers following acid injection — displayed the usual degree of caution regarding the new object. Similar results have been demonstrated in human patients suffering from painful medical conditions. We all know that pain interferes with our normal thinking abilities.

Researchers at Purdue University in Norway reported that goldfish experience pain consciously. Goldfish injected with saline solution and exposed to a painful level of heat in a test tank, "hovered" in one spot when placed back in their home tank. Fearful, anxious behaviour was rational — not involuntary. Other fish, after receiving a morphine injection, showed no such fearful behaviour.

A study by scientists at Queen's University Belfast, proved that fish learn to avoid pain, like other animals. "They have vivid areas where they avoid areas where they not repeat a neophobic behaviour that clearly showed extreme stress, such as rubbing their noses into gravel and shaking their bodies. Fish demonstrated a "rocking" motion, strikingly similar to the kind of motion seen

in stressed higher vertebrates like mammals. Since morphine appeared to ease the discomfort, Sneddon concluded that the trout's reactions weren't simply a reflexive behavioural response to pain response. The fish injected with venom and acid also took almost three times longer to resume feeding than the control group.

Trout are "neophobic" — they actively avoid new objects. But those injected with acetic acid showed no reaction to the brightly coloured Lego towers placed in their tank, suggesting that their attention was focused instead on the pain. In contrast, trout injected with saline as well as those who were given painkillers following acid injection — displayed the usual degree of caution regarding the new object. Similar results have been demonstrated in human patients suffering from painful medical conditions. We all know that pain interferes with our normal thinking abilities.

Researchers at Purdue University in Norway reported that goldfish experience pain consciously. Goldfish injected with saline solution and exposed to a painful level of heat in a test tank, "hovered" in one spot when placed back in their home tank. Fearful, anxious behaviour was rational — not involuntary. Other fish, after receiving a morphine injection, showed no such fearful behaviour.

A study by scientists at Queen's University Belfast, proved that fish learn to avoid pain, like other animals. "They have vivid areas where they not repeat a neophobic behaviour that clearly showed extreme stress, such as rubbing their noses into gravel and shaking their bodies. Fish demonstrated a "rocking" motion, strikingly similar to the kind of motion seen

(To be concluded)

"Yet, despite our many advances, our environment is still threatened by a range of problems, including global climate change, energy dependence on unsustainable fossil fuels, and loss of biodiversity."

--- Dan Lipinski

The Shillong Times

Vol No LIX No. 129 SHILLONG, MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2016

Nirbhaya and after

THE Nirbhaya gang rape in Delhi four years ago has had one significant impact. More women are reporting sexual assault to the police all over the country. Police forces for their part do not shyly about recording complaints. But that is about all. The new sexual assault law is still not fully enforced. It gives serious weight to the testimony of aggrieved women and promises speedy trial. But conviction rates remain unconvincing. Perpetrators are not punished and reasonable doubt remains an elastic notion. The reason may be that the police cannot collect solid evidence. The new law empowers the police to deal with crimes employing modern investigative techniques. However, the police are not trained to apply such techniques and their training is not given for a reasonable period of time. There is a great lack of human resources. Forensic laboratories are weighed down with backlog and are non-existent in the districts. There are no trained evidence collection units. The police are underpaid and they underperform.

All this proves that passing a law is not an adequate curative. Governments resort to quick fixes and leave it at that. Capacity building in the police forces is inadequate and is not proceeding apace. It applies most to cases of sexual assault. Police accountability goes with their autonomy which is basic to democratic functioning and the rule of law. Nirbhaya rankles but what next?

LOOKING BACK
March 16, 1989

Jamis to take fresh initiative for talks with underground

Nagaland Chief Minister Mr S C Jamir has said his government will contact the underground activists sooner or later to resolve the "honourable solution" to the insurgency problem in the state. Jamir said during a press conference here last night, his first since he assumed office after the recent assembly elections. Mr Jamir said his government has decided to initiate talks with the underground. He said the government has decided to initiate talks with the underground. He said the government has decided to initiate talks with the underground.

VP denies Swami's allegations

Janata Dal President Mr V P Singh today denied the charge that he had been involved in the subversion of the state. He said he had never been involved in any such activities. He said he had never been involved in any such activities.

MLP: A reliable and capable force

Editor, Over the years, various governments and institutions have taken corrective steps for which they have been lauded for their potential to create positive impact while some have not been so popular. While criticising these various authorities it must be taken into consideration that it is not entirely possible to bring about a drastic improvement in the lives of people, whose characteristics and differentiation is as complex as ours. In fact, it is more than necessary for the people to give up their "victim mentality" and overcome their sense of entitlement and deserviveness.

I have spent quite a number of years in few cities and metros across the country, and have witnessed a much difference in as far as the attitude and behaviour of our workforce is concerned when compared to the rest of the country. One particular area that has captured my attention over the years is the professionalism and

Commodification of Common Land: The case of changing land tenure system in Jaintia hills

By H H Mohrmen

The recent Supreme Court order permitting banks to dispose off land mortgaged by tribals even to non-tribals in case of a bad loan, in spite of the prevailing state laws prohibiting the same should raise serious questions. The order should help open our eyes, our ears and our minds to the reality of the existing land holding system prevailing in the state. It is a traditional land holding system of the tribals in a tribal state. It is also pertinent that we ask ourselves whether we can still claim that the current land holding system that we follow is still the same system as that which our ancestors had practiced since time immemorial.

Ownership of land claims ownership of the land and the marginalized section of the society to the elite of the society happens in cases where the rich coal miners bought the land belonging to poor people and in some cases when the claim ownership of the same. Like any indigenous people, the Pnars of Jaintia hills too have deep connection with land and the nature around them. Their culture and identity is entwined with their land and the community's land tenure system is a culture within a culture in itself.

Ownership of land claims ownership of the land and the marginalized section of the society to the elite of the society happens in cases where the rich coal miners bought the land belonging to poor people and in some cases when the claim ownership of the same. Like any indigenous people, the Pnars of Jaintia hills too have deep connection with land and the nature around them. Their culture and identity is entwined with their land and the community's land tenure system is a culture within a culture in itself.

Ownership of land claims ownership of the land and the marginalized section of the society to the elite of the society happens in cases where the rich coal miners bought the land belonging to poor people and in some cases when the claim ownership of the same. Like any indigenous people, the Pnars of Jaintia hills too have deep connection with land and the nature around them. Their culture and identity is entwined with their land and the community's land tenure system is a culture within a culture in itself.

A disordered India has global headwinds for 2017

By S Sethuraman

The Modi-inflicted demonetisation of higher value notes totalling 86 per cent of money in circulation on November 8, continues to take its toll in terms of deprivation of cash for poorer millions and small traders with issues of livelihood and business thrown out of gear. The disruptive effects are also spreading to major segments of the economy. While the country lauds the Prime Minister's fight to root out black money, continuing severe limits on cash withdrawals from urban accounts in banks have accentuated the misery of the people at large. That the stress should be so acute, in a country of 98 per cent dependence on cash, even after five weeks of a fateful decision, shows up its grim downsides.

Government side are that the pain could last longer, well into the early months of 2017. The printing processes for new currency notes required to replace the rupee thirteen lakh crore of invalid notes surrendered by people, would also take another six months to be completed. Why did Prime Minister Narendra Modi set a time limit of 50 days from November 8 for the people to meet their cash requirements in full? Ominously, it might have been more of buying time to reduce the role of cash in Indian economy. The technocrat in the Prime Minister wants to transform India from a cash to digital economy overnight.

Government side are that the pain could last longer, well into the early months of 2017. The printing processes for new currency notes required to replace the rupee thirteen lakh crore of invalid notes surrendered by people, would also take another six months to be completed. Why did Prime Minister Narendra Modi set a time limit of 50 days from November 8 for the people to meet their cash requirements in full? Ominously, it might have been more of buying time to reduce the role of cash in Indian economy. The technocrat in the Prime Minister wants to transform India from a cash to digital economy overnight.

Talk therapy alone can treat social phobia effectively



In a finding that could put an end to the use of medication in the treatment of social anxiety disorder, researchers have shown that structured talk therapy or cognitive alone has the potential to cure social phobia. In treating patients with social anxiety disorder, cognitive therapy on its own has a much better effect over the long term than just drugs or a combination of the two, said the study.

This is the most effective treatment ever for this patient group. Treatment of mental illness often isn't as effective as treating a bone fracture, but here we've shown that treatment of psychiatric disorders can be equally effective, said lead researcher Hans Nordahl, Professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). Social anxiety is not a diagnosis, but a symptom that a lot of people struggle with. For example, talking or being funny on command in front of a large audience can trigger this symptom.

Until now, a combination of cognitive therapy and medication was thought to be the most effective treatment for these patients. In this study involving over 100 patients -- published in the journal Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics -- nearly 85 per cent of the study participants significantly improved or became completely healthy using only cognitive therapy. "A lot of doctors and hospitals combine medications - like the famous 'happy pill' - with talk therapy when they treat this patient group. It works well in patients with depressive disorders, but it actually has

Appetising foods may not drive long-term overeating

Eating good-tasting food such as chocolate chip cookies, potato chips and sweetened condensed milk may not drive long-term overeating and cause obesity, a study has found. The research using a mouse model suggests desirable taste in and of itself does not lead to weight gain. "Most people think that good-tasting food causes obesity but that isn't the case. Good taste determines what we choose to eat, but not how much we eat over the long-term," said Michael Tordoff, psychologist at Monell Chemical Senses Center -- a non-profit scientific institute in Pennsylvania, US.

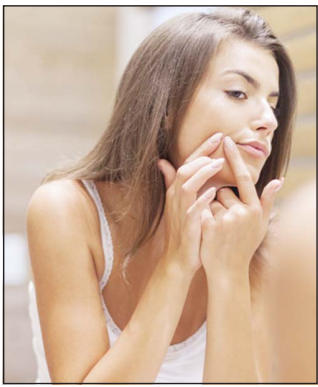


To assess the role of taste in driving overeating and weight gain, three groups of mice received one of the three diets for six weeks: One group was fed plain chow, one group was fed chow with added sucralose and one group was fed chow with added mineral oil. At the end of this period, the groups fed the sweet or oily chow were no heavier or fatter than were the animals fed the plain chow. Additional tests revealed that even after six weeks, the animals still highly preferred the taste-enhanced diets, demonstrating the persistent strong appeal of both sweet and oily tastes. "Even though we gave mice delicious diets over a prolonged period, they did not gain excess weight. People say that if a food is good-tasting it must be bad for you, but our findings suggest this is not the case," Tordoff said.

Beauty, style guide...

Get rid of acne with basic

You can use cosmetic to cover up some facial flaws, but if you have acne on your face, you can't completely hide it. Washing your face with mild cleanser and keeping hair spray and styling gel away from your skin can help you get your acne under control, says an expert. Karuna Malhotra, Cosmetologist from Cosmic Skin and Homeo Clinic, lists steps that one should follow religiously to get rid of acne.



Acne lock worse and last longer. Please don't squeeze it and use Benzoyl Peroxide or Salicylic acid face wash with a balanced pH for acne patients. This will also shrink the acne eruption gradually.

* Wash your face with mild cleanser only once or twice a day with lukewarm water. Avoid scrubbing your face using harsh abrasive products. Also, make sure one that you are washing your face in the evening to remove makeup and dirt. * Some patients will squeeze acne in an attempt to try to open up a clogged pore. However, this usually leads to further inflammation, which makes the

* If you can't live without your hair spray or styling gel, be sure to keep them away from your face as much as possible. Many hair products contain oils that can make acne worse. Try to use water-based products. * If you get acne on areas such as your chest or back, avoid wearing tight clothes, which can rub and cause irritation. (IANS)

BP lowering drugs may block cancer invasion

Drugs used to lower blood pressure can block breast and pancreatic cancer invasion by inhibiting their cellular structures, say researchers. The study discovered that calcium channel blockers -- currently used to treat hypertension -- can efficiently stop cancer cells move and invade surrounding tissue. Identification of anti-hypertension drugs as potential therapeutics against breast and pancreatic cancer metastasis was a big surprise, said researchers. The targets of these drugs were not known to be present in cancer cells and therefore no one had considered the possibility that these drugs might be effective against aggressive cancer types, said a researcher. (IANS)

Low education doubles risk of heart attack: Study

People who leave school without a certificate are more than twice as likely to have a heart attack as those with a university degree, researchers said. "The lower your education, the more likely you are to have a heart attack or stroke - that's the disturbing but clear finding," said lead researcher Rosemary Korda, research fellow at the Australian National University (ANU). The study found that in adults aged 45-64 years, heart attack rates more than doubled (nearly 150 per cent higher) among those with no educational qualifications than among people with a university degree. The risk was around two-thirds (70 per cent) higher among those with intermediate levels of education and what food choices you make. Middle-aged adults who had not completed high school were 50 per cent and with non-university qualifications were 20 per cent more likely to have a first stroke than those with a university degree. A similar pattern of income and education levels of education and what food choices you make.



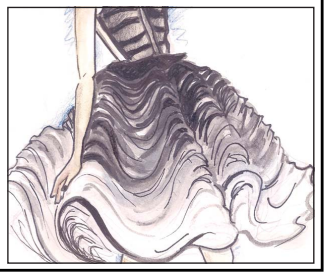
Raise your kid to be a smart consumer

Adopting the right kind of parenting style -- a mixture of restriction and indulgence in decision-making may help kids become smarter consumers when they turn adults, a study has found. According to research from the University of Nebraska - Lincoln in the US, there are four basic parenting styles -- authoritative, authoritarian, neglecting and indulgent -- that are linked to a variety of consumer socialisation processes. Authoritative parents are more likely to tell children what they want them to do while also explaining why, which can be described as "restrictive" and "warm" communication. These parents tend to relate quite effectively with their children and expect them to act maturely and follow family rules, while also allowing a certain degree of autonomy. On the other hand, authoritarian parents are restrictive and not likely to exhibit much warmth in their communication, said Lars Carlsson, Professor at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. They are more likely to tell a child what to do and not explain why. Carlsson added, "While neglecting parents offer little guidance for their children's development and limited monitoring of activities. Indulgent parents are lenient, compliant and give children adult rights without making them take on responsibilities. The findings, based on a meta-analysis of 73 studies, revealed that children of authoritative parents avoided negative marketplace interactions like cyberbullying, theft, vandalism, drug use and feelings of having an unattractive body shape. The study is available online in the Journal of Consumer Psychology. (IANS)

Fashion trend that will rule this party season

Stay fashionable and warm this winter

Winter brings in lot of confusion in terms of choosing the right outfit that not only keeps you warm from chilly season but also protects you from winter. Bomber jackets and velvet are some of the pieces that you opt for to stay both fashionable and warm, says an expert. Jinal Khimani, stylist at fashion reselling service provider CoutLoot, shares the list of outfits one can wear in winter. * Velvet: Arriving in a shocking array of bright hues, velvet is no longer the fabric of dark, romantic, gothic evening-only clothes, but one to be mixed into the most vibrant street stylist's daytime wardrobes. You'll find it used in everything from trouser suits to high-high boots. Blazers, velvet in the form of kick-around sneakers, sleek flats, and fiery evening options. * Bomber jackets: The bomber has recently taken over the fashion world, but this year it takes on a new twist in unusual colors and fresh silhouettes. Whether oversized or embroidered, it's all about the details in 2016. * Slip dresses: The slip dress can seem intimidating because of its clinging, slinky silhouette. But trying an all-line version of this trend is just as chic and a much easier wear. Pair it with an oversized sweater or a cross-body bag with plenty of hardware, heels, and a leather jacket. * Metallic dress: Metallic dresses are yet another eye-catching trend in winter. We saw both micro-sequenced dresses to metallic fabrics in colours like gold, brass, silver, metallic fuchsia to burnt gold. * Fur collars: The fur collars in coats and dresses, which is quite wintry! Try it in the deep colours like black and grape - or in light pastels or even the marble patterned one. * Ruffles: Ruffles can be seen in different styles - some on dresses, some on skirts or tops, but they were seen in the collections of so many of design houses like Roberto Cavalli, Dior and Oscar de la Renta. * Trench vest: The trench coat will always be a classic staple in all of our closets, but this year it's trending in a fresh sleeveless silhouette. Whether you're running in a brush or heading to a meeting, this vest is a perfect layering option to step up your favorite outfit.



Bank staff overworked

Editor, This refers to the letter, "Banks should work on all seven days" by M. S. Aggrawal (ST. Dec 15, 2016). Here I would like to point out that by and large, a bank employee/officer never gets his due given the quantum of workload and financial risks when compared to their counterparts in any other public sector/central government department. It is very easy for people outside the industry to pass comments or give suggestions. Bank staff are one of the most work-loaded and least corrupt work force. The government's policies are aimed at weakening the basic structure of banks which have withstood the turbulent economic situation mainly due to the concept of nationalisation. It must be remembered that the bank employees are known for their contribution in building the Indian Economy. Bank officers carry on with the business continuously despite the presence of so many demotivating factors encountered in making credit decisions in order to help the industry vibrating. The public pressures on the officers working in branches and at the top management is a well known phenomenon. Yours etc., JR Swier, Via email Ahmedabad - 15

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

"Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter, and those who matter don't mind."

--- Bernard M. Baruch

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 130 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2016

Manipur: A failed state

WHEN certain civil society groups can hold a state and its people to ransom for an indefinite period by calling an economic blockade, it is time to think of central rule to bring about order and sanity. The United Naga Council (UNC) had called an economic blockade from November 1 to protest the creation of new districts in Manipur by the State Government without consulting stakeholders. An economic blockade is unconstitutional because it prevent the movement of goods and people. In this case all goods bearing trucks including fuel tankers have not been allowed to enter Manipur either from the Dimapur-Imphal highway or from the Jiribam side. This has led to prices of fuel sky-rocketing to Rs 250–300 a liter. Since public movement along the highway is curtailed students and those with meager resources are compelled to take a flight to and from Imphal to and from different destinations. This is the holiday season and students and others living outside Manipur are all travelling home. But their agony knows no bounds as groups in the Imphal valley retaliate against the UNC blockade by pulling out passengers bound for the hills of Manipur from public transports and making a bonfire of their luggage on Sunday November 18. Over twenty public vehicles have also been burnt. While the antagonism between the people living in the hills and the valley is no secret, their methods of calling attention to their grievances have violated the human rights of ordinary citizens. It is the duty of the state to take control of the situation and use its machinery to bring law and order. But when the state represented by a popularly elected government fails to control the situation and actually plays up one group against another then a time has come to impose President's Rule.

Article 356 empowers the central government to impose "President's rule" on a State whose constitutional machinery has failed. The Government of Manipur has by all accounts failed to function as per the Constitution, and to ensure safety and security of its citizens. It has failed to ensure the right to free movement of people and goods. Maintaining law and order is the prime remit of the state government. If law and order has failed and central intervention is needed then President's Rule is the only way out.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Buta Singh's visit

Dissidence in Congress (Dis) ended everywhere and it makes no difference whether the party is in power or in opposition. In Manipur where the Congress(S) is in office, the dissidence threatens the life of its own Ministry headed by Mr Rishang Keishing; in Tripura where it is in opposition to the CPI(M), it threatens law and order in the State in its effort to find political foothold in enough force fight with the

Of Incarnations, Saints, and Scholars

By Deepa Majumdar

genuine distinctions to suit the spiritual needs of different soul-types. This implies a particular theory of religion – one that perceives religions as different windows to the same lone Christ and the Holy Mother, Sarada Devi – is unquestionably a holy month. The advent of the Incarnation puts History in a new light. That the Infinite enters the supreme finitude of immanence – implies that the chief purpose of History is *karmic*. Notwithstanding its innate finitude, History serves as a temporal curtain for the busy thoughts of man, a doorway to the transmigration. It is the stage that witnesses the fruition of our moral actions. Earth therefore becomes our *Karma-Bhumi*.

The Holy Mother, Sarada Devi, herself an Incarnation, once mused about how difficult it is for an Incarnation to take human birth. Indeed, how the Infinite stoops down to adopt the mantle of finitude, is part of the divine mysteries man cannot solve. Where Christianity accepts mainly the one Incarnation that was Christ, Hinduism subscribes to multiple historical appearances of the one Incarnation—sometimes simultaneous as was the case with Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother. In short, God being the lone Absolute Being from a monothestic standpoint, there can be only one Incarnation of God. But nothing limits the frequency with which this Incarnation appears in human form.

History, Christianity and Hinduism have come to their respective conclusions about the Incarnation, based on their respective historical experiences—but in the case of western Christianity, perhaps also on dogma. For the notion that Christ is the only Son of God is the construct of theologians, who have not necessarily experienced mystical glory. The eras of their claim therefore continues to be never. Christ Himself never claimed to be the only Son of God. Vedantic Hinduism—in contrast with the caste Hinduism—claims that the Divine being the substratum of all immanence, cannot help but be "within" each being (not only human beings). We are therefore all not only children of God, but potentially divine. Unlike Christianity, we are not mad, merely in the image of God.

Religions therefore differ greatly – not only in their conceptions of the Divine – but on other theological grounds as well. Some of these irreconcilable differences should be treated as

value, respect and appreciate one another and be patriotic towards Bharat Mata (India) by pure thoughts and good deeds and to protect and defend the country at all costs. He said that if one religious claim that it is the only true religion and that it alone only can lead to God and others are not then troubles start.

He also said that RSS wants to spread Indian Hinduism to lead a pure and exemplary life and believe in the oneness of God. He said that Hinduism is not a political ideology but a way of life and that of their communities, castes and all creeds in India to live in peace and harmony and to

than all of us – to fulfill the gargantuan task of digesting the sins of humanity, redeeming it, and delivering it from immanence. The Incarnation therefore has of immaculate conception in women of exceptional caliber. The saint, by contrast is a former sinner, who has labored to reach his existential zenith of Self-knowledge, by recovering and reaching his potential and innate divinity. The saint too has unusual percentage – born of immaculate enough – Christ for His ultimate redemptive sacrifice of Himself upon the cross, and the Holy Mother for being the first female incarnation of God, who digested the sins of thousands and continues to do so. Notwithstanding their external differences and historical uniqueness, there is a message common to both – the timeless message of forgiveness. Like the Buddha, who taught that only love (not hatred) can quell hatred – so also Christ taught us to love our enemies and turn the other cheek. Not only did He preach this, but He demonstrated these teachings on the cross, through His all-powerful exemplary meekness before His enemies – thereby verifying this truism – that non-resistance of evil—the only force capable of quelling evil – constitutes the highest of all spiritual goals. Like the Buddha and Christ, the Holy Mother taught us to be blind to faults in others and to be personally flawless. She taught us to serve others unconditionally and to love the multitude. Saying, perhaps with infinite tenderness, that *nobody in this world is a stranger*. She taught us to learn to make the whole world our own. Through her own exemplary purity, she constituted the supreme ideal we should aspire towards in our feminisms. Incarnations may therefore repeat old truths, but as uttered by a prior Incarnation. But this does not render them obsolete. For what matters more is the words themselves, is the Spirit behind the words – in this case, the grand omnipresence of the Incarnation.

To find revolutions is to enact revolutions is not difficult. Far harder is the search for Living Ideals to serve as towering goals of revolutions. In this special sense, Incarnations unleash not only galaxies of saints and scholars – but also numberless silent revolutions of the heart and numberless numinous revolutionaries who stamp Time with their indelible mark of Eternity.

Below the saints of this world are those nuns and monks, who have understood the camouflage of the discursive and leap beyond the clutter of the intellectual to the silence of the meditating sage. That meditation is a mode of receiving the Incarnation into our hearts and minds – a receptivity that most often lit (this being the prior inner silence – is something that nuns and monks understand as a basic prerequisite to their radical acts of renouncing the world for God. At the bottom of this celestial ladder, often trailing far behind, we have scholars who labor discursively to understand and explicate the meaning of the Incarnation. Historians, writers, theologians, and philosophers of the finest caliber, labor intellectually to explain and expound on the simple words of Incarnations. Illumined intellectuals who have avoided the abyss of cynicism – but not the abyss of the allure of intellectualism – labor in grandiose prose and the deepest acrobatics of the discursive – to serve as exegeses of the humble words of Incarnations. The chasmic difference between the lexical sophistication and sometimes esotericism of theologially-oriented intellectuals – and the arid simplicity, poetry, and universality of Incarnations should leave us speechless with wonder. Blinded by the vandy of the world of scholarship, and speaking from the podium of the ego-scholars often speak in torturous prose – while Incarnations speak in simple parables. Yet such scholars are better than those who may be so

unscrupulous person and we earnestly request the police to thoroughly investigate and book all those involved. The management is upset by the media reports which brought disrepute to the Guest House by also unnecessarily dragging the proprietor and his family members into the picture.

The management hereby clarifies that the Guest House is not in any way connected or involved in the commission of any criminal offence. The management hereby inform that they are prepared to co-operate with the police in their investigation. We request the media as well as the public not to tarnish the good name of the guest

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein,
Via email

Clarification
Editor,
We at Marvelene Inn's cum Guest House strongly condemn the commission of criminal offences by

Corporate Bond Market in India

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

The International Capital Market Association (ICMA) published a paper sometime in 2013 delineating the "Economic Importance of Corporate Bond Markets". It looked at the basic premises of how corporate bonds serve the need alongwith equity share capital, bank financing and other means to incur business expenses and finance future expansion. Globally, corporate bonds have particularly been a stable and reliable source of term finance for non-financial companies. As bank lending has begun to thin the importance of corporate bond market cannot be emphasized more.

In India with the cloud of huge NPA looming large over public sector banks, corporate bonds become an important source of funding even further. According to the same period Gross NPA rose from 3.4% to 7.6%. This is the highest in 12 years and is expected to cross 8.5% by March 2017. The stress in the banking sector undoubtedly mirrors the stress in the corporate sector. In such circumstances when funds from the banking sector are even harder to come by while banks clean their books, corporate have to look towards corporate bond market.

With these issues in mind recently the government announced a slew of measures in order to kick-start the corporate bond market in India. It includes setting up an electronic platform for private issuances, a platform for corporate bond repurchase and the government has to go beyond the market reforms introduced in the budget. As India looks towards a new economic push in the manufacturing sector financing via corporate bond market becomes imperative. The need of the hour is structural reforms. As an important measure the newly announced Bankruptcy Bill in effect provides further reforms are needed towards resolving contract and insolvency disputes in a time bound manner. This bill clearly separates the insolvency resolution process from liquidation. The Bill seeks to resolve the bankruptcy issues in a time bound manner.

Another important step that must be taken in order to propel the bond market in India is to ensure that corporate bonds yield a higher market rate. The government must also clear regulatory hurdles while setting up a robust secondary market for these bonds. It is only with these steps that corporate bond market in India will thrive in India.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

Road in total disrepair
Editor,
and portions of it near the Aganwadi centre-2 and near the connecting bridge are in real bad shape This road is very busy as it leads to NEHU and all sorts of vehicles ply on this road. This is my second letter to you regarding this road. In October 2016 but nothing has been done and the road has gone from bad to worse. For the sake of everyone's safety please fix this road!

Yours etc.,
RN Rymbai,
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.

Neglected, abused kids less likely to own home at 50

People who experience childhood neglect and abuse may take more time off work due to long-term sickness and are less likely to own a home when they reach middle age, a new study has claimed. Researchers from University College London in the UK showed that the potential socioeconomic impact of child neglect and abuse may persist for decades.

They found that neglected children often had worse reading and mathematics skills in adolescence than their peers, which could hamper their ability to find work. These factors did not ex-

plain the poorer standard of living for those reporting child abuse. They followed the lives of 8,076 people from birth in 1958 until the age of 50 years, examining key socioeconomic indicators. A person's economic circumstances at the age of 50 are important because this is close to peak earning capacity and poor living standards at this age can signal hardship and associated ill health during old age.

The study found adults who had been neglected in childhood were approximately 70 per cent more likely to have time off work due to long-term sickness than those who had not.

Our findings suggest that maltreated children grow up to face socioeconomic disadvantage. This is important because such disadvantage could in turn influence the health of individuals affected and also that of their children," said Snehal Pinto Pereira from UCL.

"As well as highlighting the importance of prevention of maltreatment in childhood, our research identified poor reading and mathematics skills as a likely connecting factor from child neglect to poor adult outcomes," she said. "This suggests that action is needed to improve and support these abilities in neglected children," she added. The study was published in the journal Pediatrics. (PTT)



Bad bosses come in two forms - dysfunctional or dark, claims study

Bad bosses usually come in two forms – the dysfunctional ones, who are not good at their job and the dark ones, who take pleasure in abusing and harassing their employees. A new study has claimed.

Researchers including Seth M Spain from State University of New York at Binghamton in the US are building a framework to better understand the behaviour of bad bosses and to reduce workplace stress. Researchers look to establish a taxonomy for identifying bad bosses and their distinct behaviours.

Spain said that there are two definitions of a bad boss: dysfunctional ones, like Michael Scott from the TV series The Office and the dark ones, like Gordon Gekko from the film Wall Street, and both can cause a great deal of stress to employees. "They do not want to hurt you, though lack of skill, or other personality defects, they are

just not very good at their job. Largely, that is what we would call 'dysfunctional,'" said Spain.

Dark bosses, on the other hand, do not care about employees. "They do not want to hurt you, through lack of skill, or other personality defects, they are

characteristics called the "Dark Triad," which includes Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy.

These are people who enjoy the pain and suffering of others - they are going to be mean, abusive and harassing in daily life," said Spain. That is not to say that there are not degrees in which these characteristics are displayed.

Everybody exhibits these behaviours at some level, he said. According to Spain, bad bosses, whether they are dysfunctional or dark, can

cause a great deal of stress to employees.

"A person's direct supervisor is a lens through which they view their work experience. We think, in particular, that a boss can be an incredibly substantial source of stress for people who work for them," said Spain.

Having this framework of behaviours that bad bosses exhibit can be the first step into fixing them, ultimately reducing stress in the workplace, he said. "We believe that these characteristics are extremely important for understanding employee development and career advancement," Spain said.

"Understanding the role that these characteristics play in stress experiences at work is extremely important, especially since bad leaders can cause so much suffering for their subordinates," he added. The study appears in the journal Research in Occupational Stress and Well-being. (PTT)



Guide to pick your bridal jewellery

Bridal jewellery is a once in a lifetime investment for every woman, and so it needs to be chosen carefully. Pieces that can be worn in multiple ways are high on trend, says an expert.

Manju Kothari, Creative Director, fine jewellery retail brand Entice, tells you which jewellery to pick for a winter wedding: * Choice of wearing two medium-sized necklaces on the wedding day as compared to one extra large necklace is trending these days. The two necklaces when worn together, preferably a choker and a long necklace, create a grand effect and can be worn individually. * Mehendi functions are the one of the most fun parts of any wedding.

ding. Maangtika with chandeleer earrings add grace and the desired sparkle to the overall attire. * Dresses for cocktail evenings can be paired with white diamonds that can further enhance the look of the bride to be. * For a winter wedding, a very stylish but long forgotten piece of jewellery is the brooch. Instead of a pin, use this to tuck the pallu/dupatta. Brooches with coloured stones can also be used as hair accessories with ease. * For day weddings, incorporating subtle coloured gemstones like pink tourmalines, turquoise, amethysts and pearls can give a stunning look. On the other hand, for evenings, one can opt for midnight colours like dark green emeralds and rubies. (AAS)

Deadly sleeping sickness can also spread via skin

Skin plays a significant role in harbouring and transmitting trypanosomes – the parasite that causes the Human African Trypanosomiasis, more commonly known as African sleeping sickness, which is often fatal if left untreated, a new research has found. The findings could have a major impact on the way the disease is diagnosed, treated and potentially eradicated. The disease, which kills thousands in Sub-Saharan Africa every year, is primarily transmitted to humans via the bite of an infected tsetse fly as it takes a blood meal, with diagnosis then confirmed through the presence of parasites in the blood. The current study, published recently in the journal eLife, showed that substantial quantities of trypanosomes that cause the disease can exist within the skin and can be transmitted back to the tsetse fly vector.

"Our results have important implications with regard to the eradication of sleeping sickness. Firstly, our findings indicate that current diagnostic methods, which rely on observing parasites in the blood,

Huge 'dead zone' found in Bay of Bengal

The Bay of Bengal hosts a 'dead zone' of an estimated 60,000 square kilometres – an area that contains little or no oxygen and supports microbial processes that remove vast amounts of nitrogen from the ocean, scientists including those from India have found.

Dead zones are well known off the western coasts of North and South America, off the coast of Namibia and off the west coast of India in the Arabian Sea.

The Bay of Bengal has long stood as an enigma because standard techniques suggest no oxygen in the waters, but, despite this, there has been no indication of nitrogen loss as in other 'dead zones' of the global ocean," said Laura Bristow, a former postdoc at



University of Southern Denmark. Researchers, including those from the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) in Goa, demonstrated that some oxygen does exist in the Bay of Bengal waters,

but at concentrations much less than standard techniques could detect and some 10,000 times less than that found in the air-saturated surface waters. The researchers also discovered that the Bay of Bengal hosts microbial communities that can remove nitrogen, as in other well-known dead zones and even some evidence that they do remove nitrogen, but at really slow rates.

"We have this crazy situation in the Bay of Bengal where the microbes are poised and ready to remove lots more nitrogen than they do, but the trace amounts of oxygen keep them from doing so," said Bristow, now a scientist at the Max Planck Institute (MPI) in Germany.

"Remove" is the last amounts of oxygen, and the Bay of Bengal could become a major global player in nitrogen removal from the oceans," said Wajib Naqvi, former director of

Human-induced climate change worsened 2015 heat wave in India

The deadly heat waves that killed nearly 2,500 people in India and 2,000 people in Pakistan last year were exacerbated by human-induced climate change, scientists including those from IIT-Delhi have found.

Researchers examined observational and simulated temperature and heat indexes and found that the heat waves in the two countries "were exacerbated by anthropogenic climate change."

"While the two countries typically experience severe heat in the summer, the 2015 heat waves – which occurred in late May/early June in India and in late June/early July in Pakistan – have been linked to the deaths of nearly 2,500 people in India and 2,000 in Pakistan. Researchers used "factual" simulations of the world and compared them to "counterfactual" simula-

tions of the world that might have been had humans not changed the composition of the atmosphere by emitting large amounts of carbon dioxide, said Daithi Stone from the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in US.

"It is relatively common to run one or a few simulations of a climate model within a certain set of conditions, with each simulation differing just in the precise weather on the first day of the simulation; this difference in the first day propagates through time, providing different realisations of what the weather could have been," said Stone.

"The special thing about the simulations used here is that we ran a rather large number of them. This was important for studying a rare event; if it is rare, then you need a large amount of data in order to have it occurring frequently enough that you can understand it," Stone added. Researchers, including those from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, examined both observational and simulated temperature alone as well as the heat index, a measure incorporating both temperature and humidity effects. From a quality-controlled weather station observational dataset, they found the potential for a very large human-induced increase in the likelihood of the magnitudes of the two heat waves. "Observations suggested the human influence; simulations confirmed it," said Michael Wehner, climate researcher at Berkeley Lab. The heat waves in Pakistan in late June/early July of 2015 were also similar killing around 2,000 people. The research team also found that, despite being close in location and time, the two heat waves were "meteorologically independent." (PTT)

TO THE EDITOR

RSS explains itself

Editor,

The Assistant General Secretary of the Central Body Rashtriya Sanyasik Sangh (RSS) Mr V Bhagiahai, came to Shillong on December 15, last for the first time to deliver a talk on the RSS and explain the broad aims of this cadre-based organization and reasons for its formation. The discourse helped enlighten the audience coming from a cross section of society and diverse religious groups that assembled at Shri Aurobindo Institute of Indian Culture (SAIC) auditorium. I am sure

that many of those who listened to the talk were better informed. If Bhagiahai's words are to be believed, then even the Hindus know nothing or very little about the RSS. His talk has removed to a great extent misconceptions about the Hindu based organisation. I hope that this tall leader of the RSS spoke the truth.

In the course of his talk he said that RSS wants all Hindus to lead a pure and exemplary life and believe in the oneness of God. He is not a politician but a spiritual leader who dedicates themselves for the uplift of their own lives and that of their communities and for the over-all progress and prosperity of the country.

He said that India can thrive only if there is unity in diversity. In answer to Bhagiahai he said that there are some with vested interests that blamed RSS for everything because they do not know about this organisation and because of jealousy.

It is a fact that there are political parties and many communities in India that want to spread Indian communal right wing Organisation. It will be in the fitness of things if the RSS central body sends stalwarts like Bhagiahai who are knowledgeable about many aspects about India and abroad and who can explain thoroughly about the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal and the

and portions of it near the Aganwadi centre-2 and near the connecting bridge are in real bad shape This road is very busy as it leads to NEHU and all sorts of vehicles ply on this road. This is my second letter to you regarding this road. In October 2016 but nothing has been done and the road has gone from bad to worse. For the sake of everyone's safety please fix this road!

Yours etc.,
RN Rymbai,
Via email

All About Health

Camel, llama antibodies inspire new cancer treatment

When a tumour grows, certain MMPs are over-produced, allowing cancer cells to spread to other parts of the body

Inspired by natural antibodies found in camels and llamas, scientists have developed a new cancer treatment that is highly selective in blocking the action of faulty enzymes essential in tissue regeneration. Matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs) are a group of 26 closely related proteinases (enzymes that break down other proteins) that are essential in regeneration of tissues and other normal cellular processes. However, when a tumour grows, certain MMPs are over-produced, allowing cancer cells to spread to other parts of the body. Xin Ge, an assistant professor at the University of California, Riverside in the US and colleagues developed a therapeutic monoclonal antibody that is highly selective to MMPs, meaning they can bind to a specific MMP and block its activity without affecting other MMP family members. The creation of these human antibodies was inspired by antibodies found naturally in the camelid family of animals, which includes camels and llamas. The results could lead to new treatments - not only for a variety of cancers, but also other diseases that arise from faulty proteinases, such as Alzheimer's, asthma, multiple sclerosis and arthritis, researchers said. For more than 20 years, scientists have been developing drugs that block faulty MMPs in order to stop cancers from starting and spreading. However, clinical trials on a variety of promising small molecules have failed largely because they lack the specificity needed to target faulty MMPs while still allowing "good" MMPs to perform their regular cellular duties. "Clinical trial failures have taught us that selective, rather than broad-based, inhibitors are required for successful MMP therapies, but achieving this selectivity with small-molecule inhibitors is exceedingly difficult because of the incredible conservation among MMP family members. "Both human antibodies and MMPs have concave or buried-binding sites, making interactions between them almost impossible. They simply won't stick together," Ge said. "But human antibodies and MMPs have convex, looped binding sites found in camel and llama antibodies that are ideal for interactions with the concave MMP sites. (PTT)

“Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.” --- Buddha

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX, No. 131 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2016

Winter session of Parliament being a washout was a foregone conclusion.

Prohibition in Gujarat

GUJARAT has been dry for almost 6 decades. It has now tightened up its prohibition policy even more for locals while it has been relaxed for tourists. That is obviously to augment foreign exchange coming from visitors.

One argument for prohibition is the gender violence it causes. Research proves that heavy alcohol consumption is linked to violence against women. But in India the political response to prohibition has never been holistic.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Police Cleanse Delhi of Obscenities

The Police are cleaning the capital of its obscenities. Led by police commissioner Ved Marwah, they launched a drive against salacious cinemast posters and hoarding following a meeting earlier this week of an advisory panel which decided that the posters must go.

TO THE EDITOR

Misuse of public funds

disheartening to note that in the name of organising this government sponsored events those in-charge of organising them make huge cuts for themselves at the expense of the public exchequer.

Parliament freezes

Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde syndrome

By Sabina Inderjit

lost 86 hours (it sat for 22 hours) whereas the Lok Sabha lost 91 hours and 59 minutes and sat only for 19 hours and 26 minutes.

The other question to be asked is why did the Opposition say one thing at the start and change later? It started the discussion on the notebandi on the first day.

“ Rajya Sabha Chairman Ansari’s valedictory address is worth more than a thought. He stated, and I quote: “I had fervently hoped that I would not have to repeat what I said at the conclusion of 221st Session in December 2010. My hope stands belied. Regular and continuous disruptions characterised the session. The symbolism of dignified protest, so essential for orderly conduct of proceedings, was abandoned. This deprived Members of the opportunity to seek accountability of the Executive through Questions and discussions on matters of public interest.”

The prohibition in the Rules about shouting slogans, displaying posters and obstructing proceedings by leaving their assigned places, was consistently ignored by all sections of the House.

In the Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan had this to say: “I hope this coming year brings new hope and new energy in our lives and we reflect with resolve that at the best of the exhibitor stay just within legal limits but do not exceed them in fact.

While the Opposition had its say in bits and pieces on the plight of the common man because of demonetisation, as the Speaker was obliging after saying a no to their adjournment motion, the

parties in the Lok Sabha were in a disjunctive mood. Members of various parties moved an adjournment motion seeking debate under Rule 56 the first phase. The next phase they showed magnanimity and were willing to have the discussion on Rule 184. The insistence on the two rules was it entailed voting even though the Treasury Benches had a ‘brute majority’.

What made them change their mind? Rahul’s gooly - of having explosive evidence on Modi’s ‘personal corruption’ At a press conference he vociferously stated: “The Prime Minister is personally terrified of me being allowed to open my mouth inside the Lok Sabha because I have information about the Prime Minister that is going to explode his balloon. And, I am not being allowed to speak in the House.” All these weeks why didn’t he speak, and if he was not being allowed why didn’t he let the nation know through his press conference?

This too has its intrigues. Already besieged by defamation cases, he sought to speak in the House as he was entitled to Parliament immunity. However, he claimed that as an MP he had to right to speak in Parliament. The big question is when does Rahul’s platform must be built in such a way that it can be customised according to clients’ requirements.

The change in tack was for two obvious reasons. One, the debate pretty much fell flat on the opening day (admitted even by some members privately). Two, the Opposition counterparts in the Lok Sabha were perturbed over their colleagues showing unusual enthusiasm for starting the debate on the very first day.

So the divided House in the third phase, last week of the session, the 16 parties in the Opposition changed their stance once again. “We are ready for an unconditional debate” i.e. without voting and please start discussion they were heard urging the Chair.

What made them change their mind? Rahul’s gooly - of having explosive evidence on Modi’s ‘personal corruption’

At a press conference he vociferously stated: “The Prime Minister is personally terrified of me being allowed to open my mouth inside the Lok Sabha because I have information about the Prime Minister that is going to explode his balloon. And, I am not being allowed to speak in the House.”

This too has its intrigues. Already besieged by defamation cases, he sought to speak in the House as he was entitled to Parliament immunity.

However, he claimed that as an MP he had to right to speak in Parliament. The big question is when does Rahul’s platform must be built in such a way that it can be customised according to clients’ requirements.

In the midst of all the wrangling for one-upmanship between the Treasury and Opposition benches, members surprisingly put on hold their differences. Just two days before the winter session was ending, they decided to put lung power on hold briefly to pass the long-awaited Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2014.

Sadly, the camaraderie and unanimity that was shown was short lived. Prompting Ansari in the Rajya Sabha to say: “Don’t introduce a Jekyll and Hyde personality in the House...”

Digital Inclusion Step up on e-villages

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

It is generally accepted that digital inclusion leads to economic development and in the process weeds out corruption and other malpractices. After demonetisation, the showed magnanimity and were willing to have the discussion on Rule 184. The insistence on the two rules was it entailed voting even though the Treasury Benches had a ‘brute majority’.

The HRD ministry has started registering around 18,000 volunteers to help educating the masses right across the country, specially in rural areas.

In the endeavour to move towards digitisation, one may refer to a study by McKinsey & Co. in 2014 found that over 90 per cent of the transactions in India are still conducted in cash as people in the country still fear of financial security.

A recent World Bank report states: “A 10 per cent increase in broadband penetration increases the per capita GDP by 1.38 per cent in developing countries.”

The internet has become an enabler of growth and it needs to be promoted with as much enthusiasm as other physical infrastructure such as transportation and power.

Obviously, there is need to allocate a portion of the budget to create infrastructure for internet connectivity across India. In addition, a targeted plan for implementing the objective of internet connectivity across India through identified bodies has to be in place. It may be worthwhile to develop a road map for public private participation with telecom operators.

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

Broadband through cable TV that reaches millions of homes would only require tweaking of the policy and TRAI has already given its recommendation to the government in this regard.

The HRD ministry has started registering around 18,000 volunteers to help educating the masses right across the country, specially in rural areas.

In the endeavour to move towards digitisation, one may refer to a study by McKinsey & Co. in 2014 found that over 90 per cent of the transactions in India are still conducted in cash as people in the country still fear of financial security.

A recent World Bank report states: “A 10 per cent increase in broadband penetration increases the per capita GDP by 1.38 per cent in developing countries.”

The internet has become an enabler of growth and it needs to be promoted with as much enthusiasm as other physical infrastructure such as transportation and power.

Obviously, there is need to allocate a portion of the budget to create infrastructure for internet connectivity across India. In addition, a targeted plan for implementing the objective of internet connectivity across India through identified bodies has to be in place. It may be worthwhile to develop a road map for public private participation with telecom operators.

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

Seven ways to good health for mothers



At well, stay hydrated and eat healthy and stay active. Good health while balancing pregnancy with busy schedules, says an expert. Poojima Shankar, Senior Research Scientist at The Himalaya Drug Company, gives some tips on how mothers and mothers-to-be can recharge their energy.

Striking the energy balance: Eating healthy food is important but ensuring that the energy intake is just as much as the energy you release, is more important. If your food intake is greater than the energy spent, you will experience a positive energy balance and gain weight. Likewise, when energy spent is higher than the energy intake, there is a negative energy balance and results in weight loss and exhaustion.

Relax and rejuvenate: It is important for every mother to break out from the daily routine and rejuvenate in order to stay both mentally and physically strong. Something as simple as a long and deep breath can double up as a break at times. A lot of mothers tend to worry about post-pregnancy weight gain and other skin-related concerns. Such concerns do have an impact on their overall health.

Not all fats are bad: Healthy fats found mainly in plant-based natural liquid sources, like olive oil, are good for health as they reduce bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol. Intake of saturated fats like butter or ghee, should be limited as they can raise bad cholesterol and reduce good cholesterol which, in turn, increases the risks.

Striking the energy balance: Eating healthy food is important but ensuring that the energy intake is just as much as the energy you release, is more important. If your food intake is greater than the energy spent, you will experience a positive energy balance and gain weight. Likewise, when energy spent is higher than the energy intake, there is a negative energy balance and results in weight loss and exhaustion.

Relax and rejuvenate: It is important for every mother to break out from the daily routine and rejuvenate in order to stay both mentally and physically strong. Something as simple as a long and deep breath can double up as a break at times. A lot of mothers tend to worry about post-pregnancy weight gain and other skin-related concerns. Such concerns do have an impact on their overall health.

Not all fats are bad: Healthy fats found mainly in plant-based natural liquid sources, like olive oil, are good for health as they reduce bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol. Intake of saturated fats like butter or ghee, should be limited as they can raise bad cholesterol and reduce good cholesterol which, in turn, increases the risks.

Striking the energy balance: Eating healthy food is important but ensuring that the energy intake is just as much as the energy you release, is more important. If your food intake is greater than the energy spent, you will experience a positive energy balance and gain weight. Likewise, when energy spent is higher than the energy intake, there is a negative energy balance and results in weight loss and exhaustion.

Relax and rejuvenate: It is important for every mother to break out from the daily routine and rejuvenate in order to stay both mentally and physically strong. Something as simple as a long and deep breath can double up as a break at times. A lot of mothers tend to worry about post-pregnancy weight gain and other skin-related concerns. Such concerns do have an impact on their overall health.

Not all fats are bad: Healthy fats found mainly in plant-based natural liquid sources, like olive oil, are good for health as they reduce bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol. Intake of saturated fats like butter or ghee, should be limited as they can raise bad cholesterol and reduce good cholesterol which, in turn, increases the risks.

Striking the energy balance: Eating healthy food is important but ensuring that the energy intake is just as much as the energy you release, is more important. If your food intake is greater than the energy spent, you will experience a positive energy balance and gain weight. Likewise, when energy spent is higher than the energy intake, there is a negative energy balance and results in weight loss and exhaustion.

Relax and rejuvenate: It is important for every mother to break out from the daily routine and rejuvenate in order to stay both mentally and physically strong. Something as simple as a long and deep breath can double up as a break at times. A lot of mothers tend to worry about post-pregnancy weight gain and other skin-related concerns. Such concerns do have an impact on their overall health.

Not all fats are bad: Healthy fats found mainly in plant-based natural liquid sources, like olive oil, are good for health as they reduce bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol. Intake of saturated fats like butter or ghee, should be limited as they can raise bad cholesterol and reduce good cholesterol which, in turn, increases the risks.

Striking the energy balance: Eating healthy food is important but ensuring that the energy intake is just as much as the energy you release, is more important. If your food intake is greater than the energy spent, you will experience a positive energy balance and gain weight. Likewise, when energy spent is higher than the energy intake, there is a negative energy balance and results in weight loss and exhaustion.

Noise sensitivity linked to changes in brain functions

Noise sensitivity in individuals may be caused by alterations in the brain functions linked with sound processing, a study has found.

The auditory system of noise sensitive individuals is less responsive to new sound features introduced among repetitive sounds, especially if the novel sound is noisier than the rest.

Researchers develop promising oral vaccine against Salmonella

Researchers, including one of Indian-origin, have developed an oral vaccine against Salmonella -- the bacteria responsible for one of the most common food-borne illnesses in the world.

The HRD ministry has started registering around 18,000 volunteers to help educating the masses right across the country, specially in rural areas.

In the endeavour to move towards digitisation, one may refer to a study by McKinsey & Co. in 2014 found that over 90 per cent of the transactions in India are still conducted in cash as people in the country still fear of financial security.

Ditch pills, opt for healthy food for essential nutrients

The best way to have a healthy body is to drop the consumption of pills and medicines as substitutes for vegetables and include food which is packed with vitamins, minerals, and essential nutrients, says an expert.

The HRD ministry has started registering around 18,000 volunteers to help educating the masses right across the country, specially in rural areas.

Researchers develop promising oral vaccine against Salmonella

Researchers, including one of Indian-origin, have developed an oral vaccine against Salmonella -- the bacteria responsible for one of the most common food-borne illnesses in the world.

The HRD ministry has started registering around 18,000 volunteers to help educating the masses right across the country, specially in rural areas.

In the endeavour to move towards digitisation, one may refer to a study by McKinsey & Co. in 2014 found that over 90 per cent of the transactions in India are still conducted in cash as people in the country still fear of financial security.

The best way to have a healthy body is to drop the consumption of pills and medicines as substitutes for vegetables and include food which is packed with vitamins, minerals, and essential nutrients, says an expert.

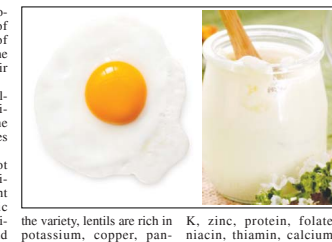
The HRD ministry has started registering around 18,000 volunteers to help educating the masses right across the country, specially in rural areas.

Researchers develop promising oral vaccine against Salmonella

Researchers, including one of Indian-origin, have developed an oral vaccine against Salmonella -- the bacteria responsible for one of the most common food-borne illnesses in the world.

The HRD ministry has started registering around 18,000 volunteers to help educating the masses right across the country, specially in rural areas.

In the endeavour to move towards digitisation, one may refer to a study by McKinsey & Co. in 2014 found that over 90 per cent of the transactions in India are still conducted in cash as people in the country still fear of financial security.



the variety, lentils are rich in potassium, copper, panthenic acid, zinc, magnesium, iron, manganese, copper, manganese and fibre make spinach a power-packed source of nutrients. It also contains carotenoid and flavonoid. Apart from being one of the best foods for its nutritional value, spinach also acts as an anti-inflammatory food. It contains glycosylipids that assist in keeping the

Researchers develop promising oral vaccine against Salmonella

Researchers, including one of Indian-origin, have developed an oral vaccine against Salmonella -- the bacteria responsible for one of the most common food-borne illnesses in the world.

The HRD ministry has started registering around 18,000 volunteers to help educating the masses right across the country, specially in rural areas.

In the endeavour to move towards digitisation, one may refer to a study by McKinsey & Co. in 2014 found that over 90 per cent of the transactions in India are still conducted in cash as people in the country still fear of financial security.



the variety, lentils are rich in potassium, copper, panthenic acid, zinc, magnesium, iron, manganese, copper, manganese and fibre make spinach a power-packed source of nutrients. It also contains carotenoid and flavonoid. Apart from being one of the best foods for its nutritional value, spinach also acts as an anti-inflammatory food. It contains glycosylipids that assist in keeping the

Researchers develop promising oral vaccine against Salmonella

Researchers, including one of Indian-origin, have developed an oral vaccine against Salmonella -- the bacteria responsible for one of the most common food-borne illnesses in the world.

The HRD ministry has started registering around 18,000 volunteers to help educating the masses right across the country, specially in rural areas.

In the endeavour to move towards digitisation, one may refer to a study by McKinsey & Co. in 2014 found that over 90 per cent of the transactions in India are still conducted in cash as people in the country still fear of financial security.

digestive track healthy and also keep inflammation at bay. * Yoghurt: Contains the benefits of animal protein and dairy foods that include calcium, potassium, magnesium, vitamin B12 and vitamin B2. It also contains probiotics (bifidobacterium and lactobacillus) which is known as healthy bacteria that help boosting stronger immunity and promote a healthier digestive system.

The HRD ministry has started registering around 18,000 volunteers to help educating the masses right across the country, specially in rural areas.

Researchers develop promising oral vaccine against Salmonella

Researchers, including one of Indian-origin, have developed an oral vaccine against Salmonella -- the bacteria responsible for one of the most common food-borne illnesses in the world.

The HRD ministry has started registering around 18,000 volunteers to help educating the masses right across the country, specially in rural areas.

In the endeavour to move towards digitisation, one may refer to a study by McKinsey & Co. in 2014 found that over 90 per cent of the transactions in India are still conducted in cash as people in the country still fear of financial security.

Beauty, style guide....

‘Thigh-high boots are must-haves’



American fashion designer Stuart Weitzman believes that footwear like thigh-high boots is a must-have for every woman.



“I personally think when it is worn with bare leg with either dress or mini skirt that it really showcases the boot design.”

Fix up your beauty woes this winter with basic steps

Winter brings on its own woes and pleasures, usually causing woes stealing skin moisture. It is important to do your bit to actually counter the cold and keep your skin looking youthful and smooth by trying out facial massages, exfoliation and a few other steps, says an expert.

Get rid of the winter sun-tan: It is very important to use a face pack perfect enough to remove the sun-tan and also provide you with the appropriate moisture that gets lost due to the chilly winds blowing across the face, making it dull and dry.

Hydrate from the inside out: Eating foods high in water content can help hydrate your skin from the inside out.

Cleanse regularly: Cleanse your face with lukewarm water and the correct face-wash for winters, ideally one that hydrates your skin.

Do not step out without a sunscreen: The sun makes you more prone to the sun's UV rays during winter. A sunscreen is very much needed during the winters.



Use DIY (Do It Yourself) masks: Homemade hydrating masks can provide needed moisture in the winter months. Use natural moisturizing ingredients like honey, avocado, yogurt, olive and jojoba oils, almond oil, bananas, and aloe.

Exfoliate: We often forget to get the skin massaged off dead cells in the winter, find an exfoliating mask and use it on your face and your hands, as well as gently on your lips.

Chapped lips aren't dry: The products works best while we sleep at night. They penetrate deep into our skin. The area under the eyes is the thinnest and the most delicate.

Hair/makeup: For functions at the beach, you'll have to apply lots of sunscreen to avoid tanning. Go for matt lip colours as the glossy ones might make the sand stick on lips. Also, weather at the beach is windy. Exfoliating body washes are also helpful in the winter months.

Gearing up for beach wedding? Get some things in place

A destination wedding is a lot of fun for the couple as well as guests. After all, it turns out to be mini vaca-tion for everyone around. But the preparations for such an occasion also depend on the kind of location you're choosing along with many other aspects, says an expert.

When you have decided the season for the wedding, set the time of every function too. For the beach wedding, it's best to get married when the sunlight is not too harsh. Therefore, sunset is the best time to get pretty pictures! Don't forget to carry sunglasses!

Deciding the outfit for beach functions: While picking a wedding outfit, make sure you go for something light both in colour as well as the fabric. Also, hassle-free outfits in pastel colours work extremely well for day weddings.

Hair/makeup: For functions at the beach, you'll have to apply lots of sunscreen to avoid tanning. Go for matt lip colours as the glossy ones might make the sand stick on lips. Also, weather at the beach is windy. Exfoliating body washes are also helpful in the winter months.

“Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter, and those who matter don't mind.”

--- Bernard M. Baruch

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 132 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2016

West Asian crisis

THE Russian ambassador to Turkey was assassinated. There was an attack from a bus on a Christmas market in Germany. Islamic terror haunts the world. The geo-political interests of West Asian countries clash, especially that of Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The US and Russia have intervened only to aggravate the crisis. Russia may have militarily intervened to prevent the Islamic State from capturing Syria. The assassination of the Russian ambassador has thrown the country headlong into the conflict. Russia is becoming a target of Sunni Muslim violence. The attack in West Germany was perhaps prompted by Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to allow a million West Asian refugees to enter Germany. There is besides sectarian conflict in the Arab world. The Islamic State is thirsting for blood. Aleppo in Syria is besieged and the humanitarian crisis indicates the malady afflicting West Asia.

Creating a stable political structure in West Asia cannot be done by one country in the region nor can an international alliance achieve it. It is to be hoped that terrorist attacks and the tragedy of Aleppo can prompt western powers and West Asian countries to abandon the scorched earth policy of the embattled nations. The assassination of the Russian ambassador has brought Turkey and Russia, enemies of the past, close together. Such a turn of events may lead to a healthy alignment of major powers to tackle the West Asian crisis.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

19 TNLF extremists come overground

Nineteen people, said to be belonging to a new extremist group formed recently under the Tripura National Liberation Front (TNLF) surrendered to police at Patni Goan Sabha under Jirania police station in Tripura west district today. Six country-made single barrel guns were also surrendered by them. District Superintendent of police Mr Rama Rao said the tribal group which had arms in its possession had started its operation recently and its existence came to light only in December last year. With the surrender, possibility of fresh insurgency was nipped in the bud. Police also arrested two of its activists recently, he said and added that the group which reportedly had 41 members including a woman was in possession of some more arms. He said the group was involved in dacoity and other crimes but could pose a serious threat at a later stage. He said they were formally arrested and taken to the court for remand. Asked if the government would help them rehabilitate as prayed by them he said the Chief Secretary was consulted and the government might consider their plea for rehabilitation. The Tripura National Liberation Front (TNLF) used to support the Tribal National Volunteer (TNV), but formed the new group in "disillusionment" as it did not get any rehabilitation facilities, according to its president Mr Malindra Debbarma. Mr Debbarma who surrendered to the authorities at Patni Goan Sabha under Jirania police station in Tripura's west district today told newsmen at a remote area that the group earlier used to help TNV from 'overground' and hence expected such facilities as being offered to the TNV. The TNLF even collected money latter gave up insurgency following an accord, he claimed adding that the new group resumed its activities in absence of jobs.

Meghalaya improves 20-Point implementation

According to a review of performance on the implementation of the 20-Point Programme for the fiscal year 85-86 conducted by the Union Ministry of Programme Implementation Meghalaya ranked 2nd in the North Eastern Region after Manipur, an official press Note said. Compared to the performance in the previous three years, the performance of the State Govt under the 20-Point Programme last year has been very encouraging. This is so because the fact that the State Govt has had to face the chronic problem of non-availability of various physical inputs from outside the State for execution of plans schemes is added. The ranking of the State has been assessed on the basis of performance in regard to the 12-points of the 20-point Programme with which Meghalaya is concerned. Performance of the State has been graded as "very good" in respect of tree plantation, number of villages provided with supply of drinking water, environmental improvement of slum areas, construction of houses for the economically weaker section of the population, construction assistance to rural houseless people, employment generation under the National Rural Employment Programme and setting up of small scale industrial units. The State Govt have initiated various measures for further improvement in the performance under the 20-Point Programme during the current year and it is hoped that the State will rank higher in performance during the current year, the Press Note added.

Liquor Policy & Trade

Wanted national action plan

By S Saraswathi

the industry, business, revenue, public good and private pleasure. Any anti-liquor policy and legislation must be national to be effective. But, distribution of powers under the Constitution has placed "intoxicating liquors, that is to say, the production, manufacture, possession, transport, purchase and sale of intoxicating liquors" in the State List.

State policies and laws are required, but not enough to produce results. In olden days, when the old Madras Presidency followed prohibition, weekly journey of drink addicts to neighbouring Pudukcherry was known to be common. The model is revived today. The Supreme Court now is shocked to learn that there are 62 liquor shops along one km. stretch on the national highway in Mahe district in this UT for the "benefit" of Kerala addicts deprived of drink following imposition of prohibition of liquor in their State.

In recent months, there has grown a populist competition among various States to introduce ban on liquor. In Tamil Nadu, for instance, political parties - the DMK (which lifted prohibition in 1971), MDMK, VCK, PMK, and other local parties - promise to bring about prohibition of liquor as a priority. NGOs are also extra eager to support prohibition in various ways including organisation of protest marches. Ideas are invited and action plans are promoted in a competitive spirit. Essay competitions are organised to gather ideas. Organised and unorganised women's groups take to picketing liquor shops located near schools and temples and have succeeded in many places in closing them.

In Kerala, a phased programme of wiping out liquor consumption was unleashed starting with restriction of bar licences to 5-star hotels. The Supreme Court also upheld the policy of Kerala Government, but was unhappy over allowing beer and wine. The UDF leadership chose the issue of "prohibition by stages" as its chief election plank in May 2016 while LDF canvassed for promoting

"abstinence".

Bihar launched its dry law in April this year banning both country-made and Indian-made Foreign Liquor with immediate effect. A noteworthy feature of its tough prohibition law is the provision for collective penalty for a whole village or town up to Rs. one lakh for violation of the law by a group. Leaving aside the politics behind prohibition, JD (U)'s rather firm stand and the Chief Minister's staunch commitment to the policy is a rare instance of fulfilling a promise made in the election manifesto to bring about total ban on consumption and sale of liquor in the State. The law applies to liquor and not to toddy.

However, the Patna High Court, in September 2016 quashed the order on liquor ban on the basis that it created unreasonable restrictions on the choice of livelihood of a person protected under Article 21 under the Fundamental Rights. Still, the Chief Minister, relying on people's support, came out with a new and more stringent law providing for more harsh punishment to keep Bihar dry. The law, termed "draconian" by Opposition parties, provides for capital punishment for those trading in illicit liquor and punishment for family members above 18 years in case of consumption of alcohol at home and of top management for consumption within the company premises. The Government is seeking public views on the issue, and is ready to address the objections and not to reverse the decision.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar describes liquor trade as immoral and refuted the claim of loss of revenue due to prohibition. As regards the problem of loss of livelihood for those engaged in liquor manufacture and trade, his advice is to shift to alternative service - a suggestion not marketable among people satisfied with practising traditional occupations and following conventional pattern of life. The Government of

Maharashtra has also decided to shut down toddy shops. The Chief Minister of Delhi has declared that no new liquor shop would be sanctioned in the capital this year. On the other hand, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh held that liquor is "linked with various traditions, customs" and could not be banned altogether though he agreed to ban opening of new shops.

Thus, there has been a sudden surge in the demand for liquor ban among political parties all over the country. It cannot certainly be attributed to the sudden dawn of enlightenment or moral resurgence. Whatever be the motive, the wave must be utilised.

History has shown that it is difficult to enforce prohibition. Any law will leave scope for differential treatment of offenders due to spot decisions by law enforcers. The common argument of governments that prohibition will encourage production of spurious liquor shops amounts to open admission of inefficiency and/or reluctance of law enforcing authorities to catch the culprits.

The moral side of the problem, dear to non-drinking public, is something to be felt and realised and cannot be taught. Curious arguments of individual freedom and rights, right to pursue livelihood of one's choice cannot go on forever as restrictions themselves are necessary to uphold any rights and freedom in real life.

The social cost of chronic abuse of alcohol is calculated to be much bigger than the revenue raised. Diseases and infirmities, losses due to road accidents, decline in work output, neglect of families leading to serious problems of domestic violence, child labour, and school drop-out are the glaring social cost involved in alcoholism. The nation needs a wise National Liquor Policy to be followed by effective and uniform State laws. ---INFA

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

TO THE EDITOR

Cashless economy a pipe dream!

Editor,

Much has been written and discussed about some people in Meghalaya who are afraid of Aadhar turning into the satanic number 666. But the real 666 is the coming cashless and digital society as propounded by the Prime Minister. Let me make very clear here that till date there is no country in the world which is totally cashless. It is a utopian dream or the wishful thinking of a conman surrounded by a sea of gullible yes-men or worshippers. Much more than the RSS ideology, this idea is more fascist and an attempt towards total control. USA with the biggest economy in the world still has 15 percent cash economy. UK which once ruled India has 48 percent cash economy. And you preach to me that India will surpass them? Tell it to the cows! Remember that if this goal is achieved, it means that if your son goes to buy liquor to enjoy with his friends, he cannot hide it anymore. His digital imprints of payment will be recorded by the Big

brother or father (in Delhi) and will be used against him one day. Obliteration of personal freedom and liberty. Is this the sine qua non of Democracy?

Yours etc.,
Rasputin Bismarck
Kolkata

No Christmas for the marginalized

Editor,

Come Christmas and the sellers have their field day selling their wares at five times the market price. The rich and the mighty go on a buying spree, purchase the best and the costliest wear, food and drink while the poor and the marginalised have to be contented with half-fed malnourished food. There is no money to buy blankets to protect against the chilly winter and no special food and clothing to celebrate Christmas with the family. It seems the Meghalaya world cares a damn for the poor and marginalised lot. We used to notice that during Christmas season, especially on Christmas day and on Christmas festivities, many are in the best and costliest attires and swanky cars but no one really cares for the poor and the abandoned.

But in the midst of this selfish world I heard somebody somewhere is turning to this most neglected section of the society through works of charity and mercy. But these noble souls are very few and far between. I hereby appeal to the rich, the mighty and the fat cats of society to sacrifice just a little bit of their income and pleasure and give it to the poor for the sake of your spiritual contentment and to honour infant Jesus who is the centre of Christmas and who was born poor in this world in a stable rejected by the residents of Bethlehem village.

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein,
Shillong-2.

Child abuse a scourge

Editor,

This refers to your write-up, "Protecting Innocence" (ST- Dec 18, 2016). It is unthinkable, but every year thousands of children become victims of crime - whether it's kidnappings, violent attacks, or sexual abuse. According to the study, the reasons for the high incidence of child abuse could be poor parenting skills, vulnerability of the child in

conditions outside the family environment - on the street, at work and in institutions - belief in the adage "spare the rod and spoil the child" and dysfunctional families. Unfortunately in India, there is no separate, exclusive legislation to deal with the problem of child sexual abuse. Child abuse has been going on for years all over the developing countries and in developed countries as well. The child often has no true realization of being abused and the implications, until they gain mental maturity. Perhaps, lack of awareness and open communication within the family, fear of being stigmatized and not being trusted, dissuades young victims from speaking up. By creating awareness among parents in order to monitor changes in their child's behaviour is one of the methods to alleviate this problem. But if the system is reformed, we can ensure that such crimes against children and women are minimised.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit,
Ahmedabad - 15

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

Religion is humanity

By Jennifer Dkhar

Let me start by appreciating those who have found it rightful and lawful to point out and clear doubts as to why we can't call our state a Christian state. Rightfully so since ours is a secular country. This then paved a way for me to start thinking about the significance of faith and religion itself. What popped out immediately was this thought that no matter what faith we may adopt and practice, each one of them must be equally respected and revered for all faiths have the teachings of God at the core. I, for one, have nurtured the belief that whatever religion an individual may follow and practice no religion and no faith will ever teach him/her to do wrong and to live wrong. All religions adhere to love and adoration, respect and dedication, sincerity and allegiance to everything that is righteous and honest. If, by chance, in the name of faith and religion a wrong is committed then it is simply a flaw in perception and interpretation of a few.

Having said that let me try to understand the simple meaning of faith and religion. What actually is this faith? What is religion? Let's start with faith. As understood by one and all, faith is trust, conviction, commitment, passion about someone or something. What is it that makes one have this faith or what is the root of this faith? Can it be seen evolving through or out of the love and adulation that we have for people and a cause? Well, I strongly believe that love can do wonders. When we love anyone and anything, that is where we put our faith, trust and conviction in. We do all we can to keep that faith intact and alive. What happens when we have this faith within us? We respect it. We revere it. We hold it to the highest regard. It then becomes the one thing that we will nurture and take utmost care to see that it never falters and crumbles. It then makes us one with God who loves us and expects us to trust and respect one another and have optimum faith on one another.

What then is religion? It makes me wonder if this faith is not religion. Yes religion, where the presence of God is felt. Basically, religion is worship, homage and faith to an entity that is invisible and holy that we all call God. Hence religion teaches us to respect, revere and pay homage to God and God's creations. I firmly believe that love is what binds religion and mankind closely. Here, I am reminded of a song by the band Firehouse, titled; You Are My Religion. The chorus goes like this: Not just on Sunday, I love you everyday . . . You are my religion. When our hearts are filled with love, it is this love that has the power to heal, to change hearts and to bring back faith to a heart and a soul that has lost it all. The line in the same song : "I found my heaven right here with you" can actually allow us to find heaven right here on earth if we can have love sowed so deeply and strongly in our hearts that it overflows and spills over every time we are in touch with God's creations. When we give love and receive love, we live and fulfil the wishes of God. And yes, this is then heaven. This is the closest that we can get to God. Love should then be our faith and religion because where there is love there is God. Love and religion - beautiful words with equally beautiful meanings!

Having said that I cannot help but look at reality in the face! I'm tempted to refer to the quote of Hubert Reeves when he says, "Man is the most insane species. He worships an invisible God

and slaughters a visible Nature ... without realizing that this Nature he slaughters is this invisible God he worships." My keen interest in the quote, besides everything meaningful that Reeves has said is the word "Nature". The slaughter of Nature here may firstly be perceived as the bare nature in terms of rivers, air, mountains, flora, fauna or in a nutshell, mother earth. Today there is a lot that is being spoken about about the need to preserve nature and the earth. Why? Isn't it because we have become careless and less appreciative of Mother Nature?

Interestingly, Reeves' reference to "Nature" here may also be seen and read differently. Nature here could also be perceived as human nature that again meets the slaughter of God when man fails to adhere to the teachings of God. I am saddened to say that human nature today has deteriorated to the extent that the word 'slaughter' seems to be appropriate when placed against human beings; their actions and even intentions. If we do not shy away from slaughtering Mother Nature for our personal gain and convenience, we do not also hesitate to kill and slaughter the humane nature that we are born with. If our belief is affirmed on this wise concept that God has moulded Himself in the shape and feature of man/woman then to be Godly is to revere and love all humankind just as God does without any distinctions and discriminations. Alas! This is not to be. Today, when we claim to be religious people and religiously visit places of worship and bow our heads in reverence to God almighty, we seem to have actually missed out the true meaning and essence of religion. If we are godly then we should also be God fearing and God abiding. We must then live our lives with conscientious minds that will shun all evil and accept all that is good. We must not only profess but indeed practice all that God rightfully wishes us to be.

We cannot pretend to be pious and virtuous while carrying out deeds that are wicked and sinful. The most important assets that God has bestowed on us (unlike in the other creations of God) is the ability to think and feel. Why not use these assets for a good cause? Why not keep aside our man-made distinctions and unfold the seed of love to one and all? Why not make a good start by thinking right, feeling right and doing right for humankind?

To be religious is to love all humans without making any distinction. To be religious is to respect humankind in its fullest glory. To be religious is to be there for one and all especially in times of need, hardships, pain and sorrow. To be religious is to be selfless and self sacrificing. To be religious is to be what God has made you to be. There is no other powerful religion than love and devotion and there is no greater faith than mankind's commitment and allegiance to how God wants us to be. As we approach the end of the year, let us all put our love and faith on fellow human beings and adopt humanity, selflessness, kindness, patience and tolerance as our religion. I am sure we can, because a little of God and godliness is still closely embedded in our hearts. I wish everyone Merry Christmas and a Happy, Joyful, Meaningful and Blessed 2017!

“Christmas is the spirit of giving without a thought of getting. It is happiness because we see joy in people. It is forgetting self and finding time for others. It is discarding the meaningless and stressing the true values. Thomas S. Monson ”

--- Thomas S. Monson

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 133 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2016

The CBSE reversal

THE Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had decided five years ago to do away with Class X boards. This week it has announced that it has abandoned the policy that offer students a choice to opt for the board-conducted finals or let the institutions assess their performance. The board examination in the CBSE schools was scrapped by the UPA. In its place was introduced continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) through year-round tests and a grading system. For students, Class X boards mark the end of an eventful chapter of their lives. So the decision was highly significant. But now the CBSE has reversed its earlier decision. What prompted it to do so merits serious consideration. Most other state boards still have a 10+2 formula. It is necessary to have a uniform method of evaluation for all boards. There is a no-detention policy till Class VIII. Class XII is the first big test and all this has given rise to a lot of problems. Teachers and parents wanted it to make students ready for examinations before the big Class XII test. The value of CCE was not appreciated especially by teachers who were lowly paid and not prepared to go the extra mile and put in greater effort.

Apart from teachers, parents also failed to see the merit of the new system of learning. The new system is in vogue in many other countries. Parents found the earlier system more suitable to their expectations. Now the Class X boards are back. But one may wonder if it will not undermine the system of continuous and comprehensive evaluation. Besides, it will revive complaints about pressure put on students stifling their mental development.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Bihar CM's 'lovmarch'

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

Bandaranaike escapes attempt on life

Former Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike this morning escaped an attempt on her life the second in less than two months when unidentified men threw bombs at her party election campaign meeting in eastern Sri Lanka, police and party sources said. Meanwhile, continuing violence involving extremists elsewhere in the island left 22 people dead, security officials said. SLFP sources said that at least four bombs were hurled at the dais where Mrs. Bandaranaike and other party leaders were seated at the inaugural parliamentary election campaign meeting of the party at Hingurakgoda in Polonnaruwa district. They said three of her personal bodyguards, who kicked away two of the bombs, a woman escort and her driver were among the wounded. "It was a clear assassination attempt on my life," Mrs. Bandaranaike, who was immediately whisked away from the site in a car and later in a helicopter

to Anuradhapura, told report-ers. The Hingurakgoda police said the wounded were being treated at Hingurakgoda, Matale, Kandy and Anuradhapura hospitals. Their exact number was not available, but the condition of 14 of those admitted to Matale base hospital was serious, they said. They said the attackers had burst a smoke bomb apparently to conceal their position, before hurling the bombs at the meeting, held at a road junction. Police and security personnel providing security to the meeting fired in the direction from where the grenades were hurled, injuring many in the crowd while many others sustained injuries in the crowd, in the stampede that followed at they said. No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but police believed to be the work of Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) extremists who had staged a similar attack on Mrs. Bandaranaike's final campaign meeting in the city in December before the presidential election, which she lost to Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa.

AP Govt. may move court against Kumudben

The Andhra Pradesh Government would move the court if Governor Ms. Kumudben Joshi did not approve the appointment of Justice Mr. R. N. Agarwal to the state. Lok Ayukta within fifteen days, state Law Minister Mr. H. B. Narse Gowda said here today. He told newsmen that the Government would move either the Supreme Court or the Andhra Pradesh High Court on the grounds that the institution of Lok Ayukta was in jeopardy, if the Governor or the President and Union Home Minister failed to resolve the stalemate.

On this Christmas with Love

By Debasish Chowdhury

The natural ambience seems to have, for once more, returned to its festive attire. The soft warmth of the morning sun at the crack of the dawn, tiny dewdrops on grass tips sparkling like bright little diamond dots, the deep azure apparel of the sky spread unto horizon, the relaxed look in the eyes of children leisurely enjoying the temporary reprieve from the maddening school rush, the ringing church bells gradually rising to its crescendo, the Santa Clause assurance of dream gifts for every kid, naughty or gentle, the local carol team enthralling the young and the old with their door to door visits as dusk descends out on the lawn have all returned to us once again to announce aloud that another Christmas is knocking at our doors.

Festivals of all hues in this age of ours, no matter from which religion and in which place they originate from, are hardly strictly religious in nature. Overriding their religious flavour, they often, graduate into social festivities that no more remain confined to the narrow boundaries of nation, society, language, ethnicity and whatever else kind of identity one may like to think of. Christmas too in that sense is hardly a purely Christian festival. Coming of Christmas to a host lot of us as such is the return of an all-endearing festival. Cutting across all perceivable boundaries that seek to divide and differentiate one man from the other, this most widely celebrated birth anniversary in the world has long transformed itself into a true carnival of love, compassion and humanity. Christmas celebration, even for the non-Christians also is a festival dear enough to adore and belong to.

Christmas being a celebration of love and empathy, it perhaps demands of us to at least note, if nothing else, with a sense of deep disquiet the scores of lives we keep on losing almost on a routine basis due to the countless instances of violent conflicts and clashes that keeps on disturbing the lives of our fellow brethren at home and elsewhere. Most of such deaths and the consequent sufferings they cause in the lives of people indeed are not only avoidable but are grossly unwarranted. Remember

the poor Syrian toddler washed ashore dead by the gushing sea waves at Bodrum beach?

The failed attempt by the hapless parents of that innocent kid to rescue the family to safety by moving away from the spot of unabated violence close to home only resulted in the death of the three year old far before he could reach the age to understand who is fighting whom for what end to achieve. The picture of little Azlan lying on the beach dead in his red T-shirt and little shoes still tied to his little feet that would walk no more on this earth went viral in the media drawing bitter contempt and condemnation from all over. But that is all that the world could do. Months down the line, the fight carries on without us rising in revolt to say stop this madness right here and right now. Our ability to be compassionate, it seems, has taken a beating long ago.

Nearer at home, things do not seem greatly delighting either. The long drawn and seemingly unending toil of the people in strife torn J & K, Manipur and even coastline states of Andhra, Telengana, the hostilities, both natural and manmade that our brave soldiers face day in and day out while guarding our borders, the mob lynching of a human life for an alleged crime ruled punishable by a kangaroo court overriding the law of the land or the suicide by Rohit Vemula for the alleged mistreatment meted out to him by authorities and fellow compatriots alike are all pointers that we too are not making great strides in upholding the essence of the wisdom we often boastfully claim as our rightful inheritance.

The audacious demonetisation drive, the latest of the moves so far to redeem this country from the clutches of unabashed corruption, despite the upheaval it has caused to us, the ordinary foot soldiers on whose shoulders rests the pride of our grand democracy seems to have also not delivered the desired result. The ever shifting contour of the expected outcome from the massive exercise hints at the gross failure in planning and execution of the intended operation. Apparently the inept anticipation of the probable impact that can befall the nation consequent upon such a gigantic exercise now leaves our Christmas at home largely a dull affair. A cash starved

people, the poor and not so poor alike, would be compelled to celebrate this Christmas in a largely gift less and therefore much less joyful environment particularly for the children of these families. The yearlong anxious wait for a joyous Christmas this year in our blessed motherland, despite the grand promises from the offices of the authorities, is likely to be much lack lustre then it ever had been in the recent past.

Christmas, being a global festival, however, would be celebrated elsewhere with its usual pomp and gaiety. A little more than 2.2 billion of us (about 32.0% of the world population) consider ourselves Christians and, therefore, participates in this celebration as followers of Christ whose single most emphasis was on love; love for self, for nature and for all human beings. By the by, though not one in the category of the organised religions, Hinduism, one of the oldest surviving religion in the world owes its allegiance from about 14.0% of the world population as on date and takes pride in the ancient wisdom of their religion that millenniums ago dared to declare "Basudhiha Kutumbakam" – the whole world is a family. Much of the sagacity, courage and compassion that enabled the wise ancestors to consider humanity as family, sadly, seem wanting these days. Our temples and churches rarely radiate the aura that is divine and reassuring. They often sum up as mere statements of power demanding obeisance and abiding servitude rather than distributing an all-embracing spirit of love and empathy to light our souls up.

A look at the Atlas of the world would reveal that the coastline at Bodrum, Turkey where little Azlan was washed ashore by the sea waves lies less than a thousand kilometres away from Bethlehem, the holy city where Jesus, the star of Christmas celebration was born some two millennia ago. Physically, the distance is at best a nominal one in today's high paced techno crazy world. In terms of love, compassion and empathy and going by the hard experiences that life thrusts upon us in this modern civilised world, the distance often looks like an unsurpassable one to cover. Little Azlan's dead frame lying on the sea shore was a terse indictment of

humanity exposing into open the ugly truth that despite our claimed allegiance to the Lord of love, we actually have miserably failed to stand upright in support of what he preached and for what he himself had sacrificed his life on the holy cross.

We live in troubled times that often deny us the sagacity to live in peace. It is an age of conflicts and contradictions. Technology has made our lives fast but distorted its mission in such a way that nothing but speed and profit perhaps make any sense to us these days. We live in an era in which top of the brand medicine is available off the shelf but the curative healing touch needed to recover from sickness is missing. Our education has become a commodity. Its utility value rather than its life enriching role is what only seem to matter these days. Amidst plentiful resources, we are condemned to live in abject penury.

Still Christmas returns to us at the year end. And, when Christmas comes calling by, we do respond and prepare us for the celebration. The Stars lit atop our decorated homes serves to assure that the divine blessing is upon us. At each Christmas, we miss a few who adored our lives with their colourful presence. We miss them knowing well that someday we too would not be around and hoping diffidently that someone might then also recall us in the passing. Life, meanwhile, would carry on.

Coming of Christmas also serves an advance notice that another year from our lives is almost on its way out. And, as the year draws to a close, it perhaps softens us at the core to pause for a while to have a relook at the days we would never get to live again. The dying days of the year are solemn moments to record our heartfelt gratitude wherever they are due, to take note of the mistakes we committed and to pledge not to repeat them again. In paying our homage to the bygone, let us ready ourselves to welcome the new with an open heart. In resolutely abiding by the faith that the Lord of love would reign supreme in our hearts this Christmas and ever after; wish you, dear reader, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

(Debasish Chowdhury is presently working as Controller of Examinations, Sikkim University).

Feint of Technology

By Ananya S Guha

I am not an economist so I will not be able to critique the effects of demonetisation in India. Learned pundits including economists have given and are continuing to give their views. Initially I thought this would have a telling effect on those who evade income tax and stash away black money in their homes. The idea was to convert black to white under some compulsion and then to catch them napping with the help of income tax raids. They could deposit the cash piece-meal but to what extent? This seemed to be the master plan. Also it was surmised that huge quantities of fake currency were doing the rounds, hence replace the current five hundred and thousand rupee notes, and lay an embargo on the old notes till the new ones are printed. The rest of course is history as these notes could not be printed

antic shop.

Let us get things clearly articulated. Of course the exercise had a definite purpose. Curb activities of black money holders and evaders of income tax. Two, get the fake currencies out of the market, so that good money drives out bad money, an old economic maxim hardly put into practice, at least in this country. Thirdly use technology so that we become 'cashless' in our transactions. Use all cards available so that we know who you are, what you are doing.

This entire issue of using technology gives a broad picture of the haves and have nots. What percentage of the Indian population has access to technology, the internet, the ATM? I believe questions of accessibility, availability comes into the fore here, similarly if we are

“ Technology also disrupts, has limitations, because of developmental reasons, inaccessibility and illiteracy. To make the rural poor, technology effectual is to impart education, and make them literate in terms of education and numeracy. Simply signing names is not literacy and certainly not education. Educational imperatives are first and foremost in a country which is not totally and comprehensibly literate. ”

in sufficient quantities and we had two thousand rupee notes which could not find their way into the market, as change was not available. Now what do people need to do? They need cash, need to make payments by cash or cheques, and they need to deposit money. As limits were put on the amount we can withdraw from ATMs, cash was obviously not in circulation. Depositing money was not a problem, but this also had its limits. The hawk's eye was of course on the depositor. In between the small businesses had both the brains and the gumption to receive small amounts by PayTM etc. I admire their presence of mind.

Then of course came the talk and babble of a cashless society, I think, an inept expression, because we are talking of direct cash transference adopting various means by credit cards etc. A cashless society would imply a cash strapped economy and perhaps it is better not to bandy such expressions. What is meant is the rapid use of technology for monetary transactions, which is to take our societies into a faster technological awakening. That is fine, but the counter argument is that the poor and the rural poor do not have access to such sophistication and finery. One has to do some study on this, because also at the rate of usage of mobile telephony this does not seem possible.

Then, of course were the sad stories of deaths, as a result of waiting in queues and of suicides. A hundred deaths in this country can only cause grimaces - that is, nothing, could have been more! The Prime Minister's silence on this matter has only made matters worse and exacerbated the shouting. Now what is left to do? Have more notes, fill up the ATM corners so that the swiping can continue happily? Again some Banks had stopped accepting cheques, reducing the cheque book to an artefact or curio in a museum or an

making technological interventions for change in education. Maybe these will come in phases. But in our jump for radical changes, we are perhaps mistaking the proverbial wood for the trees. It all goes back to the basics: poverty, inequality, lack of education. Let us tackle these first by making innovative changes side by side, and give the black money holders and income tax evaders a bashing. Technology also disrupts, has limitations, because of developmental reasons, inaccessibility and illiteracy. To make the rural poor, technology effectual is to impart education, and make them literate in terms of education and numeracy. Simply signing names is not literacy and certainly not education. Educational imperatives are first and foremost in a country which is not totally and comprehensibly literate. It is also a country where beggars, street hawkers (unfairly pushed out in many places, including Shillong), street children are ubiquitous.

Education perforce holistically visualised with concomitant and imaginative use of technology will make our societies not so much cashless but liberated from demonised neglect, exploitation and oppression. If we put the cart before the horse we might be indulging in the legerdmain of inchoate word play. True we must get rid of endemic corruption, but corruption entails a gamut of forces: exploitative, oppressive and incendiary. Where there is no feeling to uplift the weak and the poor in terms of social developmental processes, technology will only remain a white elephant and in the hands of a few possessive elites, who will complain inordinately about their poor salaries, but will use three cards for their mobiles, constantly changing numbers. The structures beneath and their levels of deprivation are interminable. They must be uppermost in our minds.

TO THE EDITOR

Hauled with his own petard

Editor, At a time of Christmas festivities when we are reminded of the holiness and purity of the Saviour, I don't want to unnecessarily remind readers about the contrast with impurity. But the brash words of Ravi Shankar Prasad, Union minister in defending his boss, Narendra Modi (vide news dated 22 Dec) to the extent of saying, "Our PM is as pure as the Ganga river" is too much to be left unanswered.

A 2006 measurement of pollution reveals that Ganga has fecal coliform counts upto 100,000,000 MPN (Most probable number) per 100ml. An estimated 2958 crores of rupees has already been spent up to July 2016 for cleaning the Ganga but it is not yet complete. I am truly sorry for this country. If that is the level of the PM's purity, then what is impure? As Shakespeare would have said about Mr. Shankar Prasad, "hoist with his own petard". Sincerely

Demonetisation and currency notes

Editor, During the British period, currency notes issued by the Bank of Bengal were categorized in the following 3 series - the Unfaced series, Commerce series and Britannia series. The Britannia series replaced Commerce series in 19th century and the new series had some better features to prevent forgery. Then the paper currency of 1861 gave the Government monopoly of currency notes throughout the vast expanse of British India, which was a considerable task. Eventually, the management of currency notes was entrusted to the Mint Masters, the Accountant Generals and the Controller of Currency. The first sets of British India currency notes were "Victoria Portraits" of 10, 20, 50, 100 and 1000 denominations. Then came the "George Series" in 1923. The Reserve Bank of India

(RBI) emerged eventually in 1938 issued the first 5 rupee note with the portrait of George VI. Following the Independence of India, Government of India brought out the new 1 rupee notes in 1949 and this was eventually replaced by the portrait of Gandhi and he continued to feature on all currency notes and also in all the new brand of currency series after Demonetisation. This time, I personally felt that Netaji Subhas Ch Bose would definitely feature at least on one series, but Prime Minister Modi did not allow that to happen. Has Bose not done anything for this country? The Indian economy is now at the crossroads and hence even a tiny sentiment should be respected. I personally feel that many people of India want to see some new portraits on the currency notes. We expect the same tricks propagated for 70 years to be defeated. Time has come to design everything afresh, not only demonetisation! Yours etc.,

Liquor sale on highways

Editor, The Supreme Court deserves kudos for its decision to ban States and Union Territories from granting licenses for the sale of liquor along National and State highways across the country, noting that drunken driving was the main culprit behind a large number of road accidents in the country. Liquor remained one of the foremost evils of Indian society. Since the national and state highways are more prone to accidents, the apex court has taken a good decision. It is the stringent laws against drunk and rash driving, proper and effective enforcement of the laws and the tough and sincere judiciary in dealing with the accidents alone which could ultimately have a positive effect in dealing with the ever growing accidents.

Yours etc., Vinod C. Dixit Via email

Anjan Kr Das, Shillong-6

“Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.”

--- Calvin Coolidge

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 134 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2016

Job quotas in Karnataka

KARNATAKA has chosen to go against the national policy of doing away with fiscal barriers between states. It plans to reserve for locals all blue collar jobs in private companies which have asked for government aid. It will run counter to labour movement across India. The Chief Minister of Karnataka, Siddaramaiah must abandon the short sighted policy. It will adversely affect Karnataka's economic status. Besides, it can lead to the adoption of a similar policy in other states which could be to the detriment of Karnataka's interests. Job quotas betray failure of governance and lack of good education. The Karnataka government is trying to offset the situation with a short cut. The state's industrial policy will be undermined by the job quota though it aims to generate a growth rate of 12%. The state also wants to increase the contribution of the manufacturing sector to its economy from about 17% to 20%. But job reservation will lead to a flight of investments from other states.

The Karnataka government is of course alive to the hazards created by the job reservation policy. It is for that reason that information technology and bio technology have been left out of the ambit of the reservation policy. The state policy will naturally induce totally private companies to show a preference for local hands. It is understandable for the Karnataka government to create employment for sons of the soil. But that calls for improvement of education and skills in the state.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Splinter Janata party to retain identity

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

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

Netas Vs People

Cash apartheid

By Poonam I Kaushish

Q: What turns black money into white?

A: A political Party's washing machine.

This my dear readers is the sum total of the Modi Government's latest order Friday last exempting Parties from depositing the banned old Rs 500 and Rs 1000 currency notes in their bank accounts from income tax and subsequent investigation if the deposited amount is below Rs 20,000. Reminiscent of the Orwellian dictum: Some our more equal than others.

Worse, adding salt to people's misery asserted Revenue Secretary, "if money is deposited in individual's account then that information will come into our radar. If the individual is putting money in his own account, then we will get information." Read face harassment even if his money is legit. Sic.

Shockingly, this brazen immunity come against the backdrop of 'inspector raj' against the aam kala dhan generators and hoarders with numerous seizures and arrests being reported daily even as serpentine queues continue outside banks and ATMs with nearly 100 deaths therein. So much for ensuring a corruption free society!

Questionably, does this not tantamount to cash apartheid? In a democracy which is based on equality for all can the State have double standards and different rules for various categories? Can it compartmentalize people? Netas vs the rest? Protect the former and harass the latter?

What makes our political Parties special that they should be exempt? Are they dhoo ka dhula? When our leaders merrily accept black money, how can we expect them to take honest action against themselves for the very same black money?

Undoubtedly, this order defies logic and raises a question mark on the aim, target and intention of the NDA Sarkar to unearth black money at any cost. Given the root cause of corruption and kala dhan

in our election process, wherein candidates spend crores of unaccounted cash to fight polls this is an evil that feeds and nurtures all other forms of illegal cash in the system. In a milieu where we treat our leaders as undatas enjoying unfettered God-like immunity what else can one expect. Aren't we accustomed to a corrupt and unaccountable polity who could stoop to anything for paisa and gaddi?

Consequently, Parties blithely use this lacuna to launder black money by putting it in their bank accounts and saying they got it (less than Rs 20,000) from small donors. Section 13A of Income Tax Act allows Parties exemptions from declaring the source of a donation under heads including 'income from house', 'income from other sources' and voluntary contributions received from any person.

Remember BSP supremo Mayawati who rewrote the grammar of 'cow belt' politics and corrupt rules by 'cashing' in on her fans devotion when she was garlanded with Rs 1000 notes totaling Rs 5.25 crores in massive celebrations organized to celebrate 25 years of her Party in 2010. Notwithstanding, the Supreme Court reopened the Taj Corridor scam case earlier this year even as it dismissed the disproportionate assets case accusing her of amassing 72 immovable properties and over 50 bank accounts with Rs 21 crores in 2012.

This not all. Believe it or not, only 11.89 per cent of Congress's total funding of Rs 774 crore and 22.76 per cent of BJP income in the 2009-10 and 2010-11 of Rs 426 crore came from donations above Rs 20,000, according to reports submitted to the EC.

The CPI(M) said only Rs. 1.93 crores were above Rs.20,000 and BSP averred it received zilch contributions over Rs.20,000! No matter, the Congress received Rs. 2,008 crore, BJP Rs. 994 crore, BSP Rs. 484 crore, CPI(M) Rs. 417 crore and SP Rs. 279 crore between 2004-05 and 2010-11.

Undeniably, these donations

undisclosed sources, aka black money run through the veins of all Parties. Surprisingly, not one Opposition Party has uttered a word on this order and political black money. It wasn't expected as it would tantamount to the pot calling the kettle black. Confessed a senior BJP leader, "Is kake dhan ke hamam main hum chor chor mauseri bhai hain."

More scandalous, Parties keep no record of donations less than Rs 20,000 and only those above this amount are reported to the Election Commission. In fact, an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and National Election Watch recently shows that about 75 per cent of the sources of funds to Parties remain unknown. Moreover, it is not difficult to make backdated donation receipts. This defeats the entire purpose of black money operation.

Further, trust our polity to trash a landmark Delhi High Court judgment in March that Parties should satisfy the requirement of the Income Tax Act, 1961, for maintaining properly audited accounts of income received through voluntary contributions. If this is not done, it could not claim exemption from paying income tax on these contributions.

Adding that proper auditing of Party accounts was imperative and critical for free and fair elections, as they dealt in large sums of public money. This would also infuse transparency and accountability into their functioning as it disposed of an appeal filed by the Congress for exemption from income tax for the assessment year 1994-95.

In fact, the Election Commission too in August 2014 had issued transparency guidelines for Parties invoking its powers under Article 324 whereby it asked them to file annual audited accounts with it. This, it felt was necessary to maintain transparency and provide a level playing field to all contestants to ensure free and fair elections and perhaps help end the scourge of black money which

vitiate the purity of polls.

Sadly, like previous orders this too was water off a ducks back with Parties continuing to ignore and play hard ball. Primarily, because elections are perceived as a "rentier" profession, with huge post-poll rewards, to amass wealth for their Parties, themselves and future elections too. Any wonder the economics of running an election campaign are a hush-hush affair.

Like politics, elections have become a business --- like businessmen the politicians in the election business balk at the idea of controls and regulations. That is why no Party, however vocal about the matter while in opposition, has made a sincere attempt at stanching the flow of black money into the electoral arena.

Notably, Parties will continue to stonewall efforts to clean up the "black". Hence irrespective of whether a Party is in power, donations must be made public as the aam janata has the right to know whether a Party's stand on a policy is influenced by the source of its funding.

Clearly, Prime Minister Modi owes an answer to the aam aadmi on his Government's cash apartheid. In sum, unless the opaque political funding are brought under the tax radar all measures of the Government to unearth black money will total a big zero. Will our leaders say goodbye to the politics of sabse bada rupaiya?

Towards that end, there must be compulsory social audit of political funding by the EC. Corruption cannot be ended if the way Parties are funded does not change. Until they make transparent collection and spend money, corruption will thrive and corrode accountability in the system. We need to stop them from functioning as private limited companies, each with its own secret war cheats. Else say goodbye to black becoming white! -----INFA

Gen Vaidya superseding was politically correct

By Praveen Davar

There is no doubt, whatsoever, that choosing the Army Chief, or any other service chief, is the prerogative of the government. Then why so much hue and cry over the selection of Lt Gen Bipin Rawat as the next army chief?

Over three decades ago, in 1983, when Gen AS Vaidya superseded Lt Gen SK Sinha

raised a controversy which was not in the interest of the Army, it was decided during the premiership of India's youngest PM Rajiv Gandhi that amongst the Vice Chief and Army Commanders the senior most will be chosen.

Gen Vaidya's successor, General K Sundarji, and all the successive Chiefs' thereafter have been

“Ultimately, Gen AS Vaidya, India's most decorated soldier made the supreme sacrifice, like Indira Gandhi and Sant Longowal, for ensuring that sword arm of India is not cut off from the rest of India.”

there was an uproar but not as much, in fact nowhere near now, anger amongst both the serving senior officers and military veterans cutting across all arms and services. This includes the infantry including the Gorkha regiment, the unit of the army chief designate.

Despite the fact that today the electronic and social media call the shots, the number of articles, editorials and columns of 'letter to editor' that are commenting on the controversy is much more than what it was in 1983. It was, perhaps, due to the fact Gen Vaidya, winner of Mahavir Chakra twice-in 1965 and 1971- had much greater battle experience than Lt Gen Sinha who only held staff appointments in the wars of 1947-48, 1962, 1965 and 1971.

The supersession was fully justified. Since I was commissioned in the cavalry regiment of Gen Vaidya, the Deccan Horse, my view may seem biased by some military veterans. But there is no doubt that Gen Vaidya was an iconic figure of the Indian Army, especially the armoured corps, the arm to which the superseded Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi belongs. Ultimately, Gen AS Vaidya, India's most decorated soldier made the supreme sacrifice, like Indira Gandhi and Sant Longowal, for ensuring that sword arm of India is not cut off from the rest of India.

But as the supersession

selected by both the Congress and non-Congress governments on the basis of seniority. The biggest advantage of following this principle is that nobody can accuse the government of the day of politicising the Defence forces or indulging in favouritism. Unfortunately, the choice of Gen Bipin Rawat, no doubt an outstanding officer, on the eve of Utrakhand elections has raised eyebrows and led to an avoidable controversy. The only option before the government is to make Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi the CDS, or Chairman of chiefs of staff committee (CSC) and similarly accommodate Lt Gen P.M. Hariz in an advisory role where he will not be junior to Gen Bipin Rawat. Nobody, more than Gen Rawat, will be happier with this arrangement. This will be in the best interest of both the Army and the nation. The Army should be kept totally apolitical and secular. Otherwise there will be no difference between the armies of India and Pakistan where supersession is never surprising and has become an established norm.

The writer, an ex Armoured Corps officer, is Member, National Commission for Minorities. The views expressed by him are personal)

TO THE EDITOR

Demonitization: A lion-hearted step

Editor,

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has yet again, with the decision to demonetize high currency notes, taken a bold step and set the national narrative. Forty-five days later, demonitization still occupies the mind space of the nation — be it the media, political circles, restaurants almost everywhere??

A move like this, no matter how well thought out, is bound to encounter all sorts of implementation issues and hurdles. The inconvenience in the form of long ATM queues, inadequate supply of new-denomination currency has become a major political weapon in the hands of the Opposition.

But before we dig deep into it, let us examine the record of the anti-demonitization champions currently led by the Congress party. Apart from 40-odd years of uninterrupted rule,

and then two consecutive terms, the party had ample time, opportunity and people's trust to implement even a fraction of what the Modi government is currently attempting. But despite the 2014 electoral drubbing, it continues to do more of the same - wasting taxpayer money both within and outside the Parliament. The party and many of its eminent leaders have exhibited time and again that the only thing they care about is bringing down Modi at any cost.

The other parties, most prominent among them the Trinamool Congress, Aam Aadmi Party, Samajwadi Party, DMK — have joined the Congress in criticizing the government's move. However, both UPA-I and II had ample of time to do everything that they preach today and has little right to condemn a government which has taken strict steps and introduced bold reforms to curb black money, corruption & improve the country's global standing.

The demonitization naysayers also point to the fact that the corrupt have still managed to find flaws within the system

by converting their dirty money to new currency as numerous raids over the past month have revealed. But on a positive note, these raids have only exposed the pervasive extent of the rot that has corroded the system. From top officials of reputed and "safe" banks like Axis Bank to employees of the RBI, it appears that the pestilence of corruption has become incurable.

Also astonishing is how the mainstream media has turned a complete blind eye to the fact that demonitization has also severely dented terror financing, effectively checked the use of fake currency and brought the trafficking of women and girls for sex work, a multi-trillion rupees industry, almost to a grinding halt. On the contrary, their singular focus has been on the inconvenience of ATM queues, as if that was the only impact of this audacious exercise. Yes, people have been impacted, no doubt, more in the big and metro cities than the smaller ones. However, with due respect let's put it straight that some of the urbanites take for granted certain comforts

and not standing in queues is one of them. Anything that upsets their permanent & routine comforts, finds no takers.

Evidently post 45 days of demonitization, the general view that is emanating is that the PM has undertaken this exercise for the good of the country. There'll be criticism coming in from many quarters because the impact on black-money hoarders hasn't been anything less than catastrophic. Ever since the country became independent, not one political party/leader has had the spunk to take such a strong decision. We, therefore, should stand united in this fight against corruption & black money and back the government to bring in more reforms and not get distracted by the pandemonium created by the opposition that has abandoned the ethos of constructive opposition. Yes, it could've been planned and executed in a better way. But when you take such a revolutionary step, errors are bound to emerge and in such situations what matters most is the intent. Also,

let's not forget that demonitization is just one, but a hugely significant part of the prime minister's larger game plan. Keep up the good work PM!!!!

Yours etc.,
Subhasish Das,
Via email

The true meaning of Christmas

Editor,

Love, as we understand it, is the road to happiness. It is a panacea for a plethora of problems in a nostalgic society. Come Christmas and our capacity for feeling love and demonstrating it is manifested in myriad ways. The exchange of cards and greetings, the air saturated with sensual pleasures such as music, and the feasts, and the shopping malls, and our philanthropic heart is at its best. We also go all out to force people to eat those cakes, pork and what not in order to prove our love. Yes each one of us has this profound desire to prove our love and our virtues. Our natural zest for love is at its height this

season. However, the pattern one observes is akin to that of a person who wishes to prove his virtuosity only during festivals such as Christmas. Hence we feel the urge to give this and that to the less privileged, the orphans, etc. But post Christmas this virtuosity disappears like dewdrops with the morning sun. So one can't help but wonder if this interest we have in others during the Christmas season is genuine? Or is our interest a mere simulated one for the magnifying our own ego? Forgive me but genuine interest wouldn't fade so swiftly into oblivion post the Christmas season. It is sad to see that in a day or two or may be a week after Christmas we are quick to huddle in our own groups. We hurt but we never try to heal. I therefore cannot resist stating that this seasonal human love, with its disagreeable characteristic, is tragic and pathetic. Our seasonal display of hearts is akin to people going to health resorts in the summer, yet returning to the place they came from. Too bad for our faith in humanly love, as Byron Says, 'there's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away'.

An emotional outburst of love that we see during Christmas, like drunkenness, is an intoxicating feeling and is at any rate nothing more than a momentary cessation from unhappiness for the soul. We come to cultivate this seasonal feeling of love at the expense of the knowledge of the truth, the truth about Christmas. This is the tragedy of Christianity. Are our Christmas and our Christianity mapped on well to each other? Christmas brings forth the gift of love. It is a reminder of how much God loved us that He sent His only begotten son for us. The son of God enters our darkness for the sole purpose of dying for us to make us whole before God. Through Christmas, the son of God came to restore all that the devil has stolen from mankind following the fall of man. Through Christmas Jesus Christ, therefore, becomes a Gift and a Giver. It is impossible to accept the Gift of Christmas and reject the Giver, for the Christmas Gift and the Giver are one. The Christmas gifts of love, joy and peace can only come through the person of Jesus Christ. For a meaningful Christmas, we must be aware of this truth, not only with our minds, but with our

blood and sinews. Without this knowledge of the truth, all the love, the joy and merriment of Christmas are but drunkenness. No wonder our effort for love and peace are only band-aid efforts. We always think we have a better way. We are perpetually toiling for peace yet nothing abides. We fight for love and peace but all we feel is pain. I therefore wish to persuade the reader that taking human love as a panacea for societal ills or as a religion for that matter is like putting the cart before the horse. We should understand that God's love is the only force that could knit humanities together, as Colossian 1:17 says, '... in Him all things hold together'. God reveals the amplitude of His magnificent love for us through Christmas. The knowledge of this truth is itself the greatest Christmas gift. Merry Christmas!

Yours etc.,
T Fightingstar L
Mawlong,
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.

As Christmas Dawns Quietly

Far from the celebratory crowd of Kolkata, Christmas unfolds slowly in other districts of Bengal with a tradition of quiet ceremony & rich Christian heritage. Sudipto Maity documents the Yuletide mood in the districts

It was cold and dark. With the winter setting in, people had retired to the comfort of their homes. This isn't the Bandel Church one imagines to witness at night 10 days before Christmas.

The place, barely 70 km from Kolkata in Hooghly district, comes up as a 'slow-starter' for someone from Kolkata, who's used to seeing bright lights and even brighter decorations of Park Street well in advance during this time of the year. But this is how Christmas unfolds here, slowly and silently.

You do not find the aroma of freshly baked cakes in the air like in some Anglo-Indian quarters of Kolkata. But Christmas still creeps in, quietly in Bengal outside its capital city.

With Yuletide on the doorstep, the church was yet to deck up barely ten days ahead of December 25. Which it will, "but not before the 23rd," says a lady while trying to coax a visitor to buy some candles from her makeshift shop.

Come Christmas Eve, Bandel Church, declared a mini Basilica by Pope John Paul II, will be hosting thousands of visitors from all religions.

Christmas is a puritan affair here, in the oldest church in eastern India. The same applies for most of the churches in several districts in West Bengal where Christianity arrived back in the 16th century. The Portuguese first established a settlement in Bandel with the Bandel Church coming up in 1599. It was burnt down, but was rebuilt in 1660.

Christians live mainly in Bardhaman, Bankura, Kolkata and Hooghly districts of West Bengal. British missionary William Carey, who founded the Baptist Missionary Society and came to India in 1793, worked in the Danish colony of Serampore in Hooghly because of opposition from the British East India Company. He had translated the Bible into Bengali and Sanskrit too.

"Jesus Christ was born to spread love and warmth. Nothing but the prayers define Christmas," says Fr. T.L. Francis, prior and parish priest of Bandel Church.

To him, less is more. It makes one wonder if we are going overboard with the celebrations in Kolkata. Is Christmas in Kolkata a tad commercialised? Fr. Dolphi Mathias, Director and Secretary of the Social Service Society of Diocese of Asansol, thinks so.

"I have never celebrated Christmas in Kolkata, but from what I have seen on TV and read in the papers, it does appear that way," Mathias says.

He too like Francis believes that prayers form the backbone of Christmas in the districts. "We have a turnout of 7,000 people during Christmas," Mathias, also an



(Anti-clockwise from top left) The main altar of Our Lady of the Bandel Church, the inside of Sacred Heart Church in Bardhaman, the main altar of the Our Lady's, and an old sketch of the St Paul's Cathedral in Kolkata. Photos: Subhdeep Sardar

districts. With the infusion of social media Christmas has become a lot more general and has lost out a bit on the religious impact.

Sounding alert, Fr Francis says, "It is a worrying trend no doubt, but I am more worried about the youth in general."

He says that the present society is a lot more trigger happy. "We must love and protect one another. That is what every religion says. That is what I tell them here," he says.

For Mathias the biggest change has come in terms of 'availability of cakes and decorations'.

A Mangalorean by birth, he has spent a good part of his years in West Bengal, working closely with under-privileged people in the districts.

"I first came here in Bardhaman in 1999 and looking at things now, this place has witnessed a sea change. People would come to the church to have a feel of the decorations, but today it's a household thing. Almost every place boasts of a



Christmas tree." Asked if the Canonisation of St Teresa had any impact on the celebrations this year, both agree that though it is a happy occasion, it wouldn't render any new meaning to Christmas. "The celebrations would have continued anyway, even without her (St Teresa's) recognition," says Fr Francis.

Christians mainly live in Bardhaman, Bankura, Kolkata and Hooghly districts of West Bengal

Mathias adds that Teresa was a saint and it was a matter of time for the Vatican to canonise her. "Though that won't have any additional meaning to Christmas this year, I must say it was a matter of time. Even when she was there in Kolkata, people referred to her as a living saint," he says.

The other big factor to determine Christmas

celebration is the note ban imposed by the government.

Though people have recovered from the initial jolt of a sudden major announcement, Mathias says that it will have a bite on the festivity, even if a tad.

"Look, ours is a low budget affair anyway," he says, "As it is I like to keep it simple, but I have asked some of the people in the villages and they are having problems with the funds," he adds.

Mathias says that the one factor that will save Christmas in West Bengal from the financial crisis is the lack of competitiveness. He says that while the Durga Puja and other religious festivities aim at getting bigger with each passing year, the magnitude of Christmas remains the same.

Whether Christmas remains puritan outside Kolkata in the years to come is a topic for a healthy debate, but one can safely say that they have managed to steer clear of reindeer horns and LED clown noses. (TWF)

'Even criminals have a holiday at this time'

Some years ago, a senior police officer told me that (with some exceptions) criminals have the exactly same holidays as ordinary people. They dislike working on bank holidays or the Buddha's birthday or over Christmas and the like, so cops see a significant fall in the crime rate.

It certainly seems to be true this year. "Dumb criminal" reports are normally the steadiest stream of reader contributions that fill this column, but there hasn't been a single one this week.

So let me start by saying a big thank you to all the villains whose idiotic antics have filled this column over the year. Enjoy a few days off so you can entertain us in the New Year by accidentally breaking into your local police sleeping quarters or whatever.

Christmas has become this columnist's favourite holiday. And I am not showing religious bias here. My father was a Muslim and my mother a Buddhist, but when it came to December, we all became fervent Christians, even our Imam. You give folk a choice between going to work as normal, or celebrating a holiday with the themes of love, families, gifts and food and suddenly we are all into Santa Claus, even the New Atheists, the scariest belief group of all.

But before fundamentalists from any faith burn down my house, let me make it clear that I believe all major codes of belief deserve respect, including the silly ones. Most faiths contain wonderful elements, which are exclusive to them — I love Hindu candles, Muslim snacks and Christian hymns et al. But it must be said not all traditions are suitable for everyone. Someone once took me to a Hare Krishna meeting where people sang the same song over and over interminably reminding me of the greatest cultural tragedy of modern times — the week in 2006 they launched High School Musical.

Anyway, since criminals are having a bit of rest and I have a humour column to fill, here are my favourite winter holiday jokes. I've chosen the silly ones, so you can share them with children.

"Christmas has become my favourite holiday. And I am not showing religious bias here. My father was a Muslim and my mother a Buddhist, but when it came to December, we all became fervent Christians"

- 1) What nationality is Santa Claus? North Polish.
- 2) What do you call an elf who lives in (insert name of your nearest rich district)? Welfy.
- 3) What goes "Oh oh oh"? Santa walking backwards.

THE FUNNY SIDE
Nury Vittachi

- 4) What did Mrs Claus say to Santa when she looked out of the window? Looks like rain, dear.
- 5) What did Adam say to his wife on the day before Christmas? "It's Christmas, Eve."
- 6) One-liner: My wife said she didn't mind what gift I got her as long as it had diamonds in it. So I bought her a pack of cards.
- 7) Why don't penguins fly? Because they're too short to get into pilot training programmes.
- 8) What did the teenage candle say to the mommy candle? "I am also going out tonight."
- 9) Why is Christmas like working in an office? You do all the work, but the fat guy in the suit gets all the credit.
- 10) My sister's new boyfriend is like Santa Claus. He gives her presents, but many people think he doesn't exist.

And as a bonus, here's my favourite winter holiday joke this year: What did one snowman say to the other? "Can you smell carrot?"
Happy holidays.

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

(Continued from next week)

In a 2014 report, the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC), an advisory body to the British government, stated, "Fish are able to detect and respond to noxious stimuli and FAWC supports the increasing scientific consensus that they experience pain."

Fishing is nothing more than a cruel blood sport. When fish are impaled on an angler's hook and yanked out of the water, it's not a game to them. They are scared, in pain, and fighting for their lives.

Michael Stoskopf, professor of aquatics, wildlife and zoologic medicine at North Carolina University, said, "It would be an unjustified error to assume that fish do not perceive pain in these

All you anglers, think before you hook a fish



Michael Stoskopf, professor of aquatics and zoologic medicine at North Carolina University, said it would be an unjustified error to assume that fish do not perceive pain in these situations

Dr Culum Brown, concludes that it would be impossible for fish to survive as the cognitively and behaviorally complex animals they are without a capacity to feel pain

An experiment involving electrically shocking toadfish showed that the toadfish would "grunt" whenever they were shocked. After some time, the toadfish began to grunt at the sight of an electrode, without yet being shocked. This shows that fish exhibit pain-response and pain-association behaviour seen in us and other animals

situations." Researcher, Dr Culum Brown, concludes that "it would be impossible for fish to survive as the cognitively and behaviorally complex animals they are without a capacity to feel pain" and

"the potential amount of cruelty" that we humans inflict on fish "is mind-boggling." An experiment involved electrically shocking toadfish in order to observe their responses to stimuli

that would be painful for humans and other mammals. It was found that the toadfish would "grunt" whenever they were shocked. After some time, the toadfish began to grunt at the sight of an electrode,

without yet being shocked. This shows that fish exhibit pain-response and pain-association behaviour seen in us and other animals. Peter Singer writes, "There is no humane slaughter requirement for

wild fish caught and killed at sea, nor, in most places, for farmed fish." Fish caught in nets by trawlers are dumped on board the ship and allowed to suffocate. Impairing live baits on hooks is a common

commercial practice — long line fishing, for example, uses hundreds or even thousands of hooks on a single line that maybe 50-100 km long. When fish take the bait they are likely to remain caught for many

hours before the line is hauled in.

Likewise, commercial fishing frequently depends on gill nets — walls of fine netting in which fish become snared, often by the gills. They may suffocate in the net, because with their gills constricted, they cannot breathe. The first ever systematic estimate of the size of the yearly global capture of wild fish is about 1-2.7 trillion; about 150 times the number of mammals and birds killed for consumption.

Can a planet survive after so much pain has been generated? There is so much violence in the air that we breathe it. Can we be happy if every being around us is unhappy? The miasma of viciousness hangs like a black pall over us. No wonder we are so miserable ourselves.

(Concluded)

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

Lucrative option

By Ranjan K Baruah

We have published about Chartered Accountant course in our last edition. In this edition, we are publishing more information related to CA and other courses. Like CA, students may also opt for the Accounting Technician Course. One may enroll for Common Proficiency Test (CPT), after passing Class X examination.

Aspirants need to appear and pass in CPT after appearing in 10+2 examination. However, one should pass both CPT and 10+2 examination before registering for ATC. After enrolling for Accounting Technician Course (ATC) one must successfully complete eight months of study course from the date of registration for the ATC.

There is also an orientation course and training on other topics like personality development, communication skills, office procedures, business environment and general commercial knowledge, among others. One must complete 100 hours Information Technology Training (ITT) and pass ATE (Group I of Intermediate Examination).

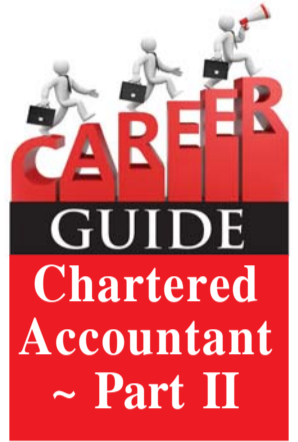
Here, Group I is composed of four papers and after one must successfully complete one year work experience under chartered accountant in practice or in industry. After this, one may get Accounting Technician Certificate and designate as "Accounting Technician".

There are also ways to become CA after becoming Accounting Technician. Accounting Technician may enroll for Group II of Intermediate (Integrated Professional Competence) Course and register as Articled Assistant for three years. There are some other stages before appearing for

CA final examination. One may enroll with ICAI and designate as "Chartered Accountant".

There is provision for direct entry for which Commerce graduates/post-graduates need 55% or other graduates/post-graduates need 60%. Instead of CPC they may directly enroll with the Institute for Intermediate (Integrated Professional Competence) Course for both groups with or without the option of ATC.

Aspirant must undergo 100 hours of ITT and 35 hours of Orientation Course spanning one week



and register for Practical Training of three years. After completing General Management and Communication Skills (GMCS)-I course during the first year of practical training, one may appear in Intermediate (Integrated Professional Competence) Examination after nine months of practical training and study course of eight months concurrently from the date of registration for the Intermediate (Integrated Professional Competence) Course.

Student should appear and pass in both groups of Intermediate (Integrated Professional Competence) course. After this, one may register for CA final course and prepare for CA final examination. Before appearing for the final

examination there are some more stages which students must complete. Candidates who have passed Intermediate level examination of Institute of Company Secretaries of India or Institute of Cost Accountants of India may enroll with the Institute for Intermediate (Integrated Professional Competence) Course either for both groups or Group I with or without the option of ATC. There are other stages before appearing for the final exams.

Career options and opportunities are tremendous for the registered CAs. They may work for others and they may also work independently. All the companies registered under the Companies Act, are required to get their accounts audited only by practising chartered accountants.

A qualified chartered accountant has the option of joining the government service, public sector undertakings or taking up a profitable job in the private sector. Some of the opportunities available for chartered accountants are in capital markets, business houses and industry. Many are seen working independently as consultant and they provide services to their clients. CAs are also associated with NGOs and different charitable trusts and other associations.

I have seen many students initially enroll for the course but most of them do not complete it. There are many who have completed CA and also completed law and they are working as consultants and earn good salary. CA and law is another good combination and many practising CAs have passed law though many of them do not practise in the court. One may go through the website of ICAI for further details and admission process.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 9864055558 for any career related queries)

Sikkim: Enchanting land



The five destinations in Sikkim that can be your gateway to amazing attractions in this tiny Himalayan kingdom

A ride in the aerial ropeway connecting Deorali and Tashiling is a must for a glimpse of the mountains and a bird's eye view of the town

Yumthang can be visited only in package tours bought from authorised agents

If you pay a visit to Pemayangste Monastery, one of the oldest in the state, request for a glimpse of the hand-crafted wooden structure that is said to be a replica of the heavenly abode of Guru Padmasambhava

By Uttara Gangopdhyay

Nestling in the lap of the mighty Himalayas, Sikkim — India's only slum-free, beggar-free and litter-free state — packs in an amazing range of attractions which belie its small size and just over 600,000 population.

Lofty mountains and passes, rivers and waterfalls, forests and wildlife, Buddhist monasteries, the list is long indeed. The 28,208 ft Mt Khangchendzonga, which dominates the landscape of Sikkim, is the third highest mountain in the world and the highest in India. The local people are hospitable and home-stay is a nice opportunity to know the culture and food of the state, which is a mixture of Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepali culture.

Gangtok: The capital of the state is the most convenient starting point for a first-time visitor to the state. Keep two to three days for this clean, orderly and happening town.

Begin with a visit to the state tourism office and any of the approved tourist agencies, who can help you draw up a convenient itinerary.

The vehicle-free MG Road — with its tiled walking plaza, convenient benches, fountains and decorative greenery — is the lifeline of the city. A walk along the road shows how Sikkim is merging the modern with the traditional. There are many cafes, restaurants and stores selling branded and local goods along the road to explore. Take the network of walkways to explore the town if walking is your forte.

A ride in the aerial ropeway connecting Deorali and Tashiling is a must for a glimpse of the mountains and a bird's eye view of the town. There are several viewpoints around the town, the most popular ones being Ganesh Tok and Hanuman Tok.

Pay a visit to the Namgyal Research Institute of Tibetology where you will find a vast collection of rare Lepcha, Tibetan and Sanskrit manuscripts, statues and rare thankas (colourful Buddhist scrolls or tapestries).

If you are on a tight schedule, pay a visit to the over 200-year Enchey Monastery perched on a hillock in Gangtok. The monastery celebrates its annual Chaam festival usually in January. With a little more time in hand, you can visit Sa-Ngor Monastery and Gonjang Monastery.

Other points of attraction include Hurhuray Dara, Menmecho Lake, Bakthang Waterfalls, zoo and Fambong Lho Wildlife Sanctuary, among other places.

With special permission (that can be arranged through any government-approved travel agent), you can visit the Tsomgo Lake (38km from Gangtok) that remains frozen in winter and continue to Nathu La (about 20km from the lake and part of the famous Silk Route) from where you can see China and are in hand-



shaking distance of Chinese border guards. However, Nathu La is open to Indian visitors only from Wednesday to Sunday. At Tsomgo Lake, you will find food stalls, hairy yaks to ride, etc.

If you are looking for ethnic handicrafts and handlooms, pay a visit to the Government Institute of Cottage Industry.

Yumthang: The alpine valley lying at 11,800 feet remains covered in snow during winter and breaks into a profusion of flowers during spring and early summer. The Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary over is said to contain 24 species of rhododendron flowers that bloom from April to May-end. Autumn is the time to visit if you want to see the snow peaks dazzle beneath a blue sky.

Located about 150km from Gangtok, Yumthang can be visited only in package tours bought from authorised agents. It is not unusual for people to complete the tour in one day and return to Gangtok and at least a night's stay is recommended. With a leisurely ride, you can also see of the attractions en route. With more time in hand you can extend your journey to the holy Gurudongmar, an alpine lake that never totally freezes even in peak winter owing to a blessing bestowed on it by Guru Padmasambhava, also known as the 'second Buddha'.

Pelling: Pelling offers you a panoramic view of Mt Khangchendzonga (Kanchenjunga) and other peaks. The lower town is slightly crowded. Escape to the higher reaches if you are looking for some tranquil moments. Pay a visit to the Pemayangste Monastery, one of the oldest in the state. Request for a glimpse of the hand-crafted wooden structure that is said to be a replica of the heavenly abode of



(Clockwise from top): Gurudongmar Lake, MG Road in Gangtok, the happening main shopping street is a pedestrian zone, and a hotel in Gangtok

Guru Padmasambhava. The town is also a gateway to many scenic spots, including Khecheopalri Lake, Khangchendzonga Waterfalls, Rimbi Waterfalls, etc. You can also trek to Dzongri starting from Pelling. You can also combine a trip to Ravangla and Namchi with Pelling. The 135-foot high statue of Guru Padmasambhava is at Samdrupse near Namchi.

Uttarey: Perched at 6,600 feet, it is one of the lesser known corners of Sikkim. Accessible through Pelling or Geyzing, the place is known for its natural beauty. Set amidst a dense forest is the Kagju Gumpha, known for its murals. You can also visit the Chewyabhang Pass, about 10km from Uttarey.

Hee Bermiok: If you are fond of adventure sports and trekking, this is the place to be. You can get to Hee Bermiok from Pelling. There are some nice home-stays here, simple but comfortable. Go trekking to Varsey or the Sirjunga Falls. Go mountain-biking. Go bird-watching — nearly 65 species of birds are found in the surrounding forests.

Information: Sikkim has to be approached from the plains of West Bengal. Bagdogra is the nearest airport. Gangtok is about

125km from Bagdogra by road. Bagdogra is also connected with Gangtok by daily helicopter service operated by Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation. Nearest railway stations are New Jalpaiguri and Siliguri, 125 km and 114 km from Gangtok by road, respectively. An air service to Gangtok is expected to be operational mid-2017.

According to Sikkim Tourism website (<http://sikkimtourism.gov.in/>), foreigners must obtain Inner Line Permit (ILP) to visit Sikkim. These can be obtained from all Indian missions abroad, Sikkim Tourism Offices in New Delhi, Kolkata, District Magistrates Office of Darjeeling, Siliguri and Rangpo on the strength of an Indian Visa.

The 30-day duration permit is issued on the spot without any delay provided photocopies of the passport and visa along with two passport photos of the applicants are made available. The permissible duration of the stay for foreign tourists is 30 days initially.

Hotels and homestays to suit every budget are available at most places.

While people are friendly and accommodating, it is always recommended to ask for permission before taking photographs inside monasteries and of people.

(The Indian Diaspora)



Sikkim has several hot springs which attract many tourists every year

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, December 25, 2016

On your solar return chart Moon sextile Pluto as handle all that comes your way with dexterity and finesse; this ensures that your image will enhance and so will your reputation. Something exciting can catch your eye and awaken the desire to follow your heart and your head backs your decision so go ahead. Finances will be stable but additional expenses could arise from time to time. People come to you with warmth and affection resulting in strong bonds and emotional ties. You also look to build and improve your approach and attitude and keep an open mind. Romantic relations come to the fore. You remain in a positive frame of mind which helps you attract opportunities. 'This week for you'

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

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

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

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

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You would be most successfully doing tasks that involve cooperation and team harmony. Emotional attachments and relationships are rewarded with reciprocity. Some interesting people are drawn to you and invite you to work with them. Your position of power and authority is maintained despite many changes all around. You can draw correct conclusions from previous knowledge of people you meet again personally when making important decisions. Business projects and associations are opening up and widening your horizons so you need to think expansively from now onwards. A new cycle begins with the old order finishing as inner and outer changes are on the cards. Health problems are resolved and your energy is restored.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

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

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

Your actions and emotions are balanced as you bring more accuracy in your work area. Economy at home and management of business and work are important issues of the week. You connect with new people and discuss important business matters. Financial transactions and professional projects go ahead smoothly with goodwill and profit. Your professional skills, wisdom and craft are appreciated and fresh opportunities for expansion are made available to you. Personal relations are satisfying and you have plenty of affection and friendship around you.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 23)

The unpredictable is likely to happen that too when you least expect it. Surprises are in store for you in professional and personal matters. It would be best to be open and receptive in personal relations and family situations. A flexible approach in the work area is recommended. New people may come into your life and influence your decisions and direction. Creative opportunities should not be ignored as it is likely to bring substantial professional material gain. While you work on one project another suddenly gains more importance and demands more attention. A financial downfall is possible as some dues come to you after a period of time.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

This phase opens up a world of romance and love in personal relations. You are gracious with family and children. You would express yourself in a gracious and exalted manner and influence people in authority. There could be alteration in ideas or plans, increase and decrease in finances and fluctuation in business. You can be lead away by enthusiasm unless careful inner balance is maintained. Marriage, business partnership and collaboration is strengthened through understanding and commitment. You may handle more than one project at the same time with expertise and success.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

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

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You are bold, courageous and frank while dealing with controversial and professional matters. You are likely to meet high profile people and share ideas and spend some time in their association. A stimulating project should be taken as a challenge which would further your business prospects. Your associates and co-workers form a cohesive team with you. A wonderful professional opportunity takes you towards success. Good planning and management lead to progressive and productive ventures. A chance meeting will lead to romance, love and even a long lasting relationship.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

The planetary configuration indicates that there is conflict within and discord outside. You may be divided about business and professional matters and finally come to terms on a compromise which might be the best thing to do at this time. You may disagree on a point of view with your partner but the love between you allows peace and acceptance. Emotions and mood can swing to extremes and it is important to achieve equilibrium. Your social life is expansive and a variety of people connect with you.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

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

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You are generous with friends, and loving in family situations. Your suave ways go down well with many. You stand at crossroads while making an important decision whether it is professional or personal. It would be better to listen to our own good judgment and do what is good for you especially as people around you could be judgmental or manipulative. Do not forget to share your feelings with the one who loves and cares for you. You can get stressed and a health problem could manifest as you worry about everything. You are fortunate as things turn out well in difficult situations at work and home.

“Anybody who succeeds is helping people. The secret to success is find a need and fill it; find a hurt and heal it; find a problem and solve it.”

--- Robert H. Schuller

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 136 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2016

Manipur crisis

ECONOMIC blockades are a part of the way of life in Manipur. The United Naga Council called a blockade over a month ago over the recent creation of new districts which was seen as an attempt to divide the Naga people. As a counter to the blockade, the road to Ukhrul has been blocked to prevent Manipur Nagas from leaving Imphal. Those stranded have taken shelter at Imphal's community centres. On Saturday last week 22 vehicles headed to Ukhrul under police protection were stopped and burnt. The President of the All Naga Students' Association of Manipur has said that the Naga community is under siege. The President of the United Council of Manipur (an apex body of Meitei organisations) claims that it is holding peace meetings to ensure that Naga students can go home. The churches in Imphal have been cautious about ensuring that Christmas services pass off peacefully.

Union minister of state for home Kiren Rijiju has air dashed to Manipur. His visit is a response to the state government's accusation that the Centre was dragging its feet on resolving the impasse with the United Naga Council. Rijiju for his part accused the Congress-led state government of politicising the issue. The state government, he says, cannot escape from responsibility for the prolonged crisis. The Centre is there for the state if it needs assistance. Rijiju is determined to ensure that the blockade is lifted quickly. The Centre is sending military reinforcements and he also promised action if there were violations of the cease fire by the NSCN (IM). We hope that Rijiju and Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh will act in concert to end the suffering of the people.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Punjab violence unabated: Akali Ex-MP among eight killed

In unabated violence terrorists gunned down Istri Akali Dal president and former MP Mrs Rajinder Kaur, daughter of late Mas-ter Tara Singh at Bhatindatoday. Elsewhere in Punjab seven people, including terroristor, were killed and one person was hanged while security forces arrested 10 extremists during the past 24 hours.

Three terrorists at-tacked Mrs Rajinder Kaur as she entered her car after attending a function at a secondary school in Bhatinda. While she was sitting in her car, the terrorists opened fire killing her on the spot. Another person, identified as advocate Baldev Singh Khokhar, who had taken the driver's seat in the car was also killed in the firing. The third person, Pira Singh Nirchhal, sitting in the car, however, escaped unhurt in the shootout. Bhatinda Deputy Com-missioner Mr Darbara Singh Guru and district police chief Mr R S Gill immediately rushed to the scene of the crime. Police have cordoned off the area. Mrs. Rajinder Kaur, edited a Punjab monthly magazine "Sant Sapai." Terrorists hanged to death one Joga Singh after abducting him from his home at Jaurisinghwala village under the Patti police station in Tarn Taran policedistrict (Amritsar) last night. While taking him away, the terrorists fired in the air with Chinese AK-47 assault rifles, five rounds of which were recovered from the spot. In an encounter, security forces shot dead and injured terrorists and in-jured drealed ultra Satnam Singh "Satta", self styled "general" of the Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan" at Bopari village in Majitha police district (Amritsar) last night. The encounter took place when the security forces raided the farm house of one That Singh in the

village where the terrorists alongwith their associates had taken shelter. Six members of Tehal Singh's family were also injured in the encounter and admitted to a hospital in Amritsar. An unidentified body was found at Jaisinghwala village under the Sangat po-lice station in Bhatinda dis-trict last night. The body bore knife injuries.

Dissidence in AGP ranks

Dissidence in ruling political parties is no longer the monopoly of the Congress (I) nor confined particularly to what is usually described as the Hindibelt of India. The contagion has by now spread to the north-east also, countering the off-repeated praise that this region is rather cut-off from the 'mainstream' of national life. Assam Gana Parishad, the ruling non-Congress party in Assam, is out to remove this 'ignominy' and the dissident activity inside its parliamentary wing seems to be heading for a confrontation with the ruling coterie, the revolt no less defiant and determined than what has surfaced at the moment in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. The storm in Assam was brewing for quite some time past and if it has burst only now it has only synchronised with the congealment tempo of defiance now ruling the roost in the Congress ruled States in varying degrees. The path of confrontation in Assam seems to have well been set with the ruling clique represented by the triumvirate of AGP leadership deciding some time ago to go in for a massive reshuffle of the Cabinet the extent of repercussion of which could not perhaps be foreseen even by some among the more important Ministers brought under the axe.

Politics of statues Govt money, nobody's money

By Poonam I Kaushish

Government money is nobody's money. This maxim was ruthlessly underscored once again last week when Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation stone of a 312 ft statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji in the Arabian Sea, just off Mumbai's coast. At a whopping cost of Rs 3,600 crores. Silly me, forgetting that in rajniti, public funds translate in to Apna money, money!

A perfect electoral cake rolled out to the strains of 'Vote For Me' as part of the ongoing political nautanki with election to the cash rich Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation due in February. Alas, why did I think that post demonetization, Modi would usher in a new bahaar of governance?

No matter that farmers' suicide, stark drought, starvation deaths and rank poverty continue to pile up in Maharashtra's backyard. Caring two hoots for public perception or maintaining politesse and decorum Modi plans to "bulldoze" all criticism from affected fishermen, environmental activists, intellectuals and hoi polloi.

Why should he? Think. The politics of statues is foregrounded when elections are around the corner. Call it coincidence but as Modi's Gujarat goes to the poll next year a 182 metres huge statue of Sardar Patel (double the size of the Statue of Liberty in New York) called the Statue of Unity is being constructed at Sadhu Bet, an island 3 kms from the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat. Costing Rs 4,000 crores it is billed to be the tallest sculpture in the world.

Undoubtedly, politicians and Parties use statues to expand their base and political footprints to areas they have very little influence. Cast in stone or metal, they plan to take their icons to every nook and corner of the country, thereby following the well-trodden path of political competitiveness.

Remember Dalit ki beti BSP supreme Mayawati constructed Memorial Mayajal as UP Chief Minister in sprawling parks across the State. Spending a mind-boggling Rs 1200 crores of hard-earned tax-payers money to prop up her own statues and mentor Kanshi Ram. With a few statues of Ambedkar thrown in to give the 15 massive memorials a touch of respectability.

Big deal. Why blame Modi or Mayawati? All others too are no different. It's all about leaving behind a legacy for future generation. Sic. Else who will remember them? Besides, aren't memorials part of the fishes and loaves of office? Look at the huge bronze statues of powerful leaders to eka duka Party chieftains coming out of every nook and corner of Parliament house and its surrounding areas.

State-sponsored memorials are unabashed political projects, and no Party is an exception to this practice. Ironically even as the Congress lambasts the memorial sprees of others they seem to forget and refuse to explain the logic of naming nearly every airport, most Government statutory institutions and cultural

memorials.

What to speak of renaming roads, lanes, mohallas et al sab chalta hai. Either way the fact is that no matter who builds what, all statues and memorials are political spectacles.

True, it can be argued they Parties are obliged to be seen as populist in the no-holds-barred free-for-all electoral race, as it would be stupid to wish away symbolism and political lollipops to entice the electorate. Raising a moot point: Where do they get monies to fund these doles? Obviously, by taxing us, the people.

Clearly, underscoring that what ails India and its burgeoning poor is not poverty, which can be corrected, but the ruthless heartlessness of our netagan who not only lack

thereby pushing more to poverty.

Yet, our narcissist leaders act like modern-day feudal maharajas. Whereby, they expect the aam janata to prostrate before them. Bluntly, the deprived with famished bellies and tattered clothes wait for hours for their mai-baaps and translate into just sterile statistics to keep the vote-bank tillers ringing.

Who will tell them that bhoomi pujans are an invitation to disaster and constructing statues and memorials are neither necessities or vital to enriching the aam admi's life and providing him roti kapada aur makaan. None sees the danger of economic derailment as the biggest loser are the poor, weak and under-privileged in whose name many of these memorials are justified.

Sadly, there is no agency which can stop public funds from being wasted, notwithstanding, expert views expressed by various committees. Thus, given the level of dishonesty, populism and irresponsibility which increasingly governs our political system along-with a leech-infested environment of the uundata takes it all, our carpetbaggers refuse to let up.

Making it imperative for us to have a code of governance and conduct of ethics in place to minimize the Executives' violations of regulations including unjustified misuse of public funds.

Time now, for the Prime Minister to realize that populism will only provide immediate succour at the expense of the future. It is no remedy for neglect of education and health, faulty priorities in industrialization and under-investment in rural areas.

He needs to concentrate on the big picture. Wherein, energies are channelized to address poverty through faster, broad-based growth, supported by well-functioning delivery mechanisms. The effort must be to reduce the number of people in need of handouts.

Modi needs to realize that it the statues and symbolism spree continues people will lose faith in politicians and the system of governance. Public accountability is indispensable in a democratic set-up. A democracy cannot allow exercise of public funds as private spending. What says you? ---- INFA

“Time now, for the Prime Minister to realize that populism will only provide immediate succour at the expense of the future. It is no remedy for neglect of education and health, faulty priorities in industrialization and under-investment in rural areas.”

hubs after the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty? Justifying it as 'honourable collective remembering national' leaders. Sic.

Ditto the BJP which is planning to install a statue or bust of RSS and Jan Sangh leader Deendayal Upadhyay in all 683 districts of the country. A part of his Centenary celebration being coordinated by the Culture Ministry for which Rs 100 crores was allocated in the Union Budget this year.

The DMK too is memorial mania driven. In fact, Tamil Nadu is looked as the badlands of memorials. In 1961, Congress leader Kamaraj built his statue and got Nehru to unveil it. As the Party was waning with the DMK's meteoric rise, it resorted to inscribing the cityscape with memorials as a part of its political propaganda.

When the DMK came to power in 1967, it lined up statues of its own leaders on the same road where Kamaraj had his statue unveiled. This is not all. Houses where Congress leaders lived, including that of Nehru, Shastri and Indira have been converted into

humility but also empathy for the garib. Worse, it exposes their sheer ennu and paucity of ideas along-with accentuating their moral bankruptcy. And a perspective completely divorced from reality.

Notably, sound economic sense has been surrendered to political shenanigans as populist electoral rewards than reasoned issues and sustainable programmes. Also, given the economic logic that there is no such thing as a free lunch, a populist scheme is invariably paid for either in the form of higher taxes or increasing inflation.

Arguably, expanding poverty seems to raise more questions than answers. According to a new study, 75.6% or 828 million people live below the poverty line. A UN report states that nearly 350 million people, roughly 35% of our population is food insecure and hunger stalks every State with over 50% mal-nourished, worse than some sub-Saharan countries. Add to this food prices continue to rise,

Rawat's appointment raises relevant questions

Defence ministry has no credible explanation

By Harihar Swarup

The choice of Lt. General Bipin Rawat as the next army chief has created a flutter in the military establishment. The bypassing of two senior army commanders is a rare occurrence. As several commanders have pointed out, the last time it happened was in 1983 when Indira Gandhi elevated Gen Arun Vaidya over Lt Gen S K Sinha (who promptly resigned). But this was not the only instance. In 1957 Jawaharlal Nehru chose Gen. K S Thimmaya superseding two senior Lt. Generals Sant Singh and Kulwant Singh (the latter stayed on, while the former resigned)

This time around, there is apparently the possibility that

criterion of merit in choosing service chiefs. While superficially correct, this too ignores deeper problems. The promotion of military officer at the lower levels is not objective just because it is decided by service boards. Every officer knows that annual confidential reports can take away from their inherent subjectivity assessment. No amount of quantification can take away from their inherent subjectivity. The idea that there can clearly be benchmark of merit in appointing chiefs, beggars belief. Thoughtful retired officers have suggested something akin to a

“The seniority principle's downsides are evident. Between two senior officers from the same course, for instance, seniority is determined based on their ranking in the military academy decades ago.”

Lt. General Praveen Bakshi may be appointed as chief of defense staff or some equivalent designation. The single-point military advisor to the defence minister. While the outcome may be comforting to the Indian army, it will entail passing over the current navy chief—the senior most chief—for the post.

Whatever the outcome, this episode triggered a much needed discussion on the selection of service chiefs. The seniority principle's downsides are evident. Between two senior officers from the same course, for instance, seniority is determined based on their ranking in the military academy decades ago. Few will dispute the fact that this has any relevance to their performance at the apex of the military system but the principle remains in place. The case for adherence to seniority has been made on three grounds.

First, the seniority is held to be best guarantee against politicization of top appointments. Do we want military to go the way of police where promotion depends on political favour? This is a strong argument but the comparison is flawed and misleading. It overlooks the fact that the police's nature and function in politics is very different from the army.

The concern about politicalisation also overlooks the importance of issue of effectiveness. The institutional design of civil-military relations always entails a trade off between democratic control and effectiveness. In privileging the former by emphasizing seniority, we have long overlooked the demand for military efficacy. Even the staunchest advocates of the seniority principle would be hard pressed to deny that it periodically gives us mediocrity at the top. In fact the case would be strengthened if they conceded the importance of efficacy, but pointed out that overlooking seniority does not guarantee better outcome either. The choice of Thimmaya resulted in the most serious standoff between an army chief and the government when the former publicly resigned only to retract soon after. Under Vaidya, the army undertook the most controversial military operation since independence; Operation Blue star.

The second argument in case of seniority is the absence of any objection

collegian system for selection of chiefs. While such system may ensure broader consensus, it will also impinge on the prerogative of the executive.

The third, and strongest case of seniority is the fact that our political leadership does not interact enough with senior military commanders to be able to make an informed call. This stems from the longstanding practice of political leadership steering clear of operational matters. Obviously, the flip side is also true. Few of our officers have any exposure to policy making. Unless the problem is remedied from both ends, top military appointment especially if a CDS is instituted—will remain controversial.

The current episode also raises the question of what kind of operational experience is relevant to service chiefs. The Line of Control with Pakistan may be hot now but why do we have the commanders and the Northern Army commanders if the chief's personal experience is supposed to count so much? What about his relative lack of experience, say, in machined formations in the plains. The army chief is the chief of the army staff. His primary role ought to be as chief of staff rather than operational commander. The point will acquire greater importance as we move toward a CDS structure.

The privileging of particular kinds of operational experience is problematic for two further reasons. It may give us service chiefs who are equipped to fight the last war rather than the next one. It also vitiates the idea of general cadre in senior ranks. Already the post of army chief is effectively closed off to officers who are not from fighting arms. Introducing an infantry versus armoured corps dimension would be unfortunate—especially in the context of recent litigation about vacancies for officers from various branches.

The choice of service chief is a matter of political judgment. It involves multiple trade-offs and considerations that cannot be wished away by sticking to seniority or hanker after criteria of merit. But with all political judgments, it will be open to public scrutiny. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Turkey's descent to terror

Editor,

With respect to the recent terror strikes in Ankara, assassination of the Russian ambassador and attacks on the American embassy, the world would like to know what President Erdogan has to say now. Turkey; a nation extremely proactive in poking her bruised nose into the internal matters of other countries like Bangladesh and India, forgetting diplomatic norms needs to pay more attention to her deplorable records on human rights violation and for successfully making the nation a hot bed of radicalism and devastating terror activities. A nation that cannot provide security to her own people and has a questionable track record on severe

violations of human rights should not be advising others before fixing her own messy and bloody internal affairs. Turkey's aspiration of becoming the leader of the Islamic world has encountered a huge wall of obstruction as well as her aspirations for becoming an EU member has been jeopardized due to serious human rights violation and failure to prevent repeated terror activities on its own soil and causing death of innocent citizens and now even foreign envoys. It is a matter of great shame, that a great legacy established by a global leader like Kamal Ataturk is being slowly destroyed under the dictatorial leadership of President Erdogan. Time for serious introspection for a nation that has the habit of interfering in the internal affairs of other sovereign countries! ?

Yours etc.,
Saikat Basu,
Lethbridge AB Canada
TIJ4B3

Unequal growth

Editor,

It is horrifying that rich India is climbing the ladder of inequality leaving poor Bharat far behind. Inequality is measured in Gini index where higher index value indicates greater inequality. India has got the dubious distinction of getting very high marks in widespread inequality. The recent report of International Monetary Fund (IMF) has showed how inequality is rapidly growing in India from 45.18 in 1990 to 51.36 in 2013 which is worse than Latin America's 43.69. This India - Bharat divide has also come out in two recent international reports. While in the New World Wealth Report, India is ranked 7th in the list of top wealthiest countries in the world, the World Bank's Report, 'Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016' shows that

close to 30 per cent of the world's poor live in our country. Our growth shows a sign of malignancy as the richest 10 per cent of our population has whopping 76.3 per cent of nation's wealth. On the other hand more than half of our population is reeling with a meagre 4.1 per cent. This glaring inequality must immediately be bridged by inclusive growth, developing social sectors, adopting labour intensive technology and ensuring social security for the needy. Otherwise, such barbaric inequality will force us to live in a dog-eat-dog environment where equality and fraternity remain a distant dream.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

“ But grief makes a monster out of us sometimes and sometimes you say and do things to the people you love that you can't forgive yourself for. ”

--- Melina Marchetta

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 137 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2016

Democracy and dissent

DEMOCRACY gives to its citizens enough space to protest against certain state actions which are seen as arbitrary or unjust. Citizens take to protests because they perceive that other modes of engagement with the ruling government have failed because the government is biased in favour of one group or the other. Most often the groups that perceive themselves as marginalised or excluded turn to direct action to pursue their causes. The case of Manipur, for instance, is seen as a perpetual war between the dominant groups in the valley (dominant because of their ability to influence governments by virtue of their larger population and therefore having more elected members in the state legislature and in government) and the minority Nagas and Kuki-Chin groups who also are indigenous residents of Manipur state. Manipur's geography and politics is impartial to the Imphal valley which is hemmed in by the hills. Imphal valley where the Meiteis numbering nearly 60% of the population reside, is connected to the lifeline bringing goods to Manipur through National Highway 39 (Now Asian Highway 2) which connects Nagaland to Manipur and the National Highway 37 through Jiribam which connects Manipur to Assam and Meghalaya. For years now the Nagas of Manipur have raised their protests by blocking these two lifelines. This time the United Naga Council (UNC) called an economic blockade from November 1 to register their protest against the creation of 7 districts which cut through ethnic homelands.

This coupled with the demonetisation announced by Prime Minister Modi on November 8 has paralysed all economic activities in the Imphal valley. The worst hit from this 58 day strike are hospital services which need to get their quota of life saving drugs and equipments. Ironically patients from the hills which include Nagas and other tribes who need to travel outside Manipur are equally hit by the economic blockade. Prices of essential commodities have skyrocketed but the UNC is unrelenting despite appeals from various groups on humanitarian grounds. The Nagas and other hills tribes have no faith in the state government. Their appeal has always been to the Centre to be the arbiter in whatever complaints they have against the state government. But law and order is a state subject and the Union Home Ministry is right in pointing out that other than providing additional forces to break the economic blockade it cannot directly intervene in matters which must be dealt with by the state. Meanwhile the impasse continues to jeopardise the lives of common people.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

18 killed in orgy of violence in Punjab

An indefinite curfew was clamped on the walled city of Amritsar today after a dozen of terrorist violence claimed eighteen lives in Punjab. One terrorist was also killed in an encounter with security forces near Haipur village in Jalandhar district this morning. All but four of the killing took place in Amritsar district where a dozen terrorists raided a house in Jagdev Kalana village and shot dead all twelve members a family. The villagers came to know of the killings only this morning. Indefinite curfew was clamped on the entire walled city of Amritsar and Durgiana Mandir area this afternoon in view of tension, official sources said. These sources said a funeral procession turned violent and stoned a police party accompanying it. The procession was in connection with the funeral of a man who was shot down by terrorists yesterday near Dubarji on the Amritsar

The need for electoral reforms has come into sharp focus yet again. The demonetisation scheme to curb black money and corruption has put the pressure on the Government to seriously contemplate bringing about certain reforms. It is a well known fact that electoral funding remains one of the major sources of corruption in India. Crores of rupees are spent in elections and a large chunk of it is not white money. It is also an acknowledged fact that corporate houses fund political parties for a quid pro quo.

Add to this the fact that most political parties do not file audited accounts. Even the biggest ones, the Congress and the BJP, have not filed accounts before the Election Commission for the year ended March 31, 2016. The Congress has, in fact, been reluctant to furnish audited accounts and has several times written to the EC, questioning its jurisdiction in implementing such transparency measures. It may be interesting to know that these parties have huge cash in hand and in bank amounting to Rs 653 crores (BJP) and Rs 601 crores (Congress), as on March 2016.

Even regional parties such as the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party have Rs 583 crores and Rs 514 crores respectively. The most astonishing fact is that the BSP collected all the funds from 'unknown donors', mostly in cash while the SP received majority of its donations in cash and from people whose name do not find mention, possibly because the sum did not exceed Rs 20,000. The BSP reportedly stated recently that being a party of Dalits, big donations do

Electoral Reforms

Enough of lip service

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

not come to the party. But this is indeed difficult to believe?

The CPI (M) has also a large bank balance of Rs 286 crores. According to the expenditure statement submitted by the party to the EC on July 3, its gross receipts during the Assemblies elections in West Bengal and Kerala (March to May 2016) were Rs 60 crores – almost 57 per cent of this or Rs 34 crores was collected in cash.

It is quite obvious that political parties have something to hide as they show more than 60 to 70 per cent of their total income coming from unknown donors. In a country like India where poverty is rampant along with corruption and black money, it is surprising how the EC has allowed donations from anonymous donors.

The debate has taken a fresh turn as while the Government initially announced that those depositing Rs 5000 have to furnish the source of their money, the political parties which collect crores from anonymous sources do not have to furnish any documents. But just a day later the RBI withdrew this order as there was great resentment among the public. It was pointed out that that aam janta is accountable while political parties are free to get black money from business houses. In fact, the lifestyles of political leaders, even at the ward and panchayat levels, suggest a relatively high standard perhaps due to getting huge amount of cash they manage to extract from even small businessmen.

Recently, the EC stated that receiving anonymous donations may be reduced from Rs 20,000 to Rs 2000. The proposal, if accepted by the Government, will

reduce the size of the window available to political parties to accept donations without having to reveal the donor and improve transparency in political funding.

Among other changes the EC proposes to clean up the political system, is that it wants only those parties that contest and win seats in parliamentary and Assembly elections be given income tax exemption. The poll panel wants the Government to make these changes by amending the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Even Finance Minister Jaitley stated recently that sham political parties, which are registered with the EC but hardly contest elections, would not get tax benefits which they have been enjoying till date. According to him, “there are 40-60 political parties which effectively contest elections in the Centre and the States, (but) you have a large number of political parties which got registration not for contesting elections but for availing tax exemption”. Meanwhile, reports indicate that 200 political parties have already been de-listed. If the present Government takes a bold stand, it would be a pioneering venture.

One may mention here that over the years, the Election Commission has conducted a number of laudable electoral reforms to strengthen democracy and enhance the fairness of elections. Undoubtedly, the election machinery, under the aegis of the EC, deserves credit for conducting elections more or less in a free and fair manner. However, our system is still plagued by many vices. To win votes, political parties resort to foul methods and corrupt

practices.

Such maladies encourage anti-social elements to enter the electoral fray. The problem is not lack of laws, but lack of their strict implementation. In order to stamp out these unfair tendencies, there is a need to strengthen the hands of the EC and to give it more legal and institutional powers. The Commission must be entrusted with powers to punish the errant politicians who transgress and violate the electoral laws.

The need for further electoral reforms is, no doubt, imperative if the Government is serious of tackling black money and corruption. It is a well-known fact that the political system itself is highly corrupt and big and medium-level political leaders are themselves involved in various types of corrupt practices. Thus, unless there is political will at the highest level, even the changes proposed by the EC may not help in eradicating black money and remain on paper.

The cosmetic changes thus being envisaged cannot totally be dismissed. These could be a stepping stone towards checking the larger issue of curbing black money and making political parties more transparent. Though the Opposition has been critical of the Government's initiatives in this regard, the intentions cannot be doubted and also the fact after many years, action, even if small, has been taken.

The sincerity of both the bureaucracy and political leadership is critical to take this initiative forward. The 'ease of doing business' in the country must become a reality. It calls for a change in mindset, transparency in both decision-making and action and last but not the least certain electoral reforms. ---INFA

What it takes to stop corruption

By Barnes Mawrie

Demonetization according to PM Modi was aimed at tackling corruption, especially by crippling black money. Definitely, corruption is a major problem and perhaps the worst evil in our socio-economic life. Getting rid of corruption is a welcome move from any sector of society. The outcome of demonetization as seen in these last 50 days, has not been very encouraging. In fact it has been a dampening experience for the citizens of India. First of all, untold misery and suffering has been brought upon the public especially the poor section who live in rural areas. So many innocent persons have died in the process. Secondly, demonetization as seen today has not put a stop to black money culture. Corrupt

terminology as “character formation”, then it is the right medicine for corruption. However, looking at education in India today, one is left with a great premonition of a national disaster for the condition is not ideal. Education in our country today is not about value or character, instead it has degenerated into a commercially pragmatic system where degrees are sought after. The cut-throat competition seen in schools and colleges reveals the presence of an unhealthy system. The manner in which a person's worth is measured by the score he or she secures, is another fault line in our education. Our education

“ Fighting corruption in India, is to be done in a holistic manner and that is through correction of attitude which education alone can do. Education to honesty, sincerity and transparency must be done in the families and in schools and colleges. In my opinion, the swach bharat movement is doomed to fail miserably as long as our citizens are not educated to a sense of cleanliness. ”

persons are outsmarting the Government and they have discovered ways to evade the law and go on with their malpractice. It is true that the media presents us with a few reports of cash raids done by the IT Department. But let us not be fooled by what is being presented for what has been discovered is only a tip of the iceberg. Even with the new currencies there are still large hoardings of black money. So the conclusion is that, the rich and corrupt people still have a lot of cash, while the poor people are left cashless and in danger of survival. What is more pitiable is the fact that the innocent millions of Indians who have earned through the sweat of their brow, have been transformed into culprits overnight because their white money has been forcefully transformed into black money by this process of demonetization.

Now if we talk about stopping corruption, no amount of legal measures or economic steps taken can really root it out. The current demonetization measure has clearly proven this fact. Corruption has more to do with attitude than mere mechanical acts. It is a state of the mind, a behaviour that has been acquired and become a way of life. You do not expect a corrupt person to stop being corrupt and live an honest life just because you introduce demonetization or an anti-corruption law. For example, you do not expect a thief to stop stealing just because you enact a law or enforce a punishment against theft. This sort of reasoning is too simplistic and cannot be subscribed to. This is exactly what the Government is doing now, trying to root out corruption by mere introduction of legal measures. Instead we should be aware that corruption because it is an attitude more than a mechanical act, is to be corrected by character formation. It is here that education plays a vital role. If education is understood in its true meaning, as inculcation of values (human, moral and spiritual), if it is understood in Dewey's

appears to be more knowledge-oriented than value-oriented. Knowledge is always good but knowledge without value is a dangerous tool in the hand of a person, just like fire in the hands of a child. Knowledge must be tempered by character. It is being channelized into something constructive for society.

Fighting corruption in India, is to be done in a holistic manner and that is through correction of attitude which education alone can do. Education to honesty, sincerity and transparency must be done in the families and in schools and colleges. In my opinion, the swach bharat movement is doomed to fail miserably as long as our citizens are not educated to a sense of cleanliness. An example of this is easy to give: every morning the municipal people come to clean our streets, but by evening they are as dirty as ever. Why does this happen? It is because people have not acquired a sense of cleanliness. It is the same with fighting corruption. The Government may introduce rules and laws against corruption but be sure corrupt people will always find a way to circumvent these legal measures. Instead, let us educate our young generation with value of honesty and transparency and then corruption will have been dealt at its root. Unfortunately, the BJP Government today is trying to suffocate education (as clearly seen in the new Education Policy). This is an attempt to suffocate the very spirit of education itself. Education should not be polarized on religious issues but it should be purely knowledge-based and value-oriented. I do hope that the Government will give more attention to improving our education because it is the only valid and effective long-term strategy to foster the right attitude in our citizens and to root out corruption from our land.

TO THE EDITOR

DeMo the Grinch that stole Christmas from Garo Hills

Editor,

The insinuation under the above headlines in your esteemed daily (ST Dec 23, 2016) makes interesting reading. It casts PM Modi himself in the character of the Grinch (a fictional character that takes away the joy of Christmas). The Prime Minister took the drastic step to fulfil his slogan of ‘sab ka sath, sab ka vikas’ meant to bring the poor and the rich alike on equal footing. But here again the rich and the powerful manipulated the chaotic situation to their advantage and the duo, that is the bankers and the rich and powerful played the part of Grinch. National television channels have shown more than 30 bank officials including two RBI officials four postal employees of the Govt. of India were sacked and arrested the latest list includes the VIP from TN i.e. Chief Secretary and some more officials are reportedly

under the lens of the ED and the IT. More than 500 banks are under the scanner. More than 70K black money hoarders are being zeroed in. PM Modi is nobody's fool and with GPS tracking system in place it is easy to catch the Grinch wherever they are hiding and stocking “the pink paper”. The Grinch who stole the bundles of

pink currency meant for the common man were some crooked HDFC sales managers, etc etc

So far SBI (Tura) branches has a clean slate and cash crunch was because the money seemed to have been siphoned off elsewhere before it even entered or reached Tura or Baghmara. The Grinch tried to achieve 2(two) fold agenda (1) to tarnish the image of the sitting PM but the result of recent civic polls sweep tells quite a different story to make hay while the sun shines at the cost of common man, and they almost succeeded in their efforts but for the sharp-shooter system. The present PM is a globe-trotter who learnt and also taught many things to the Indian diaspora outside of India. He also learnt from Israelites the Mossad -type strike. To all he may appear to be simple but appearances can be deceptive. He is smart and with high IQ rate he could persuade the global community to adopt “yoga” and observe it on June 21 every year. Out of 210 big global countries 192 countries accepted his diktat. None of my business to poke my nose in but would it not be beneficial for the local BJP bigwigs do their home work to educate the common people of the reasons for such cash crunch throughout India? We know why but it is the rural common folk in Garo hills are used to be fed with all kinds of junk. Those responsible for cash chaos are the banks having quid pro quo with certain rich and powerful people. Only few days ago two people were caught on Dalu-Purakhasia road at

Nokchi with Rs 2000 new notes amounting to Rs 29.73 lakhs. Where did they get so much “pink papers” if it was not being facilitated through back door banking system? This is exactly what angers the common people! I don't personally support mob frenzy against the good banks anywhere who are also sometimes incidental victims like those in the queue. Looks like this is the time when people call ‘good’ the evil and the ‘evil’ good.

Yours etc.,
Sonaram M Sangma,
Tura.

Conditions to improve creative writing

Editor,

On December 18, the Khasis remember the death of U Soso Tham. Among Khasi poets, U Soso Tham stands unrivaled and unmatched. Considering the lack of quality in today's Khasi poems, Mr Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih had rightly remarked that Khasi poets need to read extensively and intensively. Furthermore, one may say that in order to improve poetic contributions, ‘creative writing’ must indeed be part of the curriculum in colleges and universities to help sharpen the skills and perhaps chisel out the rough edges that might hinder the perfection of the same. There is much potential in this generation to produce quality poetry but being unguided, the prospective poets would only end up producing mere doggerels. It would perhaps be an added advantage if in creative writing classes,

students are guided by teachers who have some literary work to their names. There, moreover, needs to be numerous platforms in which emerging poets and writers can showcase their works. Your reputed daily would do good to come up with a magazine or anything of the sort in which to publish creative works. The special Sunday edition is a commendable step towards the same.

Yours etc.,
Mebaaiahun Blah,
Shillong - 6

Timely article

Editor,

This is in response to Poonam I Kaushish's timely article, “Govt money, nobody's money” (ST, December 27). Indeed, voters are regarded as if they are tenants in our democracy. As a result, our due is considered as freebies in spite of the fact that it is we who send politicians to the House of the People. Such mindset is dangerous for democracy. We need to understand that in a democracy, MPs and MLAs are not zamindars. They are our representatives and therefore our clients. Like the consumers, we should have similar rights and protections if our political representatives fail us and spend Govt money without considering our urgent need.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

*"We all want to break our orbits,
float like a satellite gone wild in
space, run the risk of disintegration.
We all want to take our lives in our
own hands and hurl them out
among the stars."*

--- David Bottoms

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 138 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2016

Safety in the air

IT is shocking that two air accidents occurred on the same day recently. One was when a Mumbai-bound Jet Airways flight with 154 passengers skidded off at Goa airport. The other was when a major mishap was averted at Delhi airport as an Indigo and a SpiceJet aircraft collided on the same runway. These two incidents took place shortly after there was a near miss early this month as a Jet Airways flight and an Alliance Air ATR craft nearly crashed into each other at Nagpur. The number of such close shaves has been steadily growing since 2011. The rise has been calamitous – 78% – between January and May this year over the corresponding period last year. India's air safety infrastructure appears to be in a shocking state. Air Traffic Control (ATC) is extremely short staffed. In fact, the staff strength is only a quarter of the sanctioned staff strength. India's aviation sector is said to be booming and so all these facts are extremely deplorable.

It is suggested that ATC should be separated from the bureaucratic Airport Authority of India (AAI). ATC will then be free from the shackles of officialdom. An efficient, professional body of air controllers is urgently wanted. They have to under great stress and require high skills. Consequently they need to be adequately compensated financially. Prime Minister Narendra Modi says that he is keen on taking tough decisions to bring about reforms. Making ATC an independent department should not be a tough decision. It is imperative that disasters in the air should be averted and air safety should be given due attention. It is especially necessary because railway accidents are becoming very frequent.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

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

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

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

The Union Government is reported to have decided to set up a single statutory permanent tribunal to adjudicate all inter-State river water disputes. A bill is to be introduced in Parliament. This is a major decision coming in the context of protracted disputes and long-standing court cases in various parts of the country involving almost all major rivers and many States. The main intention is said to be to speed up the process of settlement.

There is also a proposal to float some Benches to look into disputes as and when these arise for which the Inter-State Water Disputes Act 1956 is to be amended. They will be temporary and will be dissolved after settlement is reached.

Presently, there are eight tribunals functioning to resolve disputes over sharing water of eight rivers. Some of these are over 50 years old. Three of them were set up in 1969 to deal with disputes over Godavari, Krishna, and Narmada. Ravi & Bias Tribunal was constituted in 1986, Cauvery Water Tribunal in 1990, and Second Krishna Water Tribunal in 2004, Vasandhara Water Tribunal and Mahadayi Water Tribunal in 2010.

The proposed permanent tribunal is to be headed by a retired Supreme Court judge. The move will not make adjudication a purely legal issue. For, provision for setting up Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) comprising experts and policy makers will be included for investigation and examination of disputes before they are sent to the Tribunal.

Water disputes do not fall under Article 131 of the Constitution which gives original jurisdiction to the Supreme Court in disputes between the Union Government and one or more States, or between Central and one or more States on one side and one or more States on the other. These can only be adjudicated by temporary and ad hoc inter-State tribunals under Article 262 of the Constitution.

When the

Permanent water tribunal

Speedy resolution of disputes

By S Saraswathi

Constitution was framed, there was a vain hope that tribunals would help deliberate and ensure speedy decision-making in cordial atmosphere despite Ambedkar's warning about possibilities of "very many" disputes.

This Article gives power to Parliament to provide "by law for adjudication of any dispute or complaint with respect to the use, distribution or control of the waters of, or in any inter-State river or river valley". These tribunals stand on a different footing and hence have to be dealt with differently.

However, in actual experience in India, decisions of tribunals are not always accepted by the parties, and in recent cases, even the Supreme Court verdict is rejected at times. Creation of a single body to resolve disputes was mooted in 2011 when the UPA was in power. The National Water Policy 2012 also proposed setting up of a permanent tribunal to replace multiple water tribunals working in the country. Its revival now shows the non-political nature of the idea justifying serious consideration and approval.

Unification of water tribunals seems necessary as river water is a national resource to be shared by all States. As the nation is considering projects like linking rivers, creating canals, purifying river water, and constructing dams involving displacement and resettlement of large population which concern the entire population of the country in some way, there is reason to deal with disputes nationally and not as problems restricted to concerned riparian States.

This is a broader view beyond the immediate object of achieving speedy settlement of on-going disputes. Incidentally, in some disputes, concerned and interested parties increase in course of time, and in some cases, considerations other than sharing water are involved. The Polavaram Dam in Andhra Pradesh (Indirasagar) has led to a dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over submerging their areas. The Mullaperiyar Dam

caused dispute between Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the main contention is the safety of the dam – a question of national importance.

In federal constitutions, there are three types of resolving inter-State disputes – entering into inter-State pacts, accepting court decisions, and giving paramount power to the federal government to resolve claims. A rare case of cooperation was recently presented by Telangana and Maharashtra States signing a pact for construction of major irrigation projects on the Godavari and its tributaries thus ending decades' old dispute.

On the other hand, unilateral repudiation of inter-State agreement on Sutlej-Yamuna Link Canal by the Punjab Assembly in March 2016 against the order of the Supreme Court to maintain status quo is nothing short of a challenge to the judiciary. Tamil Nadu and Karnataka present a typical model of the highest level of non-cooperation in sharing the Cauvery river water.

In the US, where water disputes are not unknown, the Supreme Court is in favour of settlement by non-judicial forums, and has not adopted the Harmon Doctrine produced in the dispute with Mexico, i.e. the principle of territorial sovereignty in the allocation of river water. There is large scope for power for the US Congress. The most favoured doctrine is "equitable apportionment" and "equitable utilisation". Evidently, the common law theory of riparian rights cannot be mechanically applied in federal system.

On the other hand, in Australia, the High Court is the forum to resolve disputes. But, in practice, agreements between States and between State(s) and the Commonwealth are common. There is no provision in the Constitution of Canada regarding water disputes. The concerned States have to enact a legislation to take the matter to the Supreme Court. In Switzerland, water disputes between cantons

are decided by the Federal Council (Bundesrat).

Water disputes in India often lead to violence and disorder and expose our inability to foresee problems and our failure to cultivate national spirit in the manner we have promoted linguistic affinities, sub-regional sentiments, and caste attachments. A permanent and reliable mechanism for settling competitive demands in an impartial manner has become an urgent need.

Unlike courts which follow prescribed legal procedure, tribunals can follow principles of "natural justice" and avoid inordinate procedural delay and detailed legal obligations. Water disputes invariably involve humanitarian problems and livelihood issues and cannot be tackled leisurely like civil suits.

Still, tribunal awards cannot be held as final and irrevocable since the Supreme Court, which has no original jurisdiction in this, can claim that it may 'in its discretion, grant special leave to appeal from any judgement, decree, determination, sentence, or order in any case, or matter passed or made by any court or tribunal in the territory of India'.

Whether the aim of expediting disposal of cases will be fulfilled within the 3-year period proposed is doubtful. The number of on-going disputes is too many and quite complicated to be handled by a single tribunal and existing tribunals have not been effective so far in resolving disputes. Adjudication is also a long-drawn and expensive process, and cannot forestall recurrence of problems.

Laxity in implementing the awards, politicisation of disputes like interference of parties, which are essential part of State politics cannot be stopped and may continue to weaken the tribunals – whether centralised or plural. Tribunals may not be "barriers" to delivering justice, but the clients have to seek justice for all the parties to the dispute. --INFA

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

Revisiting Skill Development from the Capabilities approach

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

The contest of economic ideologies over growth versus human development has made its appearance again in the government's plight towards Skill India. According to the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015, India is one of the youngest nations in the world with more than 62% of its population in the working age group (15-59 years), and more than 54% of its population below 25 years of age. This has

While industry is creating jobs, many are low productivity non-contractual jobs in the unorganized sector, offering low incomes, little protection, and no benefits (from the Union Budget 2012-13). Thomas (2012) adds that the sharp variations in manufacturing employment during the 2000s are also a consequence of the

Beating the Rhetoric

opened the 'window of opportunity' in the form of a demographic dividend, which we shall reap by skill development. The Government of India defines Skill Development as "any domain specific demand led skill training activity leading to employment or any outcome oriented activity that enables a participant to acquire a Skill, duly assessed and certified by an independent third party agency, and which enables him/her to get wage/self employment leading to increased earnings, and/or

growing share of temporary and contract workers – who could be hired and fired easily. Jha (2009) opines that the emergence of neo-liberal ethos has "severely dented the prospects of provisioning for basic services, which has, in turn, made many of our well-meaning policies relatively ineffective".

The demographic dividend in itself is not a guarantor of growth. To quote Bloom and Canning (2004), "both empirically and theoretically there is nothing automatic about the link from demographic

"While industry is creating jobs, many are low productivity non-contractual jobs in the unorganized sector, offering low incomes, little protection, and no benefits (from the Union Budget 2012-13). Thomas (2012) adds that the sharp variations in manufacturing employment during the 2000s are also a consequence of the growing share of temporary and contract workers – who could be hired and fired easily. Jha (2009) opines that the emergence of neo-liberal ethos has "severely dented the prospects of provisioning for basic services, which has, in turn, made many of our well-meaning policies relatively ineffective".

improved working conditions, such as getting formal certification for hitherto informal skills, and/or moving from informal to formal sector jobs or pursue higher education/training". The ambit and focus is multifold with the ultimate objective being laid on employment.

There have been arguments in support of job creation as the tool to resolve the debate on growth versus development. But the story of a "jobless growth" as revealed by various NSSO rounds is another story altogether. The fate of those who have been trained under the existing skill development schemes also remains grim. To give some examples, around 6 million students have been trained under five government schemes alone (lasting from 6 days up to 6 months), and more than US\$500 million have been spent on those schemes since 2011. Yet, the placement rate of trainees under these schemes is only 27%. The NSDC, the nodal agency for promoting and funding skilling programmes, has been able to place only about 5 per cent of the students trained under the PMKVY scheme, the government's flagship programme on skill development (source: NSDC). The number of apprentices in India is dismally low with around 212,000 trainees who are annually enrolled through the government sponsored Apprenticeship Training Scheme (ATS) in 28,500 establishments, representing only about 0.05% of India's workforce (source: DGT, 2015).

change to economic growth. Age distribution changes merely create the potential for economic growth. Whether or not this potential is captured depends on the policy environment." If a population bulge in the working age group is to accelerate growth, Chandrasekhar et al (2006) note that the processes of development which in part created this bulge must ensure that the quality of those entering the workforce is of the desired level and that these workers find employment as and when they enter the labour force.

It is perhaps the best time to revisit skill development from Sen's capabilities approach as an investment on people's capabilities as "real opportunities to do and be what they have reason to value". Skill development is an enabler to better livelihood opportunities that can bridge the social, regional, economic and gender divide. A negative social perception, an unsure progression path, lack of job security, and the trials of a dynamic labour market make skilling a challenge and a responsibility. Skill development should therefore be a continuing process of developing human capabilities that builds within the early age of an individual and leads to pathways to better jobs and lifelong learning which the industry and society at large 'have reasons to value'. (Views expressed by the author are personal)

TO THE EDITOR

Give us back our footpaths.

Editor,
The current impasse and agitation of the hawkers of Shillong has left many of the city's citizens bemused and really perplexed. TUR has spearheaded the rights of hawkers as a fight against poverty; turned it into a fight on atrocities against women; portrayed it as a people's resistance against state atrocities; claimed it as a movement against private cars cluttering Shillong roads (no matter that most of the TUR members own more than one car each) and now mysteriously it has transformed into "a peoples master plan for Shillong city"! In reality it is an agitation with no finite objective except to give maximum media coverage to its instigators. A ridiculous agitation by 300 odd illegal encroachers of public space (it has now blown up to a 1000 and likely to increase) led by individuals who think

they hold all the answers of humanity. Presented as a fight to transform our beloved peaceful city into a Socialist nightmare for a set-piece class struggle. What a farce!

If TUR champions the poor then a question arises – are illegal occupiers of pavement space the only poverty ridden people of this state? What about the homeless, single working mothers, daily wage earners, those without clothes; without food; without land; without dignity; without hope? Why focus only on hawkers whose only contribution to society is to illegally occupy footpaths; force genuine pedestrians into the danger of speeding vehicles and who simply contribute to the general confusion of urban living? Why can't there be thinking and agitations on behalf of other poor people as well? Poverty cannot be defined only as a lack of money. It is basically the inability to access common amenities that all of us take for granted. Not being allowed to sell your wares on public footpaths is not the only cause of poverty. Neither is this reason enough to raise

mayhem that can easily lead to a breakdown of law and order in the city. A struggle against poverty cannot be won by self righteous leftists through emotional agitations against the state or the establishment. That is a Marxist concept that has failed the world over. Why try to repeat it in our Khasi Hills.

The time has come for the general public of Shillong to realise that Shillong is their city; it needs to be maintained for the general interest of all and is not the sole property of hawkers alone. The High Court has ruled in favour of the public. It has directed the district administration to uphold the status quo where hawkers are to stay away from public places until alternate respite is provided. Why is this being deliberately flouted? Why is a blind eye being turned on those who openly encourage scorn and disrespect to the directions and instructions of the honourable high court? The Rangbah Shnongs need to think over what's happening to their city. Will they allow Shillong to go to the dogs? Social

organisations need to stand up for the well-being of the public. Mothers have to express concern over the safety of their children walking their way to school. How can we allow vested interests to snatch away our rights to walk the city footpaths? How can 4 or 5 people alone, however shrill their voices maybe, be allowed to decide on our behalf? How can these self appointed saviours of the poor condemn all of us to the chaos of a lawless and free for all Shillong. Time to make our voices heard. People of Shillong raise your voices!

Yours etc.,
Markysai Nongrum
Shillong – 14

In gratitude!

Editor,
Now, it is time to say goodbye to 2016. It's a long list if I start enumerating the names of those who I would like to express my gratitude for showering sunshine on the path of my journey in 2016. Prof. X. P. Mao is certainly one of them. I feel joy and happiness in

saying, "Thank you" to him for giving voice in the Shillong Times to the demand to stop giving awards in the name of cruel teacher Dronacharya. But why do I feel joy in my being grateful? We can find the answer in the words of the Mother (Mirra Alfassa), ~ "There is nothing which gives you a joy equal to that of gratitude. One hears a bird sing, sees a lovely flower, looks at a little child, observes an act of generosity, reads a beautiful sentence, looks at the setting sun, no matter what, suddenly this comes upon you, this kind of emotion – indeed so deep, so intense – that the world manifests the Divine, that there is something behind the world which is the Divine."

Indeed, the very utterance of the words "Thank you" enables us to have yoga with the Divine. Since we are emphasizing on "you" in "Thank you", we find an opportunity to have a deep breath outside the confined room called "ego" for a short while though. In one of his immortal songs, Tagore

said, ~ "Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love, O beloved of my heart ~ this golden light that dances upon the leaves, these idle clouds sailing across the sky, this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead." We see how the gratitude of the poet is broadcasting a vibration of a sublime joy. Indeed, gratitude takes us out of our ego to feel the magic of oneness. As the Mother had said, "Physically, materially, upon earth, it is in gratitude that one finds the source of the purest delight." Let us take a pledge for a Happy New Year 2017 that we must uphold the dignity of labour and express our gratitude without any prejudice of caste, class, race, religion, gender or generation.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

"The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of those depths."

--- Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 139 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2016

Syrian ceasefire

IT is reported that Turkish and Russian officials are discussing the contours of a ceasefire for Syria. The talks are built on cooperation between the two countries following a deal they brokered for the evacuation of opposition fighters from the northern city of Aleppo earlier this month. But rebels have spoken up in the past against proposals that would allow the government to continue its offensives around the outskirts of Damascus, the capital of Syria. A Syrian opposition official has said that different factions were having vigorous discussions over the possibilities of a ceasefire. According to him, it was difficult to accept or refuse the matter before the details are known. It is said that a plan would be presented to all sides of the Syrian conflict. The ceasefire should come into force in all regions where fighting is going on between government forces and opposition groups. Terror organizations which will include the IS would be kept out of any ceasefire agreement under discussion.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman confirmed that Russia and Turkey were in constant contact to prepare for planned Syria peace talks in Kazakhstan. In the UN, a top Russian diplomat said that a draft UN Security Council resolution that intended to impose sanctions on Syria for use of chemical weapons was unacceptable to Moscow which would veto it. The resolution has been drafted by Britain and France. What is however clear is that a transition towards peace in Syria is impossible unless the proposal involves President Bashar al-Assad. A peace in war-scarred Syria is of course only to be awaited.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

PM reiterates resolve to stamp out terrorism

Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi today reiterated his government's commitment to stamp out terrorism in Punjab. The government would take more effective measures to check the activities on extremists, he said addressing a massive public meeting here. He categorically stated that any solution to the Punjab problem would have to be within the parameters of the constitution. Meanwhile, two dreaded terrorists belonging to the "Kahlistan Liberation Force" (KLF) were gunned down in Ferozepur district this evening. Elsewhere in Punjab, terrorists shot dead four members of a family, including a medical practitioner and kidnaped two people while twenty ultras were arrested during the past 24 hours. In an encounter, security forces shot dead two terrorists at Apmahal village in Ferozepur District this evening. One of the terrorists was identified as Balwinder Singh while the other was yet to be identified. Two AK 47-Rifles along with 600 rounds of ammunition were recovered from them. Four terrorists waylaid a Maruti car near Baikhiwind in Taran police district (Amritsar) this evening and kidnaped two passengers Prem Kumar and Prabha Dayal while letting the third passenger go. Majitha police arrested eleven terrorists, including a dreaded ultra Satwaj Singh alias Pappu. The arrested terrorists mainly belonged to the "Babba, Khalsa and Bhindrawale Tigers Force." Besides Satwaj Singh alias Pappu, others were identified as Bhopinder Singh, Balbir Singh, Sarbajit Singh, Kartar Singh, Jwahar Singh, Harbajan Singh, Gurnam Singh, Gurmej Singh and

Bachan Singh. One AK-47 rifle with magazine, four double bar-rel guns, one 38-bore re-volver, three pistols and 527 cartridges of different bores were recovered from them.

Time to implement Mandal Report

Some recent activities of the Congress(I) and its confabulations with Mr. Kanshi Ram and the grand Gujjar Sammelan organized by Mr. Rajesh Pilot indicate, as election draws nearer, a keenness to win support of the so-called "Backward classes" the intermediate peasantry mostly consisting of Ahirs, Yadavs, Jats, Kurmis, Gujjars and the like constituting 40 per cent to 50 per cent of the population in UP and Bihar. It is the growing doubts about an assured support from the established vote bank of Harijans and Adivasis (20 per cent of the population) and Muslim (11 per cent of the population) and Mr V P Singh's open declaration to allot 35 per cent of seats to backward castes from which the Lok Da draws its main strength which may prompt the Congress(I) to play the Mandal Committee trump card to checkmate the Raja's strategy. A reappraisal of the Mandal Committee recommendations and consequences of accepting their acceptance of national level may be instructive at this stage. It may be recalled that this committee was appointed by the Janata Government but could submit its report only when the Congress(I) was back in power at the Centre. The recommendations have been allowed to gather dust in the shelves of the Secretariat over several years in spite of pressing and persistent demand by the Opposition to implement them.

2016: The good, the shocking, the humorous and the ignominious

By Patricia Mukhim

Every Indian will remember 2016 as the year that jolted us out of our reverie. The 500 and 1000 rupee notes that we had become so familiar with were suddenly demonized on November 8. Apparently they were being used by people with ill intent and quite a good amount of fake notes manufactured by the enemies of India were in circulation. The other percentage was held by tax defaulters, thus turning ordinary money into "black." But frankly speaking, at least in Meghalaya about 95% of people don't have black money. Most of us are salaried people who earn just about enough to see us through one month. Our meager savings are not in cash form. Most of our purchases are now done via debit cards, except for vegetables, meat, fish and fruit and other small purchases. The tribals amongst us who do business don't have to pay income tax so they could not be bothered about cooking the books. They have to pay goods and services and other taxes only if they run hotels or other businesses which demand proper book keeping. There are some who love to look at notes and are in the habit of keeping money in their personal safes. Those might have had some problems explaining how they accumulated so many notes. So too the 5% of business persons who actually two-time the system by not declaring their correct incomes! But even those might have got around to depositing the "black" notes by a system of 'jugaad' which we Indian are famous for.

In these 50 odd days the word demonized has become the most used word in the Indian vocabulary. We are yet to recover from the shock of November 8 and are still being rationed out our money despite the 50 day embargo promised by Prime Minister Modi. Looks like it's going to be a cold, dry winter as far as our wallets are concerned. Christmas wasn't as merry and noisy as it usually is in Shillong. Except for the spectacular decorations in the old Assembly

And yes, this year I saw an outstanding video taken at the wedding of Chief Minister Mukul Sangma's eldest daughter that has gone viral at least in Meghalaya. It wasn't anything ignominious but there are people with weak hearts who cannot bear to watch the CM singing and being joined by no less a person than Paul Lyngdoh in the famous Beatles number, "All my loving." So snide remarks were posted on Facebook! Ah! Facebook that platform for gossipping and sniping at rivals! But who cares? It

Building and the city centre which were perhaps done on deferred payment, the true spirit of Christmas marked by a lavish spending of cash on things external, seems to have lost traction this year. From the small kid to the ninety year old grandma, everyone is battling demonization! So 2016 will go down in history as the year when your own money was rationed out to you. It's not a very comforting feeling. But it is also one issue that is most talked about.

I wonder if Leap Years bring bad luck but 2016 certainly did for many of us. But there are hard-core Modi acolytes who firmly believe that what the PM did was what India needed. The idea of punishing a nonchalant, disruptive and belligerent Pakistan is so ingrained in our psyche that even the taxi driver in Delhi will vouch that demonization is the best thing that could happen to India. "We need to cripple the "atankwadi" (terrorists) sent from Pakistan and what better way to do it than by pulling the rug from under the feet of that enemy nation by making all the jaali notes useless?" This is the narrative repeated by the hoi-polloi everywhere in India. The intellectual class of course thinks differently. Economists predict a fall in the GDP and a bad year ahead. Even international news agencies have not spared any pains in predicting an economic crisis for India. But Indians on the whole seem sanguine about this demonization thing and are ready to wait it out. We Indians are unpredictable anyway.

As the year closes the hawkers' issue seems to have captured our mind-space. They have strong supporters in Thma U Rangli U Juki (TUR) a group of activists with a heart for the poor (U Rangli U Juki). Some of them have termed Shillong as a city that's unfriendly for the poor and destitute merely because the hawkers are not allowed to set up makeshift shops on footpaths. I refuse to accept that poverty gives anyone the right to break laws. Footpaths have a utility. They are meant to provide pedestrians their walking spaces. If these spaces are taken over,

was a delight to watch Dr Donkpar Roy (Leader of the Opposition) also on the stage clapping his hands to keep in tune with the song. And yes Paul Lyngdoh does have excellent footwork which one noticed for the first time. But the person who takes the cake is Mr Prestone Tynsong. His dance moves are extraordinary and look like a cross between the Punjabi balle-balle and the Twist. All in all a humorous video but it seems to have ignited much tripe. Unnecessary really!

Personally I believe politicians have a right to their private lives; they have the right to sing, dance, laugh and just be themselves and let their hair down (although very few have any hair left) or shake a leg. Else life for them would be a rigmarole of boring speeches. In fact most of them have no time for friendships and meaningful conversations. So full are their lives with demands from their constituents for whom they have become the patron saints expected to fulfill all their needs from hospital fees to school fees for their children. In any case what's wrong with shaking a leg at a wedding party? Aren't we tribals supposed to be footloose and fancy free? Does being in politics also mean saying goodbye to fun and merriment? So my personal votes is that politicians should have clean fun so that they are not pushed to de-stress themselves with the single malt drinks!

As the year closes the hawkers' issue seems to have captured our mind-space. They have strong supporters in Thma U Rangli U Juki (TUR) a group of activists with a heart for the poor (U Rangli U Juki). Some of them have termed Shillong as a city that's unfriendly for the poor and destitute merely because the hawkers are not allowed to set up makeshift shops on footpaths. I refuse to accept that poverty gives anyone the right to break laws. Footpaths have a utility. They are meant to provide pedestrians their walking spaces. If these spaces are taken over,

where do we walk? On the main road which is the right of car drivers? Let us not forget, commercial vehicles pay road tax and private vehicles pay their registration fees. So they have a right to use the road. They have a right to shout at pedestrians who walk on the main road instead of the footpath.

Yes there are a growing number of poor in this State and in the country too and yes, the poor have the right to earn their livelihoods by hawking their goods if they can find a space allocated by the authorities. They cannot park themselves anywhere and everywhere just because they are poor because the same laws apply to all. I am aware that there is a central act guiding the state on how to deal with hawkers and what their rights and responsibilities are. The Government of Meghalaya will have to find a vending place for hawkers – a sort of flea market that we see in every developed country of the world. Flea markets are designated for hawkers and farmers who bring their produce to the market to sell directly to the consumers and thereby avoid the middleman. Hawkers on footpaths are not a common sight in any other city. There is a huge section of poor in Delhi who sell their wares at designated spaces because the residents of Delhi would not take too kindly to their footpaths being invaded by hawkers.

On this issue, I had earlier written a piece for which I was castigated by the pro-poor lobby which had painstakingly painted me like some affluent, elitist urbanite that has no understanding of poverty. But I know what poverty is and what it's like for a single mother to feed her kids but I still will not concede that poverty gives me the license to break the law or to refuse to obey them.

On this note I wish all readers a very Happy 2017. Hope the coming year is kinder to all of us including the hawkers!

Be a good Bhakt if you must

By Ananya S Guha

Now naming children is a problem. Not of course a cashless society. Although I am a votary of social networking sites, one thing in particular I always feel is that it is used and unchallenged. The profligates write anything, say anything, stalk and abuse people whose views don't match theirs. And theirs is retrogressive, from Amartya Sen gunning for the Nobel to, you are a leftist. Secularism has to be redefined and rewritten. History has to be re-worked, Besmirched and opinionated definitions of 'culture' are banded. For example: Hindu is synonymous with India. Well that has been happening for a long time, even before the present government came to power. The Congress government for votes cleverly instilled new ideologies by orchestrating television shows such as Mahabharata. No one bothered to read it, but eager to view it's mangled soap opera. Politics has its quirks, but not in a country which is dependent on the illiterate for power, wooing them from all tangible perspectives; from money to rabble rousing, from using the defamatory to the

called online media, is no organised media at all but people cavorting with time, playing time and passing time. But should they be taken seriously? But they are, even when they are displaying their breakfast table with ostentation. Even if they moan about how so-and-so has wronged them, with more than a slice of masochism.

So, if a filmy couple, one Muslim and the other Hindu name their child Taimur, there is problem. Firstly because Taimur was a Turkish invader, who plundered the country. Second, because he was Taimur the Lame, history text books in schools have always worked cleverly a relationship with his nature and an insidious walk. So, not knowing what the word means, a hue and cry is raised. Not that it matters to the family. Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, the gentleman that he was, would not have perhaps said a word. But what is ominous, is the growing intolerance, the petty holier than thou positions. This makes one ashamed, arising into self a sense of

The fact is that the so called online media, is no organised media at all but people cavorting with time, playing time and passing time. But should they be taken seriously? But they are, even when they are displaying their breakfast table with ostentation. Even if they moan about how so-and-so has wronged them, with more than a slice of masochism. So, if a filmy couple, one Muslim and the other Hindu name their child Taimur, there is problem. Firstly because Taimur was a Turkish invader, who plundered the country.

inflammatory. Not that the so called masses, a claptrap now, are fools. They are intelligent and can shame any enlightened democracy. Look what they did in Bihar, but they also change, shift and politick. That is why, this is a highly unpredictable country, and those reigning horses cash on such uncertainty with elan and aplomb.

So what if a child is named Taimur? What if its Hitler? What if Indira? Shall we draw the personality cult and ask for annulment? Shall we go to the courts? Shall we stage strikes and demonstrations? The demonstrations that online media has raged over these may not be taken seriously by all. But online media has of course two clear sides. And one, which can hit back, talk back, one which upholds a fair spirit of democracy without hubris or malice. And mind you, these people could well be die hard Hindus as well, and there is nothing wrong with this. But what is wrong, which is becoming malleable is new found patriotism. A new found antidote for all the sick things of the country, which includes both physical and verbal bashing, false claims and accusations. It is not a case of being a 'devotee' you can be a good 'devotee' as well, without hurting others' sentiments. This 'other' many of us sadly enough are yet to discover, despite almost seventy years of the country's torrid existence, absorbing and even withstanding many horrors. The fact is that the so

betrayal. Secondly is the articulation of distorted history. History cannot be argued against in moral terms of good and bad. All that has happened in the country since Indus Civilisation is an artefact of history, interpretive and to be given fresh look. It has led to present polity, ethos and state formation. The quibbling remains of course, also the battles. But slowly some shape of stability is coming through, not because of one language or religion, but through a sense of tolerance, understanding and belonging.

So, by all means be a Bhakt, but be a good Bhakt. Thirdly how celluloid has captured imagination of people in the country is of fantasy proportions. Reality shows is our world, the fictive and the imaginative crosses sword with the reality. So, if an ordinary citizen had named his child Taimur, it could well have been dismissed. But cult figures cannot commit such heinous mistakes. The celluloid world is larger than life, so this larger world is real. Sadly enough social networking sites seem to have their dominance-misshapen, cut off from grass root realities. Once again, the country goes for a silent toss. Taimur might have been a marauder, now we have dark, online predators, for whom again the reel is real. What a pity!

TO THE EDITOR

Plight of Polo Bazaar

Editor,

Winter is here and we all thought that bad roads in the city would be duly repaired. In most parts of the city, the repair has been done and commuters are put at ease. However, when we come to Polo Bazaar the condition of the road has not changed in the least. The whole stretch of road passing through this bazaar is in a deplorable condition. There are pot holes everywhere and drivers try to meander hither and thither trying to avoid bumping into them but thereby increasing the possibility of accidents. When driving through this area one feels that he or she is driving through a jungle road somewhere in the coal mine area. These bad roads are adding to the problem of traffic jam and Polo Bazaar has become as of now, the worst congested area in the city. Where is the so called Times Square boldly promised by our CM some time ago? Leave alone such tall promises, let the government or whoever is

responsible for this area, see to the immediate repair of the road. Polo Bazaar is notoriously known for all sorts of malpractices. It presents an image of total disorder and chaos. The roads as of today, all the more reflect such a condition of the place. I hope something would be done soon by whoever is responsible for such developmental work.

Yours etc.,

Barnes Mawrie sdb,
Via email

Will New Year's eve be noisy

Editor,

Most of us dread any kind of celebrations today. Whether it is India winning a cricket or football match; whether its Diwali, Christmas or New Year's eve celebration, crackers seems to be the only mode of expressing joy. Noise has become our companion. Perhaps it is the desire to silence conscience that pushes mankind to embrace noise. The noise and air pollution emitted by crackers is so distressing. Little children shudder in fear; our pets are petrified and the old and infirm cringe

when they hear the loud burst of crackers. Will the District Administration notify that the use of crackers is banned? If the Government has not thought of this as yet it should do so now. Let the dawn of the New Year be a time of reflection and thanksgiving for a year that has passed by with all its ups and downs. Let us pray for peace and good governance. Above all let us pray for the elected representatives that they may take their constitutional responsibilities seriously in 2017.

Yours etc.,

Mark Lyngdoh,
Via email

Blatant use of force

Editor,

I would like to bring to the notice of our Government and our "supported" people's representatives of an incident that happened on December 7 last. I was travelling to Guwahati from Shillong with my wife and three year old son. On approaching the toll gate run by NHAI we were

suddenly approached by a long convoy of vehicles escorting the Chief Minister of Assam en route to Shillong. The escort gunned at the toll gate roughly asked the vehicles lined up, to clear the path and threatened the civilians with their guns. The truck / dumper, as well as all of us were frightened and understandably the truck in front of us reversed quickly and crashed into our vehicle which was right behind it. My question is how important is the meeting for the Chief Minister and his entourage that they put civilians and their lives in danger and what authority do they have over the toll gate inspectors to ask them to defy all rules and regulations for a Minister to quickly pass? I am not demanding any compensation from them for my vehicle but want to ask them if the Police and the Government follow any ethics of behavior with ordinary civilians like us. Thankfully we have survived this ordeal alive.

Yours etc.
AK Mukhim,
Via email

“The new year stands before us, like a chapter in a book, waiting to be written. We can help write that story by setting goals.”

--- Melody Beattie

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 140 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2016

Obama Heat on Russia

IN his last few days as the US President, Barack Obama is trying to act against Russia for interfering in the recent US polls which went against the Democratic Party. He has ejected 35 Russian Intelligence Operatives from the US and imposed sanctions on Russia’s two leading Intelligence Services, including four top officers of the Military Intelligence. They were responsible for the attacks on the Democratic National Committee and other political organizations. The US is expected to release evidence linking the cyber attacks to computer systems used by Russian Intelligence. President-elect Donald Trump has however cast doubts on whether the Russian government had anything to do with the hacking. He has said that the US intelligence agencies could not be trusted. Starting on the wrong foot and showing over friendliness with Russian President Vladimir Putin. He may or may not lift the sanctions when he takes over in the White House.

Trump has struck a new note saying that computers have complicated lives greatly. The whole age of computer has made things uncertain about knowing where anybody is aware exactly what is going on. His comments are significant presaging new frontiers in US thinking. At the same time, Obama Administration will present a joint analytic report from the FBI and Homeland security producing evidence collected from tapped conversations. It is not clear how effective sanctions will be. They will go well beyond the modest sanctions imposed on North Korea for its attacks on Sony Pictures Entertainment. It is expected the crisis will blow over in the interest of peace in West Asia.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

NEC’s help to Meghalaya for power development

The North Eastern Council has agreed to take up the preliminary investigation of Kynshi Hydel Project in the South Western Meghalaya at a cost of Rs. 98.8 lakhs. The scheme which will be implemented by the Meghalaya State Electricity Board has already been cleared by Electricity Authority, Central Water Commission, Planning Commission and the Ministry of Home Affairs. The first phase of investigation is likely to be completed within 2 1/2 years while the complete investigation will take about 6 years. The project report will be prepared after the detailed investigation is completed. An amount of Rs. 10 lakhs has been provided by North Eastern Council for the current year. The Report on Preliminary Investigation for Kynshi Basin as prepared by the Meghalaya State Electricity Board reveals that the project will generate 500MW of power in different stages. The projected production in the first stage will be 170 MW while construction cost for Stage-I will be Rs. 113 crores. The cost of generation of per unit of power will be 20 paise which is described as quite cheap.

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

There is no question of merger of the two Communist parties unless the CPI corrects its mistakes. According to CPI(M) general secretary Mr. E.M.S. Namboodiripad. He was reaching to reports about the possibility of the forth-coming 14th CPI

Congress in Calcutta adopting a resolution on the merger of the two parties. In an interview to a leading Malayalam daily here Mr. Namboodiripad said the CPI continues to aligning with Ms. Jayalalitha and opposing the DMK in Tamil Nadu, opposing the Telegu Desam in Andhra Pradesh and supporting the Asom Gana Parishad in Assam. He said opposing Mr. Karunanidhi and Mr. N.T. Rama Rao was tantamount to supporting Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi.

Bandh affects life in Assam Hill Districts

Guwahati : Life was affected today in Assam’s two hill districts Karbianglong and North Cachar following a 36-hour bandh by the Autonomous State Demand Committee, official reports received here said. The bandh however evoked a partial response. Through train services were withdrawn in the two districts. The Government offices remained open though the attendance was thin. Business establishments were closed in some areas and vehicular traffic went off the road. No untoward incident has been reported so far. In all 16 supporters were, however, arrested at Haflong, the headquarters of North Cachar, for forcing observance of the bandh, the reports said. The bandh supporter stood out a procession at Diphu in Karbi Anglong district and submitted a memorandum to the authorities to press for their demand for creation of an autonomous state with the two districts.

Learn, Unlearn and Re-learn

By Gary Marbaniang

One fine day when I was in Class III my mother in a humorous way threatened to come over to my school and make enquiries about me in her own dialect. This literally scared the hell out of me and it made me cry so hard that my mother from that day onwards promised to never ever make that threat ever again. My mother speaks a dialect of the Khasi language which is abhorred by some sections of “Civilized” society in Shillong and this naturally instilled the notion in my mind that there is something wrong with the dialect when actually there is none and out of fear of being taunted and reviled I tried to avoid being associated with it at any cost. As far as I can remember it was always three dialects of the Khasi language that were spoken at one point or the other at home. When my mother’s relatives come over from their village to visit, it was my mother’s dialect that would be the language of conversation and when my paternal grandmother used to stop by our house when I was a kid it would be my father’s dialect that would be spoken.

The lingua franca or the language of choice is the Sohra dialect and this was how it works out as far as the verbal communication in our home is concerned. As far as school goes, English was the medium of instruction but Khasi was always the language of conversation. It was treason of the highest order to communicate in English among ourselves. Some girls did manage to slip into their own world of conversing in English but for us boys, we didn’t have such liberty and we didn’t really want to fall into the category of being labeled pretenders (lehar) and Khasi nationalism was running really high in those days that our love for our mother tongue outweighed every other consideration. I would clearly remember the dictat coming from Miss Democracy our beloved principal instructing us to avoid speaking in Khasi

and adhere to the rule of speaking in English only but the moment the teacher left the room we would start shouting at the top of our lungs in Khasi only. So those dictats never really worked.

Coming to the bigger picture I would like to say that the three language formula as far as our country is concerned would augur well for us in the long run. Just imagine a situation where one of our youths lands a high end job in a multi national company in Gurgaon. He/She can survive perfectly well inside the building’s premises speaking in English only but the moment they leave the building premises they

learning Hindi is concerned I haven’t reached there as yet but I’m definitely trying. There were three idiots in my previous organization when it comes to the lack of knowledge of Hindi. I was one of them but luckily for me I was the lesser of the three idiots. I can’t help but mention my dear Mizo friend, Mawia. When he first arrived in Guwahati he seemed to have come directly from outer space and landed straight in the city. He could not understand a word of Hindi and he faced much difficulty in adjusting to the new living environment. I have been to Aizawl and I absolutely love the place and its culture but its

“My four year old nephew is epitomizing the catchphrase, ‘Where there’s a will there’s a way’. He is growing up in an environment where no one in our family or his immediate surroundings speaks Hindi but the way he is ready to defy convention and break away from the norm is really awe inspiring. His only dose of Hindi lessons is from watching cartoons show like Doremon but he has learned to fully embrace the language.”

would be completely lost if they cannot speak in Hindi. My advice to our youths from personal experiences is this. Learn Hindi because you never know when you’ll need it and you might be found wanting when you need it the most. I remember the time when I was in Guwahati, trying to have a proper conversation in Hindi. It reminded me of the difficult treks I used to undertake as a child to reach my mother’s village. It was a long and arduous journey of at least two hours but once we reached there, the view was definitely worth the walk. The natural pristine untouched beauty of the village with a clean river flowing through it makes you forget all the cramp and the pain which comes with the journey.

As far as my journey in

people must open up their minds to learning new languages if some sort of integration is going to take place with the rest of the country. My sister who worked there for a few years narrated stories of how she had to use sign languages for communication since most of the people there can’t speak either English or Hindi.

As for me all those times of watching one of my favourite movie star, Rajesh Khanna delivering those sweet dialogues on screen didn’t help improve my ability to speak Hindi at all. Extreme shyness prevented me from learning a lot of things and this has been a major obstacle for me in taking the big leap of speaking a new language or enhancing and refining my Hindi speaking skills because even though I

understand the language I could not come out of my shell and put words into practice. Most of us who grew up and live in predominantly Khasi localities would be wondering how on Earth we are going to learn the language when avenues for learning are stifled by apathy and lack of opportunity.

My four year old nephew is epitomizing the catchphrase. ‘Where there’s a will there’s a way’. He is growing up in an environment where no one in our family or his immediate surroundings speaks Hindi but the way he is ready to defy convention and break away from the norm is really awe inspiring. His only dose of Hindi lessons is from watching cartoons show like Doremon but he has learned to fully embrace the language. Some of the dialogues from these shows have been ingrained in his mind and of late depending on his mood he will break into his unique way of speaking the language sending everyone of us into bouts of appreciable laughter. English on the other hand will always be the language of opportunity and since it is nobody’s mother tongue it will always be the great leveller in terms of employment opportunities and my last piece of advice to all of us on the occasion when we remember the martyrdom of U Kiang Nongbah is that we hold dear to our heart the love we have for our mother tongue because at the end of the day this is what defines us as Indians. It has always been in our blood that no matter where life takes us we will always yearn for home and this will forever be a defining aspect of the Khasi Pnar character and the bond formed through conversing in the many dialects of our diverse language is something that will always remain close to our hearts and this in turn forms one of the most essential component of our peculiar character of always longing for home.

TO THE EDITOR

Effects of Demonetisation

Editor

Demonetization is a bold decision of the Narendra Modi government. It is indeed a surgical strike against Black Money and corruption. No one can deny the noble intentions of the government. If successful and supported by one and all, it will do wonders for the Indian economy. It will also bridge the gap between haves and have-nots to a certain extent. Nobody is against demonetization but the timing and planning has been defective. The worst sufferers of demonetization are the daily wage earners, agriculture workers, fishermen, hawkers and construction workers. The government should have prepared well in advance to address the after-effects of this mammoth programme. It would have saved us from great inconveniences. Over 50

days have passed since demonetization but long queues are still seen at bank counters and ATM booths. As per electronic media reports more than 105 people have lost their lives while in the queue to withdraw their hard earned money. Several people have also lost their mental balance while several others have lost their lives in medical emergencies because they cannot pay bill medical bill for treatment. The situation is more acute in remote and hilly areas where there are no bank branches and people don’t open bank accounts and keep their life time savings at home. Opening of new accounts is also not that simple. In the rural areas one has to wait at least two to three months to get bank accounts operated at the branch offices of public and private sector banks. How can people deposit their hard earned money within 50 days if it takes 60 or 90 days to get a new pass book at the first instance!

Lakhs of people are losing their jobs particularly in the unorganized sectors. Who will compensate their lost man days?

Demonetization has brought misery and unemployment for lakhs of people all over the country. Restriction in withdrawals is also playing havoc in the lives of the people they find it difficult to meet medical expenses. Formal and informal trade at international borders has also been affected due to demonetization, thereby creating major trade imbalances for the country. As per estimate by experts one percent GDP drop is also anticipated during current financial year. If the problems persist for long there will be huge negative effects on the Indian economy. If people are affected by a series of problems then all the good and noble intentions would be washed out.

Government should listen to the genuine cry of the people before its too late and before an unprecedented situation is created in the near future. A country like India will take another 10 years to implement a cashless economy. It should be introduced slowly in a phased manner considering

that the majority of people still do not own smart phones and do not know how to operate them. Personally I support demonetization but I decry the lack of planning and poor implementation which is affecting all sections of people who own no black money and are genuinely poor. I also wonder how crores of new notes are being confiscated nearly every day from some people. It shows there is no full-proof security against black money. It also shows that bank officials are in league with black money hoarders and that the laws are meant only for the poor and the weak and not the high and mighty. Unless such loopholes are plugged demonetization will be a futile exercise.

Yours etc.,
Sylvester Marak,
Mendipathar

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.

50-Day Deadline Over

State polls to give verdict

By Insaif

Time is up. The ‘50 days’ deadline as sought by Prime Minister Modi for his demonetisation drive is over. While it goes without saying that people across the country have and are facing hardships, the big question is whether the frustration will translate into votes in the ensuing Assembly elections to five States. ‘Give me time till December 30. After that, if any fault is found in my intentions or my actions, I am willing to suffer any punishment given by the country’, was Modi’s commitment. Clearly, it’s a gamble he took and it is now for Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur to deliver the verdict. ‘Notebandi’ will undoubtedly be the hot potato this election season. The Opposition has trashed the motive and achievement of this scheme. The TMC has asked for his resignation and Congress the report card, as it is the *aam admi* which has suffered—his money looted and given to the corporates. Others have joined in the chorus.

However, the BJP and its team may not be a worried lot as recent civic elections in Chandigarh, Gujarat and Maharashtra have given thumbs up to the scheme meant to check corruption and black money. But they cannot be complacent as local issues were a factor here. Besides, the Opposition has made Modi’s ‘corruption’ a counter issue with Sahara and Birla diaries being flogged and an inquiry demanded. While the deadline is over, the clock has started ticking for both sides. The Election Commission is soon to decide on the poll schedule. Dirt is being flung from all sides. In the thick of accusations and counter accusations the voter will be burdened with the thought that as per various calculations it won’t be until July before the full value of the cash withdrawn by demonetisation is replaced. Standing in queues in front of banks and ATMs is not going to end. The coming months will test patience and next will be the long queues in front of polling booths. The big question is will BJP be able to en-cash on Modi’s popularity yet again or will the Opposition bank-ing on people’s hardship hit a jackpot?

TN’s Chinnamma Takes Over

Niggling uncertainty in Tamil Nadu is over. ‘Chinnamma’ (little mother) is to step into Amma’s (mother’s) shoes, at least in the party for now. Sasikala Natarajan, long time aide of Jayalalitha is finally to be AIADMK’s next general secretary, following the General Council’s unanimous resolution, on Wednesday last. However, this after high drama when a belligerent group reportedly sent by expelled party MP Sasikala Pushpa, tried to enter the party office and were beaten up party workers. That settled, the party also put to rest rumours that Chinnamma also take over as Chief Minister. Amma had held both posts. And, it was Chief Minister Panneerselvam who handed her the party’s resolution. She, however, is expected to take charge formally next week—at an auspicious time. Whether she will be able to fill the void, time will tell. How soon will this controversy shrouding Amma’s death in hospital come to an end, is another question. Will there be an inquiry?

UP Pre-Poll Tamasha

Is it back to square one in the Yadav parivar in Uttar Pradesh? The thaw between Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav and uncle Shivpal looks to be short lived. The ruling SP has again been thrown into turmoil after party supremo Mulayam Singh

Yadav, chose to ignore son Akhilesh’s objections to certain leaders on the ticket list and turned down his proposal for an alliance with the Congress. The list of 325 of 403 candidates for the upcoming Assembly elections so far leaves out 46 sitting MLAs, includes those sacked by Akhilesh and some baddies. To top it all, father Mulayam has even ruled out projecting son as the chief ministerial candidate. The newly-elected MLAs will take a call, he has said. A peeved Akhilesh has hit back by sacking a few on the tickets’ list from local body boards. The unfortunate tit-for-tat in the family spells trouble for the party, which otherwise was looking in good stead for these polls. It now seems, the SP like the Congress too doesn’t have to worry from enemies, when it has these within!

Delhi’s New Lt-Gov

Delhi is unlikely to get a reprieve from the infamous Chief Minister-Lt Governor cold war. The fear emanates from BJP’s choice of the new LG the nation’s capital will have. The Centre has zeroed in on career bureaucrat Anil Baijal, following the sudden resignation Najeeb Jung last week. Baijal had served as Union Home Secretary under Vajpayee’s government, but was shunted out to Civil Aviation by UPA in 2004 and retired as Urban Development Secretary in 2006. Importantly, Baijal was on the Executive Council of Vivekananda International Foundation, a New Delhi-based think tank, reported to be close to RSS and whose several former members have got senior positions in the Modi government. This would be the latest. While Jung was a UPA nominee, he was retained. However, his over three years’ tenure was marked by constant bickering with AAP Chief Minister Kejriwal over supremacy in running government affairs. How Baijal takes on the new challenge and will he be able to tame Kejriwal is definitely worth a close watch.

Bihar Pips Centre

Bihar is one up on the Centre. The Nitish Kumar government has approved 50 per cent reservation in the State’s judicial services. On Wednesday last, its Cabinet cleared the Bihar Uchcha Nyayik Seva (Sansodhan) Niyamawali, 2016, and Bihar Asainik Seva (Sansodhan) Niyamawali, 2016, after consultation with Patna High Court and Bihar Public Service Commission. The quota includes 21% for EBCs, 12% for OBCs, 16% for SCs and 1% for STs for posts of judicial/munsif magistrates and additional/district judges. With this, Nitish seeks to have enhanced his vote bank and it’s only a question of time when 1100 vacancies will be filled. More importantly, he is one step ahead of Modi, as the Centre is only in preparation mode to introduce reservation for Dalits, tribals and OBCs in appointment of district judges. This it proposes by way of constituting an All-India Judicial Service. Obviously, Modi too is eyeing a sizeable chunk of the electorate, particularly with five States going to the polls soon. However, sadly, in this vote bank politics, the government is trading on “dangerous grounds”. According to legal luminaries having reservation in judiciary, is “neither desirable nor legal or constitutional”. The limits are being stretched too far to undermine the independence of the judiciary! —INFA