

“Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren't used to an environment where excellence is expected.”

— Steve Jobs

The Shillong Times

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The taxman cometh

FINANCE Minister Arun Jaitley has promised a friendly tax regime which should improve compliance and minimise evasion. India has only 4 crore tax payers and total tax collection here add upto only a little over 10% of GDP. An expert committee headed by Justice R. V. Easwar which has tried to simplify tax laws and ensure predictability in the demands of taxmen as taken steps in the right direction. Tax deductible at source (TDS) accounts for 65% of personal income tax collections. The lowering of the TDS threshold from 10%-5% should be welcome. The committee has made other constructive suggestions—amendment of capital gains tax to provide relief to retail investors, simplification of the distinction between capital gains and business income, expediting tax refunds, a presumptive income scheme for professionals, electronic filing of tax returns to facilitate compliance, etc. But tax on provident fund accumulations will hurt individual tax payers.

Implementation of the suggestions should benefit smaller tax payers and the emerging band of professionals. In view of the endless litigation between tax payers and tax authorities, the threshold of 5% should be helpful in clearing the air. It may not however apply to the presumptive schemes for professionals. More reforms are needed in future. Clear guidelines would be laid down to lower corporate tax in the next 4 years. Steps should be taken to make for better analysis of tax data to widen the net. Finally, the passing of the goods and services tax (GST) should give the tax machinery a new breath of life. But however streamlined the tax procedures are, evasion is unavoidable. There are so many Mundhras lurking about.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 14, 1989

Burma hands over NSCN rebel

Burmese security forces, handed over last Wednesday a member of the NSCN to the Manipur police, according to official sources said he had earlier been arrested from Nakhala village in Upper Burma with a Chinese made revolver and a sum of Rs 6000. These details are not as important for us as that Indian should appreciate the new spirit of co-operation inherent in this handing over. The NSCN, which has been responsible for so much of murder and misery due to its insurgent activities in Manipur and Nagaland at the other end of the international border, without any let of hindrance. It was all virtually sanctuary for the NSCN insurgents with no administration worth the name over a large part of the rugged hills along the border.

The recent uprising in Burma seems to have induced a sense of urgency in the thinking of Rangoon that much more vigilance is called for in not only the Kareng country bordering Thailand but also those bordering India at another end. There should now be a meaningful dialogue initiated between the two countries to arrest clandestine human traffic across the inaccessible terrains which mostly have remained unadministered to a large extent at either end of the border. This should now hopefully be a thing of the past and the handing over of the NSCN insurgent to the Indian police is a precursor to more of such mutual co-operation and understanding. Rangoon has remained too long too much unconcerned about rebel activities in their part of the area creating problems hitherto more real and immediate for India rather than Burma. NSCN ac-

tivities have lately been on the wave and a part of it due to the negotiations for a settlement with the rebel leadership. The loss of the hitherto assumed sanctuary in Burmese wilderness should go a long way in liquidating the insurgency in no time.

Austerity package

A seven point austerity package to reduce governmental expenditure is reported to have been drawn by the Assam's AGP government in the wake of the severe monetary crisis that Dispur has been faced with. Not that this crisis is exclusive to Assam alone, but what is apparent is that Dipur is finding itself in a much worse position due obviously to its reckless spending on avoidable details. A lot of its emphasis on the economic front is now proving to be wrong just as much of its perception in the political arena is also bound to be unavailing in the long run for the most part.

Dispur's new awareness on the economic front agrees with the strict instructions given lately to all central ministries to keep down their expenditure within the budgeted levels. This is not generally done and it is true of most of the States too, making a mockery of all Budget exercises. With budget making well on the way in most governments, perceptions and practices on economic drives are naturally getting top priority but this should be yearlong vigilance and not an exercise to be undertaken during budgeting months only and be forgotten during the rest of the year.

Hope beyond the green hills

By H H Mohrmen

The older generation of this community would reminiscence about the good old days. They recall the days when their water was still fresh and they would spend the whole day in the river. They talk about the time when their river was not affected by mining; when they would catch all kinds of fishes big and small and the livelihood of the entire village depended on the fish. They narrate their stories to whoever is interested to know about their past and they would share endless stories of the time when the people and the river coexisted. But now they lament that with one fell swoop, the swollen rivers from the rolling hills have taken away all the fishes and also a large part of their lives away from them.

When the poisonous water came rolling down it not only killed the fishes in the river but it also deprived the people of their source of drinking water. Now, ironically villages which are situated on the banks of one of the biggest rivers in the district, have to look for other sources of water. Some villages like Pasaduar depend on the government water supply for all their needs while villages like Lumpyngngad have to ride on a boat many hours together to collect water for their needs. The river which used to be their lifeline has all of a sudden become too toxic for their use.

The sad part of the story is that when we ask the youths in the age group of 14 and 18 what they know about the river we get a blank look. Most of them are ignorant of the past history of the river and the village. They do not know that different kinds of fishes some as big as a 45 kg cat fish once lived in the river and they know very less about the history of their village. They did not know that apart from hundreds of varieties of fishes there were also other riverine life. On the sand along the river, tortoises of various shapes and size crawl. The sad part of the story is not because the river Tisang which is down-

stream of the river Myntdu is now dead, but because the young generation of the community who live in these villages now know nothing of all those stories about the river. One day when the older generation of the villages are dead and gone, the fascinating stories about the people and the relationship they had with the river will also go away with them. The death of a river is also the death of history!

[The younger generation of the village have not only lost the stories of the river and the village, but what is tragic is that they no longer have any relationship with the river anymore. When a 14 year old boy, April Syrti from Lumpyngngad was asked about the use of the river at present he said it was used only for crossing to the other bank. The river is not of any use to them anymore other than as a means of communication. How tragic! If you talk to the elders of the villages they would have stories of how they swam across the river, how they would catch boat-loads of fishes and then sell that to the traders who would come to buy the fishes from the villages.

But the people who live downstream of the rivers are not without hope. In spite what had happened to the river and its murder by callous coal mine owners they still see a ray of hope across the dark sky. Earlier they had an organization to cater to the needs of the fishing community in the area, but since there are no fish left they don't see the need to continue with the organization. After they had done away with the fishing organization, the community downstream of the river Myntdu which consist of 10 villages, five each across the bank decided to form a new organization in 2014. The villages which comprise of Borkhat,

Natbor, Pdeingwah Khyriam, Dem Lakang, Kwator, in the East

Jaintia hills and Karkhana, Lumpyngngad, Pasaduar, Kamsing and Jaliakhola in West Jaintia hills came together and formed an organization known as Borkhat-Jaliakhola Aquatic Life Welfare Association (B-JALWA). When they were asked what is the main objective of the organization they unanimously answered that they wanted to see the river come alive again!

But come alive it will only if mining is stopped. It is like hoping against hope to even think of reviving or reclaiming the water in the dead river but the people who live across the banks of the river do not see anything wrong in it. When we asked them if they know how to clean the river we got a negative answer. Yet they believe that they will one day see the river clean and potable again. They dream of swimming along the river with lots of fish alongside and that they would once again be able to relive the past.

The best part of this story is that it was the people's own initiative; it was their own desire to see the river alive again. There were no NGOs; neither were there any environmental activist to inspire, motivate, guide or help them to form the organization. It started from the people who had to endure the suffering of having to live with the dead river for no fault of theirs. And only those who had to undergo the experience and the pain of losing their river will understand the loss.

It is fine for the people downstream to hope. Like all good people they have to dream, but for their hope to materialize it would depend largely on the activity of the people who live upstream. For the river to regain its natural condition, they need the support of the people across the green hills. When we asked Mr Joyful Suna if he really thinks they would be able to reclaim the river again, the answer was a resounding

‘Yes’, but only if coal mining upstream is stopped. Their hope depends on the permanent ban of coal mining upstream of their river if life. But is this possible? Can this even happen?

Just as we returned from the trip to join them on their achievement of being able to organize themselves, at a place near Rymbai, on the road side we saw fresh coal extracted from a mine nearby. As we travelled along the National Highway 44 we saw fresh coal on the many depots. We even saw Shaktiman trucks carrying coal from the mines and unloading the same at the different depots in a broad daylight. Depots like those in Kongong which were bereft of coal few months back now had fresh coal dumped on the hill slopes. This is blatant violation of the National Green Tribunal ban. This is not only happening in East Jaintia hills, but also in West Jaintia hills and in fact all over the state with the government and the police looking the other way while the mine owners openly violate the ban.

NGT is being taken for a ride not only by the coal miners who cried foul when the NGT called them mafias, but even by the government which has done nothing to stop illegal mining. Now it is for everybody to see, if these people even respect the law. All along, this column has maintained that the coal miners believe that they can always buy their way through and for some time we thought that the NGT had proved that wrong, but now we are not so sure. Coal miners believe that money is the answer to all the problems and there is nothing that money can't buy. Now it seems like they are right and for the people who live downstream, we don't know if their hopes will ever be fulfilled.

Corrigendum: *Bhogtoram Mawroh the author of the Article, “Marching with the khaki: A fight back by a disappearing people” on edit page dated Jan 30, 2016 is no longer a faculty of the Geography Department NEHU. He was serving there temporarily.*

TO THE EDITOR

An unacceptable blunder

Editor,

The article written by Bhogtoram Mawroh captioned, ‘Marching with the Khaki: A fight back by a disappearing people (ST Jan 30, 2015)’ mentioned that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) took out its ‘Path Sanchalan’ (Procession) to observe ‘Netaji’s Death anniversary.’ Here I wish to point out that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’s Path Sanchalan (Procession) which took place on 23rd January 2016 was to celebrate the great leader Netaji Subash Chandra Bose’s 119th birth anniversary as he had fought against the British for our freedom. I wonder why the great leader’s ‘Birth Anniversary’ was written as ‘Death Anniversary’ and it went unnoticed. This is very painful, shameful and it hurts the patriotic feelings and sentiments of people who love Netaji and it even insults the nation’s great hero, Netaji Subash Chandra Bose and his family which is completely unacceptable.

I hope it was not intentional but a human error but even if so it should have been rectified before publishing the article. I hope there will be no such blunders in such sensitive issues in the future.

Yours etc,
Sandeep Ghosh
Shillong – 4

Editor replies: We regret the error which hap-

pened through oversight.

Learn to respect all religious traditions

Editor,

This has reference to the letter to the Editor ‘Essence of indigenous faith’ (ST January 30, 2015) by Fabian Lyngdoh.

The letter raises doubt about the historicity of the Khasi-Pnar traditions and customs, and thinks that just because these are ‘somewhat flexible’ as they can be easily amended and easily discarded, they are therefore imitation of the Hindu practices due to Khasi-Pnar people’s long history of contact with the plains (since 6th Century AD). However, the writer perhaps does not know that all religious practices and social traditions and customs undergo changes through time. If the writer had taken pains to know the history of the major religious and social systems of the world such as the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Islamic he would have known to what extent all of them had undertaken amendments to adjust to the changing times.

Can the writer explain why there were so many sects and cults within such systems? Secondly, all such systems had influenced one another mutually. Look at the Bhakti and Sufi movements in medieval India or at the socio-religious movements in modern India. Was there no interaction between the Brahma Samaj and the Unitarian Church? The experts have already shown that the three Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam had influenced one another.

Loyalty to one strongly held religious faith has been a feature of human nature for a very long time. Unfortunately, that loyalty has only too frequently been matched by intolerance and hostility towards all other faiths. Freedom of speech and expression is the fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution of India. However, one should not denigrate the belief of others be it indigenous or otherwise.

Yours etc.,
Marbianglang Rymbai
Via email.

China’s OROP project

Editor,

China’s ambitious global project OROP (One Road-One Belt) may not turn out to be a reality since several nations in the Asia-Pacific region look at this as a way of establishing aggressive Chinese hegemony. A string of nations including the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and the US are genuinely suspicious regarding the long term Chinese strategy of dominating and controlling the Asia-Pacific region from strategic, military and diplomatic points. France, UK and Israel will always support any initia-

tive by US against China as they are all weather allies. The OROP project has been placed in limbo by China herself by adopting confrontational relations with major partners and neighbours in South and SE Asia by pushing them towards forming allies with the US and other NATO members. This seems to be a complete miscalculation on China’s part and is creating undesirable antagonistic relations with several independent and sovereign nations in the Asia-Pacific region. International disputes could never be negotiated through jingoism but positive diplomacy and over confidence has been the major factor that Chinese strategists have been clearly missing.

The unnecessary role played by China has placed US strongly in the Asia-Pacific region and would be an obstacle for the smooth execution of OROP. Just being friendly with Pakistan and N. Korea, regarded as antagonistic nations across the globe will never help China to establish itself as a credible and trustworthy neighbour. Unless China avoids the path of direct and jingoistic confrontations with surrounding neighbours and avoid negative diplomacy and threats as bargaining points, the OROP will only be a distant dream in spite of the grand promises it has. The general mistrust about establishing hegemony on other sovereign nations by China if not aborted will never help China to truly become a global leader.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada

Congress pays heavy price for GST obduracy

By M J Akbar

One can hear the silence and visualise jaws drop in the Congress High Command drawing room at the results of a just released ABP News-Nielsen survey of the national mood. The figures speak for themselves. Indians believe that Narendra Modi is the best Prime Minister since independence, followed by Mrs Indira Gandhi and Atal Behari Vajpayee: their ratio of support is 32%, 23% and 21%.

If a general election were held today, after 18 months in office, NDA, under Narendra Modi’s leadership, would get a clear majority of 301 seats in the Lok Sabha. The Congress leadership has, during internal discussions with MPs, justified the hit-stall-run tactics in Parliament by claiming that the strategy of obstinate obduracy is paying dividends without extracting any political cost. This is supplemented by the assertion that nothing has gone down faster in the last year than the Prime Minister’s personal stock. This survey indicates the precise opposite.

A clear majority of 58% consider Narendra Modi the most popular leader in the country. Next in queue is Rahul Gandhi, but the difference between them is substantial. Rahul Gandhi gets only 11% support. Equally significant is the revelation that the BJP vote has actually risen substantially rather than declined, and Congress support has dropped dramatically. In the 2014 general election Congress achieved a historic low of 19.52%; today it would get only 14%. This is the price that Congress is paying for Rahul Gandhi’s obduracy.

The small slippage in NDA seats has been largely picked up by other parties in Congress-led UPA. The survey does not offer specific details about how many seats Congress would now win. Why has this happened? Witness the public reaction to Congress blockade of Rajya Sabha and its repeated sabotage of the GST bill. 44% of respondents believe that Opposition parties [primarily Congress] are not allowing government to pass the GST bill; only 30% support Congress. The government’s economic programme also wins endorsement, with 48% saying that the economy has improved.

Even without statistical corroboration this should have been a no-brainer. Voters will always reject any political party that obstructs economic growth. GST is recognised as a positive enabler; and Congress objections seen for what they are, nothing but cynical manoeuvres to wreck growth so that the Modi government

Digital split

Editor,

Digital split is a social issue referring to the differing amount of information between those who have access to the Internet (specially broadband access) and those who do not. Researchers and advocacy groups look optimistically at the economic and social potential of the active and technology-skilled elderly; other approaches dealing with the social appropriation of technology see obstacles and stress the dangers of an increasing digital divide between generations. Factors like gender, education and socio-economic status still play an important role for acceptance and diffusion of a technology. The diffusion rate among the elderly is increasing, but will continue to lag behind the figures of the young users. While more and more people become technologically literate, the digital divide grows even wider. The answer lies in how we define ‘technological literacy’. We often define the digital divide between age groups by measuring ‘computer literacy’. Measuring ‘computer literacy or illiteracy’ to define the digital dividing line is a short-sighted view of how

cannot claim credit. Congress is taking revenge upon the voter for its defeat in 2014. Why should the voter forget or forgive this?

The Prime Minister’s approval ratings are even more remarkable if you factor in the reality that some sections of the electorate are still implacably opposed to him, irrespective of how his government performs. Democracy has its share of emotive and even irrational responses. These can be overcome with good governance, but that takes time. What, however, remains indisputable is that a clear majority is convinced that the Prime Minister is exceptional, his government is sincere and the economy is moving in the correct direction. Two elements of the current mood are particularly interesting. One is the slow but sure recovery of the Left. It would win 20 seats now, after the wipe-out of 2014. Its tally in the East, for which read Bengal and Tripura, rises from four to nine. Since the Left did not evaporate in Tripura, the recovery must be in Bengal. This questions, even if it does not fully negate, the conventional view that Mamata Banerjee and her Trinamul Congress are going to be re-elected easily in this summer’s Assembly elections. Nothing is easy in any democracy; as far as Indian elections are concerned; you can erase that word from the dictionary.

Note another trend in the East. While NDA suffers a drop of 15 seats from its 2014 tally, it will still get 42 Lok Sabha seats from Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and North East, with 31% of the vote. The implication is evident. When the Prime Minister asks for a vote for his government at the Centre, there is a sharp spike upwards.

Second, there is overwhelming support for the Prime Minister’s Pakistan policy and his efforts to re-vive the dialogue with Islamabad. This view has survived the setback to this process in Pathankot, for the opinion poll was conducted after the terrorist attack. There is a yearning for normalcy on the subcontinent, although never at the cost of security. Prime Minister Modi has gauged the public mood to a nicety. Equally, there is applause for the Prime Minister’s overall foreign policy: 50% agree with what he is doing, and only 35% disagree.

Will this survey persuade Congress to change course during the Budget session of Parliament? The answer is up to Congress leaders. But in order to hear a wake-up call you do have to take your head out of the sand

we should define the digital divide, or at least how we measure it. People can also be trained. Like young students with special learning needs, be it physical, behavioural, emotional, verbal, etc. we must gear our education to this group by customizing the learning environment to suit their special needs. This involves not just accessibility alternatives to the standard mouse, keyboard, display, etc. The ‘technologically handicapped’ cannot take part in many of these technology based services. These include services like online shopping, home access to medical information and medical assistance, security and health monitoring, access to public libraries and databases, communications with family and friends, online banking, online learning, remote technical assistance, access to daily news and events, entertainment, maps or directions, etc.

Technology is drastically altering the way we go about our lives. Social media outlets are also creating a digital divide based on age, that may continue for decades to come. Computer and internet literacy will become increasingly important as more services are offered through this medium.

Yours etc.,
Arnab Dey
Via email

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown."

— H. P. Lovecraft

The Shillong Times

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Prime Minister ill-briefed

THERE are many who listen to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's unique communication platform, "Maan Ki Baat," where he addresses all Indians as his brethren. In fact, the rural masses listen most attentively because they want to know what the PM thinks and what his latest schemes are that could empower them and lift them out of the morass they live in. To that extent Maan Ki Baat though critiqued by Modi detractors as a misuse of the public information and broadcasting space by the Government, is an excellent way to connect with the Indians masses across the nooks and crannies of this country. And Modi who is a communications expert knows this very well. On January 31, the PM addressed the nation and spoke of the South Asian Games which are scheduled to be held in Assam and Meghalaya. Modi did not mention Meghalaya at all but mentioned only Assam and said the Games would boost ties with SAARC countries. While Assam will host the opening and closing ceremonies with 16 sporting disciplines across 11 venues, Meghalaya is hosting 8 sports disciplines across 5 venues. Is the Prime Minister not informed about this? Obviously Modi depends on someone in the I & B Ministry to craft out his script. Who is this script writer? Surely the Prime Minister cannot be caught making such serious gaffes. And these are very emotional issues for the people of this region, more so since the Chief Minister of Meghalaya held his ground about hosting the Badminton events here.

Now this is Modi's second faux pas. On January 4, when an earthquake of severe intensity with its epicenter at Tamenglong district in Manipur jolted the region, Modi called up the Assam Chief Minister instead. It was Manipur that suffered major damage of buildings and where lives were also lost. How could the Prime Minister be so ignorant of what happens in the seven states of the North East? Isn't he better informed than this? Isn't that why Kiren Rijiju was appointed Minister of State for Home to help the PM unravel this region of several contentious issues? Or is the PM courting the people of Assam more fervently now because the state is headed for the polls? The MPs representing the North Eastern states must bring this to the PM's notice. We should not tolerate indifference and ignorance from the Prime Minister of the country!

LOOKING BACK

Jan 14, 1989

Nepali refugees are our own people

The relief camps for Nepali refugees at Barapani and Rajabagan will be dismantled on January 20. The action in part of the process of encouraging the displaced people to go back to normal life, according to Mrs. M. R. Mawlong, Deputy Commissioner East Khasi Hills District.

About forty percent of the inhabitants of these two camps have already left, but at the request of the remaining inmates, the date for dismantling the camp has been postponed to Jan 20.

Referring to the demolition of the Barapathar relief camp that was completed on Friday, Mrs. Mawlong said that the process for helping the inmates to return to normal life started in July last year. The refugees were asked to leave the camp by the end of October. Taking heed of their problems, the date was once again shifted to November.

We realized that these unfortunate people had been through a tragic experience. But we also explained to them that at some point of time they would have to pick up the thread of their lives and go on. The camp,

and the aid could not last forever, says Mrs. Mawlong.

The District Administration, in an effort to help the affected people wrote letters to headmen and landowners, urging them to employ the displaced Nepalis and give them shoulder. Some four thousand people were rehabilitated in this way.

The Gorkha Welfare Union played a very constructive role in helping the refugees as well as the Administration said Mrs. Mawlong. Unfortunately another group, calling themselves the Displaced Persons Association started stirring up trouble among the refugees collecting money and promising that they would secure more money and some land as compensation for these people. Some of the camp inmates were led astray by these promises.

The Deputy Commissioner denied that the police were rough with the Barapathar Camp inmates during the demolition on Wednesday.

44 yrs of undiluted confusion

By Toki Blah

On 21st Jan 1972, I was a young man nervously waiting my UPSC exam results but all the same enthused and excited like everyone else, about future prospects in the new political dispensation for these hills, romantically then described as 'a patch of beauty and a shining outpost of India'. On 21st Jan 2016 Meghalaya celebrated its 44th birthday, but on a very subdued note. Except for gaggles of politicians, babus and hapless captive participants called 'school children', no one else in the general public seemed bothered about the significance of the day. Actually for many it was just another day of struggle to simply survive; just another day of grind; just another day worrying how and where to get employment. It was a wretched way to celebrate a birthday. A most befitting manner however to commemorate the birth of a failed state!

Let's try and define Meghalaya. Four decades ago 'an abode of the clouds' sounded so apt and poetic. Today 'an abode for cloudy, woolly headed minds' seems more appropriate, as the state is filled with confused citizens milling around in despondent bewilderment. In the 1950's we were under Assam, culturally protected by the 6th Schedule. We decided we wanted something better and nothing else would suffice but full statehood. We then went on to form Govts. with our own elected representatives but decided to retain the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) to protect us from 'all evil'. ADCs were retained to serve as training schools for future MLAs and in the twinkling of a political eye, an institution to protect indigenous identity and culture, got converted into a training institute for aspiring MLAs! Today those chickens have come home to roost. We have our own elected Govt empowered by the 7th Schedule to make laws on more than 113 subjects ranging from Public Health, Agriculture, Industries, taxation, Local Government, Economic and social planning, Education, Electricity etc. On the other hand we have the ADCs with powers under the 6th Schedule to make laws on only 10 subjects. Believe it or not but there are self appointed saviours of the Jaibynriew rooting for supremacy of the ADCs over the State Govt! Is this a classical case of throwing pearls before swine? If this is not superb undiluted confusion, then what is?

Next lets try and have a social audit on what Meghalaya has achieved in the last 44 years. Social auditing is not so much about facts and figures; data and statistics but more about public impressions on the impact policy and governance has had. Of the most important indicators is the impact on health and education; livelihoods and employment and most important of all, impact on the wellbeing of society and its citizens (the mandate incidentally for both State Govt and ADCs). Time to do a social audit by asking the common man's impression on the last 44 years. Most will unhesitatingly declare that nothing has happened. Either they're not aware of any developmental benefits or they're not impressed. Everyone however bewails the corruption that has taken place during the last four decades. 44 years of self rule and common citizens walk around convinced that corruption and politics is one and the same. It's the bitter icing on the state's 44th birthday cake. A damning verdict on all its leaders, its governing institutions and the governance system we have imposed upon ourselves.

Problem is when we speak of governance, Meghalaya has yet to make up its mind whether it means "to govern by tradition" or "to govern by the Constitution". An infantile debate on whether the 6th Schedule or the Constitution is supreme reigns uppermost in minds of people who should know better. Misleading statements are given and the common man is totally confused. Now champions of tradition are ready to move for Supreme court intervention on the matter. Here a word of caution would be in order. We must accept that legal and judicial priorities have shifted in the last half century. Focus today is more on upholding the Right to wellbeing; the Right to decent existence; the Right to Justice for all. Tradition, custom and 73rd Amendment exemption can no longer be used as an excuse to circumvent the above priorities. Moving the Supreme court might therefore be a big mistake. It might just end up in the imposition of the Panchayat Raj regime on these Schedule areas - an outcome nobody wants. The paradox here cannot be missed -the champions

of tradition might just end up finishing off tradition completely! Ignorant arrogance can be so tragic. So has Meghalaya, as a State, failed us? It is obvious that Meghalaya and its people suffer from some major flaws. The first is our failure to connect or associate the modern state and its system of governance with our own wellbeing. Meghalaya is a state driven more by nostalgia for the misty mythical past than any practical vision for development of the present or the future. We worship traditions "from time immemorial" (ki ririt ki dustur na mynbarim). The people of Meghalaya are a very practical lot. They shun away from speaking about the future for they believe it doesn't exist. So no point worrying about it. The past is more comfortable to discuss, so why not simply live in it? According to Wikipedia one characteristic that a political leader ought to possess is the 'ability to visualise the future'. Many 'future blind' Meghalayan politicians think this is sheer bunkum. Only the past with its tradition can bring in votes, so why bother. Unfortunately such prehistoric mindsets are predominant in the highest echelons of both the ruling and the opposition. Those who speak about tomorrow are ruthlessly suppressed or sidelined.

The second flaw seems to be common to all - the reluctance of the Meghalayan electorate to elect effective leaders. It actually springs from the inability to differentiate between Service oriented politics (Where power through an elected office is used to promote governance and wellbeing of society) from business oriented politics (where an elected office is used to generate profit for self and family). The Meghalayan voter has the inclination to opt for those who are willing to pay for votes. So we end up with MLAs, MPs and ministers with a hidden agenda - to recover investments by converting the public exchequer into a private piggy bank of their own! Politics in Meghalaya, with a few exceptions here and there, is about winning; attaining power and using power to make money. Party bosses and election managers have a quaint term for such perversion. They call it the winability factor; its all that matters and it usually determines who gets the

party ticket. No one has ever challenged this vulgar practice that has denied Meghalaya its fair share of effective and dynamic political leadership. In the last 44 years the quality of political leadership has steadily declined and power hungry political parties, both national and regional, appear to be least bothered. The third flaw flows from the first and the second. We have managed to effectively establish a visionless political leadership. In the absence of a vision for the future, our politicians simply proceed by rule of thumb - a childish belief in 'the voice of the people' (ha ka sur u paidbah). In most cases this 'voice' is actually the voice of a few drunks mobilised at public meetings in the parking lot in Motphran or at student's field. Demagogues devoid of vision become leaders and get elected to office. Once there they just don't know what to do next. They flounder; they hem and haw; unable to give directions or to lead. They usually end up leading from the rear and in the last four decades we have become experts in extolling the virtues for this distorted style of leadership.

Lastly in this frantic race to attain power by means fair or foul, we lost the most fundamental ingredient of democracy, the skill to debate; to dialogue; to talk to one another, to argue with reason and logic; of engaging one another. Political and NGO leaders have somehow come to the conclusion that to discuss or debate issues is a sign of weakness. Instead opposing for opposition's sake is the order of the day. Confrontation is the weapon of choice since it requires no logic; no reason; no rationale. Raw emotion plus the ability to spout nonsense are the only elements required. We see this happening all around us with increasing frequency. Of alarm is that it has started spreading to the once staid, sober and decorous traditional institutions, the pride of our society. Dorbars and their representatives have now allowed themselves to be polluted by the malady of party politics. Logic and reason (ka nia ka jutang) discarded with contempt. Our very culture and grassroots democratic systems of governance have been contaminated and soiled. Sadly it's the inheritance we are handing down to our children simply because the future is irrelevant and unimportant to this generation's scheme of things!

Author is President of ICARE

TO THE EDITOR

Illogical arguments

Editor,

In response to Oscar B. Marwein's article, "Heads they win, Tails we lose" (ST Jan 28, 2016) I must begin by saying that like Marwein, I am also a Khasi (Khasi/Pnar) by birth and blood. While my father is a Khasi by identity and a Christian by religion, my mother is a Pnar by identity and a Niamtre by religion. And mind you they both enjoy Scheduled Tribe status. Like Marwein, my identity too "springs from matrilineal practice where I derive my name from my mother's side" and yes "[i]t is the fountainhead of my identity and culture as a Khasi." If we go by what is actually happening now then truly my father would then be a ST as well as a Minority since he is a Christian while

my mother is not. Therefore Marwein's fear about any kind of confusion that may arise in the future is unfounded and uncalled for as there are numerous households like mine amongst us.

The point one wishes to drive home is that if the Niam Khasi-Niamtre do fulfill the criteria of Minority status then why should we be denied that? Why should Minority benefits be enjoyed only by some of our Khasi/Pnar brethren who are Christians? We do not have any qualms about our Khasi/Pnar brethren who have converted to Christianity, enjoying the benefits of Minority Status in spite of being a majority in the state and Marbianglang Rymbai's letter "Where is Justice here" (ST Jan 22, 2016) has vividly brought to light the piece of evidence statistically. What is

upsetting and disturbing is the kind of objection that has arisen when we the Niam Khasi-Niamtre are putting forth our demands. Why not let the authorities concerned do their duties and decide?

One agrees that faith is indeed a personal matter but if a believer of one faith enjoys a right which a believer of another faith also deserves but is not yet acknowledged then it is baseless accusation to term and brand the former as a binder of the community and the latter as "the main threat to our Tribal society." To argue that the demand for a Minority Status has evolved through "the narrow perspective of religion" is facetious. It must also be understood that benefits attached to a Minority Status has its requirements in terms of faith and religion alike. To avail this benefit one has to either be a Christian, a Sikh, a Muslim, etc

(differing from state to state) and not just simply a Khasi? There is no denying the fact that the preservation of culture and identity lies not simply on dances and faith but also on literature, music, research, documentation and publication of tribal culture and practices but it cannot also be denied that the Niam Khasi-Niamtre do have their share on Tribal faith, culture and practices. Believe it or not religious rites and practices do play a vital role in inculcating the same. Granted that the Niam Khasi-Niamtre are no different from other Khasis and other Khasis are no different from them in terms of script, language and culture then why are Minority Status benefits enjoyed only by our Khasi/Pnar brethren who are Christians? Isn't this "rationality and cold logic"?

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Via email

Violating the Freedom of Expression

By Vinay Joshi

Mr Albert Thyrniang's article, " Shillong RSS linked to Nazism and Fascism (ST Jan 29, 2016)" is an exercise in RSS bashing. As per the website of Don Bosco Tura (www.donboscoindia.org) Albert Thyrniang is Catholic priest. It means he is a religious leader. The common man takes religious leaders very seriously, which increases the responsibility of religious leaders manifold. The word and deeds of religious leaders are precious, and people expect, these words to be true and logical and that they should not contain fabricated views and be free of manipulation and chicanery. But Fr. Albert failed on all criteria. It would be fair for his reputation and the post he adorns, had he cross-checked his doubts by directly contacting RSS leaders in the region, but he didn't. Instead, he used run-of-the-mill allegations to corner RSS. I firmly say, it won't work anymore.

Let me analyze the overwhelming participation of indigenous youth in RSS Path Sanchalan (route march) in Shillong. It is a manifestation of tremendous confidence that is developed in the youth from Khasi and Jaintia community, which led them to participate in the RSS march. In the absence of RSS these youths from indigenous communities would have chosen another platform to express themselves. The valid mode of expression and due respect has been denied to indigenous tribes of North east India by many agencies. So, they chose RSS; nothing objectionable in it. After the abduction of Rijoy Singh Khongshah, people from indigenous faith had taken out a huge procession in Shillong in 2001 and about 20 to 30 thousand people participated in the procession, to express their anger against religious persecution. This time they came out not to protest anyone but to express their confidence in their Way of Life, which was suppressed for so long. PLEASE don't deny their constitutional right. PLEASE don't condemn them. PLEASE respect them, as doing so will ONLY increase your respect and space in the society.

We are now in 2016, where the internet has torn apart all myths and concocted theories. People can search for knowledge and information and decide their views, so no one can spread concocted, manipulated and fabricated theories in the guise of TRUTH.

As far as the media is concerned, freedom of speech and expression is not muddling or allowing space for unsubstantiated allegations. Misusing the newspaper for making prototype allegations which are never proved in court of law is abuse of that freedom. As per my knowledge freedom of expression does not allow anyone to tarnish the image of any person or organization. Prejudice coupled with Gobelian Propaganda can be a dangerous cocktail; it can backfire.

The RSS has always welcomed positive criticism but has never used force, intimidation and conspiracy as a tool to neutralize its opponents. It is well known as to what happened to Bah Rijoy Singh Khongshah for his association with RSS. Rijoy Singh was a veteran

indigenous Seng Khasi leader, who received repeated threats for his work for indigenous culture and Niam Tynrai religion. Rijoy Singh did not bow to pressure but ultimately lost his life. Do you attribute Rijoy Singh's murder to high democratic principles? Was it not Nazism and Fascist ideology of eliminating opponents in a cold blooded manner?

Many are aware of what happened to Arnab Hajong the veteran Hajong author from Garo Hills for taking the side of Bangla script in Hajong language instead of Roman script. He vehemently opposed using Roman Script for Hajong language replacing Bangla, which is being used as official script since hundreds of years. Arnab Hajong received threats for his views. He ignored it and was finally physically assaulted on Garobadha bridge. No Police station registered any FIR in the matter. He approached Gauhati High Court, and Meghalaya Police registered FIR only after Hon High Court compelled Police to register the FIR.

Freedom of Expression is not a joke and no one other than RSS and Indigenous Faith Groups in North-East India know the real meaning of Freedom Of Expression, as RSS and Indigenous Faith Groups have lost scores of dedicated cadres in trying to safeguard Freedom Of Expression. It is appropriate to recall the list of those who made sacrifices for defending Democracy and High moral values within last 30 years in North East India. Here is the list.

- 1) Bah Rijoy Singh Khongshah- Meghalaya- Abducted and murdered for serving ancient Niam Tynrai faith
 - 2) Arnab Hajong- Garo Hills- Brutally assaulted for taking side of Bangla script and opposing Roman script
 - 3) Swami Shanti Kali Maharaj- Tripura- Murdered for trying to preserve indigenous religion of Tripura tribals.
 - 4) Pramod Dixit- Assam- Shot dead for being dedicated to social service
 - 5) Shuklewar Medhi- Assam- Veteran professor and RSS leader shot dead for serving society,
 - 6) Bineswar Brahma of Bodo Sahitya Sabha killed for opposing Roman script to Bodo language.
 - 7) Muraidharan- RSS Pracharak killed in Assam for social work .
 - 8) Shyamal Kanti Sengupta- RSS Pracharak abducted and killed in Tripura,
 - 9) Sudhamoy Dutta- RSS Pracharak abducted and killed in Tripura
 - 10) Dinendranath Dey- RSS Pracharak abducted and killed in Tripura
- 1 1) S h u b h a n k a r Chakraborti- RSS Pracharak abducted and killed in Tripura.
- The list of victims of religious and political persecutions is unending in North-East India. Senior journalist Nitin Gokhale had written an article in Tehelka a few years ago on the topic of religious persecution of tribals in Changlang and Tirap District of Arunachal Pradesh. (http://archive.tehelka.com/story_main4.asp?filename=Ne071004lord_of_the.asp)
- In the light of the above arguments it is patently unfair and biased on the part of Albert Thyrniang to launch such a vicious tirade against the RSS

"Age wrinkles the body. Quitting wrinkles the soul."

— Douglas MacArthur

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 172 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2016

How is Meghalaya's air quality?

IN every other state, the State Pollution Control Board informs citizens about the air quality every day. Not so in Meghalaya where every information must be literally wrung out of government departments. Of late the skyline is mostly invisible by noon as the atmosphere is laden with smog. Meghalaya had registered as the state with the highest density of cars much before anyone could discuss vehicular pollution. Now that vehicles have gone up almost a hundred fold the air is thick with suspended particulate matter. Not only that. Parking has become the biggest challenge in the city today. The Delhi High Court recently observed that parking a vehicle in an open area which is meant for public purpose, renders that space unusable by others and even "transient parking" in any open public area amounts to unauthorised encroachment.

The Delhi HC Division Bench comprising Justice Gita Mittal and Justice IS Mehta said that residents of housing societies had to ensure free passage for emergency vehicles like fire engines, ambulances and security of others living there by parking vehicles inside. In this landmark judgment the Delhi High Court has ruled that people who own flats in group housing societies are entitled to ONLY one car parking slot. Further the Court ruled that parking of vehicles in open spaces such as roads, parks, etc amounts to encroachment.

In Shillong, it is a common sight to see cars parked in lines on public roads blocking precious public spaces, which are meant for pedestrians and other vehicle users. Private car owners usurp such spaces with impunity. Does the State of Meghalaya have any policy to regulate how many vehicles each family can own? What are the guidelines for car owners regarding the availability of private parking places for them? The Singapore law is very clear. A citizen can't buy a car unless the person shows that he/she has private parking space. In Meghalaya the neo-rich elite which have amassed wealth through coal and other businesses, flaunt their wealth by buying one car each for every family member. Many families in Shillong, Jowai Tura, Nongstoin, Nongpoh etc. own more than two to three cars. There is nothing illegal in owning as many cars as one can afford. But do the authorities demand that these owners show their private parking places for their cars? In Shillong, there are hundreds of private cars parked on the road outside private homes. It is time to frame strict rules to ensure that people with cars also have parking spaces. The Traffic Police should invoke the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act to impose fine on private car owners who park on public roads.

It is time for the Meghalaya High Court to take suo-moto cognisance of this problem and issue directions for the larger public good. When the governing institutions turn a blind eye to these important issues which are aimed at the larger public good, the citizens look up to the judiciary to bring relief.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 17, 1989

Buffer stock for North East

The Union Minister of State for Civil Supplies, Mr. Sukh Ram's recent announcement in Shillong that a buffer stock for two months would be created for the hill states of the North East before the onset of monsoon will be highly welcomed. This is particularly so in view of the past experiences, especially that of last year when several parts of the North East remained to landslides resulting from excessive rainfall. The National Highway 44, which is widely regarded as the life line of North East, remained out of commission following a massive landslide near Sonapur in Meghalaya. This put tremendous economic pressure on Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur and two southern district of Barak Valley in Assam. In

Meghalaya, too, the extraordinarily high rainfall tore life asunder. And to cap it all, the recurring floods in Assam, the gateway to the entire region completely disrupt all surface transport every monsoon.

Viewed against this backdrop, Mr Sukh Ram's announcement will be endorsed by every State Govt in the region. The Ministers however made it clear that timely creation of warehousing facility for the storage of food grains would much depend on the cooperation of the State Governments concerned. He elaborated that land and other related facilities must be extended to the Food Corporation of India which is going to maintain the buffer stock.

Implications of ka ktienhok-ktiensot

By Fabian Lyngdoh

Many authors have written in a general manner about the concepts of 'ka hok ka sot' and 'ka ktienhok-ktiensot' in the Khasi thought, but I feel that their deeper meanings are still lying hidden, and therefore this article undertakes to explicate their full meanings and imports. 'Ka Hok' (Divine Justice) is different from 'ka hok' which carries the following five different meanings according to different situations: First, ka hok is seen as 'righteousness' in thought, feeling and behaviour guided by 'ka tipbriew-tipblei' (moral conscience). Second, ka hok is seen as 'a right'. Every person and all other creatures in the cosmos have the right to exist and manifest their being as designed and allocated by God. Third, the word 'ka hok' is also used in the concept of 'truth'. The general word for 'truth' in Khasi is 'ka jingshisha' but the word 'ka hok' carries a heavier meaning of 'truth'. When a man agrees to what another man has spoken, he may say, "kata te ka hok," which means, "that is the truth." But if he disagrees to what another man has spoken, he may say, "kata te kam dei ka hok" (that is not the truth), or he may ask, "Balei mem kren ia ka hok?" (Why don't you speak the truth?). Fourth, ka hok may imply, 'righteously-earned property' (ka khih ba la kamai hok). A Khasi says, "Ngam salia ban iap ruh ban iada iala ka hok (I'm ready to die to defend my righteously-earned property). Fifth, ka hok also means spiritual wealth that man should earn by fulfilling his moral and spiritual obligations so that he would have ka Hok (right) to receive the favour of ka Hok (Divine Justice) as credit to his spiritual wealth to strengthen his 'ka rngiew' (spiritual personality). When we put together these five meanings of ka hok we can say: "It is the truth (ka hok) that man has the right (ka hok) to earn his material wealth (ka hok), but he must earn it righteously (da ka hok) so that he may have sufficient spiritual credit (khrav ka hok) before the eyes of Ka Hok (Divine Justice). Ka Hok and responsibility go together.

'Ka ktienhok-ktiensot' is generally described as "the word of righteousness, or a word of honour with an implicit divine connotation, that once such a word has been given, it is believed that a violation of it would invite divine retribution." In the context of this article, ka ktienhok-ktiensot is the word of righteousness that is guided by the dictates of ka Hok (Divine Justice), and the dictates of 'ka Sot' (socio-religious code) of a particular community. 'Ka ktien-hok' is a statement that is spoken with good conscience and sincerity from the depth of the heart according to the dictates of ka Hok. 'Ka Sot' is the 'socio-religious code' which is not similar to 'Sat' as in Hindu concept of 'Sat-Chit-Ananda', as seemed to have been misinterpreted. The equivalent of 'Sat' in Khasi belief is 'Ka Hok', and not 'Ka Sot'. Hence, 'ka ktien-sot', though required to be spoken with sincerity, but it should also be in accordance with the provisions of 'ka sot' of the community to which the speaker belongs.

Examples would make this concept clearer. If a man says to a woman, "I love you darling; you will be with me wherever I go and wherever I live, and I will ever care for you and never leave you for the whole of my life. I am speaking from the depth of my heart that no one else but you, shall be the flesh of my flesh and the bone of my bones," he has spoken ka ktienhok. But whether he has also spoken ka ktienso, it depends on the socio-religious code of the community to which he and his beloved belong. If the man and his beloved belong to a patriarchal society, then he has spoken 'ka ktienhok-ktiensot' of love in its perfection; but if the man and woman belong to the Khasi society, the statement made is 'ka ktienkai' (slanderous statement). For the Khasis it is 'ym juh sot' (not the norm) for a man to address such a statement of love to a woman. According to the Khasi thought, a man cannot convert a woman belonging to another kur into the flesh of his flesh and the bone of his bones through marital relationship. That is called ka sang (sacrilege) among the Khasis. Moreover, accord-

would go to eat betel-nut in the 'House of God', is a modern accidental interpretation, probably influenced by Christianity: "In my Father's house there are many rooms...I am going there to prepare a place for you" (John, 14: 2-3). So, ka ktienhok-ktiensot is a statement made with good conscience according to the dictates of truth or universal morality, as well as in accordance with the provisions of the socio-religious code of the community to which the speaker belongs.

In the past people trusted each other on the strength of verbal covenants witnessed by God and other spiritual beings. But today, ka ktienhok-ktiensot as it was understood in the past can no more stand the test of time, because the traditional matrilineal system which is the core of 'ka Sot Khasi' has become diluted and remains only in name, much to the disadvantage of womenfolk rather than the source of their security. So in serious cases ka ktienhok-ktiensot can no more be trusted without the evidence of written documents. Land ownership is now confirmed by 'ka dular dupat' (written document), transfer of properties have to be recorded in written documents; 'ka bishar' (judicature) can no more stand on ka ktienhok-ktiensot but on evidence of written documents, etc. So, ka ktienhok-ktiensot is now replaced by a written document as a substitute for the spiritual witnesses to the commitment made in ka ktienhok-ktiensot. The Khasi society is today within the Indian State. The purpose of the Sixth Schedule is to accommodate 'ka Sot Khasi' into the provisions of the Indian Constitution, and not to accommodate the Indian Constitution into the provisions of ka Sot Khasi. So, according to Khasi traditional thought, ka Sot today would also include the provisions of the Constitution. To speak ka ktienhok-ktiensot implies speaking according to the dictates of truth, according to the Khasi socio-religious code, as well as according to the provisions of the Indian Constitution. A spoken or written statement that is contrary to any of the above is not ka ktienhok-ktiensot.

'I'll follow you beyond earth's bound/ No matter where you lead/ You cook in earthen pot, so what/ But in a warm dove's cote." (Ka Duitara Ksiar)

The formal rule in Khasi marriage is that, it is the man who offers himself for marriage to the woman. In patriarchal societies the man asks for the woman's hand and proposes if she is willing to be his wife by asking, 'will you marry me?' Which means, 'are you willing to be my wife?' But in the Khasi society the man offers his hand to the woman and say, "nga wan kylli yngkha yngkurim". For this reason a Khasi man is called 'u rang-tyrwa' (a male who offers himself).

If a Khasi says that his mother has departed and went to 'Ka ring U Blei' (House of God), he might be speaking ka ktienhok, but he has not spoken ka ktienso. To enter the House of God implies to merge in God's divinity. The Khasis never believed that the human soul (atma) would merge into one with God (Brahma) as in Hinduism. The traditional belief of the Khasis is that a good person after death would be eating betel-nut 'ha Dwar U Blei' (in the portico of God) not in the House of God. God would remain the Lord Almighty forever, and the human soul would remain with separate identity forever. For the Khasis, it is sufficient for the soul to attain the highest bliss just by being able to enter into the communion of saints in the fold of ka iawbei (ancestral mother), along with u suidnia (ancestral uncle) of the clan, and that is called 'Ka Dwar U Blei'. The idea that the spirits of the dead

TO THE EDITOR

Who violates the freedom of expression?

Editor

Apropos, the article, "Violating the Freedom of Expression" (ST, February 2, 2016) I am not able to understand Vinay Joshi's allegations that I have violated my freedom of expression. Being a Catholic priest I do not lose the right to express my views on any issue. In fact, I sincerely feel I need to get involved more in the various matters concerning the society. Nowhere in my article, "Shillong RSS linked to Nazism and Fascism (ST Jan 29, 2016)" did I indulge in the RSS bashing or tirade against the fundamental organization. Nowhere did I condemn or show disrespect to the Khasi-Pnar/indigenous people who have joined the RSS. They are free to do so. Nowhere did I even imply that they have no constitutional rights.

The substance of my article was to show that the RSS's ideology traces its origin from Nazism and Fascism of Germany and Italy respectively and that it continues to expound them in India. This is well documented. The references I quoted are available in literature aplenty, including on the internet. The quotes

in my articles are just a handful. More references can be provided. I am also sure that Joshi has read the RSS's Geeta, Bunch of Thoughts, by M. S. Golwalkar where the author not only bashes minorities but denounces them and even explicates their extermination. Joshi listed the names of RSS leaders/ pracharaks who have been supposedly abducted or killed or threatened. In my article there was not even a remote suggestion to justify, let alone, propagate or advocate violence against RSS or against anyone.

In this connection I refer also to Sunil Khanal's letter to the editor on January 30, 2016 which states that 'Meghalaya is already a fascist state' For the sake of argument even if Khanal's opinion is true, should we bring more fascist elements in the state? The author gave some examples to prove his point. In my article, directly or indirectly, I did not condone the so called ethnic cleansing and other aberrations (if I may say so) that happened in and around 'my surroundings' in the past. If all the riots and acts of hooliganism and fascism of the RSS and its associates before Independence till now are mentioned the list will be endless. For the

interest of all, hope the RSS's exclusive religious ideology/nationalism have not taken roots in this state. The RSS will not help preserve Niam Khasi or Niamtre. It will hasten their end (Marching with the khaki: a fight back by a disappearing people by Bhogtoram Mawroh, January 30, 2016).

Yours etc.,
Albert Thyrniang
Tura, West Garo Hills

Whither Pollution Control Board?

Editor,

Of late Delhi & Mumbai's extreme air pollution has made headlines. Mumbai is in the news because of garbage fire at the Deonar dumping grounds. Serious attention also needs to be paid to our very own Dump Yard at Marten, Mawiong which is perpetually on fire at least for the past two years and smogging out our skies. An argument for the fire is that it is "Un extinguishable"? Another is the lack of space for additional garbage, hence the need to burn to create additional volume. Recently an Expression of Interest (EoI) for a construction contract at the same site was floated

in the local papers, prompting a serious question - why are additional funds to the tune of crores of rupees being pumped into a defunct site, rather than simply relocating to a new site for a new dumping ground in New Shillong. Hundreds of acres are lying with different Government departments for years on end waiting for some project or other to fructify. This would have saved precious financial resources on acquiring a new site. But all this is just wishful thinking I suppose as the powers that be, always have some grander schemes which are beyond the comprehension of us the Mango People of a Banana Republic. Till then we can making the doctors, hospitals, medicine companies, air purifiers firms richer and ourselves and our health poorer. Or wait!! How about a PIL? And pray where is the State Pollution Control Board in all of this?

Your etc.,
Gagan Jain,
Viaemail

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

Playing shabby politics for smart cities Modi sarkar picks names to trump rivals

By Arun Srivastava

The politics of vengeance has been the key factor in the Modi government denying the smart cities to the eastern Indian states. Except Bhubaneswar, Odisha's capital, no city from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand or Bengal has made it to the smart list. Last year, when the names of the cities for including in the list of the smart cities were being finalized Bihar government was given the impression that at least three of its cities - Bhagalpur, Biharsharif and Muzaffarpur - are among the 97 shortlisted and would be upgraded. But none made it to the first list of 20 released by the Union minister Venkaiah Naidu.

Reacting to it Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar compared the Centre to the fabled "andher nagri (City of lawlessness)" for ignoring Bihar while picking the first list of 20 smart cities. Nitish was highly critical of the manner in which the cities were selected and observed that this has upset

would get the smart cities next time. The U-turn of the Modi government has indeed been baffling though it claimed that the selection process was carried out in a transparent manner and "no politics was involved" in it. Interestingly, out of the 20 cities nine are from BJP-ruled states and four from Congress-ruled ones.

The political circles link the denial of the smart cities to Bengal and UP to the ensuing assembly elections in these two states. Since the governments of both the states are hostile to the BJP and the Modi dispensation at the Centre, they were not offered the new cities. The Modi government did not intend to allow Mamata or Mulayam Singh to grab the offer for boosting their image. There is no denying the fact that both the state governments would prefer to exploit the offer to their electoral advantage. They argue that Jharkhand was denied the privilege only to shield the Modi government from public criticism and outcry. The Modi gov-

The political circles link the denial of the smart cities to Bengal and UP to the ensuing assembly elections in these two states. Since the governments of both the states are hostile to the BJP and the Modi dispensation at the Centre, they were not offered the new cities.

the regional balance. "It's andher nagri... no propriety, no rules, nor any thought for regional balance". Nitish said; "Whatever is happening is their (Centre's) wish. There are no rules or laws for them. Creation of 'smart cities' was their idea. They had initiated the process of choosing such cities. And when the Bihar government sent its proposal, fulfilling all conditions imposed by the Centre, they reneged on their promise".

Retribution has been the guiding principle of the Modi government and it is manifest in the wake of outright denial of the special package to Bihar. Though the package was agreed to by the UPA government and it was in search for the right occasion to make it public, the Modi government preferred to dump it. In fact even during the campaigning for the assembly election Narendra Modi had assured the people of delivering the package. But later he started playing with the words and resorting to arithmetical jugglery. Once the results were announced and the BJP lost the battle, the Modi government put the package on the backburner, ignoring the genuine needs and claims of Bihar.

The Bihar government had sent the Centre a proposal as per the required format. Earlier, the Central government had selected three cities in Bihar for the Smart City list but now they have ignored Bihar. After financial package this is the major denial to Bihar. Under the plan, the Centre will pump in Rs 50,802 crore into the cities over the next five years to refurbish basic amenities, the focus being also on improving information technology infrastructure to provide essential services to residents.

While the Modi government did not mention the reasons for denial it also preferred to remain tight-lipped whether the state

ernment would use the non-inclusion of any city in the list from Jharkhand to justify its action in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

There is yet another aspect of the denial to these states. The country will have the Lok Sabha elections in 2019. Using the smart cities fund the incumbent governments in these may succeed in consolidating their position and upstage the BJP and Modi sarkar. With the Bihar assembly election showing thumbs down to the BJP, the leadership is not in the mood to take any further risk. The think tank is of the view that the cities in these eastern states would be included in the second list and that would be released just ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. This would make the task easier for the leadership to stake the claim and reach out to the people with the agenda of development and growth. Incidentally each smart city will be given Rs 100 crore every year for five years. This is quite a huge amount. The next two years will see the inclusion of 40 and 38 cities, respectively.

A 'smart city' is an urban region that is highly advanced in terms of overall infrastructure, sustainable real estate, communications and market viability. Of the 98 cities and towns that five years down will graduate into smart cities, 24 are capital cities, 24 are business and industrial centres, 18 are culture and tourism influenced areas, five are port cities and three are education and healthcare hubs.

Interestingly, Patna did not find a place due to poor marks in the prescribed criteria laid down by the Centre. The selection was done through 'City Challenge Competition'. Initially, Bihar government had sent a proposal to the Centre to develop Patna, Gaya, Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga as smart cities. (IPA Service)

"You can cover a great deal of country in books."

—Andrew Lang

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 173 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2016

Politicians and megalomania

THE South Asian Games are a great opportunity to showcase the opportunities of the states of Assam and Meghalaya. The Games could also tempt some of the participants to venture into the other states as well, having come this far. The images and perceptions that the participants and officials would carry back with them are also very important. On that will depend whether this region would be able to host other international Games as well. The Meghalaya Government order to remove all hoardings and advertisements along the national highway from Shillong Civil Hospital to Mawblei because such hoardings are hazardous to safe driving is a welcome one. However, this order was on account of a recent Supreme Court ruling. On its own the State Government would have been incapable of understanding these nuances.

The South Asian Games are being held in Shillong and Guwahati. In Guwahati the participants in the games would be greeted by huge hoardings of the Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, complaining that the Modi Government has not released the Flood Relief Funds. This is the first time that a chief minister of any state has made a public spectacle of the tenuous Centre-State relationships. Gogoi is a past master of creating public attention through such off-beat mediums. But even the people of Assam are nauseated by this overt display of political one-upmanship. What happens if Modi puts up another big hoarding highlighting the corruption in the Flood Control Department and several other Departments of his Government? There is no dearth of corruption in Assam. Is Gogoi oblivious to all this? There is a line that politicians cannot breach and that is to turn megalomaniac and believe they are actually monarchs ruling their little fiefdoms. The hoardings would have surprised the SAG participants and officials. It cuts a very sorry figure for Assam, its people and government. But is Assam not governed by the same Supreme Court rules?

LOOKING BACK

Jan 17, 1989

India trounce Poland 4-0

India played a classic game today to trounce Poland 4-0 in a poll 'B' league match of the third Indira Gandhi International Gold Cup hockey tournament here. The big victory considerably brightened India's chances of making the semifinal grade. India have three points from two matches.

The hosts gave a pleasing display and dominated the proceedings throughout. Skipper and penalty corner expert M.P. Singh with rasping drives sounded the board twice, while Thoiba Singh and youngster Mukesh Kumar were the other scorers.

In a first paced match, hosts went into the attack from the very beginning. Their forward line functioned like a well oiled machine, and Thoiba, Jagbir and Jude Flex repeatedly tore the rival defence with Atif Idris and Mukesh providing them adequate support.

At half-live the hosts led 3-0. In deep defence M.P. Singh and Ashok looked solid, while Subramani Vivek Singha hdn Sujet effectively controlled the field. The visitor were without their ace goal keeper Kulpa Zbigniew, and no reason was given for his not playing. Indians looked like a totally transformed side. There was purpose in their moves and every attack spelt danger.

Thoiba made a dash from the flank in the eleventh minute, his cross was nicely trapped by Judge Flex in the circle, but defender Bogucki blocked him, resulting in the first penalty corner. Jagbir's push was nicely stopped by Subramani and M P Singh with a powerful shot sounded the left corner of the board (1-0), though goalkeeper Kamieski lay straw led on the right side. The clever change

of tactics paid dividends. **Lachit Barphukan's statue unveiled**

A statue of Ahom general Lachit Barphukan constructed at a cost of Rs eight lakh was unveiled by Chief Minister Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta here today. Lachit Barphukan fought gallantly in the famous Saraights battle in 17th century to defeat the Mughals. Speaking at the function. The Chief Minister recalled the patriotism of the great general and said his ideals were instigating the people to sacrifice themselves for the country. A large number of people including Ministers, MLAs, attended the function.

TV fosters integration

Television fosters national integration in spite of great diversity in the country, said Mr J D Pohrmen, Meghalaya Law Minister, while distributing television seats to the Banan club and the Khlachympa club of Nongthlang, the Sokha Mission and Lamin recently. Mr Pohrmen informed that recipients that the state government wanted the people living in rural areas to know about what was taking place in India and the world. He cautioned the young, especially the student's that television viewing should not be the cause for negligence of duty. There must be a time for everything, he said.

Indo-French Ties

All weather friendship

By Amrita Banerjee

The 67th Republic Day celebrations saw a French leader being honored as the Chief Guest for the fifth time. This year the parade also included the first-ever participation of foreign troops in the march-past wherein 124 French Army soldiers (a ceremonial Lyon-based military band contingent) marched down Rajpath. Underscoring, the blossoming relationship between New Delhi and Paris.

French President Francois Hollande's three-day visit deepened India-France Strategic partnership, consolidated and expanded the gains accomplished by Prime Minister Modi's visit to France earlier.

India-France relationship has truly come of age. Despite Paris being a part of US's Western Alliance, it has always shown flexibility in dealing with India as part of its independent foreign policy. Recall, France was one of the first Western countries to lift the arms embargo that hit India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the 1965 conflict. Similarly, during the 1971 war, Paris was one of the only Western Capitals to comment on India's legitimate concerns vis-à-vis the refugee crisis in its border areas with Bangladesh.

Importantly, France refused to sermonize India after the 1998 nuclear tests and publicly opposed US sanctions. Rather, it opened a strategic dialogue with New Delhi as an alternative to a sanctions approach and extended its support for civilian nuclear cooperation.

France-India relations have traditionally been close. Both nations have centuries-old history of trade relations, from the 17th century until 1954, France maintained a colonial presence in the sub-Continent; Pondicherry, being one of its former territories. Post India's independence, Paris's lack of interest towards India can be attributed to Cold War political fixation and Western mistrust of lofty moral posturing in Nehruvian foreign policies and India's selective non-alignment guidelines.

A key milestone in ties was President Chirac's 1998

visit which resulted in the signing of India's first strategic partnership which has significantly progressed to all areas of mutual cooperation through regular high-level exchanges at the Head of State levels especially in tactical areas such as defence, nuclear energy, space and terrorism.

In fact, France was the first country with which India entered a pact on nuclear energy following the IAEA and Nuclear Suppliers' Group waiver. Consequently, a new impetus has been given to nuclear cooperation with both leaders encouraging the conclusion of techno-commercial negotiations by end 2016 for the construction of six nuclear power reactor units at Jaitapur.

France has consistently supported India's permanent membership of the UNSC. In 2008, President Sarkozy during his visit to New Delhi had noted that India should get "its rightful place at the global high table". He assured that Paris would do its utmost and support India for a UNSC seat and for inclusion in NSG and an expanded G8.

In the military domain, the Indo-French High Committee for Defence Cooperation set up in 1998, comprises three sub-groups which discuss military cooperation, industrial complex and strategic issues. The two sides have consolidated naval cooperation to include ship visits, joint naval exercises and exchanges of naval delegations and trainees in defense institutions.

Pertinently, French military hardware is finding a significant place in India's military, among the flagship project are six Scorpene submarines, Dassault Mirage 2000 fighter aircraft and a squadron of DCNS Scorpene class submarines (called Kalvari-class submarines). Besides these, the purchase of 36 Rafale jets will further boost Indian Air Force assets and

provide India with a strategic edge over neighbours.

Further, both nations' armed-services conduct joint-exercises called Varuna annually. France and India also maintain a discreet 'strategic dialogue' which covers joint cooperation against terrorism. Both have instituted a Strategic Dialogue between the National Security Advisers.

France's and India's interests in the Indian Ocean are also closely aligned as both have historically played an active custodial and humanitarian role throughout the region. They share concerns over the risks of sea-borne nuclear proliferation and malevolent non-State actors. The two Republics uphold similar core values when it comes to navigational freedom and closely monitor threats posed by revisionist actors to sea lines security of communication.

In addition, Paris recognizes that the Indian Ocean Region's strategic equilibrium can only be truly maintained once India emerges as a more powerful naval actor with a greater capacity for sustained operations at sea and power projection. Therefore, the annual Varuna naval exercises between the two countries should not solely be viewed through the prism of military diplomacy but also as a deliberate French effort in regional capacity building to counter China's revisionist powers.

Furthermore, another area where interests converge is terrorism. In the wake of terror attacks in Paris and Pathankot, Modi and Hollande have expressed solidarity against terrorism. In fact, Modi asserted he decided to invite Hollande after Paris's terrorist attacks in November. The robustly worded separate joint statement on counter terrorism speaks out their concern.

Significantly, Modi and Hollande asked for "decisive actions" against the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen while con-

demning the Pathankot and Gurdaspur terror strikes and told Pakistan to bring to justice their perpetrators and those involved in Mumbai 26/11.

Earlier, President Sarkozy during his 2010 visit strongly condemned Pakistan for providing a safe haven to terror outfits, stating that this was "unacceptable". Mincing no words he added that terrorism emanating from Afghanistan and Pakistan was the major source of instability in the world and strongly argued against the return of Taliban in the name of reconciliation. In accordance with this, France has signalled a temporary freeze on arms sales to Pakistan.

In the area of space, the two implementing arrangements for cooperation in definition studies on a future joint thermal infrared earth observation mission are important as night time monitoring capability is evolved.

Hollande also sees economic opportunities in India growing at 7% plus at a time when global economy is in bad shape, Europe is in crisis, China's economy is slowing down and the remaining BRICS countries are facing economic trouble. He recognizes the esteem India has for France and the growing affinity between the two countries. Both sides have done well to actively build on their common interests and mutually benefit from this joint effort.

However, the strategic angle of defence, nuclear and terrorism is one side of the story. Another side explores complementarities in trade and investment, solar thermal technology, aerospace, counter-terrorism, culture, science & technology and education. France also recognizes India's pre-eminence and its role for stability and promotion of democracy. In this respect, even though India has entered into strategic partnerships with more than a dozen countries in the last 10 years, its relation with France would always remain special. ----- INFA

(The author is with School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi)

TO THE EDITOR

India still high on corruption

Editor,

In his article, "India in sweet spot to balance the act" (ST, January 30, 2016), K. R. Sudhaman has, rightly, pointed out that one of the major reasons for the present government securing majority in Lok Sabha election in 2014 is its promise to weed out corruption but so far there is no visible effort to end this menace so as to ensure the economy marched ahead. India is still stuck at the score of 38 points on a scale of 0-100, the same as in 2014 in the latest international corruption perception index 2015, prepared and published by the Transparency International just a few days ago. Corruption is like a hole in a bucket with which we cannot irrigate our garden. There is a close association between human development and anti-graft environment. We can easily see the fact if we compare the rank of a country in Human Development Index (HDI) with that of Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).

After securing fourth position in HDI, Denmark has topped the CPI as the most corruption free country of the world. Netherlands (5th) and Canada (9th) have got identical rank in both

indices. While the Asian teacher Singapore conquers eleventh rank in HDI and eighth in CPI, HDI topper Norway gets sixth rank in CPI. Similarly, The United States of America (HDI 8, CPI 16), The United Kingdom (HDI 14, CPI 10), Sweden (HDI 14, CPI 3), Switzerland (HDI 3, CPI 7), New Zealand (HDI 9, CPI 4), Luxembourg (HDI 19, CPI 10) and Germany (HDI 6, CPI 10) establish a close relationship between these two indices. It is also the same story down the ladder. China (HDI 90, CPI 83), India (HDI 130, CPI 76) and Pakistan (HDI 147, CPI 117) - all remain poor performers in both. The corrupt environment indicates a very narrow mindset of the people in power. They cannot have faith in cooperation and sharing. So, there are no takers for HDI booster inclusive growth in a graft raj.

By giving a cruel slash to social sectors, the last year's general budget has underlined the fact that Mars and moonstruck mindset cannot prioritise the welfare of people. The budget has witnessed a downsizing in health and family welfare by 16 per cent and school education by 23 per cent. Moreover, it has cut down children's welfare by 56 (!) per cent, women's welfare by 25 per cent, social justice and empowerment by 5 per cent and rural

development by 10 per cent. It is a case of dog eat dog at the lower rung of HDI and CPI indices.

It is said charity begins at home. We cannot improve the lot of our people until we ourselves believe in the magic of cooperation and sharing that makes lives worth living. The malignant growth of a small part of our society is going to cause cancer to Mother India. The sooner we realise Tagore's dictum, 'Whom you push down will pull you down,' the better for all of us. This realisation helps improve our position both in human development and corruption perception Indexes that generally go hand in hand. Now, let us see what is in store in the coming budget.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Rights are equal

Editor,

I am grateful to "The Shillong Times" for providing young people like me a platform to spill our grievances and speak against any injustice meted to our fraternity. I am happy now that my words are creating a ripple effect as someone has sent a missive confronting my views. Firstly, I would like to inform that in my rejoinder to Albert

Thyrniang letter (ST Jan 29 2016), I have never labelled any allegations against him that he condones any form of violence. But I would also like to assure him that I also do not condone unbecoming acts of any organization be it RSS, GNLA, HNLC etc, that perpetrate heinous crimes against minorities. But in his letter to the editor on (ST Feb 02, 2016) Thyrniang has craftily used the words (so called) ethnic cleansing and aberration to define crimes against minorities in Meghalaya. If we term crimes as aberrations then the Gujarat pogrom (2002), massacre of Sikhs in Delhi (1984) etc are all aberrations leaving no scope for justice for all those who suffered as a result of these macabre events. Further if the Constitution of India grants Right to Free speech to Fr. Thyrniang, it also grants the same to me which also means the right to dissent. Unfortunately the religious leaders of our country have not yet understood that the public domain provided by media is not a holy pulpit where every word uttered by them has to be taken as Gospel truth.

Yours etc
Sunil Khanal
Shillong2

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 mountain eco-system

By Arnab Dey

Mountains are places that are much higher than the land around them. They are different from plateaus because plateaus have flat tops, although they can be as high as mountains. Mountains have had an important place in history as they have offered protection from invading armies and are frequently the boundaries between countries. If they are crosswise to the winds of the areas, mountains have an important role in affecting the climate of an area. The side of the mountain that faces the wind is the windward side, which is apt to have heavier rainfall as the wind drops the moisture before going over the mountain. The other side called the leeward side is much drier as the rain has already been deposited on the windward side of the mountain. Mountains also protect valleys from extremes in weather.

The role of mountains in regulating Earth's climate and fresh water systems is vital for the sustenance of all life, as all of Earth's rivers originate in them. Healthy mountain ecosystems are the foundation for global health and stability. Glaciers form the water towers of Earth. In mountain regions high altitude forests, through the action of precipitation and transpiration, play a key role in the creation of snow. Certain indigenous mountain plants such as the Oak play a major role in cloud seeding. Without this process, functioning, the amount of snow is massively reduced and glaciers cannot be fully replenished. These glaciers and snows are also important because they act like a mirror reflecting solar radiation. As they melt, the mirror thins and more solar rays penetrate through to the Earth, increasing Earth's temperature. As this ice melts, it also increases the quantity of water vapour in the atmosphere. Water vapour (H₂O) is a very powerful greenhouse gas, which normally stays in the atmosphere for no more than nine days. However if it is not brought to Earth through precipitation, it remains in the upper atmosphere and increases the problems of the greenhouse effect.

Earth's hydrological system, unlike coal, uranium and oil, is a fast regenerating system. Given the right ingredients, of mixed indigenous mountain forests, it can be rebalanced and maintained indefinitely. The stability of Earth's rivers and water tables depends upon maintaining the integrity of watersheds. These, in turn, depend upon the healthy biodiversity of high altitude forests. It has been recognized that the protective function of stable forest cover is vital for safeguarding them. It is recorded that only 25% of mixed indigenous mountain forests are still intact worldwide. This implies that 75% of the world's indigenous mountain forests have been removed. These forests are the natural mechanism, which would normally be involved in making the mountain snows and replenishing the glaciers. The global fresh water system and hence all of life on Earth is utterly dependent upon them. Therefore, to save the glaciers from melting altogether and Earth's rivers from drying up, it is a matter of great urgency to protect, conserve and restore indigenous mountain forests worldwide.

However mass deforestation along with mono-culture pine programs have left these regions seriously eroded, denuded and polluted. As rains wash away the scanty remaining soils, the task becomes more difficult and in some places impossible. Nevertheless there are techniques which could be used and prove to be successful if implemented swiftly. Utilizing the knowledge of mountain

people and working together with them is essential for success. Using a combination of methods ranging from traditional conservation knowledge, companion planting, green corridors and Perm culture techniques, the regeneration of these forests could conceivably be accomplished. Local mountain communities could be organized into collectives using cooperative methods for replanting, managing and maintaining these forests. Regenerating and protecting indigenous mountain forests would increase employment and create green economies within mountain regions. Payment for Environmental Services' schemes could be used to support mountainous countries and communities to establish and protect indigenous mountain forests as this assures the protection of the global fresh water system.

In the light of this, the detrimental effects of hydro-dams on the environment in these regions should also be reconsidered. Along with all life on Earth, hydro-dams are dependent upon healthy glacial flow. Given the quantity of high quality free solar energy in mountain regions, it would be beneficial to replace hydro-dam electrical projects with solar power projects. There is no greater urgency today, than to protect, regenerate and conserve biodiversity in mountain regions. Mountain ecosystems are found throughout the world, from the equator almost to the poles, occupying approximately one-fifth of its land surface. They are found on every continent, and at every altitude, from close to sea level to the highest place on the earth - the summit of Mount Everest (Sagarmatha or Qomolangma) on the border between Nepal and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China.

An estimated one-tenth of the human population derive their life-support directly from mountains. Mountains play a critical role in the water cycle by capturing moisture from air masses; when this precipitation falls as snow, it is stored until it melts in the spring and summer, providing essential water for settlements, agriculture and industries downstream - often during the period of lowest rainfall. In semi-arid and arid regions, over 90 percent of river flow comes from the mountains. In rural Nepal there are an estimated 25 000 water wheels and over 900 micro-hydropower turbines - a more recent technology - that provide a critical source of energy, mainly for agro processing. Such local renewable energy is a vital catalyst for economic development in areas that are at the far ends of the distribution networks for the fossil fuels on which most urban dwellers depend.

In developing countries, wood fuel is the predominant energy source in mountain settlements, but it is also essential - whether as wood or charcoal - to many people living in urban centers in the lowlands and on the plains. Mountain wood also has many other uses, including timber and wood products both for local use and, where road, rail or water networks permit, for export. Billions of people living in lowlands benefit from mountains. They are the sources of both major and small rivers on Earth. Mountains also play an important role in the water cycle because they capture moisture from the atmosphere and release it in the form of snow or water, which is essential for industries, settlements and agricultural activities downstream. Renewable energy from mountains promotes economic development, especially in rural areas.

"If you are not willing to risk the unusual, you will have to settle for the ordinary."

— Jim Rohn

The Shillong Times

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Section 337 Controversy

THE Supreme Court has observed that the question of criminalising homosexuality involved very large and significant Constitutional issues and referred the 2013 decision making gay sex illegal to a five-judge Constitution Bench. In 2013, the Court had overturned the 2009 ruling of the Delhi High Court which found Section 337 to be a breach of the fundamental right to equality. The 2013 decision has disappointed many who thought Section 337 should have been stamped as it smacked off Victorian morality. The UK had legalised homosexuality before 1960. The Supreme Court bench would criminalised homosexuality gave the legislature the responsibility of making the final decision. A batch of petitions to the Court led by NGO Naz foundation had challenged the 2013 judgment. A number of eminent lawyers including Kapil Sibal, Anand Grover and Colin Gonzalves had argued that the 2013 Supreme Court judgment curtailed individual rights. But this time the Court decided that only a larger bench will issue a ruling as the matter was of Constitutional importance.

The appeal for striking off Section 377 had met with opposition from the Apostolic Churches alliance and the Muslim Personal Law Board. Gay rights are not explicitly supported by Hinduism. The removal of the law by a Constitutional bench would be authoritative and the petitioners should be satisfied with the referral in view of the religious resistance. Considering the issue from a societal and traditional angle it may not be possible for all to equate gay rights with minority rights and democratic values. Advance countries are moving towards legalising homosexuality and India should follow the trend but it will not be easy.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 19, 1989

Housing of schools and community

A little under a thousand lower primary school buildings are to be constructed all over the State before the end of the current financial year. This decision of the Meghalaya government, which costs the public exchequer as much as about seven crore of rupees, is undoubtedly bold and ambitious and is in keeping with the policy of the new government laying special emphasis on improvement of primary education. It was a standing disgrace that while at one end crores of rupees were being spent and mis-spent over the pompous campus for higher education at the post graduate level, little thought had hitherto been given to the plight of education at the lowest rung of the primary level. These primary school buildings now would ensure at least uninterrupted education throughout the year irrespective of sun and rain and this in itself goes a long way in streamlining education in the hills. A permanent school building in a rural setting, moreover, provides a centre for cultural pursuits of the community a sure aid to education in its wider perspective and also an insurance incidentally against large scale fall outs now so common in the whole system.

Along with housing primary school education, the government has taken up the other problem of housing for the community at large. The 1981 census showed that out of over two and a half lakh households in these hills, only a very few were homeless. The fallacy has since been pricked by the National Building Organisation which has estimated that at least 1.69 lakh are homeless which the State's Housing Minister Mr. Armission Marak rightly pointed out at the recent conference of State Housing Ministers in New Delhi as being quite a big number for a small State like Meghalaya. The fact is that those having even a

ramshackle structure in the rural areas with an expectation of longevity of at most five to six years are also considered to have a home-stand which is the real crux of the whole housing problem. In an earthquake prone area like the north eastern region, proper house building for the community should well be prior charge on the government concerned and it is good that the Sangma government has been alive to this responsibility and acting on it with all seriousness.

The Chief Minister did well in discussing with the Prime Minister in advance of his final meeting later this month with the Planning Commission his plan thrust for the next financial year. Housing, education and industries occupy a large part of the year's plan estimates amounting to about Rs 210 crores, working well over a fifty percent increase over the current year's outlay. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has assured all support to Mr. Pruno Sangma which is what is meant by the former's appreciation of Mr. Sangma's big initiative in this matter. The Planning Commission is generally inclined to assess plan estimates in economic terms only as it of course is its job. There is also the political part of the economic which is supposed to be looked after by the Commission's Chairman who is the Prime Minister himself. His assurance to Mr. Sangma in fact is in pursuance of his general interest in the accelerated development of the north-eastern region as a whole. Mr. Sangma also drew his particular attention to his region's needs and this pleading by the States for the region's needs should be mutually complementary to each other in the common interest of the development of the region as a whole.

Meghalaya at a critical juncture

By Patricia Mukhim

To say that Meghalaya society is today experiencing a societal tsunami is an understatement. On the one hand are those who have craftily introduced metaphors of tradition into politics and packaged it to look like governance, 'as it was in the good old days.' In a clever yet manipulative manner, the Khasi's fear of the ubiquitous other is now conflated into a demand for an exclusive form of governance ostensibly to protect the exclusive Khasi identity. This unique Khasi identity and the threat to it from non-Khasi, non-tribal 'others,' has been the fulcrum around which the politics of this state has revolved.

On the other hand, the carefully constructed 'other' is what has financed politics in Meghalaya since its creation. Was any election post 1972 won purely on the merit of the candidate? So what was it that helped win elections? Did money play a big role? How many tribals had the money then to splurge on politics? Was it not the business class which is largely non-tribal with the financial clout that finally invested money to ensure that those who would provide them the economic space they enjoyed were elected and re-elected? If that is not the case then why did we hear stories (that were only whispered for fear of retribution), that before every election, the non-tribal business class would be summoned for a special meeting to solicit/demand their support? So did the non-tribals actually have a dedicated vote bank? Perhaps some had. They include those we pejoratively refer to as 'sweepers' (Mazhabi Sikhs) and who our politicians (in whose constituencies they reside) rub shoulders with only a fortnight before elections and treat with disdain at other times. The other non-tribals were merely taps from which money flowed and which money sustained the month long election campaigns.

Let me be candid here. I have yet to encounter a Khasi or non-tribal who did not have a motive while financing politicians. The motive is clear - after the elections they want all the major businesses/contract works to come their way. Earlier there were few Khasi business magnates. Now they have grown and that space is therefore contested. Hence the non-tribal business person is slowly losing clout.

The Khasi businessman/woman however is one of a kind. Those who have observed them would agree that they don't believe in long term investments. They will only invest in ventures with short gestation periods and will take shortcuts to arrive at that objective. The sense of philanthropy is absolutely missing. The idea of doing ethical business or of creating

durable public assets out of profits made is alien to the Khasi mindset, as it has become to the non-tribal today. Earlier the non-tribals community in Shillong donated generously towards hospital construction, schools etc. Now that philanthropy has dried up. Why?

This is because prior to 1972 the non-tribal thought he had a future in this place where his forefathers had arrived from (the far western regions of Rajasthan, Sind etc) to settle and do business in. Today he knows it is useless to invest in public infrastructure since he has no stake in the state. His earnings from here are invested in real estate elsewhere - a second home as it were should violence recur. A person without a stake in a place develops an antipathy and detachment and tends to exploit the place. A non-tribal born and brought up here might wax eloquent about how he misses Shillong but it's an imagined emotion, romanticised and linked to the imagery of the place as he knew it then - before the rude violence of 1979 - 1992. The moment he is jolted to reality he knows that life is never the same in idyllic Shillong. There are no avenues for income generation. Employment in the government sector is all but sealed and the idea of having a home in this place is a dream that was killed by the Meghalaya Land Transfer Act. Ironically this Act is absolutely impotent, a dud in fact, when it comes to protecting the legacy of the poor Khasi who is today landless (being landed today means having some document to claim your inheritance either from the community or the person you brought land from if you could afford to). So when people contest the latest socio-economic survey that shows 76% of rural Meghalayans as landless by retorting that not having land documents does not mean not having land, may I ask anyone if they can lay claim to any land without documents?

Now coming to the crux of the matter, in their enthusiasm to protect themselves the Khasis have alienated all others from the shared vision of a Meghalaya that is pluralistic and inclusive and where every citizen enjoys equal rights with responsibilities. Alas! Today there is a huge section of non-tribals (migrants) whose own identity is in a flux and whose idea of citizenship is ambiguous. They are the new vote banks of Meghalaya. The Khasis thought they had scared off 'the aliens' (mynder) since 1979 but what they succeeded to so was to

chase out the best brains (gentry) including some of the best doctors, lawyers, college and university teachers, all of whom had added their expertise to enhance the quality of life here. No religious group at that time came forward to protect those who had to leave their hearths and homes, sell off everything overnight and run for their lives. Some who survived carry the scars and are now in a comfortable position to strike back. What goes around does come around.

Then there is the case of the non-tribals who still live here but know in their hearts that in the order of things today and perhaps in the emerging Meghalaya they will always be third class citizens. I would be understating the problem if I said that they have got on with their lives and that the worst is over. It is not. The non-tribals who suffered then and their children now, do carry a persecution complex. They see themselves as victims of a system in a country that promises every citizen equality before the law. To those who see the Sixth Schedule as some kind of a 'unique' law to protect the Khasi and his inheritance, those who are non-scheduled are also equivalent to non-citizens and their claim to justice and equity is tenuous. Ironically the Sixth Schedule is touted as the Law that should allow callous exploitation of minerals and murderous quarrying - murder because it has killed our forests and rivers. Because of the Sixth Schedule some tribals (the wealthy) are more equal than others while the non-tribal is a non-citizen.

It is in this context that the recent display of bravado by the RSS cadres in Shillong seems to have been taken as an encroachment into an otherwise comfortable place for the Khasi (Christian) gentry. The rise of Hindu nationalism is attributed by Jyotirmaya Sharma (Hindutva: Exploring the idea of Hindu Nationalism) and others to the perception that Hinduism as defined by Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Dayananand etc was tolerant, benign, reformist, weak and therefore feminine in its attributes while Vinayak Damodar Savarkar saw Hinduism as having little to do with faith. Sharma says, Savarkar politicized religion and introduced religious metaphors into politics. Savarkar evidently pioneered an extreme, uncompromising and rhetorical form of Hindu nationalism in Indian political discourse. His was a life dedicated to the pursuit of a Hindu nation. Sharma's book recounts how the 12 year old Savarkar led a march of his classmates to a village mosque to re-

venge the atrocities committed against Hindus during the Muslim-Hindu riots in Bombay and Pune in 1894-95 and earlier in Azamgarh in 1893.

Human history is rife with revenge but very little of reconciliation even though pacifists like Raj Mohan Gandhi and others work relentlessly towards that cause. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh which in English means National Volunteers, models itself on the philosophy of Savarkar. Sharma writes that Savarkar greatly admired the Muslims because for him they represented all that was deficient or missing in the Hindus. He admired the political and religious fervour of Islam. Savarkar believed that the principle of theocratic patriotism was the underlying strength of Muslims. His belief was that all those born in the Indian soil are indigenous to India and hence Hindus. To him all other faiths are non-indigenous implants since they did not emerge from India. Hence the Ghar Wapasi programmes of the Sangh Parivar.

Bhogtoram Mawroh and Albert Thyriang have elucidated the dangers of the NiamKhasi-Niamtre adherents joining the RSS bandwagon as a bulwark against other organised religions. Frankly speaking, no one raises an eyebrow when Christians shut down all roads because they are taking out a religious procession or are having some evangelistic programmes. No one raises a voice when Christian institutions single out their own for admission into schools and colleges, throwing merit out of the window. Well, there was bound to be a reaction. The NiamKhasi Niamtre followers feel boxed in by the dominant religions. They perceive themselves as victims in states that are labelled as "Christian majority states," such as Meghalaya. I write this piece as a participant observer of events and not as belonging to any religion. Over the years I realise that faith in God is not what religion is. Religion is excessively loud, obtrusive and exhibitionist in its character, at least in how it is practised here. Do we believe that people don't get angry when they hear words like 'pagan' non-believer and "not born again and therefore destined for hell" narratives drilled into their ears? Food for thought for the pious!

Albert Thyriang's was an impassionate attempt to defend the space occupied by Christianity thus far. Mawroh's was an appeal to the NiamKhasi Niamtre to reflect on their origins and refuse to ride a readymade bandwagon merely to garner political voice. Both have the right to articulate their views and RSS bhakts have no right to intimidate either of them for holding those views. We cannot allow a Taliban like grip on our thoughts and ideas.

TO THE EDITOR

NEIGRIHMS doing its best

Editor,

The news report, 'HC hauls up Centre, State for poor healthcare' (ST Feb 3, 2016) needs clarification. The Honorable High Court of Meghalaya had issued notices to the health authorities of the Centre and the State Governments over the 'pathetic' health-care scenario provided by the hospitals here, including NEIGRIHMS. This was based on the joint petition filed by the advocates, which also inadvertently mentions that NEIGRIHMS, being a super specialty hospital, does not have any super specialists and patients have to be referred for treatment outside the State of Meghalaya.

With due respect to the

esteemed order of the High Court of Meghalaya, I, availing my fundamental right to freedom of free speech and expression as an Indian citizen, would like to mention here that I (and I am sure many others) who have availed the services of the Institute, do not completely agree with what has been mentioned in the report.

Many patients both from within the State of Meghalaya and from the other states of the North Eastern Region have availed the excellent facilities and services of the existing super-specialty departments here, and have appreciated the services as I have myself referred a number of patients from outside Meghalaya (relatives, friends and even strangers, as I work here) to come to NEIGRIHMS for treatment of their various sicknesses.

Sometimes, the demand is such that there is a waiting list, depending on the severity of sickness of the patients, attending these departments. Certain super-specialty departments such as Gastroenterology, GI surgery, Nephrology, Burns and Plastic Surgery are yet to be started as there are no qualified professionals who are willing to come and settle here in Shillong. These posts have repeatedly been advertised in the Institute's website and also in leading news dailies from time to time. I write this letter, not with the intention of defending the Institute, since I work here in the medical college, but because what has been mentioned in the news report is not completely correct and accurate, and this projects the image of the Institute in a negative light. Ground-breaking complicated surgeries, which could

not be done in other hospitals, have been conducted here successfully from time to time and also have been highlighted in the past in your esteemed newspaper and other news dailies.

The Institute does strive for the best and will continue to do so, be it in strengthening the infrastructure, recruiting qualified manpower for various departments and also in the field of academics, be it in conducting research workshops, seminars, guest lectures etc. We have had national and foreign guests faculty coming from the leading Institutes in India as well as from international universities. They come to imparting knowledge and training to faculty, resident doctors, nurses, trainees, students and paramedical staff.

Yours etc.,
Sarah Ralte
Shillong

India: From Khairlanji to Hyderabad: what post-outrage?

By Avinash Pandey

Rohith Vemula's suicide will not be just another suicide in the statistical records of the National Crime Records Bureau. It will not be so in the same way the 2006 massacre in Khairlanji was not. These two cases separated by almost a decade, are far more than a statistic of ordinary crime, such as that committed in a fit of rage or planned in cold blood; they are a comment on the very body politic of the republic.

They expose the lies that the Republic has repeated so many times that it has started believing in them. They expose the myth that India has a functioning - even if inadequate - justice system, capable of delivering what it promises. They betray the fact that all Indians are not equal in front of the law, definitely not the ones condemned to live at the bottom rungs of the social hierarchy created by the caste system. They expose the celebrated justice system for needing public outrage to serve justice, even in cases that catch the public eye, and leave no doubt about the fates of those cases that do not.

In Khairlanji, a mob of fellow villagers bludgeoned an entire family to death, while also allegedly raping women and mutilating their bodies. These acts were committed due to the victims doing well despite being Dalits. The massacre led to outrage, albeit one contained largely in Maharashtra, where such protests had not been seen in decades. It forced the State to stand up, get its act together, and get the perpetrators convicted in 2010.

Anyone little more aware of the same would, however, see the travesty of justice even in the welcome but grossly inadequate Khairlanji case verdict, wherein the judge had refused to invoke the provisions of Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

The prosecution's poor arguments and the shoddy investigation helped the judge treat the case as one involving mere "revenge killing" and not caste-based atrocity. The judge did not bother to ask the question: for what did the killers seek revenge? The decision of not invoking the provision of the SC/ST Act was not oversight. It shows the systematic and institutionalised nature of casteism that keeps denying the linkage between caste and crime.

Rohith Vemula's case is similar. He had excelled in life and reached one of the premier educational institutions of the country, despite "the fatal accident of his birth" in the Dalit community. That was reason enough for casteist forces in the system to harass him to death.

The only thing different in his case is the nationwide outrage it caused. Arriving a decade after Khairlanji, the sense of anger was palpable; it took no time to mobilize people to take to the streets. The system would not have expected it; in fact, many in the social justice movement themselves might have been surprised by the ferocity of the protests, the only thing heartening in this sordid saga.

In the midst of all the genuine and required outrage, however, basic questions remain un-asked forget about being answered.

Why should a rule of law based justice system need outrage to deliver justice? What about most of those on the margins who will not be able to garner an outrage for their predicament? Vemula's suicide was not the first of a Dalit student in a university. Many before Vemula have been harassed enough for being Dalits to take the same extreme step; documentaries and media reports have counted 18 such suicides between 2007 and 2011.

Yes, they counted. There was a hint of outrage back then too. And then the trail goes cold. Not many know what happened in those cases. Not many know if any of the perpetrators got punished, say, for instance, in the case of Jaspreet Singh. The uproar over his suicide, after getting repeatedly failed by his head

of department in Chandigarh Medical College, followed by his sister's suicide, because of denial of justice to her brother, had made the National Commission of Scheduled Castes (NCSC) intervene.

The Commission later found that Singh had, in fact, passed his examination. The Commission then got the police to file an FIR under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The police had refused to file one despite Jaspreet naming the Professor in his suicide note. However, trying to find what happened afterwards and you may just hit another wall of the labyrinth that is India's justice system. Rohith's suicide-murder was preceded by many such suicide-murders; and the Khairlanji massacre was followed by many such massacres.

For instance, in the same state of Maharashtra, three Dalit girls were raped and murdered in Bhandara District in February 2014. And, three members of a Dalit family in Ahmednagar were brutally murdered later in that year. In the case of the minor girls, the police even got the rape case - established by the autopsy - changed to "accidental drowning", with a claim that the autopsy was carried out hurriedly. One must note here that Maharashtra is not an exceptionally bad place for being a Dalit. In fact, the curse of caste-based atrocities leaves no Indian state unaffected; one can keep counting cases after cases in every single of them.

So what happens to justice in these cases, the ones that get no outrage? Do they get justice too?

No, as is exemplified by recent suicide of a 21-year-old gang-rape victim from the Bhillai Town of Chhattisgarh. The girl, who was repeatedly raped by two constables and a doctor, killed herself on January 28 this year.

Her suicide note, while naming her perpetrators, indicts the justice system too; she blamed her lawyer and the judge of "harassment". She noted how the judge would not turn up on the dates her case was to be heard, and shift it to another date, and force her to come to the court again and again in acts of futility. She described how the lawyer took her signature on blank stamp papers on the pretext that the judge is sold out. "I have lost my faith in justice now and that is why I am committing suicide" is what she wrote.

Isn't the ordeal she faced inside the labyrinths of the justice system typical? Do powerful people not use the tactics of getting hearings cancelled, all the time? Are not Indian courts a place, which end up harassing the rape victims, with repeated hearings amidst probing eyes and dirty taunts that shame the victims and not the perpetrators? Do poor people stand a chance of getting justice without starving to death with cases dragging on endlessly?

The outrage way to justice can help in one case, or in a few cases, at best. India has over 3 crore cases pending. What India needs is a radical restructuring of its justice institutions to operate within the framework of the rule of law in practice and deliver justice and not occasional solace.

A question faces us. What after the fatigue in the Rohith Vemula protests sets in or after some other case worthy of popular outrage takes centre stage? Should we not be fighting for building structures right from within universities to take on such caste based discriminations and punish the perpetrators?

Put another way, we must ask ourselves if justice to Rohith Vemula would ensure an end to caste-based atrocities on campus. If it will not, then we need to fight on another front too: the front of re-engineering the delinquent criminal justice system in India.

(Avinash Pandey, alias Samar is Programme Coordinator, Right to Food Programme, AHRC. He can be contacted at avinash.pandey@ahrc.asia)

"Our lives improve only when we take chances - and the first and most difficult risk we can take is to be honest with ourselves."

-Walter Anderson

The Shillong Times

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China battling up

Whatever maybe said about the economic slowdown in China, the Chinese military are definitely most formidable. If you cannot argue with your banker neither can you overlook the barrel of the gun. It is particularly alarming that China is now taking steps to formally reorganise the People's Liberation Army (PLA) from seven military regions to five battle zones. A fort is being built which President Xi Jinping said in another statement, "and wins modern wars." Since Mao Zedong's northern army created Red China, the Chinese forces have always won wars. Now branches of the PLA would be unified under one command. The Communist party of China will hold the military in its grip. Last September, the 70th anniversary of Japan's surrender was commemorated and China marked the occasion adding new units and cutting through fortress to make the PLA efficient. It is evidently against Japan which inflicted great torture on the Chinese during World War II.

China's military regions were reorganised in 1985 to tackle Soviet Russia. Today Beijing is swayed by the turbulent waves of the South China and East China seas. Besides, Xinjiang in the north east mutinous. The Chinese military have been spiked up especially as the US is moving into the coastal waters. Chinese policy is said to be defensive-but it is really as aggressive as Louis XIVth's defensive policies. US shift hugging the borders of artificial islands in the unquiet Pacific. US Defence Secretary Ash Carter has said that the Pentagon has plans to step up arms spent in fiscal 2017 with its eyes on Chinese bayonets. With Asia-Pacific geopolitics getting erratic, alliances may fracture.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 19, 1989

Chinese eye on N.E. tribal areas across Burma border

The Thangsas are an Indo-Burmese tribe, living in both India and Burma. In India they live at Miao and other places along the Indo-Burmese border, in Tirap district, in south-eastern Arunachal Pradesh. In Burma, they occupy the Pangchow tract, on the other side of the international border. Every other day, one may find Thangsas coming to the bazaars at Miao, from the Burmese side to buy rice, clothes and other consumer items.

The Pangchow tract has unexploited gold-mines, rubies and diamonds can also be found there. This is an addition to silver, lead and zinc. But the area is utterly undeveloped. It does not grow enough food. There are hardly any schools or hospitals.

In fact, the Burmese Government, whose writ does not run west of the Chindwin river, has done nothing for the uplift of the Thangsas. It is difficult to assess the exact population of Thangsas living inside Burma. At least about one lakh of them may be there. One the Indian side, the member of Thangsas may be less.

The tribal people living in India enjoy a higher economic and social status. Often, Thangsas coming from the Burmese side compare their economic conditions with those of their Indian counterparts and feel dismayed. However, Thangsas, on both sides of the international border consider themselves brothers separated by an artificial border.

A few years ago angry over the conditions of his people a middle-aged Thangsa, called Khaplant, organized a rebel brigade to fight the Burmese. Khaplant, who has not had any formal education managed to get support from them and go his

men trained in guerrilla warfare. Incidentally, the Chinese have been interested in colonizing most of this uncared for barren and inhospitable land which however abounds in natural resources. Their help to Khaplant in the Naga rebels led by Muivah of National Socialist of Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and to the Kachins and the Shans in northern Burma, is not without a well-worked-out plan for gradual colonization.

Some time ago Khaplant with his four hundred boys joining Muivah's NSCN and is now its vice-president. Khaplant joining hands with Muivah has given the NSCN a new base, not only in the Panchow hill tract but also inside India in Tirap district. Muivah, it is learnt, has succeeded in persuading the Chinese not to have any direct dealings with Khaplant.

Some people in Tirap district have begun to feel the powerful and terrorizing presence of the NSCN which carries on smuggling activities. Agar-wood and other valuable items are smuggled from Burma into Tirap. These may include drugs. When the Thangsas in Tirap district opposed the NSCN operations, warnings were issued to them not to do so. The NSCN shot dead two persons last year in Tirap. The NSCN has also been forcing Thangsas to part with food and money. In June this year the NSCN sent a secret message to an influential Thangsa leader living near Miao, who is known to have made a complaint to Assam Rifles personnel against the terror spread by it.

China bubble bursts the Japanese way

Asian slowdown could be boon to India

By Subrata Majumder

The governor of China's central bank kept on saying in the G-20 meeting at Ankara that the growth bubble in his country had "burst". Chinese stocks have plunged 40 per cent since its June peak. The slowdown in the Chinese economy and the erase of US \$ 5 trillion equity were the focal points of discussion at the summit. No one could believe that Chinese economy would grow by 10 per cent forever at the summit. The downturn from the double-digit growth was faster than expected and underlined the global recession, said Robert Samuelson, columnist of the Washington Post. In between 2007 to 2011, China's GDP grew by annual average of 10.6 per cent. The average growth during the following three years was 7.6 per cent. In 2015, China's GDP grew by 6.9 per cent. IMF forecasted further dip in 2016 to 6.3 per cent.

China was the locomotive for global growth. It was the biggest contributor to global economic expansion. China's share in global GDP was 16.6 per cent in 2014. Given China being the pivot, the Chinese bubble burst will result in wider ramifications on the world economy. Fears loom large on emerging countries dependent on China that the slump will push global economy on the tenterhooks of recession, causing idle capacity, surge in unemployment, fall in the metal and oil prices and flight of capital from China - the biggest recipient of FDI.

China's bubble burst replicates Japanese burst in 1993. Like in Japan, asset prices soared in China. Land prices increased due to construction boom, commensurate with high growth in the economy. High land prices triggered the bubble. Major Chinese cities are crowded with growing numbers of buildings that remain dark in

the night, because they are vacant. Over-spending in infrastructure by the Chinese government for the purpose of creation of employment rather than stoking consumer demand swelled the bubble.

Japanese bubble triggered yen appreciation in 1985. Yen appreciation led to cheaper dollar availability. Japanese goods became costlier in export market and impacted the Japan's export - a nation whose economic growth was based on it. This led to a drag on the Japanese manufacturing prowess. Apprehending further dip in export, Japanese manufacturers shifted manufacturing base to Asian NIEs (newly industrial economies), USA and China in the effort to manufacture cheap products and enabled them to sustain its footprint in world export market.

Similar to Japan, China is facing two problems - high debt and ageing population. Both will deter inward investment in China. High debt, induced by government stimuli, will squeeze borrowers' capacities to spend and propel the growth. Ageing population, the byproduct of One Child policy, will shrink the availability of working population. Between 2015 and 2040, China's working population of 15 to 64 age-group will fall by 14 per cent, amounting to 140 million, projected by US Census Bureau.

Given the doomsday ahead for inward investment and the rise in the value of Chinese yuan, Chinese bubble burst will prove to be a boon to India, despite the fact that the world economy will be shaken. The upshot of Japanese bubble burst and its

favorable impact on Asian NIEs, can be the example for forecasting how the Chinese bubble burst will impact India. Japanese investment soared in Asian NIEs after the bubble burst in 1993 and became the engine for growth in South East Asian economies. Japanese investment leapt more than double in Asian NIEs till it was hit by Asian currency turmoil in 1997.

China was already on the binge of overseas investment. Following an overturn in the FDI policy a recipient country, Chinese President Xi Jinping asserted for investment abroad, launching a 'Go Out' policy in 2012. In 2013, China emerged the third biggest outward investor in the world. From a paltry overseas investment of US \$ 3 billion in 2005, Chinese overseas investment increased to US \$ 90 billion in 2013. USA was the biggest receiver of Chinese investment, despite security threat. Chinese investment also made a surging growth in South East countries including Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

Chinese investment in India is in the priority list after Narendra Modi became the prime minister. China is not a foe - a catchword hyped in media. PM Modi's zeal for Chinese investment is not new. His inclination towards Chinese investment sparked when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat. China pledged US \$ 20 billion investment in Indian infrastructure in the next five years. Close on the heels of Japan, China will offer its technical cooperation for high speed trains, bullet trains and development of Indian railway. China proved its competence in high-speed trains after bagging the award in Indonesia

against stiff competition from Japan. China pledged to set up industrial parks in India to promote Chinese investment.

There are three outcomes of Chinese investment, which will benefit to India. First, Chinese investment in India can be instrumental to normalize the political relation between the two countries, besides economic gains. After the change of guards in Chinese leadership in 2012, China was in haste to make a thaw in its bitter relation with India. China upgraded its diplomatic presence in Delhi after PM Modi took charge at the Centre. In September 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping appointed Le Yucheng the new Chinese Ambassador to India, who was at the rank of Vice Minister. China deputed ambassadors at Vice Minister rank only to those countries with which it has strategic importance. The countries like USA, Japan, Russia, North Korea and Great Britain have Chinese ambassadors at the rank of Vice Minister.

Second, Chinese investment will curb the rising trade deficit. The gushing flow of Chinese export led to a wide trade deficit. More than one-fourth of India's total trade deficit is caused by Chinese cheap export to India.

Third, the Chinese are flushed with enough cash for investment abroad. Modi government opened up the economy further by putting more doses of liberalizations in FDI policy, such as in defence, insurance and geared up ease of doing business in the country.

If USA can be the front-runner to coax Chinese investment, why should not India bury the hatchet of security threat and welcome Chinese investment? After all, FDI inflow is pivotal to "Make in India". (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Marching with the Khaki - But why Not?

Editor,
I read with great amusement the article by Mr. Bhogtoram Mawroh (ST Jan 30, 2016) titled 'Marching with the Khaki - A fight back by a disappearing people'. What caught my attention was, to quote "Its (RSS) ideology of an exclusive Hindu nation which does not recognize other belief systems has always been a threat to the idea of a secular and plural India" unquote.

In this regard, it may be stated that a belief in the concepts of secularism and plurality must first begin at home. I, for sure, am aware of many Khasi individuals, males and females, who have either been coerced or duped into conversion, especially upon the arrival of the first child. Are we, therefore to believe that other socio-religious denominations are more secular and pluralistic than the RSS.

And by the way, the most successful and secular Congress Prime Minister who brought a change to this country, had started life as a Pracharak.

Yours etc.,
B.K. Dey Sawian
Shillong - 5

Growth not visible

Editor,
Apropos the news item "Opp leaders question veracity of report on State's growth record" (ST 3rd February 2016), Mr Jemino Mawthoh, MLA has driven home his point in stating that growth should not be based only on the basis of GSDP but parameters like quality education, good health, infrastructure, proper sanitation, good water supply and housing should be taken into account when measuring economic growth. However one cannot

ignore State Domestic Product or State Income or Gross Domestic Product as it stands today in the country. We study in Statistics that there are three degrees of lying and that is lies, damned lies and statistics but we cannot run away from the fact that statistics is more acceptable than lies and damned lies. The Gross Domestic Product (GSDP) at 2004-05 prices based on the data provided in the Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region, 2015 published by the North Eastern Council, a statutory Regional Planning Body of the NER shows that the growth rate of GSDP in Meghalaya during the 11th Five Year Plan was 9.42 percent and this has shot up to 12.41 percent in 2013-14.

During 11th Five Year Plan (2007-12) the sector wise growth rate recorded 2.6 percent in respect of Agriculture and Allied activities, 2.65 percent in Mining and Quarrying, 5.95 percent in manufacturing, Construction 32.42 percent, Electricity, Gas and Water supply -0.86 percent, Transport, Storage and Communication 9.79 percent, Trade, Hotels and Restaurants 7.29 percent, Banking and Insurance registered a growth rate of 21.89 percent, Real Estate, Ownership of Dwelling and Business services 1.91 percent, Public Administration 10.38% and Other services 18.22 percent. During 2013-14 the sectors referred to above registered a growth rate of 5.07, 1.25, 13.43, 15.61, 2.11, 12.55, 10.47, 15.63, 5.35, 12.21 and 29.99 percent respectively. Comparing the data of these two periods, the growth rate in Mining and Quarrying and Construction sector have come down from 2.65% to 1.25% and from 32.42% to 15.61% respectively in 2013-14.

We cannot look for the parameters mentioned by Mr Jemino Mawthoh, in the data given in the State Domestic Product. The data on

such parameters at best would be available from the Social Sector. As per the data compiled by NITI Aayog the unemployment rate in Meghalaya in 2011-12 is 9 percent placing Meghalaya in 2nd place in the country. Infant Mortality Rate (per 1000 live) is 47 and Meghalaya ranks 23rd in the Country. The percentage of underweight children under 5 years is 42.9 and Meghalaya ranks 24th. The percentage of households with access to improved sources of drinking water in rural area is 70.4 and in urban areas it is 94.5 respectively. The percentage of household with latrine facilities is 62.9 and Meghalaya ranks 13th in the country. In connectivity infrastructure Meghalaya ranks 3rd in the country in terms of highway length per sq.km and 17th on state highways. The per capita consumption of electricity (kWh) is 690.02 ranking 19th and household electrified is 60.9 ranking 22nd in India. The energy deficit is minus 12.1 and the position is 22nd. The percentage of telecommunication density in rural area is 42.7 and 153 in urban area positioning the State on 12th and 9th position respectively. According to udyogaadhar.gov.in State Based Report, the number of MSME units registered under Udyog Aadhar number is just 1 under small enterprises. This sums up the present Socio economic progress in Meghalaya. It would be interesting to note that the State has invested a sum of Rs 34141.43 as planned investment since the 4th Five Year Plan (1969-74) to 2015-16(4th Year of the 12th Five Year Plan) and a question would naturally have to be raised whether the assets of such a huge investment financed by the Government of India is visible in the State today.

Yours etc.,
V K Lyngdoh,
Via email

Women in Indian army

Editor,

Every woman has a right to choose her own path in life. I have seen many girls who dream of joining the Indian Army. The general mindset is that women are physically weaker, so they can't do what men can do. But physical strength is not the only criterion required to join the armed forces. Women can become stronger with adequate training and reach a very high levels of proficiency in the armed forces than men. Also, we live in an age where women can no longer be sidelined as weaklings, not even physically in many cases. The government has to remove all barriers that prevent women from getting permanent commissions in every branch of the military, including combat operations. The role of women as soldiers and warriors is evident in history the world over for centuries. Indian military history also boasts of a fair share of women soldiers, Razia Sultan and the Rani of Jhansi being the most famous. The thrill and pride of serving one's motherland is an additional attraction. Research has shown that women are more perceptive and intuitive and endowed with organisational skills that help plan right down to minute details. Nature has given different attributes to both men and women and it is only right that to optimize one's productivity and the organisation's efficiency, the right person be chosen for the right job. Issues like gender discrimination have no place in decisions like these. We all must encourage girls to join the Defence services. Best of luck to all women defense aspirants.

Yours etc.,
Arnab Dey
Kolkata

Round the States

By Insaf

Anti-Corruption Steps: Maharashtra's Vendetta Politics

It's now the turn of Maharashtra to get embroiled in 'vendetta politics'. With the Devendra Fadnavis government going full steam to clean up the system and clamp down on political corruption, the Opposition is crying hoarse. The Governor C Vidyasagar Rao's nod giving the CBI the go ahead to prosecute former Chief Minister Ashok Chavan in the Adarsh housing society scam has the Congress screaming 'political vendetta' and accusing Fadnavis of pressurising the investigating agency to implicate him. In fact, the Congress questions the State Cabinet's recommendation to Rao to give the go-ahead to the CBI, when the previous Governor had turned down the same. Add to this, it's alliance partner, the NCP's charge of 'gross abuse of power' to settle political scores by the BJP-led Government following the arrest of its former Deputy Chief Minister Chhagan Bhujbal's nephew by the Enforcement Directorate under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

Then again, the Government has sent show-cause notices to 44 politicians, mainly heavyweights of the NCP and Congress, barring them from contesting polls to co-operative bank boards for 10 years after it amended the Maharashtra Co-operatives Act, 1966, and dissolved the boards of several loss-making co-operative banks, following RBI guidelines. While those in power justify the move as a drive to clean up the co-operative banking sector and deny any kind of 'political motive', the Opposition sees it as trying to clip its political influence. The amended Act is considered a huge setback for most politicians, who depend on their control over co-operatives-- banks or sugar mills -- to dominate rural politics. Some of the aggrieved are contemplating challenging the ordinance. Be that as it may, anti-corruption steps in the State would be more than welcome, whether political vendetta or not. However, Fadnavis will do well to look within his Government as well.

Bengaluru's Shame
Bengaluru, known as the country's IT capital, has caused much embarrassment to South Block. The shameful incident of a Tanzanian student being allegedly stripped and forced to walk "without her top" by a mob has had the High Commission lodge its protest with the Ministry of External Affairs. It was reported that a Sudanese student's car hit a local resident, who died and later that Sunday night an infuriated mob set his as well as the Tanzanian student's car on fire in north Bengaluru, where a number of African students live. While Chief Minister Siddaramiah has informed Sushma Swaraj that five locals have been arrested, the State needs to do a lot more. For only a few months ago, locals in another locality in north Bengaluru had beaten four students from Ivory Coast following complaints of late night parties. Growing signs of 'racism'? Difficult to deny as in the past South Block has had to deal with diplomats from African countries expressing concern over the safety of their students.

Delhi Stinks
Delhi literally stinks! A fact lakhs of residents baring spoiled New Delhi are waking up to. With over 1.5 lakh municipal corporation employees, including sanitation workers, on strike for over four days, heaps of garbage has been left unattended in north, east and south Delhi. This apart, doctors and paramedical staff and teachers have joined the strike in hospitals and schools run by the civic bodies adding to the woes of sick patients and students. The crisis has been triggered by Chief Minister Kejriwal now getting into a big fight with

the three BJP-run municipal corporations. While the Mayors are claiming there are no funds to disburse salaries and the Delhi government do so immediately, the latter is accusing the BJP of instigating the strike and the civic bodies of fudging accounts, which merits a CBI inquiry. Unfortunately, in this blame game, unlike the famous Kejriwal-Lt Governor Jung fight, the poor citizens are badly caught. Time Kejriwal stop being the warrior and give what he promised - 'clean' good governance.

Mahagatbandhan In UP?
Uttar Pradesh is abuzz with talk of a Bihar-like Mahagatbandhan (Grand alliance) in the making. Though Assembly elections are way off in 2017, political parties are already busy working out their maths to keep 'communal' BJP from doing a repeat of the Lok Sabha elections. In fact, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar seems to have swung into action with a luncheon meeting with RLD chief Ajit Singh. Other than smaller parties like Apna Dal and Peace Party, the JD(U) is hopeful that the Congress, which is down and out, will join the bandwagon as it did in Bihar for a 'secular front'. Though the anti-incumbency factor weighs heavily against ruling SP, and the BSP too has spoken of going it alone, the JD(U) is hopeful of either joining the united front. As for the BJP, it keeps its hopes on President Amit Shah doing a double whammy in UP. Will he be able to ride with the tide and is the grand alliance inevitable in UP? The run-up to the polls promises a year-long excitement indeed.

Now AP's Reservation Stir
Andhra Pradesh is the latest State to be caught in the cross fires of the reservation bug. Taking a cue from Hardik Patel agitation in Gujarat, the Kapu community in this southern State seeks to shake the State administration out of its inertia of not heeding to their long-pending demand for reservation under the Backward Caste category. The agitators turned violent in East Godavari - blocked the national highway, set the Ratnachel Express on fire, ransacked railway station and targeted police personnel etc. The community has accused the ruling TDP, regarded as a party of the Kammals, of not honouring a government order of 1993 for their inclusion in the Backward castes and renegeing on its promise made in 2014 to reserve some State government jobs. Though Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu says his government is committed for reservation and a Judicial Commission constituted, wonder for how long the fire will be doused?

Sikkim On Rail Track?
Sikkim, the country's first organic State, can finally heave a sigh of relief. It will eventually have a railway line. The Himalayan State will thus no longer be dependent on 'national highway 10, a switchback of steep, landslide-prone rocky slopes that remains closed for days during the monsoon.' The wait has been agonisingly long, since 2009, as the ambitious Rs 1,339.48 crore project ran into trouble with wildlife activists and environmentalists. They argued the tracks would pass through Mahananda sanctuary and forest divisions of Kurseong, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and East Sikkim, known for rich wildlife diversity. However, the Supreme Court showed the green flag to the litigation-marred railway line from Sevoke in West Bengal to Rangpo in Sikkim and has asked the Railways to strictly adhere to environmental safeguards as fixed by national wildlife board. Importantly, after the project is completed the train will run through 14 tunnels or cross 22 bridges for most of its journey, perhaps setting another track record. ---INFA

A bohemian attitude, a need for self-expression are playing big in the current fashion scene, finds Pramita Bose

Are you a bohemian at heart but shy of admitting it? Well, throw your inhibitions to the wind and discover the rebel in you this season. For 'boho chic' is taking the fashion scene by storm.

Derived from the term bohemian, boho style of clothing owes its origin to a number of inspirations. It harks back to history like, folk elements, tribal culture, hippie influence, gypsy look and the retro fashion of the 60s-70s. One would also recall vintage sartorial elegance of ladies from the latter half of 19th century, a maverick way of life widely propagated by the cognoscenti living in North Kensington area of London since the mid-50s and much more.

But how does the bohemian wardrobe work for the modern women always on the go? After all, today's working women often live life out of the suitcases to manage from bedroom to boardroom. And with the trolley luggage, their sense of fashion tags along too. Be it school-kids, a college-students or office executives, the 'new millennium' women are bold as well as carefree to set their own standards.

"Boho chic is for those liberated souls who don't hesitate to experiment with fun patterns and exude a raw, individualistic appeal. A little bit of eccentricity won't do much harm if you balance the get-up with a smack of delicate charm," opines Delhi-based fashion de-



Go the bohemian way

hippie flairs and ethnicity

cakey powders or matte finishes, as you don't want to look overdone. Mostly, bohemian looks include sun-kissed complexions. Therefore embracing a light bronzer would be indeed beneficial. But listen to the alarm bell, lest you tend to go overboard. For a flawless boho pout, pretty nudes and peach hues are the way to go," advises Arora.

For hairstyles, she contends that breezy beach waves compliment boho fashion. "To be a boho queen on the street, remember to braid your tresses into a cute ponytail and for that, you must try a braided crown or a headband to spell out that nonchalant yet majestic chutzpah," she says, adding "To maintain those rocking soft messy waves, it is imperative to make a note of the products being applied to create and keep the style intact."



Offbeat yet hip, the bohemians can certainly rock the party adding a lot of character to their outfits. Heavy junk jewellery, earthy-chunky baubles, geometric prints or checks, crinkled embroidery, crushed textiles, tunic-tops, cross body purses, coin-belts, quirky hair-clips, barrettes, large tinted lenses, wide-brimmed hats and other such stuff nicely tote up to the basic bohemian fad. A floppy straw sun hat and oversized sunglasses are chic accessories to lift any outfit and give the right feel to it.

"A key feature of bohemianism is to defy stereotypes. It is eternally fresh in its approach," says designer Purvi Doshi from Ahmedabad: "The concept initially took off from the needs of tucking in loose ends of clothes hanging from one's waist or tying up those wobbly, unfastened garments (Contd on P-VII)



signer Ridhi Arora. No wonder then that unconventional floating long white skirts, baggy pants and flowy dresses grace the cupboard-racks of those individualistic ladies.

Most designers suggest a big yes to lace, crochet, fringes and other embellishments to bohemian's visible revival. "It's all about combining the fitted with the flowy," they stress "Bohodoesn't come with any strings attached. It's spontaneously beautiful. The style clubs an eclectic cocktail of casuals, 70's

alongside the classic vintage," says Arora, who emphasises a vivid, happy colour-code as the true essence of 'brazen boho beauty'. The comfort factor, plus natural tones and fabrics hold high in bohemian attire. The idea is to celebrate this footloose and fancy-free side of yours if you wish to take to the bohemian fashion. "Bohemian style is all about letting your natural self shine. So stick to minimal in the makeup department. Stay away from



It will be difficult for Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa to win Olympic medal, opines Mathias Boe during an interview with Sandip Sikdar

In a jolt to Indian hopes of a doubles medal at the Rio Olympics, Mathias Boe - Danish badminton player who is one of the world's leading shuttlers in the men's pairs event - has opined that India's premier women's combine of Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa will find it extremely difficult to pull off the vaunted feat. Though chances of a medal win are high from the Saina Nehwal-led singles contingent, 2011 World Championship bronze medallists Jwala-Ashwini remain the only realistic hope for India in the women's doubles.

Asked if he sees India clinching a badminton Olympic medal in doubles, the current World No.4 Dane replied: "No! In women's doubles there are way too many pairs who are better than Jwala-Ashwini. They are just below the 8-9 best pairs in the world but can definitely beat them once in a while. For them to reach the semifinals, they need to beat two top pairs... and that is something really difficult."

There are no Indian pairs in the top-25 of mixed doubles in the world. Commonwealth Games 2010 champions Jwala and Ashwini are the only Indians in women's top-25 at No.14 while compatriots Manu Attri and B. Sumeeth Reddy are the only Indians in men's top-25.

"In men's doubles, Manu and Sumeeth have been beating a lot of good pairs but they need to win 2-3 really good matches to reach the semis. It is possi-



Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa in action

Doubles trouble

ble because nothing is impossible in sports. If just some expert could understand and predict the results, there would be no reason to play. So of course it is possible but very difficult because competition in doubles is extremely hard,"

the reigning All-England champion said.

The former World No.1, who won the Olympic silver with men's doubles partner Carsten Mogensen at London in 2012, said the reason why India has done very well in singles but the op-

posite in doubles is because of chief national coach Pullela Gopichand.

The 35-year-old, however, did not blame the 2001 All-England Open winner, averring that if he had been in Gopichand's shoes, he would have done the same.

"Gopichand is a big part of Indian badminton. He has brought India back on the map, so to speak. His passion and knowledge is mostly in singles so it is most natural to start there. If I was building up something new in a new country

I would also start with men's doubles because that is where I can contribute and that's what happened in India," said Boe, who also has World Championships bronze and silver medals in his kitty. India has so far bagged a sole Olympic medal in badminton -- a bronze by Saina at the 2012 London Games. The country has had no dearth of talent -- Prakash Padukone, Syed Modi and U. Vimal Kumar, to name a few. Besides, the future too has many a bright lining -- twice World Championship bronze medallist P.V. Sindhu, multiple Superseries winner Kidambi Srikanth and junior World No.1 Siril Verma -- though all in singles. But Boe pointed out that "badminton is much more than just singles". "It is definitely also about doubles. Internationally, men's doubles is very high priority along with men's singles," he asserted. He feels that with time the Indian badminton doubles graph will move upwards. "It will come with time. To be a world-class badminton player takes a lot of practice. You need to start very early, practise for many hours, need to have players who are willing to sacrifice their entire lives to reach the top... and you obviously need to have the talent," said Boe. "It is a really long process and, like any other sport, it is not something that is done in five years... it takes generations. There is no reason why India can't produce world-class doubles players, but it will take time."

Sometimes I feel The Universe hates me. On the morning of writing this, I found my Fitbit step-counter hadn't re-charged, which meant that I was trapped in bed for an hour.

But even more cursed by destiny, I reckon, are the folk at the World Taekwondo Federation, known as WTF. For years, everything was fine and then along came the Internet and now everything they do sounds ridiculous.

Trophies emblazoned with WTF make people laugh, cheerleading chants ("Yay, WTF!") sound absurd, and any kind of slogan looks silly: "Don't say Taekwondo, say WTF!"

Now WTF boss Hoss Rafaty is giving up the battle and urging members to ditch the acronym and just say "World Taekwondo". I heard about this from sports-mad reader Allen Chiang, so I canvassed regular contributors to share tales of other innocent organizations with names that were overtaken by circumstances.

First up was Grexit, a US software company who were proud they had invented a new word. But "Grexit" became a political term in Europe and the nerds were soon driven mad by people wanting to discuss Greek politics. Nerds know a lot about computers but almost nothing about complex issues of Real Life, such as politics, society, putting buttons in the right holes, etc.

Then there were the many firms who have been harmed by the inability of Internet addresses to include spaces, punctuation or capital letters. Experts Exchange had a clear enough name, but its web address, expertsexchange, was read differently. The same thing happened when Pen Island became penisland, KeepPass became keepass, Who Represents? became whorepresents, and Old Man's Haven

became Old Man's Haven. The two banks merged; now they work for the bizzarrely named Fifth old information technology hardware called itself Third, which just sounds like bad math."

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

Life is unfair for WTF

IT Scrap, but it became itscrap in the web version.

Web-surfers' preference for short forms was a problem, too, as was discovered by the South Korean pottery training company which found their web name constantly misunderstood: enjopot.co.kr.

Perhaps the most ironic case of events overtaking honest intentions was the story of ISIS, which long stood for the International Society for Islamic Secularization, a group of people who are like most Muslims: modern, intelligent, lovely people. But now it's hard for members to even introduce themselves. "Hi, I'm from a Muslim group called ISIS and I-wait! I won't hurt you!"

Name changes can be awkward, too. Staff at Lakeview Typewriters in the US were happy with their business cards until the firm was bought by Allan Boring and they now work for Boring Business Systems (not a joke).

Office equipment makers in Sweden learned that their boss had decided to name their company after the Swedish word for "logic", which is "stolen", which is why tourists now stop in Stockholm to take pictures of the Stolen office goods store.

A financial reporter friend tells me that staff at the Third National Bank and the Fifth National Bank in the US had ordinary business cards until

the two banks merged; now they work for the bizzarrely named Fifth old information technology hardware called itself Third, which just sounds like bad math."

By Ranjan K Baruah

IAF: Career in the Sky

Many of us want to fly high. Whenever we see a bird or an aero plane we feel that wish we could fly too. Though it is a dream for many but for some the dream comes true. There are opportunities for young people to choose career that helps them flying in the sky. Though there are many career opportunities of activities but one of the prominent in this regard is career in Air Force. There are different types of opportunities in Indian Air Force.

The best way is to join Indian Air Force as an officer. An officer is a member of an armed force or uniformed service who holds a position of authority. To be able to lead and control, requires the ability to motivate oneself, inspire others and make tough decisions efficiently. Indian Air Forces teaches lessons in team work, developing communication skills and confidence, honing strategic and dynamic thinking and preparing you to face pressures with ease are grilled into an Officer during his training. The Air Force teaches you all, not only making men and women of young boys and girls but making them leaders in life. An officer's strength of character and strong moral compass make him/her stand out from the crowd at all times.

As an Officer in the Indian Air Force, one can inherit a glorious heritage and timeless traditions of the IAF, blended perfectly with the latest technology. As an officer in the Indian Air Force one will strategise, lead and manage. Depending on

one's qualifications, one could join one of the various branches in the IAF. Broadly the Air Force has three branches with further sub-streams:

graduation which is known as Combined Defence Service Examination or popularly known as CDS Exam. These exams are conducted by union Public

apply for the Education Branch under Ground Duty Branch. Educational Qualifications for Meteorology branch is Post Graduation Degree



(a) Flying Branch: Fighters, Transports, Helicopters
(b) Technical Branch / Aeronautical Engineering Branch: Mechanical, Electronic
As an officer in the Technical Branch, aspirant propels and manages their team to ensure that the Indian Air Force remains airworthy. One could be in charge of some of the most sophisticated equipment in the world by joining one of the sub branches based on qualification.

(c) Ground Duty Branch: Administration, Accounts, Logistics, Education, Meteorology
Aspirants may appear in National Defence Academy Entrance Test after Class XII. Students from science stream with Physics and Mathematics may appear in the entrance test. However there are also entrances after

service Commission. Students may look at the website of UPSC or newspaper for the advertisements. Aspirants may also appear in Air Force Common Admission Test (AFCAT) for joining in IAF.

There are permanent commission and short service commission in Indian Air Force. Both men and women may join in these commissions. Presently Women Officers of Education and Accounts Branch only are being considered for Permanent Commission. There are opportunities for aspirants having NCC 'C' certificate in Air Wing. Students from commerce stream may join accounts branch who scores more than 60% in their final examinations. Post Graduation Degree in any discipline with a minimum 50% mark in aggregate in all papers put together may

in any science stream like Mathematics / Statistics / Geography / Computer Applications / Environmental Science / Applied Physics / Oceanography / Agricultural Meteorology / Ecology & Environment / Geo-Physics / Environmental Biology and candidates should have scored a minimum 50% marks in aggregate in all papers of Post Graduation put together and should have studied Maths & Physics in Graduation with minimum of 55% marks in both subjects. (With inputs from the website of IAF; aspirants may visit www.careerairforce.nic.in for further details)

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

Dr. George John

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a cartoon is worth more than a thousand pictures is very true and just apt to the cartoons and caricatures of Rasapuram Krishnaswamy Laxman, shortly known as R.K.Laxman- the brother of Malgudi Days famed late R.K.Narayanan.

Laxman was the undisputed David Low and irrefutable Peter Pan of India to be consecrated and acknowledged as King of cartoons in pioneering political cartooning in India.

He visited Dehradun, then Uttar Pradesh (now Uttarakhand) in October 1990 as the Chief Guest of the Foundation Day celebration of the well reputed Welham Girls School.

This author, who incidentally happened to be at Dehradun on a visit sought a courtesy call meeting with him being known each other at Times of India (ToI), at the then Bombay and also along with late Abu Abraham, another stalwart and contemporary political cartoonist whose cartoons depicting Nehru in comical sketches and comments have been publically admired.

Nehru was the only Prime Minister, who was very tolerant and extremely appreciative of all cartoonists and that least by Morarjee Desai. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi, however, providently escaped from the cartoon cudgels and the caricature tridents of RK.Laxman.

Laxman Dada as we very fondly and most respectfully called him at ToI was an Orwellian Big Brother to me. In his usually commanding and stentorian voice told me to come down to the Welham Girls School. After reaching the school, I carefully and cautiously avoided the pre-function high-tea meeting with him with a sole selfish motive and a very calculated objective of extracting a bit larger and slightly longer slice of time with him afterwards and also to conveniently avoid the attention of others.

I quietly occupied a last row seat as an unimportant and unnoticeable participant only.

During his fairly lengthy extempore but well-measured and eloquent speech, to the jam-packed audience in a pin-drop environment, he philosophically stated that "It is very common to see a bird resembling a person"

After the closure of function, the audience, as usually expected, crowded and flocked around him-some for autographs, some others for congratulating him; while a few others for taking photographs with him.

I met him almost in isolation and renewed our association with ToI

During the initial exchange of pleasantries, I provoked him in a lighter vein referring to his speech and posed a question that: "Sir, have you spotted your favourite Kaakka" (Malayalam word for crow)

As spontaneous response and reaction, he immediately withdrew his left hand from his black coloured trousers and slowly raised it bending and turning leftwards on folding all fingers except the thumb that stood naturally turned left pointing towards his left side where the then School Principal, Mrs. Shanti Verma,

U said it @ common man



RK Laxman

an aristocratic and noble lady stood, amid burst of loud laughter and cryptic silence.

He clarified as if to relieve the Principal from her embarrassment, indicating that she had maintained the school surroundings in an environment friendly and hygienic manner, a very rare scene in usual schools and all the students, who belong to this mother crow.

The crows with its everydayness, very commonness and just universality are like the Common Man who is the true and real natural citizen at home, everywhere and anywhere. Typical cry of crow is generally considered as a forewarning of a guest's arrival by the Indian villagers irrespective of geographical boundaries and limits. Laxman was not the only person who remained artistically bonded to crows as common black beauty bird which stood poetically penned by his contemporary Malayalam poet way back in 1940 through a poem titled Kaakka (crow).

Philosophically, crows remain inseparably and inalienably attracted to RK Laxman more than any other bird because it was so alive, very much active and exceptionally alert in every landscape.

A series of crows in water colour by Laxman was exhibited in Chennai depicting the passions for crows as captured and felt by him over the years.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Accamma Alexander, the wife of late Dr.P.C. Alexander, the then Governor of Tamilnadu in honour and respect for both Laxman

This author known to Accamma Alexander, and his late husband, visited the exhibition and enjoyed the work which was intellectually and philosophically well conceived by Laxman.

Laxman as a person was unapologetically arrogant, outspoken and opinionated. He earned that indisputable, unchallengeable and tolerant position over the long six decades of sharp insightful professional struggle and sacrifices.

There are several incidents and events that this author personally knew about his short-tempered nature.

However, the frank and free quality of Laxman was deservedly respected, reciprocated rather rewarded and honoured by the country with its coveted Padma awards after the Magsaysay award in 1984. Late Mr. Girilal Jain, the then editor of ToI in the 1980's unwillingly tolerated his difference in opinion with Laxman in the long term journalistic interest of the news paper as he was an asset to the company as employee.

Indira Gandhi, who was caricatured by Laxman, honoured him gracefully with the Padma awards. The visiting U.S President as the chief guest of the Republic Day-2015 was not spared by the ailing Laxman from his bed. Obama rightly acknowledged his sentiments with a thanks without knowing the destiny reserved on the very big D-day i.e on 26-1-15, as the cartoonist will be sailing out for ever for his eternal journey as if to continue his cartoonistic "Tryst with Eternity" to devise, design and cast a "Common God" like his common man for a truly secular, tolerant and socialist India in particular and the world in general by studying and observing the Gods and Goddesses in heaven.

The Common Man, the famed creation Laxman, is a universal Indian.

This helpless and hapless Common Man, watchfully moves around in his typical style, but never utters a single word but meaningfully reacts, usually witnessed by one or two crows watching his pathetic plights from the nearby tree tops, to the world in utter confusion, and complete silence

The iconic Common Man, his societal appearance and feature just conveys the artlessness and helplessness of citizenship of watching the world loyally like a mere spectator though he never gets bored or disappointed and disheartened as if he discov-

ers new and fresh situations every day.

Ironically, Laxman was denied admission in the famed J.J.School of Arts at then Bombay to which he opportunistically responded while participating in a JJ school function as Chief Guest years latter!

Laxman was rightly acknowledged as one who represented the commonest of the common man in the streets of the country and has become quite familiar figure just reacting to the social evils, economic maladies and political ironies and situations in which he was thrown mercilessly by his rulers in service of which the Government of India thought it fit and proper to put him in the postal stamp a few years back during the 150th anniversary of Times of India.

Laxman very critically and cautiously cartooned the SLV-3 falling head down. The then former President, Dr.APJ.Abdul Kalam as then Junior scientist at VSSC-ISRO at Trivandrum was part of the launch though he later emerged as the People's President with his characteristic Kalam effect and Kalam spirit, the two attributes innovatively coined by this author.

I am unusually privileged as well as extremely lucky and fortunate that I have known him as an Orwellian Big Brother and shared an abysmally small slice of time at Dehradun in an unexpected time.

Finally, I left him with as he acknowledged my parting with his typical smile raising his usually dangled spectacles beyond forehead.

His wife Kamala was a reputed journalist well-known for her Tenali Raman serials like that of her famous brother-in-law, late R.K.Narayanan who penned Malgudi days.

Kamala passed away recently as if to very urgently join her beloved husband calling from eternity.

My soulful homage to her too along side that of Laxman who departed us with no malice towards anyone by leaving his iconic Common Man amidst us.

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambhani

Sunday, February 7, 2016

Moon semi-square Saturn on your solar return chart indicates mixed results. Rival and competitive activity will increase and you will have to contend with these issues. Some results may not meet expectations so exercise prudence before entering into a partnership. Ongoing projects will pick up speed with effective team work. You may have to pack your travel bags in a hurry. Some of you are on the threshold of embarking on an affair. There is some catching up with family members and the possibility of meeting with some family members after a long time. Finances will be stable though there could be some spurts of additional expenses. Students will fare well. Literary activities will be of interest.

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

You are expected to gain momentum and it will be a good time ahead. You will have good ventures in the field related to publishing, writing and education. You will use communication skills to attract the people which may be favorable for your professional life. Amid some minor misunderstandings your family life will be soothing and enjoyable. Health should be looked after. Stick to routine work and have a suitable diet. Matters related to your career will be sorted out soon. Be prepared and watch for the favorable time which will be coming soon to boost up your business and career. Enjoy with children and loved ones.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

You may have mixed results as predicted from the position of stars. You may be facing a not enviable position at your work place. Cooperation and amity is needed in your behavior with superiors. Think before you speak and be careful in what is performed by you in your career. There may be a temporary conflict in between your family or may they be not satisfied with your thoughts so try to be very tactful with your family and loved ones. Take care of self and your luggage in travels. There may be some expenditure which may disturb your budget, so spend wisely. Take care of your health. Your friends may help and guide you in matters related to material gains.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

The position of stars predicts that you may be in a position to care for the health of a family member. You may have to look after your family and loved ones. Your emotions and feelings about your children may bear fruit. They will work according to your desire. Professional and career matters will need more attention these days. You are clever enough to so decide well before you start a new venture. You may have to face some problems in love life or marriage matters. Avoid having contacts with unknown persons at your work place. Health will need attention. You may have to take some precautions and also take morning walk to avoid stress.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

This position of stars will give you some mixed results. Financial matters and profits will grow slow. You may take steps for entertainment and betterment of health of your family and children. Education and progress in career may get affected so you may have to consult your elders to sort out problems related to these matters. Your health will be good and may enjoy some trip with your family and children. You may have to work hard in order to maintain your image in public. Your communication skills will give you desired results in improvement of relations with people. Dispute in some common sharing matters related to property, joint finances or other resources within the family are more likely at this time.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

It is a time where you have chances of progress in profession and career. This is equally good for intimacy and friendship related matters. You may expand your social circle by image building and better communication skills. People recognize you by your talent and soft spoken words. You may have some sudden profits or achievements related to money, finance and real estate. You may have good opportunities for starting a new venture. Your marriage or love problems may get solved suddenly. Take care of your responsibilities and duties and let it not disturb your health.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

Configuration of planets at this time depicts some mixed results. You may expect some uneasiness and unfavourable circumstances. Your friends and well-wishers may not support you at this time. Take up each matter related to finance, profession

or career wisely. You may be misled by some friends or an intimate person so keep watch over what transpires. You will have to decide every matter patiently and personally, do not give any opportunity for others to interfere in your work. Your life may take a new turn. Your love or romantic related problems will be sorted out. Love and affection among your family members is expected.

Libra : (September 23 - October 23)

A favourable combination reveals that there are good opportunities for you in regard to your job, work and investments. You may enjoy a time where your public image and business opportunities may get a new perspective of progress. You should keep yourself out of emotions and feelings and remain balanced and focused. Your family and children will enjoy your company in some outing. Love and affection with loved ones is assured. Sudden expenditure is expected and it may be for religious work. You may focus on utilizing this time in some important issues.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

Stars depicts a time of monetary and financial gains for you. Take some wise steps in investments which will prove to be very beneficial for you in the long term. It may be a better time to carry your imaginations to a realistic stage. You will arrange to spend time with family, children or loved ones which will prove to be helpful in stability and peace of mind. Your courage will be remarkable and you will show your skills in order to have good combination of wits and health. Relations with friends will be good and your may enjoy good public relations. You could get involved in some charity work and improvement in social circle is also indicated.

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)

You may plan to enjoy yourself and focus on matters related to entertainment and romance. You resolve problems of finance and money now. During this time you may buy products related to cosmetics, jewelry and clothing. You may give a change to your personality and outlook which may help you to be popular among friends and associates. You may engage yourself in some renovation at home or at your business place. Your vigour and courage will help you to achieve your goal. Many matters will go slow but these will be favourable for you. Health related problems may be checked in time.

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)

Simply attending to your home affairs and making efforts for creating a loving environment and affection among your family members will give you satisfaction. Peacefully attend to your duties and give a bit more care to your professional work. You will prove to be good at making contacts in social life. You may take steps to take your career to new heights and achieving goals for success. Take care in travel and long journey for any injury. Health would need attention. Give due care to your children. Avoid showing some extra ordinary courage in matters related to friends and in public else you may get entangled in some conflict. Solve problems with a calm mind.

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)

You may have some favourable scope in profession and career related to the armed forces. There are chances of promotion in your job. You may enjoy good health now. Financial and money problems will be resolved. If you are looking to start a new business you may go for it for profitable returns. You will enjoy interactions with relatives and friends. Marriage problems or children may get solved. You may plan for a long distance journey.

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)

You will emphasize on improving your personal social image. You will get due regard from family and loved ones. This is a time where one should make efforts to make personal contacts within office or at your place of work. You will have wonderful relations with your family members and children. You may go with children and family members to an entertainment place or for religious trip. Spend time in creative ventures in order to have peace of mind. Keep up regular exercises in order to have sound and stable health. Money related problems will soon be resolved and gains are on the cards.

Go the bohemian way

(Contd from P-VI) while working in fields." She recommends skirts, dresses and drapes of all lengths and uneven cuts for an ideal boho look.

Dabbling in natural colours for sometime, Doshi notes dull greens, deeper blues, mustards, white, grey and black as the predominant palette for boho fashion. While women primarily lead the boho march from the forefront, "boys need not shun the style in vogue either", she feels. "Guys can charge up their closets with stylish shorts, waistcoats, jackets with some patchwork, trousers with unusual length, width and pockets, bracelets, head-bands, hair-slides, doodled tees with funny messages in print, et al."

Checks, squares, candy prints and geometric patterns are also doing the rounds of boho circuit according to the draper.

When you know you want to emerge fashion-friendly from tip to toe, then you cannot risk forgetting to shop for the right kind of footwear to suitably accompany your boho dresses. Slouchy distressed booties which are loose around the ankles are perfect for wearing with both shorter skirts and tucked-in skinny jeans says Arora.

Clothes and jewellery should be in harmony too. When it comes to bohemian jewellery, the more unique it is the

better. A pair of dangly earrings or oversized hoops or long hanging feathers are some of the coolest options for an immaculate look.

A statement necklace is yet another great booster to an otherwise bland outfit. Also, wood and metal bangles always look fabulous and would perhaps never wane on the style-quotient scale," according to Arora.

Arora suggests that "men should try spending on a classic pair of light-washed jeans with a loose-fitting kaftan styled sweater. They're masculine but exotic as well."

Her tips: "Please don't be afraid of sporting a bold ethnic-inspired print. Let your feet breathe with open-weave wicker shoes or peep-toe leather sandals. Avoid using overly bright chromes. Untucking your shirt, letting a scarf drape loosely around your shoulders, wearing relaxed-cut tailoring, going sockless or even skipping certain steps of your grooming routine — such as shaving — might rather help you cultivate and develop that artfully stubbed, dishevelled look."

Supporting the cause of sustainability, Doshi uses hand-woven materials like khadi and natural cottons with embroidered animal motifs of reindeer, parakeets and flamingoes. (TWF)

"The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination."

— Albert Einstein

The Shillong Times

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Racism in India

TAGORE had described India as the meeting place of a variety of races. He would have been sopped by the rash or racial outrages in India in the past few years. The latest shameful incidents was the attack on a Tanzanian woman student who was apparently beaten and stripped on the outskirts of Bangalore. All this was for the colour of her skin. It is unlikely that the incident had anything to do with a fatal accident caused earlier by a Sudanese. One recalls the midnight vigilante raid in Delhi's Khirki village led by AAP minister Shomnath Bharti against Ugandan and Nigerian women. But the atrocities on Africans who come here in search of education opportunities betray a peculiar kind of dehumiliation. For decades Indians showed lip-service to the struggle of black Africans led by great men like Nelson Mandela. But colour prejudice in India seems ingrained. It appears to be a hangover from the humiliation that Indians received from whites during British rule, an inverted contempt for Africans who are more black. It has little to do with differences, lifestyle and social attitude. Colour prejudice is also rampant in Indian society. Dark girls have great difficulty in getting married amongst Indians themselves.

The despicable anti African attitude is very much at odds with the moves at the India-Africa summit. Delhi is showing great interest in forging new ties with African nations, promoting investments in science, technology and infrastructure. In these endeavours, its main rival is Beijing. The colour prejudice shown by Indians in the atrocities on Africans in Indian cities no doubt corrodes this initiative.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 20, 1989

Short supply causes kerosene crisis

Kerosene oil the common man's fuel has suddenly become hard to get. Long queues of consumers in front of the different outlets are a daily feature. Desperate consumers depend several hours to procure, if at all, a few liters of the precious commodity.

Why has it become so scare all of a sudden?

Those in authority say that there has been a huge gap between demand and supply. There is at present a 50 percent shortfall between the demand and supply of kerosene for the Greater Shillong area. Against the estimated requirement of 45,000 liters per day, Shillong gets only 20,000 liters per day. East Khasi Hills Deputy Commissioner, Mrs. M. R. Mawlong told reporters on Wednesday that the current stock position was a precarious 86,243 liters which is barely good for two days. Unless the stock is urgently replenished there could be a further worsening of the situation.

Mrs. Mawlong regretted that in spite of repeated requests made to the Union Food and Civil Supplies Ministry over the past few years to increase the quota of allotment for kerosene nothing has been done so far resulting in grave crisis of kerosene in Shillong.

Way back in 1986, the District Administration had estimated that about 30,000 households in the Greater Shillong area would use kerosene oil as fuel and projected a demand of 30,000 liters per day on the basis of one liter per day for every household. As against this, there are 45,000 households which are using kerosene as fuel and on the basis of the earlier calculation the current demand

stand at 45,000 liters per day.

But why should the demand suddenly scare?

Mrs. Mawlong says that many households have now switched over to kerosene as fuel due to the rising costs of charcoal and firewood and as a result of efforts made to this effect for the conservation of forests. Moreover, as a result of the uncertainty and irregularity over the supply of LPG, cylinders, many households are procuring kerosene as a standby measure. These factors have contributed to the increase in demand for kerosene oil.

In addition to this there occur frequent breakdowns at the oil refineries in Assam, thus disrupting the supply of kerosene. There have also been cases of dealers reporting the diversion of supplies to other areas even before it reaches Shillong.

Elaborating on measures taken by the District administration to ease the sufferings of the consumers, Mrs. Mawlong said that an order has been passed recently restricting the quota of kerosene oil to 20 liters per family for one month's to be issued against each Ration Card. This will eliminate the scope for hoarding and profiteering by unscrupulous people who earlier used to life kerosene at the rate of five per head from retail outlets in Shillong. The headman of respective areas have been asked to forward applications for sub depots and 156 applications have been received so far which are being processed.

TIs are neither perfect nor sacrosanct

By H H Mohrmen

The Hon'ble High Court has a point in ordering the state government to come up with a legislation to empower the Traditional Institutions and after all we must give the court the credit for waking us up from slumber. Had it not been for the court order we would still blissfully continue to live with our ignorance that the institutions that we are so proud of exist without any legal sanction. It was after the court order that the state government and then the respective ADCs came up with a draft bill to empower the Traditional Institutions in the state. The question is: are these knee jerk reactions going to solve the problem? Did we honestly take the alarm bell that the court rang to come up with the best law possible for grass root governance in the Khasi and Jaintia area of the state?

If one looks at the very recent stories reported in the press, one would see that the TIs are still in a state of confusion or to be precise, 'they are in a world of their own.' The first case in point is the conflict between the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council and the Dorbar of the Hima Myllem. A cursory study of the case would help one understand that the conflict was due to the absence of transparency and the system is undemocratic and gender biased.

Another case reported in the press relating to the office of the Rangbah Shnong was an incident happened at Ummulong. A certain pressure group captured a policeman (red-handed) while he was collecting money from a truck on the NH 44 near the Ummulong police outpost. Later the Rangbah Shnong who is a well educated person clarified to the media that the policeman was not collecting money from the driver, but he just helped pass the betel nut to the truck driver. Seeing a policeman or a person in plains-clothes waiting for the trucks adjacent to the Ummulong police outpost is no longer a surprise.

Anyone who has travelled on the Shillong-Jowai road would see this happening every day. Why did the RS make the clarification on behalf of the police in the first place? Isn't this a case

of abusing the office of the RS?

Lastly, is the case which has to do with the Eleka Narpuh's objection to the government declaring Narpuh Reserve forest as Eco Sensitive Area. This makes one wonder and question what are the terms of reference of the office of the T.I.? What is it that they can do? Or is there anything that they cannot do? Or can they do anything they like under the sun? The ADCs or the State government should clearly state what the mandate of the TIs are. What are the do's and don'ts of the TI? Or can they just object and become stumbling blocks even for good projects or causes such as declaring Narpuh as ESZ?

In the first place the Narpuh reserve forest is one of the very few forests which are under the jurisdiction of the state forest department. Hence the government has every right to protect and preserve this pristine forest for posterity. Secondly, the villages on the fringes of the ESZ were consulted and made aware of the change of status in the forest. It is also important to note that the villages will receive many benefits from the forest, most importantly clean water. It must be noted that the portion of river Lukha which flows between the Narpuh reserved forests is still clean and free from any kind of pollution. It is only when it meets Lunar that the river gets contaminated. The greatest gift that the forest can give to the people of the area is pure clean water.

Are people going to lose anything if the RF is converted to ESZ? Is the ESZ going to have any negative impact on the tribal way of life of the people in the area? The people are not going to lose anything when the forest is converted to ESZ, but it will only help them continue with their traditional way of living close to the nature. In fact they will be the envy of their neighbours because they will only breathe clean air provided by the forest.

The Narpuh eleka has

no locus-standi to protest against the move to declare Narpuh reserve forest an ESZ, because it was responsible for converting tribal land in the Narpuh area and selling it to the corporations. Isn't it true that the duty of the TI is to protect tribal interests? And if so, then is allowing tribal land to be transferred to corporations in the interest of the tribals? Not only industrial sites for construction but as many as 8 mega cement plants were sold to companies. However, a large tract of forest land which has limestone deposits is now in the hands of the cement companies. Can this transfer of tribal land happen without the knowledge of the eleka?

Can Narpuh eleka still claim to be an institution for protection of tribal interest when it looks like it only caters to the interest of the cement companies? But the most important question is whether we can say that the protest is not as much in the interest of the tribals of the area but the cement companies? This is either a case of blowing some other trumpet or the eleka going beyond its brief.

The government should come up with a clear cut brief to regulate the functions of the institutions because they are not omnipotent. The government should also take note the point made by the court that the office of the TI should be under the purview of the RTI. If the TIs are involved in implementing government schemes and projects then there is no way that the TIs should not fall under the purview of the RTI. Many government schemes and projects fail because the TIs which are implementing authority/agency misuse the funds meant for the projects. Many cases were filed against the secretary of the VEC for misusing the MNREG funds. Many school buildings or community halls are of substandard quality and sometimes are not even completed because of corruption. Therefore there cannot be power without responsibility. Hence the TIs have to be under the purview of RTI.

The legislation should also make sure that people who are elected to the office of the TIs should be duly compensated because there is no free lunch in the world and volunteerism will not work on a long term basis.

The state government is also right to restrict government servants from involving in the running of TIs or other Associations including religion. To say that barring government servant from participating in the running of TIs will affect the function of many dorbar shnong is sheer ignorance. How many dorbar shnong in the rural areas have government servants as their headman? Isn't it true that most of the Rangbah Shnongs in the rural areas are farmers/ traders or even contractors? Isn't it true that cases of government servants becoming Rangbah Shnongs are prevalent only in the urban areas and in the suburbs of the towns and cities? And don't we have literate people in the villages?

The active involvement of government servants in association or even religious organizations affects their performance and decision making. For example if the chief secretary/secretary or head of other government department is a tymmen basan or a rangbah balang, it is very natural that he will be biased and show favouritism towards his religion or co-religionists. There are also cases where government machinery and time are used for association or church work and even government vehicles were used for the same.

There is no better time to address these vital issues; hence the government should do the needful. TIs are neither perfect nor are they omnipotent or sacrosanct and if we want to keep our tradition, there is only one way and that is to bring in changes which will make TIs more effective and relevant to our contemporary society. It matters not who makes the legislation be it the ADCs or the State government and better still if all the two institutions come together to bring the best possible grass-roots administrative system for the state that everybody will be proud of.

America has changed!

By M. J. Akbar

Wonders, we have been told more than once, will never cease, but we just might be witnessing a wonder that is too wonderful for words. A self-professed socialist has just become a credible candidate in the race for America's White House. Grey-haired Bernie Sanders, with the demeanour of an academic and manner of 1970s leftist, also - gulp - tells his cheering audiences that his candidacy marks the beginning of a revolution. Socialist. Revolution! What on earth is happening in the land of the free capitalist and the home of the brave citizen? The answer is not complicated. The young are happening once again, and they are tired of a financial system that is loaded in favour of a one-percent elite that is shovelling off an indiscriminate proportion of the wealth of the nation.

Just a decade ago any American politician foolish enough to claim any infection from the dread ideological virus called socialism would have been locked up in the political equivalent of a lunatic asylum. It is not as if the world's predominant economic superpower never had a left, but it never crossed the fringe. There were idols in the star-crossed Seventies and Eighties like Ralph Nader, but they were consumer activists and trade unionists who worked to a limited agenda. When they did try and get into a national race they barely got two percent of the vote. Even they faded along with the 20th century, their mission partially achieved since they did induce practical reforms and improvements in products they targeted. Their very success made them irrelevant. The big beasts of Wall Street remained masters of the economic jungle, distributing their middle class-to-millionaire dreams with dexterity, and redefining their capitalism with aplomb without ever making the mistake of compromising their leadership.

It worked. The voters, by a huge majority, bought the line that capitalism was synonymous with the flag, and who can blame them? This track had a record. It had made America the richest nation in history, fueled by opportunity and supported by income growth that improved ordinary lives. Americans saw red, literally, at the mention of socialism, a belief-system they equated with the grave threat that the post-World War 2 generations faced, the Cold War against the Soviet Union. It was the defining conflict of the second half of the century, fought with the tense and consuming fervor that only an existentialist threat can generate. The threat of nuclear annihilation

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hovered over the Cold War. Victory in the Cold War, logically, reinforced faith in the market philosophy that had defeated.

And then, the American right became a victim of its own success. The turning point was surely the financial collapse in the first decade of this century. The malady was diagnosed: greed, or more accurately, avarice beyond belief. Income disparity rose to cynical heights. The bankers could do no wrong, even when they were palpably caught out during the housing collapse. America bailed out Wall Street instead of holding its architects accountable.

The reaction was not immediate, but it had to come. It first became perceptible when books proved, and movies projected, that Wall Street had become a villain after a century of life as a hero. The hit of the moment is a film called *The Big Short*, based on Michael Lewis' book. Lewis rails at the immorality of bankers, now a tribe that had become a law unto itself.

But it is not so easy to change the meaning of symbiotic term in popular culture. How did 'socialism' become acceptable in public discourse?

I discovered the answer from a television debate on CNN. American news shows are tough, but fortunately no one is allowed to scream. Television restricts the brawl to a spectator sport like fake wrestling. You can actually hear what someone is saying. One astute commentator explained that 'socialist' owed its rise to the summit of politics thanks to the most right-wing news channel, Fox News. For nearly eight years, ever since Barack Obama became President, Fox News has been describing Obama as a socialist in the hope of vilifying him. But viewers like what Obama was doing, and if this was really what socialism was all about, then they had no problem with it.

Brilliant. In a fascinating twist, the surprise ascendance of both Sanders and his extreme opposite, Donald Trump, is because they have instigated the middle class and the poor against an establishment that is beholden to conventional powers, most notably the power of money. Trump shrieks; Sanders is mellifluous. Trump is racist, Sanders inclusive. But one leads an insurrection from the right, and the other a rebellion from the left. Both demand the death of a status quo that caters to the miniscule.

No one knows how this will momentum will shift in a fortnight, let alone how it will end. But one thing is certain. Americans have changed. Politics must follow.

A wasted opportunity

Editor,

The South Asian Games' coming to Shillong has been a blessing to a great extent. We see a lot of repair works and beautification in the city. We take pride to be able to host part of the Games here and I believe that this will boost sportsmanship in the State. Meghalaya has not been much in the sports map of the country. Yesterday the opening ceremony in Guwahati was a feast to the eyes. There was a lot of cultural aspect in the whole programme highlighting the diversity and beauty of North-east cultures. However, one needs to observe that we feel a sense of shame to see that Wah Umkhras which runs close to our games' venue, is in such a pitiable state. We may glory in our beautiful stadium, spacious playgrounds and a scenic beauty around them, but the filth of Wah Umkhras takes away all that sense of pride. What an impression we will leave in all those participants coming from other countries? Perhaps they will go back telling their friends at home about

the state of our city and the unhygienic lifestyle we follow. The opportunity of cleaning the river had come with these Games and definitely the central government with its "swachh bharat" campaign would have easily supported the State government with the necessary finances. Unfortunately, it looks like our Government has been asleep all the while and suddenly woke up only to realize that the Games are at the doorstep. This was the golden opportunity that we should have grabbed but now it is gone for good. I do not know now when the cleaning of Wah Umkhras will take place? Perhaps we might have to wait for another South Asian Games or something of the sort.

Yours etc.,
Barnes Mawrie SDB,
Via email

Late night partying and other menace

Editor,

As a resident of 3rd Mile Upper Shillong I would like to state some facts about this area which extends from the main road junction towards the anterior of St. Paul's Seminary,

TO THE EDITOR

Bad time management at SAG

Editor,

My brother who is still in school, has been chosen to light the lamps for the opening ceremony of the South Asian Federation Games here in Shillong. On February 5, he left for the so called practice session at 2 pm because he was asked to reach at around that time. But what bothers me is that he went there with the intention to practice but all he did for almost five hours was wait. He just waited for the practice session but there was none. Those in charge of this event should be more organised and sensible. It's a stupid wastage of time and easily avoidable if only we all take pour jobs more seriously.

Yours etc.,
Alanah Syiemlieh,
Via email

SAG unnoticed by national media

Editor,

Your etc.,
Gagan Jain,
Via email

Riatsokhklur and the Government reserved forest. All sorts of people come here and mix with the locals. As a result lawlessness is the rule of the day. Alcoholism, drug-addiction, abusive language, blasting of music from the cars and parking of vehicles at night on the roadside and indulgence in all kinds of unwholesome activities happen here. Then there are those that party late into the night and blast loud music. It takes a toll on everyone in the neighbourhood. When anyone approaches the party animals the answer is, "We play music in our compound; if it reaches your compound it is not our problem!" Music would carry on up to 2 a.m. Complaining to the local authority has no impact. Taking it as challenge another party was held in the neigh-

bourhood recently with loud music till past midnight.

Based on these facts, I feel that only the law enforcing agency can bring solace to this area. I would suggest setting up of a Police Out-Post in this part of Upper Shillong so that lawlessness can be controlled. I also fervently appeal to the concerned authorities to look into the matter with all sincerity as this will go a long way in helping the youth to realize the menace of living an unwholesome life.

Yours etc.,
Kosini Hynniewta
Shillong -5

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 positive attitude can really make dreams come true - it did for me."

— David Bailey

The Shillong Times

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Culture of delays

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi took a dig at the UPA government for the failure to implement the Assam Gas Cracker project on time. He slammed the culture of delay in adhering to the timeline of any project. Inaugurating the Rs 35,000 cr., 15 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) oil refinery of the IOL at Paradeep, Modi harped on the same theme. He said he would have been happy if the project had been completed 15 years ago. Such delays made the projects expensive and the fault lies with bureaucrats and policy makers. If the projects are implemented on time, people get the benefit on time. The Paradeep refinery was planned in the 1990s by the Odisha Congress State Government. The PM ensured that the new refinery would enable rural households in the country to cook without firewood or coal. The smoke inhaled from such cooking is injurious. Modi said Odisha had added 11 lakh new LPG connections within a year since Dharmendra Pradhan became the petroleum minister. He emphasized the need for energy sufficiency and less dependence on crude oil. He has asked for import of crude oil to be reduced by 10 percent by 2022. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik thanked farmers for agreeing to leave their land for the refinery project.

It is obvious that the Prime Minister is taking sides on the eve of the assembly elections. The litany of accusations against the UPA government's work in the past is expected to have an adverse impact on its results in the assembly polls a few months later. But the proof of the PM's claims will depend on the NDA government's performance during its tenure this time.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 21, 1989

Peremptory

Meghalaya government has put a ban on house building in large parts of this capital city as evident from a statement of the State's Urban Development Minister in this behalf. The other areas left out from this fiat, such as Laban and its neighbourhood at one end of Mawkhar and Jaiaw at the other area already too congested with too many buildings and structures of diverse types and specifications not to allow further scope for any more constructions even without the restrictions now intended for the other areas. Whatever little scope for new constructions exists in the city proper and its extended areas are precisely in those segments which have been marked out for this stringent ban. When we talk of congestion in a city we do it in terms of population and we fail to see how the population and we fail to see how the population factor can be regulated by refusing permission for new constructions which in effect would be only adding to congestion in a n area where the restriction is in operation.

Shillong is growing and gaining in importance due to a variety of factors not all of which are amendable to government's or even the city planners wishes. The inflow of the unwanted and the superfluous can be controlled and should be. A developing State, however, has willy nilly to accommodate a fairly large population which are needed for the sake of speeding up the development process itself and a large part of this burden has to be borne by the capital city. Shillong, moreover, is the hub of the entire north-eastern hills and for maintaining this eminent position to the city has to put up with a variety of demands from diverse quarters which cannot be wished away so easily. This city needs more built area by all means and not restricting the same. Cost of construction of new buildings is already a deterrent to housing activities in the pri-

vate sector. Investments which would still have been forthcoming under this head would now be deep-frozen, thus introducing a negative trend in the overall State economy.

We fully appreciate the need for regulating building constructions for the sake of town planning in the interest of city beautiful and an attractive tourist spot for which Shillong has all the potentials. Congestion in particular areas of the city has by all means to be countered. This involves all policy which will have a taken some very basic measures such as extension of the city limits. Whatever has been conceded so far has been done for the sake of institutional needs such as, for instance, those of the Defense establishments or the NEHU campus and the like. Land acquisition by private persons and bodies has been rendered rather more difficult even for those who have not to suffer the disabilities the non tribal's have to encounter. The Shillong Development authority, whose business it would be to take into consideration all aspects of the divergent needs of this city, is yet to see the light of the day. The Urban Development Minister should in all conscience hold his hands till he has duly been briefed by experts going deep into the complexities of the overall housing and allied problems in Shillong. For the intervening period, the Municipal Board can be trusted to be stringent enough in sanctioning building plans. The new look Board although yet again a nominated body, can at least be expected to fulfill this vital role allotted to it. The Urban Development Minister's peremptory decision, in fact, can well be interpreted as a virtual encroachment on this statutory body's normal authority.

Aligning Between Disruptive and Sustainable Traditions

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

Sustainable tradition always relies on established norms where successive improvements thereon enriches the practice of such traditions and make it relevant for every generation. In other words, sustainable tradition gradually develops in the process of refinement and emerges into an established institution without diverting from the basic principles but can be modernized to suit the individual's needs. To further understand this concept let us consider marriage as an institution in our Khasi society. The nomenclature for a surname or a lineage from the mother side has become an established norm that rendered any attempt to change this system meaningless and ineffective to the extent that no external forces or agencies can alter or force to change its course. The fact that this tradition has remained sustainable is because the logic behind it is socially embedded even if a person has adopted new culture or has different beliefs.

There are some traditions that appear sustainable for some time but disappear and vanish unnoticed. Just as the computer and digital devices have replaced the analog system of television and typewriters, the internet and other new developments have changed the culture and tradition of communication today. They are disruptive in nature because they pose a challenge to the existing models with their new scope and features. At the initial stage these disruptive devices seem to be irrelevant to the general public, but when the usage of these devices become more user-friendly they reduce wastage including time and space are safer to use with minimum energy. They ultimately displaced other old devices permanently. For instance, the primitive role of the maternal uncle in Khasi society towards his clan is becoming a thing of the past and less significant except for reasons of maintaining a cordial relationship. But his role as a father is more important and needed for the overall development of his

own family. A family without a responsible father cannot be substituted in totality by a maternal uncle. There is a drastic change in tradition here which is good for the family and well-being of children. In the past, marriage in Khasi society is about relationship building between two clans whereas today marriage is all about the individual and various others reasons.

In the same way, disruptive traditions are either beneficial or detrimental but that depends on the scope they offer and the utility they create. For example, fashion and music vis a vis local or indigenous costumes and music which we see and witness today. In the long run these disruptive traditions become sustainable traditions when the community or society chooses to adopt these cultures as they are found suitable and useful. Therefore, for customs or traditions to flourish they should suit the requirement of each and every individual otherwise a clash will ensue if imposed forcefully. Barring government employees from participating in traditional practice is ironic and will undermine the social fabric within the society because a locality community is a platform where people from all works of life should work together for the welfare of their own society, but preventing a person from holding dual profitable post is another issue otherwise this prohibition should also cover those government employees who are active officer bearers of religious organizations earning extra income in the form of honorarium.

When it come to traditional administration, the foundations and the causes of sustainability should be re-examined as to whether they are still relevant or not and what contributes to their sustainability is in fact a point to ponder. What makes our 'Hima' or 'Raid'

sustainable thus far? Is it the Sixth Schedule or is there something else and more? As a point to be noted, can the Hima Mylliem sustain without 'Iewduh' and other local markets or without a sizable commercial land under its disposal? This may apply to other 'Hima' as well while lands in the borders without sizable income are like sheep without a shepherd.

Over the years our Dorbar Shnong have sustained themselves not because of any prescribed norms but mainly on public consensus and the complacency of the residents who constitute that community, towards their elders. Out of that a consensus system of self governance emerged that seems to offer convenient living and well-being in the society. But all of a sudden this state of complacency was challenged and on the verge of being displaced when faced with real confrontation as happened from the recent judicial activism. It is here that the danger of unregulated tradition lies, which led the Dorbar shnong of Pamrakmai village in East Jaintia to promulgate authoritative rules out of emotion with arbitrary justification and intruding into the personal choice of a person.

Truthfulness, freedom and liberty from exploitation are the established norms and the High Court was right when it reacted because the primary objective of the judiciary is to protect the individual from any form of deprivation and exploitation. If the Court on the contrary failed to protect and administer justice to affected individuals who approach it, then what is the point of having a judicial system? What to eat and who to marry is an individual freedom and individual personal right. No organization or institution should interfere and impose any restriction. There is no doubt that we have been confronted with disruptive developments ever since the High Court order on Headmen, but, it is also up

to our leaders and elders to explore options to bring about a compatible traditional governance in the spirit of the founders of the Khasi National Dorbar when they anticipated a disruption in the system of governance once the British left the region.

The situation itself proves that our traditional system is very fickle so how can we blame the institution of justice when disruption occurs in the traditional practice? Our politicians had a chance once as legislators but failed to see that these issues are well taken care before something bad happens. Their complacent attitude and behavior while in office reflects a dearth of visionary leaders in the society. The headmen too should not stick to their old guns, but rather create a platform to solicit better options than calling rally after rally expressing displeasure and putting the public under pressure. But looking at the custodian of customary laws the District Council, how far can the elected representatives understand the perplexities of the issue or does it matter to them anyway since District council is just a political alternative that we all know? The fight to regain recognition has become a one man mission of who ever occupies the CEM's berth and the absence of a consolidated effort clearly explains the attitude of our elected representatives. So where is the uniqueness of traditional governance here?

It is high time to reinvent our traditional practices and align it accordingly in order that a vibrant society should not be deterred from sustaining itself or to disintegrate into many sects and sub-sects. A stand-alone traditional system of governance will in no way sustain the advancement of globalization. Let's not forget that disruptive technology plays a vital role in the development of any nation. If Start-Up India advocates for an environment with lesser rules and procedures, and the blind in China can use smart cards for metros and other utilities, then where are we in comparison to the rapid changing world?

RSS rejects idea of secularism

By Bhogotam Mawroh

BK Dey Sawian's recent letter is a very important reminder of the misgivings that the followers of indigenous religion have against Christianity and explains why some are inclined towards RSS, which is against conversion.

All proselytisation movements, whether it is religious or secular, employ various tactics that can include coercion and duplicity. As for the question whether "other socio-religious denominations are more secular and pluralistic than the RSS" the answer is 'No'. Secular simply is the opposite of being religious and therefore by definition RSS or any other socio-religious denomination can never be called secular. They may engage in secular activities like social work, but if that is done with the intention of proselytisation, the distinction breaks down. The Indian state however is a different matter altogether.

The Preamble to the Indian constitution clearly states that India is a 'Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic'. One may argue that the term 'Secular' was a later addition, inserted during the 42nd Amendment in 1976, but the idea of secularism was always present. During Independence when the country was divided on religious lines, while Pakistan chose to identify itself as an Islamic state, India didn't declare itself a Hindu state. RSS's official policy of 'Hindu Rashtra' is a clear diversion from that. Supporters of the idea of 'Hindu Rashtra' might choose to defend the idea in many ways. One is by stating that the term Hindu originated as a description of people who live beyond Sindhu/Indus by the Greeks and hence it is non-sectarian. However, this line of argument does not consider how the term has been used ever since. The origin of the term does not determine how it is understood and used at current times. The term pagan was derived from the Latin paganus which in classical Latin means villager, rustic, civilian, non-combatant. Is this how pagan is being understood today? Another line of argument is that Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life, i.e., culture. Firstly, religion is a form of culture and every religion provide guidelines regarding how to live, i.e., way of life. And secondly, Hinduism is a distinct religion with its own distinct history, philosophy, myths, rituals, deities which are different from those of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism and for that matter Niam Khasi/Niam Tre.

Most importantly though, the debate regarding RSS's belief in the idea of secularism has actually been settled long back as the

organization has itself constantly rejected the idea of secularism for India. This was recently reiterated in a RSS seminar held in Chennai where RSS's All India Prachar Pramukh Manmohan Vaidya claimed that the concept of secularism is of foreign origin and all faiths and sects in India are one. Equating foreign-origin with being unsuitable is completely ridiculous and RSS does not believe that all faiths are one, which can be understood from its ideology and actions that stand in complete contrast to pluralism.

Pluralism, for me, can be summed up in the phrase often used to describe India 'Unity in Diversity'. In this regard, I would like to bring up MS Golwalkar's (RSS ideologue) own thoughts on this subject matter. According to him, the three internal threats that India faces are Muslims, Christians and Communists (from his book 'Bunch of Thoughts' which is freely available in the RSS official website). In this book he talks about the Muslim menace, termed Christians as being "bloodsuckers" and described Communism as "a sworn enemy of democratic procedure". It is difficult to talk about unity in diversity when one considers those who don't agree with their viewpoint (diversity) as enemies. This antagonism to other faiths is clearly brought out in the infamous Babri Masjid Demolition in which the 'Liberhan Ayodhya Commission' report (freely available on internet) implicated the RSS and VHP. More than a thousand people died in the ensuing riots. Destroying the symbol of faith of one community for constructing that of another is a murder of pluralism. This is but a natural progression from Gowalkar's analysis and an organization such as RSS which believes in it is neither for Secularism nor Pluralism.

I would agree with BK Dey Sawian that "the concepts of secularism and plurality must first begin at home". Meghalaya is a Christian-majority state not a Christian state, and the state cannot discriminate in terms of religious affiliations. If it does so, we have the right to protest against that. But while secularism can be enforced by the state, pluralism is a little different. It needs acceptance of differences by the society at large. Within our Khasi society we have Christians, Hindus (not Niam Khasi/Niam Tre type but mixed family), Muslims and atheists as well. In this, I do believe, we have a lot to do. But replacing one kind of exclusivists' ideology with another is not the solution.

accessible by patients who have been referred for physiotherapy by the doctors.

Finally, being a gender activist I cannot resist voicing out this thought: "I wonder if the sensitivity and all the other attributes that I mentioned above are because it is a Unit run by women".

Yours etc.,
Darilyn Syiem,
Via email

End of an era

The highly respected cartoonist Sudhir Tailang is no more. His cartoons were not only highly enjoyable, but very thought-provoking as well. I vividly remember a cartoon, which he had created in July 2012, after the much-hyped discovery of the God particle. It was indeed the Kohinoor of all. The destitute, while searching for food in a garbage vat akin to dogs and rats, asks, "Did you find the God Particle? I'm very hungry brother!" The cartoon should act as an eye-opener

for those who try to judge progress and modernity of society through scientific achievements only while the plight of the hungry millions is consigned to oblivion. That the destiny of the starved stomachs will not change a bit despite the much-hyped discovery of God Particle had been brilliantly illustrated by Tailang. Scientific research is good, but eradicating hunger and malnutrition from the society should remain our greatest concern.

Through this letter let me salute the great humanitarian in Tailang. He might have physically left this mortal world, but Sudhir Tailang will continue to reside in the hearts of those who strive for equality for all.

Yours etc.,
Kajal Chatterjee,
Kolkata -114

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

TO THE EDITOR

Unfaithful Ministers!

Editor,

Apropos the news item about the four ministers supporting the idea of government servants as Rangbah Shnongs (ST Feb 5, 2016), my views are that if government servants are allowed to join pressure groups including becoming Rangbah Shnong, it will be as bad as allowing them to take part in election campaigns and contest political elections. Then we will witness indiscipline, politics in the bureaucracy, bad work culture and more corruption in government offices. The ultimate sufferers will be the common man. I am shocked to note the four Ministers who instead of supporting and protecting the interests of the state are instead supporting those who want to bring down the authority of the state machinery. I suspect they are doing this for cheap politics. Such ministers do not deserve to remain in the chair.

Yours etc.,
Badondor L Nongrum,
Shillong-8

Flip-flop Govt decisions!

Editor,

The cabinet has unanimously agreed on the amendments to the Service Rules where Government employees are no longer allowed to hold office in the Dorbar Shnong and other

public institutions. The four ministers who had an after-thought and shot off a letter to the Chief Minister asking him to reconsider this amendment must have been part of the Cabinet decision. Isn't this what is called collective responsibility? Or is this a flight of fancy of only the Chief Minister, Dr Mukul Sangma? If so, then does it mean that the CM is a dictator who does not entertain dissenting voices from his colleagues?

I agree with HH Mohrmen in his article, 'Tis are neither perfect nor sacrosanct' (ST Feb 8, 2016) when he says that government employees are not the only ones blessed with wisdom to run the affairs of the Dorbar Shnong. This belittles all those others who are equally competent to engage in governance and public affairs. A Government employee as a Rangbah Shnong or as executive members of the Dorbar Shnong constitute a major conflict of interest because the Dorbar cannot be truly free to express its views and as Mohrmen says even the Dorbar Shnong turns into a replica of the Secretariat. The CM ought not to pass any resolution if he does not have the spine to stand by it.

Yours etc.,
Arnestwell Shadap,
Via email

Let's take environment seriously!

seriously!

Editor,

Shillong is in dire need of a vehicular emission testing center in view of its extremely poor air quality. Though there were reports of our transport minister visiting some Hi Tech facility in Haryana and trying to replicate the same here, in the meanwhile why can't we have a simple Maruti van stationed at Barik like we used to many years ago.

Another problem is Meghalaya vehicles entering Guwahati are invariably hauled up and fined at Khanapara for want of a Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificate. Similarly trucks which are the biggest polluters should also be tested at weigh bridges. Environment conservation which at this point should be the highest priority for all governments seems to be pushed to the backburner in our State. They do this at their own peril, for in the future rhetorical issues like economic development, jobs etc. will be overtaken by our basic survivalist needs such as air, water and organic food. One should also keep in mind that industry based economic development will always be at the cost of clean air and water directly or indirectly. Haven't we seen enough in the last hundred years? At what cost and for whose gain is all this?

Yours etc.
Gagan Jain,
Via email

Kudos Physiotherapy Unit CHS

Editor,

In the last few months I have been availing of the services of the vibrant Physiotherapy Unit, Civil Hospital, Shillong and the sensitive treatment that I received has inspired me to write this. At the outset let me clearly point out that by writing this I do not mean to undermine the other departments with which I have had little experience.

This Unit (Presently has eight Physiotherapists who are all women and a couple of support staff, who are constantly on their feet. This is not to imply that the other health care providers in the rest of the hospital are otherwise. Now, what impressed me most is the team work amongst them. For instance, a job, like Cervical Traction for a patient, that was started by one is quickly attended to by another when the need arises. I did not see the usual grudging attitude as is usually seen in government set ups. There is pleasant, politeness and patience from each of them and this attitude is extended to every patient irrespective of class, creed or caste. Throughout my treatment there was not a day that I did not want to go there. Moreover, this small Unit is clean and ideally located near the Orthopaedics Department making it easily

"For in the final analysis, our most basic common link, is that we all inhabit this small planet, we all breathe the same air, we all cherish our children's futures, and we are all mortal."

—John F. Kennedy

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 179 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2016

The Myanmar scene

POLITICAL developments in Myanmar are proceeding very slowly. The National League for Democracy (NLD) party won a landslide victory in the November 8 general elections. But the leader, Aung San Suu Kyi has been stymied by the Myanmar Constitution which says that no one with a foreign spouse or children can hold the executive office. The names of the country's next president and two vice-presidents will be revealed on March 17. That will mark the transition of power from a military government to a democratic one. Whatever happens, there is no denying that Suu Kyi will be at the helm, even if from behind the scenes. She has been negotiating with commander-in-chief General Min Aung Hlaing on having the debarring clause suspended from the Constitution. The clause can be legally scrapped only by a 75% plus one vote in parliament. The military holds 25% seats in parliament which means the NLD cannot scrap the clause on its own.

Kyaw Htwe, a senior member of the NLD has said, "the negotiations will be positive for our leader Aung San Suu Kyi to become President". But Yan Nyo Theim, a political analyst in Myanmar has said that the outcome of the negotiations is likely to be uncertain and the process will be time consuming. One thing is clear. The NLD owes its massive and most unexpected victory to Aung San Suu Kyi's charisma and leadership and cannot run the government without her guidance. If the clause debarring her is not removed, she will have the same role in the NLD government as Sonia Gandhi had in the UPA government. That is not as satisfactory as it should be.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 21, 1989

96 cars enter Himalayan Car Rally

Ninety-six cars left the ramps of the Jawaharlal Nehru stadium this morning to begin a five day battle for supremacy over some of the most difficult terrains in the world in a rally known to be one of the toughest. The 3,000 Km eighth Himalayan Car Rally, to be completed in four legs, was flagged off by the Lt Governor of Delhi H.L. Kapoor the Australian rally champ Davib Officer, driving the Mitsubishi team's Mitsubishi Starion was the first to zoom off and was followed by one of the legends of this rally, Jayant Shah of Kenya.

Shah, the winner four times from 1982 to 1985 drove off in a Nissan 200 that was actually meant for another of the Nissan team's entry, Ashok Patel. There had been a delay in the arrival of Shah's car and since Patel's was nicely tuned he would be using it to try notch his fifth victory. Ross Dunkerton and Steve McKimmie were the third to leave in another Mitsubishi Starion. Dunkerton the winner of the luck strike rally in Malaysia had come in third last year in the Himalayan rally. Ashok Patel whose participation had been doubtful however was able to drive off as Shah's car arrived yesterday.

Bounties for Indian Cricketers

India's captain Kapil Dev has so far earned Rs. 33,000

by way of incentive from Bush on the schemes announced by them till the end of the India-Zimbabwe match at Ahmedabad yesterday.

He is followed by Manoj Prabhakar with Rs. 20,500., Azharuddin Rs. 20,000, Sidhu Rs. 19,500, Gavaskar and Maninder have been awarded Rs. 17,000 each.

So far four batsmen have scored 35 runs in 30 balls to earn Rs. 3,500 each and both Kapil Dev and Azharuddin have scored 50 in 50 balls to earn Rs. 10,000 each.

Till date India had hit 22 sixers and 99 four with Gavaskar hitting the maximum number of 25 four and Sidhu hitting the maximum number of ten sixes.

Other who have won prizes are Dilip Vengsarkar Rs. 15,000, Kiran More Rs. 12,500 Ravi Shastri Rs. 10,000, K. Srikanth Rs. 8,500, Chetan Sharma and Shivaramkrishnan Rs. 2,000 each and Roger Binny Rs. 1,000.

Mr. J. R. Mulchandani the marketing director of the company has announced that at the end of the Reliance Cup, the total amount earned by the player will be donated by the company to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund while the players have announced that they will donate amounts collected by them to different charities.

Facts are sacred in history

By Abhijit Choudhury

In recent times I have been reading the editorials, articles/commentaries and letters in the edit page of The Shillong Times with keen interest. In the last few years a number of writers, especially from among the Khasi and Pnar commentators, are articulating bold views and ideas. Among them (Messrs) Toki Blah, Avner Pariat, Ms Jennifer Dkhar, Rev H H Mohrmen, Fabian Lyngdoh and a few others are worth mentioning. However, one has to concede that the present editor of this daily has been spearheading this movement through the last few decades, thereby encouraging the others, particularly from the younger generations to come forward to place their observations in the public domain. In fact, in my article on the contextual dimensions of the Sixth Schedule, published in Contemporary India (Journal Of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi), in 2002, I have had cited Kong Patricia (as I would like to address her!). Of course, one may not necessarily agree with their views. But that should not deter the readers from participating in the public discourses. I recall a participant at a national seminar on the status of women in Meghalaya, in Shillong (1989) observing that dissent was necessary for the progress of any society. One may add that without the elements of self-criticality a society/community is bound to be decadent! If the fourth estate has the sacred task to guide a given state and a larger society, then perhaps your daily is trying to do so.

That said however, I have also noted that some writers/commentators either give wrong or distorted views/information, which may misguide people. Some writers are not able to transcend the boundaries of ethnic and cultural loyalties. Coming to the context of misinformation, I refer to Rev. Albert Thyrniang's article, 'Shillong RSS linked to Nazism and Fascism' (ST, Jan 29). I refer specifically to the writer's comment on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Thyrniang writes, "Facing the wrath of the British, Bose took shelter in Germany and Japan". He adds that Hitler and Bose were "mutual admirers". Nothing can be further from the truth! While Nehru was a Fabian socialist, Bose was an ardent admirer of the Soviet model of 'Marxian' socialism. Though Bose commended on the good works of the Nazi government in improving the quality of public life in Germany, prior to Hitler's embarking upon ethnic cleansing and aggressive foreign policy, he did not accept it for the India of the

future. It is clear from his talks, correspondences and writings. More than the "British" wrath, Bose had to face morbid hostility from within the Indian National Congress led by M K Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Ballavbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others. In spite of winning majority support for his presidential election at Tripura in 1939, ultimately he had to resign due to non cooperation from the Gandhite faction. Prior to leaving India, in 1940 he wrote an article in a Bengali daily that more than the British, he had to face the enemies within! It is an irony of history that M K Gandhi later admired Bose's heroic efforts to free India from the colonial yoke. He told Sir Stafford Cripps, while the latter visited India with the Cabinet Mission in 1946, that Bose was the "Patriot of Patriots". An enraged Cripps wondered how the votary of non-violence could praise Bose, who advocated violence!

It is true that Bose went to Germany first and then to Japan. But how many of us know that he made an attempt to solicit the support of the Soviet Union? When Stalin cold shouldered him (as he was then involved in the diplomacy of 'real politik' with Hitler), Bose tried his luck with Germany. As the President of the Congress in 1938 he realized the intricacies of international relations and exhorted the Party members to take the opportunity of the coming showdown in Europe, so that India might be liberated. In his book on the reasons for leaving India (Keno Desh Chhorechhi, Why I have left the country), he pointed out that enemy's enemy could be used to advance the cause of freedom struggle. Probably he understood the utility of real politik in this sense. The question is: Did Bose admire Hitler and vice versa? The answer is a clear 'No!' While proceeding to Moscow in 1941, Bose expressed his disdain towards the Nazi creed for its racist ultra nationalism. Yet after the failure of his mission in Moscow, he had to move to Berlin via Italy.

It is relevant to note, in our context, that during his sojourn in exile in Europe during 1933-37, he issued statement to the German Press strongly condemning Hitler's racist comments against India and Indians. He wrote to the German academic and scholar, Dr. Thierfelder that while trying to arouse sympathy and support for the

Indian cause, he would never compromise on India's honour! His articles and interviews published in the European Press as well as his correspondences with his German and other friends and his lectures (both in radio and other fora), during this period clearly reflect his attitude towards Nazism and Fascism. After Bose arrived in Germany in 1941, he had difficult relations with the German authorities but Hitler ultimately agreed to meet him after much persuasion from the German Foreign Office and the architect of this meeting, Von Ribbentrop! Hitler did not give any assurance of support. Indeed Hitler's address before the officers of the Indian Legion in 1943, mentioned by Thyrniang, was the result of their efforts, which did not carry any meaning for the Indians!

Interestingly, Bose was held in high esteem by German diplomats and officials of the Foreign Office and by academics for his candid approach. They included such persons as Paul Leverkuehn, Dr. Alexander Werth, W Harbich, J H Voigt, Dr A Seifritz etc. Among them Dr Werth was actually anti-Nazi. He even went to live in England. However, being unable to adjust there, he returned to Germany and worked with the Foreign Office under compelling circumstances. Most of them had written books and articles (in the German Press) in the post-war era, which inform us on what really happened behind the scenes. The diaries of Goebbels state that the German government kept Bose under watch and that his radio addresses from the Azad Hind Radio were tapped. Voigt wrote that Bose had a poor opinion about the Nazi creed and never supported Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union (1942). He also refused to commit the troops from his Indian Legion on the eastern front in spite of pressures from the German authorities. Before leaving for South East Asia by submarine, on his way to Japan, in 1943, Bose instructed his commanders not to give in to such pressures. Many soldiers of the Legion were killed by the German officers for refusing to cooperate. This was revealed by the noted German Indologist, Dr. D Weidemann at a press conference in Calcutta (I'm using the spelling then in vogue) in 1973. This is also corroborated by the well known Left Parliamentarian of India, Late Prof Hiren Mukherjee. Further, the Italian Fascist Dictator, Mussolini was initially reluctant to assure any support to

the Indian cause. However, after his meeting with Bose in May, 1942, he changed his stand and extended support for India's liberation. Goebbels' diaries reveal his annoyance over this development. Because, like Hitler, Goebbels believed that the British rule was beneficial for the inferior people of India!

Bose also did not get whole hearted support from the Japanese authorities as he was uncompromising on the independent status of the Government of Free India in exile. Although he commanded high respect from the Japanese, there were tensions between him and the Japanese commanders in South East Asia like Field Marshal Count Terauchi, General Isoda and Colonel Tada. The reasons include his refusal to allow them use the INA against the Burmese liberation fighters (against the Japanese) and against the Communist guerrillas in Malaya in early 1945.

We will do well to remember that Bose does not belong to any one political party or group. Nor can any organization indulging in politics of culture claim him. He belongs to the people of India. He always thought of the liberation of India and a bright future for her. It is for this reason that his charisma appealed to all, cutting across caste, creed and community. It was reflected in the composition of the INA. Why did a number of tribals and non-tribals alike, from North East India, join the INA? Why did the NRIs of S.E. Asia donate their wealth to the Azad Hind Government? Definitely they realized the significance of this movement. Unfortunately, in India of the post-'Transfer of Power' era, we needed a 'Hero', to fall back on! Earlier Bose was disowned by the very Congress, some of whose leaders claim him now. So too the Indian Left, which once called him a "Quisling", following the dictates of the so-called "People's War." They took a long time to admit that it was a "mistake". Unlike the Nazis and the Fascists, Bose never believed in "Leadership Principle", which he declared to have never been the creed of the Congress. Yet in India today personal cults are dominating our political culture. Hence we have a tendency to capitalize on the names of Bose, Gandhi or a Sardar Patel and even Nehru-Indira Gandhi.

This explains why sundry parties/groups are in search of 'Heroes' under political compulsions. This is an curious phenomenon! Before ending this apparent polemic, let me place my humble request to the writers/commentators like Rev Thyrniang to verify their facts before putting them in the public space. Because their role is to educate the society!

TO THE EDITOR

Why meddle with indigenous faith?

Editor,

Observing the death or birth anniversary of any legend, in a country with immense diversity is a regular and common phenomenon. This is usually observed by any association by paying tributes to the icon, through a public meeting or peaceful march. B Mawroh in his article of January 30, 2016 published in your esteemed daily seems to have lost track of the scenario as his writings reflected a sense of waywardness in the world's biggest democracy. Let me remind him here that a peace march organized by the RSS on the January 14, 2016 invited people of all walks of life to glorify the

name of Subhash Chandra Bose.

This was done with the sole intention of drawing the attention of the public to the life of this great leader. The initiative here was anything but a peace march transcending all regions and religious and yes it was done for a good cause. However it is sad to see that the failure of other religious communities to participate in the march prompted the writer to make scathing remarks, blatantly accusing the manner of practice and propagation and the faith of the indigenous people embracing Niamtre - NiamKhasi. Mr. Mawroh, if other foreign delegations can come to this country to teach our people about Christianity, why not our Indian brothers? Article 19 of the Indian Constitution, clearly

states the freedom of movement of an Indian citizen in any part of India. It's also shameful that the Christian brethren discuss other religions in their churches and term their faith and beliefs as archaic and primitive. Wouldn't it be better if these people mind their own business?

Other writers like Oscar Marwein, Fabian Lyngdoh, Albert Thyrniang, Morning Star Sumer, started raising their eyebrows ever since, the Hon'ble High Court of Meghalaya, gave direction to the Meghalaya Government on issue of minority status of the Niamtre-NiamKhasi. They made a hue and cry over the issue on a daily basis by being critical and at times even condemning our own indigenous religion. Let me be very clear that the custodians of culture and religion lie with the indigenous

people embracing NiamKhasi- Niamtre. Religion and culture are intertwined and are the two sides of the same coin. So loss of religion means loss of culture. So, on the question of minority status...who are you to decide? Why not allow the law to take its own course? It would be better if you could please mind your own business as we are the all products of a democratic and secular State. It would be more glorifying if we learn to respect others and glorify our own.

Yours etc.,
OR Shallam,
Panaliar,
Jowai

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Taken for a ride

By Ananya Guha

The North Eastern part of India is strategically located, geographically defined but politically and socially vulnerable for decades due to insurgency and armed militancy which is still continuing in some states. In Nagaland where armed militancy first started there is now an uneasy quiet after a 'truce' with the Government of India pending a final agreement.

Though geographically defined, there are some paradoxes even in the demarcation of states as some of the states were carved out of political expediency. Thus Assam which looked after most of these states and what is now Meghalaya has strange quixotic borders; one part of it the Barak Valley has a route through the Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, and the other the Brahmaputra Valley can be entered through the Garo Hills of Meghalaya. The following narrative tries to underscore how one valley which is the entry point to so many other states lives in geographical and hence social insularity being far away from the capital city. Also for the common person road connectivity is the heart line not only here but for the rest of the country. But North East India has always been dogged by poor road connectivity: poor roads, long hours of travel etc. Unless this glaring issue is sorted out with comitant good rail connectivity, which is comfortable, the ghost of 'neglect' in various manifestations affecting communities will continue to haunt this region which is India's most vulnerable points, bounded by four or five foreign countries. It is a very culturally diverse region, but it is also this diversity which leads to ethnic tensions.

On the 15th of January I was travelling to Silchar by bus with a friend. The bus started from Shillong at around 10 am and we were told that we would reach Silchar at around 6.30 pm as the road in some patches was very bad. This of course, I had been hearing for a long time. But the last time I remember travelling to Silchar in a bus was 13 years ago. I recollect having a fairly nice and smooth journey. We started at 10 in the morning and arrived at around 3 in the afternoon. A few years later I went to Silchar en route to Aizawl in a taxi and it was a smooth journey again. So all these years although I had been hearing about the bad roads I really deluded myself into thinking that it couldn't be all that bad and that people always have their own hyperbolic sense.

Anyway till about Jowai it was quite nice and I hummed to myself softly. The next day I was to deliver a talk and I was really looking forward to it. After that the driver or the road started showing their true colours. Or it could have been the ramshackle bus. It lurched forward and bumped like an aeroplane but everyone took things in their stride. I thought that this was normal, though my premonitions started working a little overtime. We had a sedate lunch at Lad Rymbai. I told a co-passenger that the roads were not that bad after all, but he said tersely "wait". Ahead of the Assam Meghalaya border the bus chivalrously hit something; there was a noise which rattled me at least and we saw a truck nonchalantly sail by. I thought the irascible truck driver had hit our hapless bus. After sometime the bus halted, the mechanic was brought into action and there were no signs of movement. Getting bits and pieces from co-passengers I was told that the spring of the bus was severely damaged

and there was no instrument to rectify this. But wait - they had got one thanks to another charitable truck driver and everything would be alright within minutes.

The bus once again started, and for five minutes the driver drove as if caution was the only thing on earth. I admired his wisdom, thinking that discretion is the better part of valour but discovered such discretion was due more to the mechanics of the bus; the spring was mended by patchwork, and then the bus came to a slow, slow halt, clearly a sign that it would be a long one. By that time many passengers started making their own arrangements rather adeptly. I thought, understanding clearly that this was nothing new to them, and they were veteran travelers in this part of the world. I silently admired but started to wonder when I would reach Silchar. The talk weighed heavily on my mind, and I had no idea where the hotel I was supposed to be staying in with my friend was located. It was past seven. A co-passenger from Shillong suggested we try a truck. That he said was the best bet. In the meantime we made effete attempts to hail autos, the drivers of which looked at us with disdain. Our co-passenger kept on muttering the magic word "truck". And then the magic happened. A young truck driver looked at us benignly and agreed to take us to Silchar. It was almost 7.30 pm. If the previous bus driver threw caution to the winds, with gusto, this young man was caution personified. He drove carefully avoided the main roads, if one could call them, took us by the farthest side so much so that we thought that the heavily loaded truck would overturn. But he was an experienced and clever driver. He halted two or three times on the way, once in Meghalaya to pay what I think are called toll fees and grumbled a bit. In the meantime the three of us were sitting literally on the driver's seat with our legs in all directions.

We crawled our way safely enroute to Silchar at around 11 pm and reached the precincts of the hotel. Unless I narrate all this I cannot of course highlight the moral of this story. But there is more than one moral. The first is that this route which is the lifeline to many states: Meghalaya, Assam, Mizoram, Tripura and even Manipur is grossly neglected. And the people living in Silchar and beyond are not only cut off, which we all know, but no one bothers, and all this talk of 'mainstream' is rubbish in this much vaunted 21st century with all its talk of an internet world. The second is that private buses have no right to cheat their customers and should refund the fares in such cases to whatever extent. This so called highway, the gateway to so many states is neglected. No one bothers about the road conditions and I am surprised that people are silent, and there are no protests. True another highway is being developed, but what has been happening all these years? What about the trauma and suffering that the people have undergone? On that day there were two ladies and a child. I shudder to think of what they must have undergone.

Two weeks later there was a major mishap on the same route to a bus travelling to Agartala. I might have escaped, but providence is not kind to everyone.

"They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."

--- Andy Warhol

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 180 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2016

Racism in India

Tagore had described India as the meeting place of a variety of races. He would have been zapped by the rush of racial outrages in India in the past few years. The latest shameful incident was the attack on a Tanzanian woman student who was apparently beaten and stripped on the outskirts of Bangalore. All this was for the colour of her skin. It is unlikely that the incident had anything to do with a fatal accident caused earlier by a Sudanese. One recalls the midnight vigilante raid in Delhi's Khirki village led by AAP minister Somnath Bharti against Ugandan and Nigerian women. But the atrocities on Africans who come here in search of education opportunities betray a peculiar kind of dehumanisation. For decades Indians showed lip-service to the struggle of black Africans led by great men like Nelson Mandela. But colour prejudice in India seems ingrained. It appears to be a hangover from the humiliation that Indians received from whites during British rule, an inverted contempt for Africans who are more black. It has little to do with differences, lifestyle and social attitude. Colour prejudice is also rampant in Indian society. Dark girls have great difficulty in getting married amongst Indians themselves.

The despicable anti African attitude is very much at odds with the moves at the India-Africa summit. Delhi is showing great interest in forging new ties with African nations, promoting investments in science, technology and infrastructure. In these endeavours, its main rival is Beijing. The colour prejudice shown by Indians in the atrocities on Africans in Indian cities no doubt corrodes this initiative.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 21, 1989

A New Year interlude

We spend New Year's Eve beside the beautiful surf tossed sea in Pondicherry, perched on the pier while the unmistakable French ambience of an earlier era touched us with light, ghostly fingers. But for all its seaside promenade bordered with crumbling 300 years old grand - Gothic - French buildings and its miniplaza bordering the Sea front, Pondicherry typifies, the eclectic nature of India culture, combining with happy ease the continuum of the ancient Tamil - Hindu cultural presence of "Puducherry", the Pondicherry of French Colonial times as seen in the elegant façade of town houses spilling over with bougan village, the renaissance of poet Subrahmanyan Bharati's era, and today's bustling town. Add to it the hurly - burly of the exciting bazaar which has everything from boutiques to "bonda" stalls, the beautiful calm of the Aurobindo Ashram, the futuristic 'Utoplan' settlement of Auroville taking shape just outside Pondicherry, the exquisite Ganapati temple within calling distance of a mosque and an old church and we have India as she has always been, layers of differing cultures merging into a unified "civilized" stream, symbol of acceptance and absorption, with her windows open wide for all the winds of the world to blow in.

Even the legends of Pondicherry are a fascinating mix of cultures. As the beautiful 800 years Ganesha temple, we were told how the sea had once engulfed the temple and the beautiful Ganapati tossed into the seas, from where French seamen had rescued it and handed it back to the pundits of the town, to be re-installed with due ceremony. Duplex' Indian mistress too finds mentioned in a tablet in a pretty little park in the heart of Pondicherry, where till recently Duplex' statue proudly presided. In Pondicherry also found shelter from the tentacles of the British the great

poet Subramanyam Bharati poet, visionary, philosopher, freedom fighter and giant among men. And Aurobindo, whose denunciation of British imperialism and dream of a new world orders blossomed to perfection in his Pondicherry ashram by the Coromandel coast.

We spent the early hours of the New Year in meditation at the Aurobindo Ashram, a beautiful place of total peace where a thousand people celebrated the New Year by looking into their hearts. Under the great rain tree where rests the samdhi of Aurobindo and the Mother, we all mediated in a vast, moving silence while the fragrance of incense and flowers and immense faith rent the air and the sky slowly spread a baby pink and blue canopy over 1989. It was an affirmation of faith, its way as moving as Auroville itself, a burgeoning township being built on the philosophy and dreams of Sri Aurobindo and attracting to its portals people from every corner of the earth bent on building a Utopia, Auroville's heart, the 'Matri Mandir' with its dream like gardens and its prayer hall topped by a geodesic dome in a marvel of architecture, breath taking indesign, concept and execution. Here, hopefully, a brave new generation will find moral, spiritual and philosophical sustenance.

Back in Pondicherry, it is time to say 'au revoir', to the elegant French quarter with its atriums overflowing with tropical flowers, to the old Indian township with its neat little town houses converging on lanes neatly covered with the early morning 'kolam' or 'rangoli', to the gorgeous seafront and the crumbling colonial buildings, to Bharati's serene little house, to Duplex statue now off its pedestal.

Power of the word and power of knowledge

By Fabian Lyngdoh

There are two sources of power among human beings: the mystical power of the word, and the power of scientific knowledge. We will discuss the power of the word according to Khasi thought. Many writers have said that the Khasi language has already contained in itself 'ka hukum ka kular' (mission and covenant). I am compelled to point out that this is an exaggeration. To say that the Khasi language already contains the mission and the covenant, or that it is 'ka ktien shong-sbai shong-blei' (a language that is charged with the power of God), is only an emotional and sentimental expression which may resonate with poetic literature, but not in philosophical discourse. The words have their effective meanings somewhere between the speaker and the hearer. If a language already contains 'ka hukum ka kular', then a covenant can be instituted even when it is spoken by a parrot or a moina. But the Khasi elders had understood that no covenant is created when the Khasi language is spoken by the birds, or when spoken by little children, or by people who do not know the meanings of the words.

The Khasis say that the words spoken can institute a covenant because they believe in the existence of spiritual beings who can stand witness to what is spoken. The other reason is because the Khasis in the past, are a people who hold fast to covenants (kiba bat jutang) and who never speak out of turn, and do not allow others to do the same. It is here that the concept of 'ia said nia' (to argue against) has its meaning. When a person speaks in a dorbar, he establishes his argument of truth called 'ka siang nia', which means to lay down his reason or principle. The opposing member would in retaliation establish his alternative argument of truth which is called 'ka said nia', which means to wash away or remove the validity of the argument that the first speaker had established. If 'ka siang nia' of the first speaker cannot be invalidated by 'ka said nia' of the opposing speaker, then the argument of the first speaker stands as a resolution or 'ka jubanlak' of the

covenant arrived at in the dorbar.

Khasi elders used to say that with the power of his words, man is the master over the earth and all the creatures in it, and the forces of nature would obey his command and direction. But this does not mean that nature would ordinarily obey the verbal command of every individual. It is the human spirit which can command nature, and not an ordinary individual. By himself, a human individual does not have ka sot to command nature, but it is only 'ka longkur' which comprises the 'material human' in the visible form of the living members of the kur, and the 'spiritual human' in the invisible realm of the departed members, which is authorized to directly exercise spiritual power through ka sot of the kur religion. It is only in a desperate situations and on righteous reason that any individual can acquire authority over nature by directly appealing to the mercy of ka Hok.

The idea that 'Ka Lei Synshar' (attribute of God) has given to man the word or language by which to command nature refers only to the general covenant by which man would have the cause, the reason, or the ground to institute religion and to establish man's status above all creatures. In daily living, the Khasis do not directly make use of this covenant, but they interact with nature or command its powers through the intervention of the spirits of the departed members of the kur, or through other spiritual beings with personal names. If a man faces a turbulent river, which is humanly impossible to cross he may seek spiritual assistance through these words: "Ko Lei Synshar, as you have given to u khunbnyriew (human race) the word by which to rule nature and all creatures in it, look here, I establish my argument of truth through the word." Then he would continue, "Ko lawbei! Ko Suidnia! Support me, calm down the water that I may safely swim across. Listen

to my word, and I shall duly acknowledge at the altar" (To da sngap ia ka nia ho, nga ruh ngan buh hi ka nguh ka dem). Man would be able to command an elephant or a tiger to obey him through the intervention of the spirits of the dead. In the community religion, or in the kur religion, people can move heavy stones or perform remarkable feats by invoking the spirits of their ancestors.

A long time ago, a man from Raid Nongtluh named U Phanram Matong, killed U Dit Lyngdoh from Raid Thaiang on mere suspicion and a war ensued between the two Raids. U Der Malai, the Nongtluh warrior, fraudulently cut off the right thumb of U Chikhir Lyngdoh the Thaiang leader and brother of U Dit Lyngdoh, and the warriors of Raid Thaiang had to retreat to ka kut (castle), while the warriors of Raid Nongtluh went in hot pursuit after them. Ka kut of Raid Thaiang was defended by trenches, thirty feet wide and twenty feet deep all around it. All the Thaiang warriors managed to escape but U Sing Chulit Shadap and U Chikhir Lyngdoh were trapped between the pursuing enemy and the deep trench of ka kut. U Sing Chulit was slain while faithfully defending U Chikhir Lyngdoh who managed to escape. Facing the barrier of a thirty feet wide trench, U Chikhir called upon his deceased brother, "Ko Dit Lyngdoh! it is for avenging the wrong done to you that I fought this war. Hear now, give me power to jump across this trench, and I will sacrifice one bull in your honour." With these words, U Chikhir flew across the trench like a bird just at the moment when the enemy's sword was about to fall on his neck. The warriors of Nongtluh in amazement said, "Heit te, da em thabaner re pha tel!" (Thou art lucky to have wings, or else thou should be dead). The Nongtluh warriors realized that U Chikhir had 'ki thabaner' (wings) or mysterious power through spiritual intervention. As a man, U Chikhir would not be able

to jump across the trench, but with the intervention of the spirit of U Dit, he was able to overcome the nature of gravity and flew across. U Chikhir sacrificed a bull in honour of U Dit Lyngdoh, and from then on began the religious tradition of ka 'Sit Masi' in the Jait Lyngdoh of Raid Thaiang. In this religious tradition, only a man from the Shadap clan has 'ka sot' (sanctioned right) to kill the sacrificial bull by shooting an arrow, in honour of U Sing Chulit Shadap who sacrificed his life to defend the life of U Chikhir Lyngdoh.

The righteous way to seek spiritual intervention according to the Khasi thought is through the spirits of the departed members in the cult of the kur religion. Today, the tribe is in a dilemma. We are no longer in a position to harness energy from legitimate traditional spiritual resources, while at the same time we are apprehensive of moving forward to institutionally embrace the principles of modern scientific knowledge. With due respect to all concerned, I would like to advise our younger generation to critically study the past and set projectiles towards the future. We should be a tribe that moves forward, and not backward. Slogans like, "Ngin nai ia ka lawei lada ngi dei ban khlad noh na ka mynnor" (we say 'nay' to the future, if we are to divorce from the past), should be dumped into the archive. The youthful generation with a bright future would rather say, "Away with the miserable past if it hinders the wellbeing of the present and the future!" We cannot fly from generation to generation only on the wings of poetry. We have to build the society on the rock of truth, not on the shifting sands of emotions and sentiments. U Soso Tham said, "We walk no more by the light of a fire-brand like our ancestors, but by the brightly shining sun." Education conducive to the needs of the present and the future is the shining sun that the paths of our youths should be lighted by. It's only then that the deep thought of the ancestors would bear new leaves, flowers and fruits in the wide modern environment.

Zika Virus Americas fear, India's concern

By Amrita Banerjee

With the World Health Organization (WHO) designating the Zika virus as a public health emergency of international concern, world's leading health experts brainstorm in Geneva to debate ways to treat and combat the spread of this single critical issue. So far statistics reveal that as many as four million clinical cases of Zika could affect the Americas. In this interconnected world where an outbreak of a disease is just a flight away, India needs to gear itself up to tackle any eventuality.

In the past, the Ebola outbreak which took over 11,000 lives in West Africa between 2014 and 2015 was terrible. However, the Zika outbreak is in many ways worse, because its silent infection grapples the highly vulnerable individuals, especially pregnant women whose babies get associated with a microcephaly - a horrible condition of foetal deformation whereby the infants are born with small, deformed heads and suffer from convulsions, seizures and neurological defects.

The virus that originated from the Zika Forests of Uganda was first isolated in 1947. Since the 1950s, it has known to occur within a narrow equatorial belt from Africa to Asia. In 2015 the virus has spread to Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America possibly by the thousands of fans who gathered for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. In view of more such Zika virus carriers, there is a travel alert that has been issued by many governments specially to regions and certain countries where Zika virus transmission is going on.

The symptoms of Zika are similar to those of dengue and chikungunya diseases spread through the same species of mosquitoes, namely the Aedes aegypti. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week. People usually don't get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die of Zika. However, this has become a medical emergency because there is a possible link between Zika fever and microcephaly in newborn babies by mother-to-child transmission. Situation has become more chronic as there are reports that the illness is not only vector borne but can also be sexually transmitted.

These reports and the Zika menace have given rise to certain intriguing questions. Firstly, the rapid spread of the virus appears to have prompted Latin American governments to urge women not to get pregnant for up to two years, an extraordinary precaution that is aimed at avoiding birth defects. It shows the gravity of the danger because what should have been a routine public health problem is now becoming a culture shaping phenomena.

Secondly, the UN has urged countries hit by Zika virus to let women have access to contraception and abortion. This has given rise to a great debate because many of the affected countries are Catholic and have restrictive abortion laws. Thirdly, Brazil, which has been the worst hit, is slated to host the 2016 Olympics in Rio, the first on South American soil. However, with it being Zika prone there are health concerns for athletes and the visitors who intend going there. The army getting deployed for fumigation purposes speaks about the magnitude of the problem in the region. Even though the organizers have dispelled fears stating that since the games would take place August 5-21 in a dryer cooler climate that reduce the presence of mosquitoes, the assurances do not sound good enough.

Now coming to India's preparedness, despite no incident of Zika virus infection reported in the country so far, health experts have sounded an alarm over its potential spread in Western Ghats and coastal areas in the coming days, unless authorities take appropriate action. Aedes mosquitoes, which spread Dengue virus, are also the carriers of Zika virus and as India has dengue outbreaks every year along, the situation gets serious. The problem gets compounded further with many unclean cities and urban enclaves that India has in large numbers.

There are several problems facing health experts to stop this menace. First, there is no tested vaccine as such. Secondly, tracking the disease becomes difficult because in at least 80% of those infected no symptoms show up. In rare cases tests can be done only through sophisticated molecular testing methods. Finally, the illness causing species of mosquitoes thrives well on 21st-century conditions of global warming. In fact, only two nations, Chile and Canada, in the whole of the Americas are free of Aedes aegypti and both essentially cold countries are likely to be the only ones that escape a Zika outbreak.

Amidst this very somber situation there is a ray of hope. In an important 'Make in India' mode, scientists at the Bharat Biotech lab in Hyderabad seem to have found their eureka moment as they claim to have developed the world's first vaccine against Zika. In fact, they claim to have developed two vaccines for the same and got these patented. It is an irony that even though India has no reported Zika cases, an Indian company has been able to beat the western pharma giants at their own game, especially when it is always cornered in the patents issue in the WTO.

It is indeed laudable that this 'Zika biotech moment for India' has come at an opportune moment, where the land of snake charmers, elephants and 'Hindu rate of growth' has now transformed into an innovation hub with a tech-savvy, science loving Prime Minister. It's time for Modi to seize this opportunity. With his timely intervention, the vaccine's development and delivery can be fast-tracked, cutting through the red tape of regulatory clearances as it can potentially help countries such as Brazil, which is a fellow member of the BRICS and pave the way for what he called the "vaccine diplomacy."

Further, on the domestic front, to counter the Zika menace, the Health Ministry has decided to set up a technical committee to monitor the situation. The possible measures that can be taken are - integrated pest management programmes that reduce the mosquito population, mopping up stagnant waste where mosquitoes breed, proper screening of all travelers in airports and other entry points, strengthening the diagnostic and laboratory facilities like nucleic acid amplification methods and carrying out a mosquito census to identify the areas of threat.

History tells us that as public health efforts slacken mosquitoes return in buzzing millions. Therefore, the effort should be a sustained one till the world is free of this pest. Besides, research in various biotechnological methods such as gene editing, introducing GM mosquitoes and a lethal bacterial strain, show promise and should be well funded. It is high time the Government takes effective measures to stop the arrival of this illness into India because in the near future with an un-planned urbanization and global warming, the situation can get out of hand. --- INFA

(Author is with School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi)

TO THE EDITOR

Roots of our faith

Editor,

The letter by OR Challam, 'Why meddle with Indigenous Faith,' (ST Feb 10, 2016) has raised the important question about whether we are being tolerant or intolerant with other faiths. Intolerance is the cause of so much communal disturbances around the world. To raise alarm bells over a rally organized by the RSS to commemorate a nationalist leader like Subhash Chandra Bose is to overreact. It should not be a cause for alarm nor should such a procession be termed as tending towards 'Facism or Nazism.' Ar not similar rallies organised even to commemorate a freedom fighter like U Tirot Sing or even something like Khasi Awakening Day? Why should few critics from the Christian community raise such hue and cry? In a democracy respecting other faiths and learning to appreciate each other is more important than condemning something that tends to infuse a sense of nationalism. It's what we call in Khasi call 'Ka Jingieid Ri.' Are we not being hypocrites?

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

Enjoying the best of both

worlds!

Editor,

Apropos to your recent news item in which certain political parties some of whose members are members of the Synjuk Ki Rangbah Shngong have been demanding that conduct rules amendment restricting government servants to from holding the post of Rangbah shngong should be withdrawn. It clearly shows a nexus between politicians and Government servants. Besides, a government servant holding the post of a Rangbah Shngong is a clear case of conflict of interest where one who sanctions and monitors the schemes also implements them! Many of them have converted the office of Rangbah shngong into an office of profit and power. Some even are not bothered to do justice the Government jobs they are holding by spending most of the time outside the office. Government employees are a small fraction of the population of the state. There are many qualified people outside the Government available to hold such posts. Then why do government employees consider themselves superior and treat others as idiots? Government servants if required can always tender advice without holding such posts. So why are

these Government servants so power hungry? This clearly gives the impression that they don't miss any opportunity to grab power and associated benefits at any cost however unethical it may be.

Government employees in Meghalaya are pampered and more privileged than the vast majority. I have seen in the past whenever a government employee dies in service mostly due to unhealthy lifestyle his kith and kin would demand as a right, compassionate appointment in the Government at the cost of vast majority of educated unemployed although his family is eligible to receive family pension and other benefits. The vast majority of the population do not enjoy such privileges. I congratulate the Government for the correct decision to withdraw such appointments in public interest.

People have joined the Government of their own free will and having joined are bound by the conduct rules. Government servants do not have the liberty to publicly criticize the very government which provides them bread and butter. We have seen these Rangbah Shngongs in Shillong who are also government employees openly criticizing the government as a part of Synjuk Ki Rangbah Shngong. They

want to have the best of both worlds. No one is indispensable in the Government and if they think that they are above the conduct rules they do not deserve to be Government servants. I would urge them to quit in public interest if their conscience pricks them. There are too many unemployed youth in the state. It would be a great service to the people if more avenues for employment are available.

Government employees are paid hefty amounts from the public exchequer with job security. Most of them are irregular and not sincere towards their jobs. They talk about their rights conveniently but forget their duties. It is high time that we raise our voices against such opportunists and ask them to do the job with commitment and do justice to what they are being paid for in public interest.

Yours etc.,
S Nongkynrih
Shillong-4

Correction

In Abhijit Bhattacharjee's article, 'Facts are sacred in history' (ST Feb 10, 2016), Para 2 line 13 should read, "In spite of winning majority support for his presidential election at Tripuri in 1939, ultimately he had to resign..." The word Tripuri was misspelt as Tripura. The error is regretted. Editor

“Security depends not so much upon how much you have, as upon how much you can do without.”

— Joseph Wood Krutch

The Shillong Times

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End of an era for Nepal

SUSHIL Koirala, former Prime Minister of Nepal, passed away at the age of 78. In a state of turmoil in the country, he represented the central platform as did his party, the Nepali Congress, advocating a balance between consensus and negotiation on the one hand and agitation, particularly mounted by Maoists, on the other. He did his best to steer through the troubled times which Nepal experienced for years. As Prime Minister, he fought for a basic structure of the Constitution. It was the drafting the Constitution and its adoption in Parliament which prolonged itself over many a hurdle. He finally got it passed in Parliament last year. Another obstacle was that the people of the Terai/Madhes region protested vehemently against the Constitution which they thought was weighted against them and created an economic blockade at the India-Nepal border. It also led to a marked deterioration in relations between India and Nepal. Koirala initiated a dialogue between Nepalis and Madhesis before he was replaced by K.P.Oli in October. Finally, the Constitution was amended to meet the grievances of the Madhesis.

Koirala's death coincided with the end of the border blockade. Like other members of his family, the Nepali Congress leader had close links with India. He was considered an obvious successor to the Prime Minister's post in Nepal after years of struggle against the monarchy and the victory of the Nepali Congress in the 2013 elections. He wanted to hold the post for another term and as a result became a mere faction leader. He went into inaction but his role in promoting relations between India and Nepal in the face of Maoists ascendancy in Kathmandu will be remembered with gratitude.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 22, 1989

Brain drain issue at stake

With the massive migration of scientific and technical manpower from the developing countries during the last few decades, brain drain has become a serious issue. Apart from the economic drain on the country which is deprived of the manpower trained at its cost, the issue has acquired an ethical dimension as well. Science and technology personnel acquire education and training in our country at very low costs. Most of the expenditure is met by the Government in the form of subsidies, grants and scholarships. If services of these personnel are not available to a nation at whose expense the training has been acquired, the investment of the Government would amount to a national waste.

During his visit to the USA, the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi made the obligatory exhortation to the Indians settled abroad to come back and lend a helping hand in taking the motherland to the 21st century. Brain drain was a major public concern in the late sixties and the early seventies and continues to be an active phenomenon, but we no longer seem willing to lose our sleep over it.

There is lament and anger that those fellow Indians who have had the benefit of having state funded education should at the first opportunity seek greener pastures, in affluent Western nations.

Addressing the governing body of the Atomic Energy Commission, Dr. Raja Ramanna former Chairman of the Commission said, "Too many people leave and go abroad and thus cause depletion of talent available to our development projects, it is the duty of all IIT graduates to stay here or come back and work for national development. Some people may be satisfied with money and comfort abroad but I have a feeling that their talents are not at all properly used abroad as many people think

it to be. Whatever the difficulties in India, they should come back and work for the nation mainly because it is challenging and thus gives the same satisfaction as our freedom fighter had.

The eminent Economist Dr. Ashok Mitra also hares the same view. He feels, "There is no question of the serious economic loss involved in the steady exodus of even the handful of young people from affluent families. They make use of the nation's facilities which are scare so as to qualify themselves for immigration to richer countries. Because they use up the facilities, these are not available to the others who are with us, and will be with us, whose productivity, therefore, will be less than what it could be."

A moral predicament ought to assail those who leave, are they being fair in choosing to leave. Will it be wrong to call them ingrates? Do they not feel uneasy availed of the facilities, however, limited it has provided to ensure that they have acquired an education which would be the crucial base for further, more sophisticated skill formation.

The seriousness of the impact of the brain drain on national development could be gauged from the Report of the Committee on Government Operations (COGO Report) to the 90th Congress of the House of Representatives. It says: "The national morale of a developing country will suffer from the movement of highly trained people out of it. Such a movement can encourage bright young people to look towards emigration instead of national development as a personal goal. The COGO report said the 78% of the Indian immigrants were students who originally entered the U.S with the declared intention of obtaining education and returning to India."

Trapped by Anxieties of Impotence

By Patricia Mukhim

For some weird psychological reasons men seem destined to be afflicted with impotence at some point in their lives. That this affliction can visit the most virile Alpha male is again a long explanation that psychiatrists give and which I am sure is no secret. That is why Viagra with all its side effects is still consumed by a large number of males. This article is however not intended to delve into male sexuality or its dwindling powers which is most often related to age, alcoholism, stress, work pressures, some illnesses and a series of other unknown factors. One can imagine how helpless a person feels when some of the critical functions that should keep the adrenaline pumping begins to show signs of degeneration. The question to ask is whether such biological malfunctions affect decision making in the public sphere. Male Impotence is a secret known only to the man's better half or his secret female friends. The rest of the world is not privy to such details. Unfortunately, that sense of powerlessness could affect those in positions of self-acquired authority or authority by selection.

Anyone who has witnessed the shenanigans of the Synjuk Ki Nongsynshar Shnong... (the name is too lengthy anyway) would agree that they suffer from the inability to articulate what they actually want and why they want it. In the book, Getting to Yes by Roger Fisher and William Ury the authors speak of different problem solving strategies. One important point they note is that both sides in a negotiation should look for mutual gains. There is no such thing as, "I win, you lose or vice versa. Fisher and Ury speak of shared interests which can help the parties arrive at an agreement. The present imbroglio over a framework which the Government is told to come up with for regulating the functions of the Rangbah Shnong should not pose any obstacles if the key stakeholders of the grassroots administration system - the people - were to have been the focus. The problem is that the Synjuk Ki Nongsynshar Shnong want to be power brokers. If this is a democracy then power should reside with the people. As of now the large swathe of Khasi population is powerless to articulate what they want. No platform

has been created for alternative views. People are expected to rally behind the Synjuk and anyone who has other views is considered a traitor to the cause. But whose cause are they talking about? Just as religion takes a grip on its adherents by creating a fear psychosis and by making it appear that only a certain path leads to salvation, the Synjuk and many other interest groups too, use the same tactic. Today people are told that they are at a crucial junction; that they might lose their identity and culture if the Synjuk ki Nongsynshar Shnong were to be brought under a law (haven't we heard this refrain since 1979) The Rangbah have not taken the trouble to explain how that could possibly happen. No single leader in this state has till date told us how to get out of the hell-hole of fear. For if people stopped being afraid and decided to talk back and fight their own demons then all the self-styled leaders would be out of jobs. So these leaders derive a sense of importance when they co-opt us "the people" and co-opt our voices (even when we have not spoken) and say they are speaking for us.

I have some very pointed questions to ask the Synjuk Ki Nongsynshar Shnong because my voice too has been co-opted as part of the mindless flock which is too lazy to think for itself and therefore simply says "Yes" to every constructed viewpoint. What exactly do these Rangbah Shnong want? Do they want to provide village/locality level governance which essentially means (1) pushing the MLA/PHE to provide drinking water (since on their own they don't have the wherewithal, neither financial or human resource or expertise) (2) to push the MLA/PWD to provide good roads (3) to ensure that garbage is collected and dumped somewhere on payment of a fee (4) to facilitate implementation of a plethora of Government/MLA schemes etc. Of course the Rangbah Shnong used to have the authority to certify who a permanent resident is and based on this certificate many residents are able to get a Voters ID Card. There

are other residents who require an NOC so that they can apply for a Trading License from the District Councils. For a long time the Rangbah Shnong operated outside the purview of any Constitutional authority because the District Councils had not come up with a regulatory framework on the powers and function of the Dorbar Shnong. Interestingly this laissez faire climate is what the Rangbah Shnong feel, ought to continue. And of course their only weapon of defence is good old "Tradition." Never mind that tradition has been discarded in all other areas of life; the Rangbah Shnong want to wield power by this 'Tradition' and they are using this instrument like a double edged sword.

In their own homes and families, tradition has long been discarded. Otherwise tradition used to be that we sat around the kitchen fire to have our food (bam ja sngi, ja step, dih sha, not lunch or dinner which are western concepts), with the mother/wife serving all the family members. This tradition is no longer seen in any urban household. Today in urban Meghalaya the families have graduated from the kitchen (jing shet ja where we all sat on the lyngknot and therefore we never could carry too much weight on our bodies) to the dining table. Conversation around this table is greatly reduced for every family member has his/her own timing. We adjusted to this huge change because it works for us. We are using sophisticated kitchen gadgets, have graduated to smokeless kitchens and have all kinds of machines at home to reduce the drudgery and physical strength of the home maker (woman). Did we even for a moment question ourselves on why we discarded many of the old ways of doing things? No we did not because it served a good purpose. So why are the Rangbah Shnong insistent on taking us back in time when it comes to governing our villages/localities? Why are they afraid of having to act within the boundaries of the Constitution? Why are they comfortable with exercising arbitrary powers? Is it not because they want to be the power centres and to make the MPs/MLAs and MDCs

dependent on them during elections? And yes, as has been stated by many individuals in their letters to the editor, many Rangbah Shnong also want to exercise a tight control over the sale and purchase of land in their respective localities/villages. So it's all about wielding power. Public service is farthest from their minds. If their intention is purely public service why would they challenge the government? The fact that the Rangbah Shnong have been fishing with different political parties and are willing to align themselves with the Party that sings the same tune as them shows that they don't even have the wisdom to put forward their points cogently before the Government and have been constantly sulking (walking out). This is not a very comforting thought for the large population that has thrown its weight behind these Rangbah Shnong. Today there is an educated, articulate and far sighted section of the Khasi society which demands that these Rangbah Shnong adapt to the changed circumstances. But there is still a huge chunk of the population which has allowed others to think for them. They rest in the lame excuse that the Rangbah know best. But aren't we all gifted with common sense? Must we allow someone else to decide our fates forever even while we crib behind the backs of those who do so? It's time for alternative voices to emerge and for those with strong views within the society to synergise those voices. We cannot allow ourselves to be stuck in a pathetic rut and for a group of intellectually bankrupt people to continue to lead this society, because frankly, we are getting nowhere. The traditional institutions as they are today are failed institutions which need to be injected with a strong dose of reforms. Those who reject this idea are a bunch of insecure people. I have said this before and I reiterate that insecure people make the worst leaders. We cannot march into the future with unfounded fears and anxieties of stepping outside our comfort zones. This unfounded anxiety will render us impotent and incapable of claiming our legitimate rights in this country through the process of dialogue.

TO THE EDITOR

Shillong Water Supply: Designed for waste?

Editor,

Almost all localities in Shillong, that are covered under the Greater Shillong Water Supply Scheme have tanks that perennially overflow. If one were to enquire why the supply to a full water tank is not automatically shut, one is told that the system does not allow it as closing the supply would build up pressure in the pipes resulting in damage! As a result, thousands of litres of water keep overflowing from the tanks being fed from the PHE supply.

As far as my knowledge goes, the installation of a simple ball and cock system costing a few hundred rupees is enough to regulate the flow of water automatically. In all gravitational water supply systems they are very effective. What kind of system would work for Shillong? We need an effective solution to stop the criminal wastage of water.

Yours etc.,
Sanjeeb Kakoty
Shillong 14.

Tug of war over water tank

Editor,

I would like to draw the attention of the concerned authorities to the need for immediate reconstruction of the public water tank located near Tura Govt. College, Hawakhana. This is one of the oldest water reservoirs in Tura Town constructed sometime in late sixties. The reservoir has outlived its longevity and started leaking heavily since a few years ago. As a result, the people of Hawakhana and neighbouring localities are facing acute water scarcity even during the rainy season. Of late, the leakage has become so intense that the out-flowing seepage water could be noticed on the main road around 100 metres away from Axis Bank, Hawakhana, where people are seen making a beeline everyday to collect this water and sell it to needy consumers.

Everyone is aware that the soil condition in Hawakhana locality is loose and sandy. Uncontrolled seepage of water may cause maximum dam-

age to the underground soil in the long run. Under such circumstances, there is every chance of liquefaction/caving in of part of Tura Govt. College and GHADC land after some time if no preventive measure is taken immediately. It is learnt that the Government has already sanctioned the required money amount to a few crore rupees for restoration of the same. The delay in implementation is perhaps due to rigid stand-off between the two Departments i.e. PHE Department (Management) on one side and GHADC (Distribution) on the other, over utilisation of funds. While this cold war about implementation of work between two concerned agencies is carrying on, the poor consumers in the locality are getting restive day by day. It is high time that the matter is resolved immediately in the interest of tax paying consumers. Let there be permanent solution instead of constant friction so that people do not suffer.

Yours etc.,
R M Sangma,
Via email

Educational dowry

Editor,

The alleged suicide by three girl students in Chennai zeroes in on how leeches are sucking the blood of our future generation in the jungle of private educational raj which is mushrooming without meaningful government control. In their suicide note, they stated that they were being harassed. Around three lakh rupees had been extorted from them and more money demanded as special fees by their educational (!) institution despite abysmal facilities. Thanks to lack of government participation, involvement and control, higher education has, practically, been hijacked from the domain of lower and lower middle class by the greedy private players. Sky rocketing tuition fees puts archaic educational infrastructural facilities to shame in the free for all loot. Now, parents are to cough up a new form of dowry if they want to settle their wards in jobs that can do justice to mark-sheets and aspirations of their children. This new version of educational dowry has gone up to such a level that only those who belong to

cream layer of the society can afford to pay. Thus, the capacity of parents' credit cards have become a more important factor in our higher education system than a student's marks in his or her merit card. Education sector like health sector is gradually being exported to private money-grabbers without meaningful control and without attachment of necessary strings. As a result, majority of our population have become helpless spectators when it comes to educating their children. These money making educational (!) grinders destroy the lives of many Monishas, Saranyas and Priyankas as well as their families. Article 38 of the Indian constitution directs the State to secure a social

lived mainly in the 'main land' India. There are many Hindu writers, thinkers, activists, etc. all over the country who vehemently oppose the RSS through their publications. One of the most vociferous and articulate critics of the RSS I have ever heard was from a Hindu speaker in a seminar in Bangalore in 2003. There is fight for space yes, but it is against the intolerant, communal and exclusive philosophy and ideology of the RSS and fascist elements. The question of Religion does not arise here.

There was also an advice to verify facts before putting them in public domain. The reference is to my statement that Subhas Chandra Bose and Hitler were mutual admirers. I still hold on to my views. Bose did meet Hitler and presented his plans for the liberation of India from the British. He was a political leader in Germany for two years (April 1941 to February 1943). Had Bose no admiration for Hitler he would not have gone to Germany in the first place. Had Hitler no admiration for Bose he would not have entertained him for two years. At what point of time the mutual admiration existed is a matter of historical details. Manimugdha S Sharma in his article, "Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose wanted ruthless dictatorship in India for 20 years" in The Times of India of Apr 19, 2015 writes, "Netaji seems to have liked Nazism more than fascism. In a speech to students of Tokyo University in 1944, Netaji said India needs to have a philosophy that "should be a synthesis between national socialism (Nazism) and communism".

Sisir K. Majumdar writing in www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv7n1/Bose.htm, says, "It is still a puzzle how a self-respecting and dynamic personality could put up for two long years with an inhuman fascist clique which desperately tried to submerge the whole of humanity in rivers of blood", adding quickly, of course, "He was solely and unequivocally guided by one desire- the liberation of his mother India from the cruel clutches of British colonialism". Wikipedia.org has this to say, "Subhas Chandra Bose was an Indian Nationalist whose defiant patriotism made him a hero in India, but whose attempt during the World War II to rid India of British rule with the help of the Nazi Germany and imperial Japan left a troubled legacy". The mutual admiration I referred to might be one troubled legacy.

Debates are welcome not intimidation

By Albert Thyriang

The controversy arising with the RSS's maiden 'Path Sanchalan' (procession) is lingering longer more than expected. Writes have expressed varied views. My pieces might have contributed to the debate as they have evoked reactions from quite a few. Debates and discussion and presenting one's points and counter points are welcome as they are the very essence of democracy. However, I take exception to some who used prefixes like 'Fr' and 'Rev' to allude and make insinuations to the way of life and the religion/denomination I follow which are strictly personal. The views are solely personal. My views do not represent the organization I belong to. They could be in accordance with or even contrary to the official position of the church. I am no one to speak for the church, much less for Christianity.

Continuing from this point, some advised me and others not to meddle with the faith of others. Whether the Niam Khasi or Niamtre or other indigenous religions should align with the RSS and whether the RSS would help to preserve them or whether they should approach the court for according minority status on the basis of religion are not personal issues. They concern the whole community and beyond. Any citizen of this country, nay, of this world can express his or her opinion.

More serious is the use of threat and intimidation (referred by the editor of this paper in her write-up last Friday). This is against democratic principles. Succumbing to such illegal tactics would mean allowing a "Taliban" like situation in the state. RSS's historical ties with Fascism-Nazism are undeniable and should surprise no one. I have my right to caution the arrival of such elements into our state and the North East. Any one is free to have recourse to legal action but only the court can take 'punitive' action. On the flip side, thanks to the intimidation from some quarters that my articles have gone national and even global. And there is no shortage of people in agreement with me.

Kong Patricia's ability to critically summarize the different points of view is indeed admirable. She interprets my opinion as an attempt to keep the Christian space intact in the state. However, it must be pointed out that most of the anti-RSS books and articles are published outside Meghalaya and the Christian majority states of North East. They are pub-

lished mainly in the 'main land' India. There are many Hindu writers, thinkers, activists, etc. all over the country who vehemently oppose the RSS through their publications. One of the most vociferous and articulate critics of the RSS I have ever heard was from a Hindu speaker in a seminar in Bangalore in 2003. There is fight for space yes, but it is against the intolerant, communal and exclusive philosophy and ideology of the RSS and fascist elements. The question of Religion does not arise here.

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order for the promotion of welfare of the people. So, it would be a constitutional dereliction if our government has a half-hearted approach towards providing education to the aspirants. There should be enough government schools and colleges to give private educational institutions a run for their money. In addition, a 24x7 surveillance to arrest the practice of fleecing educational dowry from the parents of future India is a crying need. Moreover, India badly needs sufficient scholarships and enough interest-free loans for the needy to honour the pledges of her constitution.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Jaipur has an unmatched polo tradition with its royal family trying to keep the polo legacy alive. The game conjures up visions of aristocracy, excellence, style and rare athletic power. Jaipur's Saawa Man Singh II was one of the most famous polo players of 1950s and 60s. And now his great grandson, the young Maharaja of Jaipur, Padmanabh Singh, who has also taken up polo, has been chosen by a polo clothing company to become its brand ambassador, making it a first in the royal family. R. Pal caught up with him...

Polo Prince!

Jaipur Polo season is on. But the one man or rather a boy who is making waves on the ground is the young maharaja of Jaipur. He is just 16 but already an accomplished horseman with classic polo skills.

Playing polo comes naturally to him but turning a brand ambassador for the game is a first in the long history of his royal family.

Hailing from a family with an enviable polo pedigree, Jaipur's young maharaja Padmanabh Singh has become the first royal to turn a brand ambassador for the game of polo. Padmanabh Singh of Jaipur's Kachchawa dynasty, also the country's youngest maharaja, has now become the chosen one for the reputed Argentine family-based polo lifestyle company, La Martina, which is into fashionable polo kit and clothing.

The company which believes it is linked at its very roots to the sport of polo and shares common values of elegance, luxury and expertise, found Padmanabh a very promising player, who has almost all qualities they were looking for to take their brand forward. He is young, just 16 and has a handicap of 2.

playing so well, say polo observers.

His association with La Martina will give him more exposure to play with international players and improve his game. Polo player Ransher Singh Rathore says, Padmanabh is the first royal to be chosen by La Martina and also the first Indian to be signed on by the company.

Polo experts opine La Martina chose him as a brand ambassador more for his royalty, heritage, aristocracy and for his privileged polo ancestry. They say it is not so much about the financial deal because money isn't the only thing going for people from such affluent backgrounds.

What really counts are his ancestors. His great grandfather Sawai Man Singh II, husband of Gayatri Devi was a world-class polo player with a handicap of 10. Man Singh II was a great patron of polo and an agile

along with Hanut Singh of Jodhpur, another 10 goaler, won the Indian championship from 1932-39.

In 1933, the Jaipur team comprising Prince Prithi Singh, Rao Raja Abhay Singh, Rao Raja Hanut Singh and the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II visited England and won every tournament like the Hurlingham, the Royal Windsor Cup and many others that they played. Their unbeatable achievement prompted English cartoonist The Tout to sketch the Jaipur team mounted on an elephant and the British team running scared. The caption read: A Jaipur Allegory — Look Out, the Elephant's coming.

Tall and dashing Padmanabh now joins the ranks of other world-class players like Eduardo Novillo Astrada, Nacho Novillo Astrada and George Spencer Churchill, who are also part of La Martina's global



Padmanabh Singh

handicap is actually an 'advantage.'

Padmanabh has been associated with polo since a young age. Jaipur, his native place is considered the home of Indian polo. Padmanabh's own grandfather late Brigadier Bhawani Singh continued the endorsement of polo and headed a number of polo teams, which won a lot of tournaments in Indian and abroad. He introduced the Jaipur World Cup Trophy and was also instrumental in formation of International Federation of Polo (IFIP) in 1982.

Padmanabh's father Kunwar Narendra Singh first learnt polo at the age of 32 but has now become a name to reckon with in the polo world with a 0 handicap. He has led the Jaipur royal polo team to Germany, Italy and travelled extensively around the world.

The Indian Polo Association (IPA) has recently chosen Narendra Singh as steward of Rajasthan zone for a term of two years. A polo ambassador of Federation of International Polo (FIP) in India, his job would be to coordinate with the 9 Polo Clubs in Rajasthan for growth of rising talent in polo and the game itself. He will also formulate strategies along with IPA to develop the game of polo and facilities.

So having grown up amongst horses and polo players, it was only natural for Padmanabh to take up the sports, which signifies power, adventure and tradition. But he started taking it seriously not until he was 13. He has played polo in his Mayo School, Ajmer days and led the team to victory in national championship.

He has participated in the Delhi Horse show and won many awards in equestrian activities including winning the Junior Indian polo championship. He also played in England and Germany recently and awarded the most valuable player award of the tournaments.

This year he has participated in tournaments in Abu Dhabi and UK.

Padmanabh approximately gives 3-4 hours to polo after his school hours. He passed his secondary i.e Xth board from Mayo College, Ajmer in 2014. He took admission (Contd on P-VII)



Beginning at 13, Padmanabh has managed a handicap of 2 over three years. No other Indian player at such a young age is on the scene right now or

player himself. His wife and princess of Coochbehar, Gayatri Devi was also an avid horse rider.

As part of the Jaipur Team, Sawai Man Singh II

brand ambassadors.

Padmanabh says he feels honoured to have got such an endorsement from a leading polo brand. Through an email interview, he said: "It

is indeed a matter of great pride for me to represent the La Martina as a brand ambassador. Normally, only well known polo players get to become ambassadors of such a reputed brand. The company has, perhaps for the first time, chosen such a young brand ambassador as me. This association with the brand will enhance my reputation in polo."

Like all brand ambassadors, Padmanabh will also don their apparel, their products thereby projecting their company and also participate in their sponsored tournaments in different countries.

About Padmanabh's two-goal handicap, polo player Ransher Singh

Rathore says: "Padmanabh is just 16 and his ranking is good amongst top Indian polo players, who have handicaps of at the most 4 and 5. Top players from Rajasthan Polo Club like Dhruv Godara has a handicap of 5, Vishal Singh handicap 4, Col Bhawani Singh Kalvi 3 and Manu Godara has a handicap of 3."

Ransher Singh explains: "A polo handicap roughly translates into how many goals you are worth to your team. Every player is judged on the basis of effective play, stick work and riding ability. The ranking starts from -2 and goes up to +10. It is opposite to golf, where the lower the handicap better the golfer, here a

Once I worked in a country where officials angrily denied rumors that the premier was dead by announcing that: "His health is normal for a man of his age." So I pointed out in my column that the normal state of health for a 93-year-old was "dead".

My editor was furious, but then the guy died anyway, so the discussion became moot.

Death is a touchy subject, but a powerful one that can even be used to make your children revise their clothing choices.

"If you die tonight, what you're wearing is what your ghost has to wear forever. That's how it works," I say. (Teenager rushes back to bedroom to change.)

Your columnist was musing on the topic of death after reading a report about a woman arrested recently for drunk driving in Australia.

A breathalyzer test showed a blood alcohol level of 0.48, which is above the level at which normal humans die. Police shrugged and stayed with their diagnosis of drunk driving rather than doing the obvious thing of recognizing her as an undead harbinger of the coming zombie apocalypse.

Not that I'm worried. Zombies don't really do anything except wander around looking for something to eat, which pretty much describes most of my friends, most of the time.

Or perhaps the undead driver was a journalist, many of whom are super-human drinkers.

Last week, one particular colleague of mine donated blood, and I just hope whoever gets it likes cheap Chardonnay. In one of her few lucid moments, this lady shared her outrage over a story she had read which said that a UK man was recently charged with drunk driving despite the fact that he wasn't driving, but sitting in the passenger seat advising a learner driver. Police said legal liability stands with the person giving instructions. Interesting.

I'm going to try this

next time I stopped for speed-ing. "The kids in the back seat told me to go faster, officer. They're

Death has a lighter side too

naughty."

But going back to zombies, did you know that humans can function well with partial brains? A reader sent me a news report about a Spanish man who played the saxophone while he was having brain surgery. There was also a patient a while ago in the US who played the guitar while having his gray matter rearranged. You can see the advantages. Patient: "I can't remember the next verse." Surgeon: "Let me jog your memory. There."

The medical logic is that if patients are active during surgery, doctors get useful clues as to the exact functions of the bits of brain they are slashing out. Patient: "I think Trump would make a classy addition to the pantheon of world leaders." Surgeon: "We must have taken out all his intelligence circuits, quick, put some back."

If I ever have brain surgery I am going to ask if I can juggle live porcupines while riding a unicycle during the op. That way I'm sure of retaining saleable skills when it's over.

Still, death is not the big thing it used to be. On the list of five most frightening things in the world, I reckon death has been edged out by: 5) "Virus detected"; 4) Phone hotline robots; 3) Tyra Banks; 2) People talking in the cinema; and 1) "No connection, consult your ISP."

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

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

By Anna Juhi John

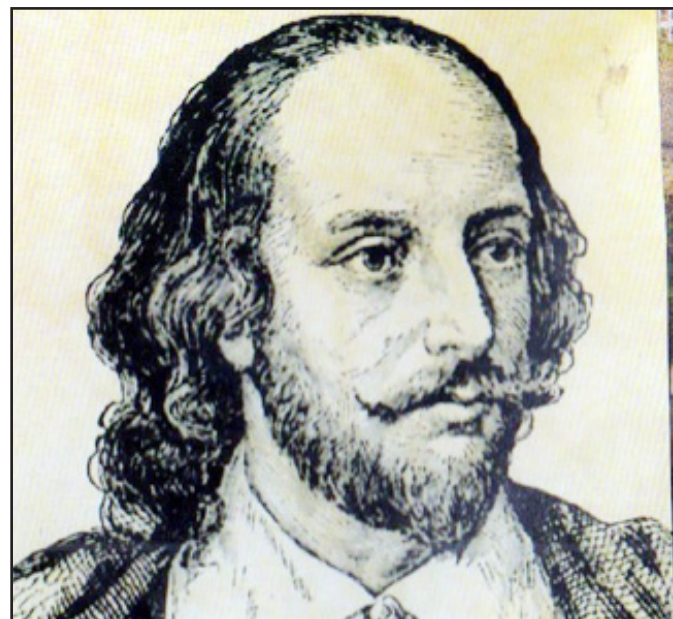
The sole credit of formal English education in India stands irrefutably and inalienably indebted to Lord Macaulay though the seed of which was silently sown in the then undivided India by William Shakespeare, the great dramatist and sonneteer, without his physical visit to India.

This may look unbelievable and unimaginable to the Indian historians, but the real time historical happening and fact is probably unknown to many including the Shakespeare 'addicts'.

There is a road named after "Shakespeare" adjacent to the sub-area canteen in the Dehradun Cantonment, near to which this writer is living since birth.

The Doonites love to continue and wish to upkeep this Bard's legacy like the Bengalis who proudly retains "Shakespeare Sarani" in spite of localization drive of many streets in the present day Kolkatta as if to pay an everlasting obeisance and homage to Lord Macaulay for his initiation of English education in the then East India Company head-quartered at Calcutta.

This evidentially proves the fact of Shakespearean roots of the culturally rich and spiritually enriched and enlightening Dev Bhoomi famed Uttarakhand's capital city Dehra Dun, an educational hub in the country, fondly known as Doon without any trace of doubt and grain of suspicion of



William Shakespeare(L); Shakespeare Road in Dehradun(M); Capt. William Henry Irvine Shakespeare(R)

Much ado about the Bard's Doon root

any kind.

The Doonites love to continue and upkeep this Bard's legacy very proudly with them.

The Bard's father John Shakespeare was a very successful Glover and had his Kins and Clans spread across England including the London city as per the authoritative records titled "Shakespeare Family: A Record of Ancestors and Decedents of William Shakespeare" held by The Shakespeare Birth Place Trust. One such business flourished ancestral lineage and genesis linked family originated from the elder brother of William Shakespeare having three other brothers and four sisters (Gilbert, Richard, Edmund, Margaret, Joan, Joan & Anne. He was Baptized as John Shakespeare (Junior) like the former American

President of our time George W.Bush (Junior).

Since he was the first born and eldest in the family, he was called after Bard's father's name as per the then prevailed religious practice and familial custom as well as social tradition in honour and respect of father as the Head of the Family existed on those days. He had settled down in the Stepney, London according to the historically sustaining clan descent claims of the Stepney, Shakespeares

emanated from this brother of the dramatist and from the verifiable and veritable proof available in the Shakespeareana Genealogica; William Shakespeare - A Compact Documentary Life; The Warwickshire Family History Society Records; The Globe Theatre Records...etc... and other such London based Shakespearean Study Centres sording records personally and physically accessed by this writer's father during his

London visit. This familial chromosome connectivity of the Stepney Shakespeare with the Bard further stands mentioned at length rather acceptably reiterated through another Shakespeareana Genealogica by George Russell French which categorically and unambiguously states that: The Family has a long tradition of descent from the same family as that of the Poet, and was using the same COAT of ARMS-presented to John

Shakespeare, the dramatist's Father in 1596) as far back as the 1600s". It is very much pertinent to mention here for the reader's delight that the Grant of Arms was a very specific and specially recognized and distinguished award to the Senior John Shakespeare by the Royal Kingdom and the use of such arms without rights and privilege by anybody was a punishable offence. The Shakespeares at Stepney have shared the Arms and this establishes

the fact that they were natural relatives and belonged to the same blood of the Senior John Shakespeare.

As per other such convincing familial records and invincible historical evidences, one Arthur Shakespeare is fully credited with the long and continued rather uninterrupted imperial military service tradition and legacy in the Stepney Shakespeares descents of the Bard whose elder brother Henry Davenport

Shakespeare fathered Henry John Childe Shakespeare in 1814 who gave birth to five children by his first wife Jane Blanche, the youngest them was William Henry Sullivan Shakespeare born in September, 1849. The William Shakespearean connection to the city of Doon and India goes to this Sullivan Shakespeare deservingly nicknamed as Tiger Henry for his unblemished shooting reputation during his military services in the British India during his bachelor days. He was married to Annie Caroline Davidson from Jamaica. The couple gave birth to Capt. William Henry Irvine Shakespeare on October 29, 1878 at Sandhurst, Bombay dockyard and he studied in the nearby school after which he joined the Devonshire Regiment (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career option in Coast Guard

There are different defence forces in the country like Indian Army, Indian Air force and Indian Navy. There are many other Para Military Forces like BSF, CRPF, ITBP, SSB, etc operating in different parts of the country. There is another similar organisation about which we may know little as we don't see them around us as we are not connected to sea or oceans. The Indian Coast Guard is a multi-mission organization, conducting round-the-year real-life operations at sea. Despite being relatively small, it has a wide range of task capabilities for both surface and air operations. The organization is headed by the Director General Indian Coast Guard (DGICG) exercising his overall command and superintendence from the Coast Guard Headquarters (CGHQ) located at New Delhi.

Indian Coast Guard is an armed force of the union for enforcing the maritime laws of the country. The Coast Guard has dedicated and professional team of officers and men who operate ships and aircrafts for safeguarding county's maritime interests in the Indian EEZ. Indian Coast Guard offers various job opportunities as officer and Enrolled Personnel to the young and educated youth of the country by conducting recruitment in different categories. There are options to join as officers and others.

Officers General Duty Branch is the operational branch of the Indian Coast Guard. Command of Ships at sea can only be exercised by officer of the General duty branch. As a General duty branch officer would operate weapons, sensors and perform the command function which demands a wide sphere of knowledge of equipment. There are opportunities as Pilot in Indian Coast Guard.

Indian Coast Guard operates fixed wing aircraft from shore Air stations for surveillance of the Exclusive Economic Zone. In addition, helicopters are embarked on Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Vessels to provide local surveillance and perform Search and Rescue mission at sea.

Technical Branch deals with modern ships and aircrafts are abounding with advance technology and machinery. In the Technical branch one would be responsible to keep all these equipment serviceable. Aspirants shall also get opportunities to work in shore jobs in Coast Guard repair organisations.

Women in Coast Guard: Women are recruited in Coast Guard only as officers in General duty, General Duty (Pilot / Navigation) and General Duty (CPL Holders, Short Service entry) branches. The selection process for women is similar to that of male candidates. The women officers are posted in non sea going appointments. Unlike the other Armed Forces, the women officers in Coast Guard have the option to serve till superannuation, except for CPL holders and General Duty branch- Short service appointment.

The recruitment of Asst. Commandants is conducted bi-annually and the advertisement is given in leading national newspapers in both Hindi as well as in English in the month of Jan/Feb and Aug/Sep. The shortlisted candidates are called for Preliminary Selection (PSB) as

per their choice of centers from Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi, Kochi, Vizag and Port Blair.

There are also opportunities to join as Yantriks. Coast Guard offers excellent opportunity for diploma holders in Mechanical, Electrical, Electronic and Aeronautical branches of engineering. The Yantriks are backbone of Coast Guard and responsible for operating and maintaining the machinery.

Naviks(GD) : Coast Guard provides excellent opportunity for young dynamic male candidates in General Duty branch for 10+2 entry. On joining one would specialize in various streams viz.

(a) Seaman (b) Communication (c) Mechanical Engineer (d) Electrical (e) Aviation

Naviks(GB) : Candidates with 10th qualification can join Coast Guard in Domestic branch as Cooks and Stewards. The recruitment is conducted bi-annually in the month of Apr/Oct. The recruitment is conducted in 6 zones viz., Western Zone, Eastern Zone, North-Eastern Zone, A&N Zone, North West Zone and North Zone. Aspirants may visit the website of ICG for further details and any updates related to recruitment.

(With direct inputs from the website of Indian Coast Guard and writer may be reached at bkranjjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)

By Ajeyo Basu

Roger Federer may be past his prime these days, but former Wimbledon champion Marion Bartoli feels that the Swiss superstar is probably the greatest tennis player of all time.

Federer, once the most dominant player in the men's singles circuit, has been a shadow of his former self in recent years. He won the last of his 17 Grand Slam titles at Wimbledon in 2012 and is struggling in the face of the rapid rise of Novak Djokovic, losing to the Serbian star in the Australian Open semi-finals last month. But Bartoli asserted that Federer is one of the greatest players to step onto the tennis court and the recent dip in his performance is due to the natural process of ageing.

"You cannot possibly say that for someone who has won 17 Grand Slams. Roger Federer will always be one of the greatest, maybe the greatest. He is probably the greatest tennis champion of all time. The things he has managed to accomplish and the level to which he has taken the game is amazing. When he is playing, his style is so flawless and beautiful. It is almost like a ballet when he is playing. If I watch Federer's match on television, I cannot even switch it off," Bartoli said.

"But if you are 33 or 34 it is tougher to compete against someone like Novak Djokovic? Yes, definitely. But that's just due to human nature. You cannot say that Djokovic is a superior. He is younger, so he can play for longer.

"Roger elevated the game to another level and then Rafa (Rafael Nadal) did it on clay. Now Djokovic is the dominant player. Probably in seven years' time, someone younger will challenge Djokovic. Then you cannot say that Djokovic is over. It is just a matter of age," she added.

Bartoli is also impressed by the superb form of the formidable doubles pair of



'Federer is probably the greatest ever'

Sania Mirza and Martina Hingis. The Indo-Swiss combination have won 12



Marion Bartoli

titles so far, including three consecutive Grand Slams. They have also won an incredible 36 matches in a row, the second longest winning streak in tennis history. "Sania has a very strong

forehand. Her ground strokes are very difficult to play. Martina is good in the left corner while Sania is good in the right corner. The way Martina plays in the left corner is exceptional. They almost have the perfect combination, that is why they are winning so much," Bartoli said.

"They struggled a little in the Australian Open final. Both of them were not playing well at the same time. But what is amazing is that if one is not playing well, the other one is

able to provide the required support. Then when they both play well, they are able to win without much diffi-

culty." She, however, pointed out that both Sania and Martina have a weak serve which is probably the biggest chink in their armour.

"I would probably try to break Sania or Martina's serve. I think if you want to attack, it will probably be on their serve. If you do that then Sania may sometimes lose confidence on her shot. Martina's serve is also not very powerful. I will try to find a way to hold my serve by serving. Their return of serve is excellent so you have to go for aces. I will try to break them not by going to the rally but by return winners," she remarked.

Bartoli also asserted that Sania has a strong chance of finishing on the podium

when she competes in the mixed doubles at the Rio Olympics later this year. The Hyderabad player is expected to team up with either veteran warhorse Leander Paes or Rohan Bopanna.

"They will probably have to face Federer and Martina. So it can be tough for them. It can be difficult when you play against your partner. It is mentally very difficult. But I am sure they could be in for a medal. But the colour of the medal will depend on the draw.

"It will also depend on how they handle the pressure. The pressure of the Olympics is just too much. Sometimes it can be difficult, but they will be strong challengers for sure," the former Fed Cup champion opined.

(The writer can be contacted at ajeyo.b@ians.in)

Interview

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambhani

Sunday, February 14, 2016

Mars sextile Jupiter on your solar return chart denotes a good year. Creative people will shine and leave the competition way behind. It shall open up new horizons for you this marks an excellent time for important events and to take that important step as opportunities present themselves in new business ventures and new professional assignments. Get in touch with your inner strength to rejuvenate yourself as you make the most of what the phase has to offer. You can invest in property during this phase. If you are appearing in an exam or competition then do not take things very lightly. Luxury items would attract attention. Financially you will do well.

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

Get involved in some good venture at your work place or in business. Professional gains are likely to be profitable. You will be in a position to attract a good response from colleagues and friends due to your magnetic personality. This week you may have some conflicts or uneasy circumstances so avoid the company of bad elements. This period is good for individuals and intellectuals engaged in education, research and study. Vitality and courage will take you towards new horizons. Solve family and other interrelationship problems politely and in a friendly way. Your personality and communication skills hold the key of progress of your success, utilize it to have better relations in public.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

The combination of stars will prove to be very favorable for you. Luck will favour you in material and professional related matters. You may find new prospects to boost your income. Sudden money gains could also be expected. You should take caution in family relations by having a more amenable behavior as children and friends need attention. Health of some elder person at home needs care. You may have sudden chances of increase of your business or career. Take care if someone is hurt by your spoken words or harsh attitude. Change your behavior and abstain from bad habits. It is in your favour to keep away from any conflict.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

Professional matters will be settled now in your favour. Being over courageous and hasty in dealing with people at work place and in family should be avoided to have amicable relations among them. This week you may invest in real estate or some other fixed assets which will turn to be beneficial in the long term. You may make up your mind for a foreign trip where you get better response. For stable thoughts and positive mood you may insist on meditation and elevate the environment around you. Take precautions in travel and be cautious about your belongings.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

Sudden gains in profession related matters are expected. There is a time when your wits will be helpful along with new opportunities to be successful in making new contacts which prove to be helpful. Happiness comes to your door by a new loving relationship and a harmonious atmosphere in your family. This is a good time for entertainment and romance for you. You can expect to look forward to joy and happiness this week. People will admire your positive approach in some matters and your decisions will be appreciated.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

Amidst some practical uneasiness this week brings mixed results for you. Insist upon slow gains in money matters. Construction work may be a delayed process this week. Health of self or mother may be affected so care must be taken. To have a harmonious relationship with friends be more forthcoming. On the family front you should spend some more time with them. A property deal may get finalized which would prove to be profitable. Right now you need to take care and avoid indulgence in any type of negative relationship.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

The week is good for your career and the stars are favorable in the field of education, research and related matters. You will enjoy some creative or educational travel or some

activities in the publishing field. You are expected to get long term investment opportunities which will give you profits and financial gains. You may get financial aid from some near relative or a friend. Avoid stress and take care of your health. Meditation will be helpful to have peace of mind. You may visit pay a visit to relatives or friends.

Libra : (September 23 - October 23)

This is a good time to improve interpersonal relations. You may think of finalizing a pending aspect in matters related to property. Undue expenditure is expected for travel and in domestic affairs. Avoid conflict with youngsters and friends. You may get sudden news or a message through phone which may affect your daily routine. You may feel some problems in family life and relations with spouse. This is a good time to invest in real estate. Sudden monetary profits may be expected. Health problems may be solved during this time. Utilize the priceless time for bringing your plans to reality.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

Some mixed results are predicted from the position of stars this week. Amongst your financial profits you will try to get early gains. You can expect to come across some persons who may bring about an increase in your social activities. You will be full of courage, understanding and glamour. Health of an elderly person may need attention. Think wisely which ought to win popularity in public and this may bring you new ventures in the field of finance. Your desire for love and romance may be fulfilled. To refresh yourself, spend time with family.

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)

As depicted from your stars position this week your progress in public relation will be improved. You will be expected to enhance your social contacts. Your progress may be slow at your work place and you may gain marginal profits. Regarding your career and material matters, you are likely to get engaged in matters of property but take care of all costs before you finalize a deal. Keep watch on your health and take care during travel to avoid injury. Good chances to go for a foreign tour may emerge now.

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)

There is a good possibility of progress in career, finance and public relations. Financial matters may be solved for now with good returns. You will enjoy an outstanding personality with wise decision making power and of which you are surely capable. Success and happiness comes to your door with material gains. This is the time to go ahead in career matters. You may enjoy a good time in love and romance. Health will be good along with freshness and energy. Happiness and enjoyment are yours for the asking. With your good communication skills you will have a fine image in public and this will be very useful in future in achieving your goal.

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)

According to the stars position this week you will have mixed results. Your progressive, decisive and focusing nature is going to prove beneficial for you. The impression you leave on people around you is remarkable. Now there may be matters related to money decided in your favour. Your old financial problems will be sorted out soon. Think positive and be polite while talking with children and family members. To maintain peace of mind and positive frame of mind take light exercises and make it a daily routine. Keep your presence of mind in dealing a problem related to property. You will have a good time with friends.

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)

New contacts will be helpful in your progress regarding career and financial matters. You may choose to have some relaxation at home. Your family environment needs some attention. Social image will be fine. If you give a new look to your work place you will gain more profits. Take care of your health. At present your focus will be on personal freedom and making good friends. It will be beneficial for you in long term. This week you will go for some compromise and will be able to solve a pending or disputed matter. You would plan for a brighter future.

Much ado about the Bard's Doon root

(Contd from P-VI) and Bengal Lancers from 1898 and initially posted at Dehradun that enabled him to be remembered even today by a road named after him as Shakespeare Road at the Doon Cantonment proudly recallable and connectable to his Great Grant Father clan and tribe of William Shakespeare born on 23 April, 1564 and passed away at the age of 52 on the same day of 1616 [April 23 is celebrated as Shakespeare day] as it was highlighted in Julius Caesar:

*This day I breathed first, time is come round
And where I did begin there shall I end
My life is run his compass" [Act-V, Sc-III]*

Shakespeare is amazingly credited with the longest ever known English word "honorificabilitudinitatibus" meaning state of being able to achieve honour and his literary works stand translated in more than 80 languages across the world and most read books after THE HOLY BIBLE.

In 1904, Capt. William Shakespeare joined in the Indian political department as a military attaché of then Imperial Indian Civil Service. In the same year, he joined the British Foreign Office and became the youngest Vice-Consul in India at the age of just 26. By the end of the year, he was posted to Kuwait with a specific and special mission on retaining his service allegiance with the British Indian Government, being a perfect and complete linguist fluent in Urdu, Persian and Arabic. While in Kuwait, he made seven adventurous expeditions into the deep interiors of Arabian countries with political albeit hidden military ambitions in mind with meticulous mapping, drawing and documentation of the highly hostile virgin landscapes including desert areas and harsh virgin terrains which even today remain the base map amongst the Arab countries and earned the credit as the first European of doing so. About eight months later, Capt Shakespeare was drafted to diplomatically secure the support of Ibn Saud for the British Indian Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force that took over the Arab Basra Caliphate.

In January, 1915 he was persuaded by his sole friend Ibn Saud to retreat from the Battle of Jarrab to a safe and secured safe place before the fight started. Typical of an

English Army blood, he declined to run away from the battle ground. He was struck by a bullet and killed on the spot. The victory addicted Rashidis cut-off his head and his solar helmet was presented as a victory memorabilia to the then Ottoman Emperor and was symbolically hung on the main gate of Medina (it was a military practice and social tradition among Arabs to hang the head of the enemy in the army barrack gates and in faithful adaption, Ali-Baba and his 40 Thieves used to do so to instill fear among the opponents to foretell the misfortune of those adventures against them) as the proof of the Al Saud's secret and unholy understanding with the empire. It was deservingly placed on the war records of the Bengal Lancers now rechristened after the Indian independence as Bengal Sappers Headquartered at Roorkee, just one-and-a-half hours train journey from the Dehradun where Capt. William Shakespeare is adorning a street of his own in the Cantonment as if to recall and reflect his famed ancestor William Shakespeare by all the passers-by of the street, that the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire would have been different and might have changed the course Arab history altogether if this Bard clan credited Capt. Shakespeare had survived and won the British-dominated decisive battle. This author sincerely wishes and honestly desires that all the Shakespeare addicts and enthusiasts may make a literary pilgrimage into the street and the state tourism department may urgently consider the spot to install a proper memorial to the Shakespeare clan member who (in)directly immortalized the Bard celebrating his quarter-century death anniversary from his grave in the Holy Trinity Church, Stratford upon Avon bearing the following parting appeal :

*" Good friend for Jesus sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here!
Best be the man that spares these stones
And crust be he that moves my bones."*

On preaching love and peace to all on earth with the philosophical words:

LOVE ALL, TRUST FEW ; DO WRONG TO NONE.
(The Author is a B.A(Hons) English Student and can be reached by annajuhijohn17@gmail.com

Polo Prince!

(Contd from P-VI) in Millfield the same year.

His grandfather Bhawani Singh, who studied in Harrow, had wanted him to go there but he picked Millfield as it has great sporting facilities and permits him to play outside school campus as well.

Millfield also offers vast range of equestrian activities for its students including polo. It is a school, which provides option of 28 different sports and has at least five Olympian sportspersons as coaches. The school is set in Somerset countryside across two campuses. It has stabling for horses, staff accommodation for supervision of horses, specialist coaching in polo, horse walker. Padmanabh has bought some horses there too.

The school, he says, apart from the regular studies allows him to focus on polo seriously. Its other famous Indian alumni is Arun Nayar.

Padmanabh says : "I play polo in Vaux Park Polo Club and the Guard's Polo Club, patronised by the British royals. Here I get to play with top notch British players, which has helped me to learn the nuances of the game."

But it is not just polo for him for his final years, Padmanabh has opted for history, politics and business studies and is hoping to get into Oxford or Cambridge for his college.

Being a royal himself and studying in a country where the royal family is a revered British institution, Padmanabh says he has never been overawed by his royal lineage.

His mother Princess Diya Kumari is a first time BJP MLA from Sawai Madhopur. Although being famous is a part of and parcel of royal family, Padmanabh prefers keeping a low-profile.

After his grandfather Brigadier Bhawani Singh died in 2011, Padmanabh, whom Bhawani Singh had adopted as his son and heir became the maharaja of Jaipur although the title is not recognised by the government of India since it was abolished in the 1970s.

But along with the unofficial royal title and a Rs 1,000 crore worth of property, which includes palaces, forts, treasury and priceless jewels, Padmanabh has also inherited a number of lawsuits by his extended family members. (Source: rajasthanpost.com/TWF)

“He who rejects change is the architect of decay. The only human institution which rejects progress is the cemetery.”

--- Harold Wilson

The Shillong Times

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Pause in Syria

MAJOR western powers have agreed to a pause in combat in Syria. If implemented, the deal would allow humanitarian aid to reach the deceased terms. Civil war in Syria has killed 250,000 people, made 11 million homeless and sent hundreds of refugees to Europe. But many western countries have indicated that there is no hope of progress if Russia continues its bombing. Russia is helping President Bashar al-Assad in its fight with the rebel in Southern Syria. Assad has said that he will continue to fight terrorism while talks take place. The Russians are back by Lebanese and Iranian allies. They are also trying to seal the Turkish border which has been the lifeline for the rebel territory.

The cessation of hostilities agreement fall short of a formal ceasefire. It has not been signed by the main warring parties. US Secretary of State John Kerry has spoken of actions on the ground to implement the tentative agreement. Russia has however said that it may not stop its airstrike. Russian foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that Moscow would continue firing on the ISIS and a rebel group called the Nusra Front which is affiliated to Al Qaida. But the western powers say that Russia is targeting other insurgent groups. NATO, Britain, and France feel that a deal can be reached only if Moscow stops bombing rebels other than the ISIS. The tangled global relations suggest that only the UN can end the civil war in Syria but then there is the Russian *nyet*.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 24, 1989

Indo-Bangla drug trafficking

The recent Indo-Bangladesh parleys held Dhaka took up one of the major problems of today the narcotics smuggling across international borders. Talking on the subject earlier this week in Calcutta Mr. H.P. Bhatnagar, Director General of the Border Security Force won led the Indian delegation said that drug smuggling across the Indo-Bangladesh border has recently gone up substantially because of a change in the pattern of drug trafficking. This has been caused by the fact that while trafficking along the country's western border has somehow been restricted in the wake of recent political developments in Afghanistan that along the Indo-Bangla border had shot up following rise in drug smuggling along the Burma-Bangladesh border. As suggested by India, it was decided at the two day meeting that both the countries would have a drug liaison officer in Dhaka for exchanging information on drug trafficking. While this is an important step, mere exchange of information however can hardly serve the purpose of tackling the menace even as a preliminary step.

The crux of the problem is how to restrict the operations along the vulnerable routes and this brings us to the more important question of imposing and enforcing stricter vigilance which has to be the job of the BSF on this side of the border. Without this essential pre-requisite, the information which the two liaison officers are supposed to handle and exchange with each other under the proposed arrangement is bound to be faulty and therefore to fall far short of the requirements. The two border outfits are already fairly heavily burdened with dealing with the growing incidents of

dacoity and such other criminal activities along a long and tenuous border, besides dealing with the perennial and primary task of regulating clandestine human traffic. From the point of view of India and its constituent States in the eastern region, infiltration of Bangladeshis is such a menacing problem that any addition to the burden of the BSF even for the sake of the newer menace of drug trafficking is bound to land the relatively inadequate personnel to work at cross purposes.

A separate wing of the BSF itself, and also of its counterpart in Bangladesh, could perhaps be a possible way out of the situation but this implies addition of quite a number of fresh battalions inducted along the border. As it is, the Dhaka discussions appear to have concentrated attention on the main routes of the clandestine drug traffic. A more realistic view would have been to take also into consideration the subsidiary routes spread over the north-eastern states which lately are contributing a lot to the volume of clandestine drug trafficking. Unmanned as mostly are the vastly inaccessible entry points into most of these States, the problem of infiltration which is basically socio-political, the problem of dacoities etc. which is mainly economic although essentially criminal in nature and the latest problem of drug trafficking which belongs to an new international category of its own can effectively be tackled much easier by plugging loopholes at the roots and not merely adding to the rank of bureaucrats at the top.

War Room Ready for 2018

By H H Mohrmen

bleak and mere membership in the Lok Sabha will not do. The only option for Pala is to jump into state politics and the situation is now ripe for him to do so. Besides the circumstances are also like an opportunity which comes to him in a platter to appropriate.

It is also known that poor Pynshngain is just a pawn for Pala to intervene in the state politics, because the truth is there's much more beyond Pala taking keen interest in the Rangbah Shnong and other issues than what meets the eye. Pala and Dr Sangma are not best of friends and that was obvious from the last M.P. election. And Pala too has his business interests in the state which did not get favourable consideration from the CM. He therefore has his own axe to grind.

As for Pynshngain it is obvious that the blame that he was targeted by Dr Sangma in the dual post case is but a lame excuse. He is simply trying to get public sympathy by portraying himself as a victim in the entire imbroglio. Everybody know the case against MLAs and MDCs holding dual post was filed by Agnes Kharshiang an ordinary citizen of the state (with no affiliation to any political party) and the matter is in the court but the government is only acting in the best interests of the state. Pynshngain Syiem has no other option but to follow the footsteps of his other seven colleagues holding dual post in both the Jaintia and Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council and resign from one post. His entire comrade in arms irrespective of their party affiliations resigned (including the former CEM Ardent Miller Basaiawmait) the moment the bill was passed. So what makes him think that he is special? Does it mean that all those who had tendered their resignation from the office of MDC in their respective ADCs are fools? The government should do the needful and implement the law in letter and spirit as

there cannot be a special treatment to anyone. Everybody is equal in the eyes of the law. Government should act immediately to save the Congress from more embarrassment.

The other pertinent question is, if election is going to be conducted to the 7 MDC constituencies lying vacant in the two ADCs due the resignation of the MLAs also holding MDC posts, how can there be a special treatment for the constituency which Pynshngain occupies? Thank goodness at least the other 7 politicians holding dual posts listened to their conscience and resigned on moral grounds.

The next party which has its war room ready for the 2018 election is the BJP. The election of Young-Turk Shibun Lyngdoh as the president of the party is not unexpected but the question is whether he be able to make a difference. Although he lacks experience in politics but as of now Shibun is the best bet that the party can have. He has also showed his political acumen as the incumbent president when he hired and fired and even sent some party men who have been through the thick and thin of the party packing. Obviously Shibun is a quick learner and he is fast becoming a true politician.

Of the few national parties having their presence in the state, Purno A. Sangma's National Peoples' Party is still basking in its glory of being able to win the recent election to the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council. The party is yet to get its war room ready, or perhaps there is no need of doing so, because it relies on one man, the doyen of the party himself.

The United Democratic Party which is the most prominent regional party in the state is also gearing up for election of the party's new president in preparation for the ensuing election. Two contenders to the office of the president have emerged, namely Paul Lyngdoh and Bindo Lanong and for the UDP it is a choice between the future and history. Lanong is

a diehard and a true regionalist to the core but his success will depend on his being able to garner the support of the young people. His recent statement in the press particularly on Rangbah Shnong issue could also further alienate non tribal voters in the state particularly those in Shillong from the party. They UDP leadership should realize that nontribal residents of Meghalaya are no longer the same people which the Congress can take for granted as the party's solid vote bank. Not only do they now have the alternative in the BJP but of late there is trend of non tribals in Shillong voting for the UDP too.

The challenge between the UDP and the Hills State Peoples' Democratic Party for the top slot of proving which of the two is more regional-centric than the other is getting intense by the day. As the two remaining regional parties are vying against each other for being the party which represents the true regional or tribal interest, the only losers in the competition are the regional parties themselves. They will ultimately only cut on each other's vote bank. The HSPDP under the leadership of Ardent Miller Basaiawmait is trying to project itself as the only party which is fighting for the interests of the tribals in the state and they are banking heavily on that. Unlike the UDP which is gradually embracing every citizen of the state into its fold, the HSPDP still portrays the presence and the influx of non-tribals to the state as the imminent threat to the indigent people of the state. Whether this kind of projection is going to help or backfire on the party's performance in the elections is yet to be seen, but it is obvious that the party still has a long way to go before it can attract all the voters in the state irrespective of their race or religion.

We will not have to wait long to see which party would gain from this stalemate. The upcoming election to the seven/eight MDC constituencies in the two ADCs will be a mini general election which will give us some indication as to which way the wind blows.

There cannot be a small group that decides on behalf of the majority while the basic principles of peoples' involvement from election of Headman to choosing which party they vote for are sidelined. Government programs and policies fail because of a half-hearted top-down approach. A forum that can define the needs and aspirations from the grassroots up to the top echelons of governance would be more pragmatic in empowering the people.

Yours etc.,
Dominic S. Wankhar
Shillong-3

Defective street light

Editor,
Through this letter, I would like to bring to the notice of all concerned that a defective street light in Garikhana locality of this city, opposite the parking space and which is one way towards Mawlai, has been lighting on and off continuously for the past few months. This is gross wastage of energy and may pose as a hazard. I pass this way frequently and have noticed that the light bulb has not yet been replaced or the fault repaired. Will the authorities please respond?

Yours etc.,
A. Dutta,
Shillong -2.

Wonders of Science

By M J Akbar

As an enquiry, science has generally left me perplexed. During first encounters in school physics was a bit of blank and chemistry intriguing only when it lit a few flames. Mathematics was more welcome, with its logic and assumptions, but anything built on a notional zero can only be considered a philosophy.

And then this week, in the pre-dawn stillness of a hotel room I casually switched on a television news channel. Science suddenly acquired an enthralling dimension, an elixir from the amalgam of past, present and so many possible futures. In stunned silence a phrase from literature, which had told me what to expect while reason taught me to reject as beyond belief, took an enchanting reality: the music of the spheres. I heard the ethereal, haunting melody of two black holes colliding a billion light years away, pulled by gravitation. At an intellectual level, Pythagoras had met Einstein. The mystic-mathematician of ancient Greece has proposed that all celestial bodies moved in harmony, that each had an unique hum imperceptible to the human ear. This was music of the spheres, a concept that cast a magnetic spell on poets.

For an individual like me, bystander to the genius of generations and the audacious brilliance of contemporary scientists, the music opened the mind to linkages across the universe that offered a radical new meaning to the essence of existence, time and space. Life is but the passage of time which ends abruptly in a void. What happens thereafter is a conundrum whose answer is available only in the certainties of faith and doctrine, and not the uncertainties of human intellectual endeavour.

But this endeavour has now proved that there is sound in the universe, in addition to gravity. In other words, elements of human experience do exist in worlds elsewhere. Sound is no longer just a function of one of the human senses but of eternal existence. I can only repeat a statement made by Szabolcs Marka, a Columbia University professor who is on the LIGO [Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory] team, to the New York Times: "I think this will be one of the major breakthroughs in physics for a long time. Everything else in astronomy is like the eye. Finally, astronomy grew ears. We have never had ears before."

Think of the profound difference, so eloquently described. Sight emerges

from the human eye, and travels as far as human capability. Sound arrives from somewhere else; and now we know that this somewhere else can be a billion light years away. The eye is subjective. The ear is objective.

We seem to be on the brink, once again, of another decisive leap forward beyond the existing frontiers of knowledge. It is easy to overestimate the drama of discovery. Scientists repeatedly warn against hyperbole. They take pains over every step: 'painstaking' is clearly a word that comes from a laboratory or an observatory. Lifetimes are lost in the conversion of information into fact, and even fact is acknowledged as temporary, awaiting the next stride into the unknown.

But it is equally easy to underestimate a discovery. Perhaps I am over-reacting in my excitement but I prefer to err on the side of optimism. Surely the excitement of discovery lies precisely in its ability to scatter more questions into the air than it answers on the ground? More than two thousand years of questions separated Pythagoras from Einstein, and a century of relentless effort lay between Einstein and the Virgo Collaboration and LIGO team.

Is the universe, whose extent we cannot comprehend, a well-conceived design rather than a series of random accidents, as much conventional 'anti-God' writing argues? Is there existence outside the timelines of this earth?

Our imagination has always been inspired by the promise of time reversal. When Albert Einstein was shaping his ideas H.G. Wells was penning The Time Machine. Indian philosophy has always dismissed time as an illusion, a necessary requirement for belief in reincarnation. LIGO scientists have recorded the warps and volatility of time. Time has more dimensions than our mind can marshal. What next? Where next?

Would it be a descent from sublime to the ridiculous to mention astrology? Astrology does not have the dressing or rigour of science but its hold on our convictions is surely evidence of something more than collective insecurity. The daily or weekly forecasts in media are obviously nonsense but the reverence that the horoscope commands across cultures hints at some back story that has been lost.

I don't know the answers. I only know the questions.

Demonising the RSS

Editor,
Apropos Fr Albert Thyriani's letter, "Who violates the freedom of expression?" (ST Feb 3, 2016) and also Mr. Vinay Joshi's article (ST Feb 2, 2016), I as a Baptist Christian have nothing to do with RSS or Catholics. But one thing is that is very clear is that RSS is being demonized purposely by vested interest groups. During my college days in Delhi I have had interface with RSS members and on return to Assam-Meghalaya, I sometimes meet them here too. But I could never trace a single point which Fr Albert mentioned in his article. At least in the North-East the RSS has always been at the receiving end as mentioned by Mr. Joshi. One more aspect about the RSS in Meghalaya is that it runs numerous schools for poor tribals and my two cousins received free education in those schools in Garo Hills.

I hope the issue will stop here and Fr. Albert will fo-

cus more on theology than politics. My advice to RSS leaders and cadres is that they must make all out efforts to clean up and repair their demonic image in North-East India.

Yours etc.,
Dalina Dalbot Shira,
Via email

SAG opportunists

Editor,
The SAG is indeed an honour to our state and kudos to all who are working tirelessly to make this event a grand success. However, the opportunists are taxi drivers from Polo who are fleeing local commuters without the authority's direction and instruction. The normal fare from Polo to Nongmynsong is Rs 10 but the cab drivers are now charging Rs 20. As a concerned citizen I request the concerned authority to look into this and ensure that the people of the city do not end up at the receiving end because of the Games.

Yours etc.,
Reuel Mawlong,
Via email

TO THE EDITOR

Don't misuse Freedom of Expression!

Editor,
Albert Thyriani's article Debates are welcome, not intimidation (ST Feb 12, 2016) has again blamed RSS of being linked with Fascism and Nazism. I seriously want to state that he does not have any information about the RSS and is trying to confuse the society through your newspaper. Interestingly history is testimony to the fact that the RSS cadres demonstrated great patriotism and sacrifice during the Chinese aggression of 1962. The first Prime Minister of India Pt Jawaharlal Nehru invited the RSS cadres for the Republic Day Parade on Jan 26, 1963 at Rajpath, Delhi. So going by the statement of Albert Thyriani did Nehru also supports the RSS link with Fascism and Nazism? Jawaharlal Nehru was a global leader and he was famous for his secularist ideology so why did he invite or give due honour to the so called "communal organisation" (RSS) to demonstrate their strength and discipline with their own uniforms on a prestigious event celebrating democracy at Rajpath? In my opinion Albert Thyriani does not know the another links

that RSS had with Mahatma Gandhi. In fact Gandhi visited the RSS camps several times and discussed various social issues with the founder of RSS Dr Hedgewar. He was impressed with the systematic work of the RSS across all castes. Even a veteran leader like Dr. Ambedkar had also visited the RSS training camp. If all these great leaders are well wishers of the RSS and praised its cultural and national work then apropos Albert Thyriani are these great leaders also linked with Fascism and Nazism? Even the former President of India Late, Dr APJ Kalam also visited the Headquarters of RSS and paid his tributes to the RSS founder Dr Hedgewar at Reshimbag, Nagpur.

All these great global leaders of our country appreciated the cultural ideology of the RSS and they have never ever hinted that the Organisation is linked to Fascism and Nazism. Without understanding the ideology and history of any organisation, just blaming it blindly reeks of fascism too. My sincere request to Albert Thyriani and his ilk is not to misuse their ability to write and their freedom of expression to malign an Organisation they know very little about.

Yours etc.,

Elio Khiewkhar,
New Delhi.

Of ulterior motives

Editor,
The CEM of KHADC Mr. P N Syiem's idea of floating a so-called forum in the form of a People's Platform is appreciated but we need to understand that this is another ploy to garner political space and public votes for the 2018 state elections. It is interesting to note that the political tussle between the KHADC where the CEM is a Congressman and the State government which is also led by the very party he represents do not see eye to eye as far as the Village Administration Bill (VAB) and other piquant issues plaguing the Khasi hills. A similar alliance called the Regional Party Alliance which was floated to take over the Congress failed miserably due to disunity amongst the regional groups and benefitted the Congress in retaining political power for long. In this context, instead of having a platform of people, the strategy should be to have a holistic approach of involving people directly in deciding and choosing what policies are best suited to the present circumstances and the challenges that each village

"People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude."

— John C. Maxwell

The Shillong Times

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Wastelands in Meghalaya

THE Wasteland Atlas of Meghalaya 2005-06 published by the Department of Land Resources, Government of India based on LISS III satellite Images 2005-06 shows that Meghalaya has a total of 3865.76 sq km of wasteland which is 17.24% of its geographical area. These wastelands are classified as land with open scrub measuring - 2640.10 sq km, land under shifting cultivation - 291.87 sq km, barren rocky stony waste - 255.13 sq km, abandoned jhum land - 157.12 sq km and land with dense scrub - 454.43 sq km.

The Atlas reveals that West Khasi Hills has the highest measure of degraded land at 1005.12 sq km followed by Jaintia hills at 968.32 sq km. Intensive coal mining without any environmental compliance from the mine owners to restore the empty mines is what has turned these erstwhile green covers into degraded lands. Now these have become a liability for the State Government. In no other state would private mine owners be able to shelve their social and environmental responsibilities and pass this onus to the Government. It is uncanny that in a state where 'land is said to belong to the people,' those people only know to claim their rights but have no understanding of what responsibility means.

The Integrated Basin Development and Livelihoods Programme (IBDLP) has now stepped into this critical space with the intention of rejuvenating these degraded lands through a series of interventions in collaboration with external funding agencies like the World Bank and also by tapping into the Wasteland Development Board. Ironically, successive governments have not paid any attention to this grave issue. If 17.24% of land is no longer cultivable and does not support a healthy, bio-diverse ecosystem then there are reasons to worry. It means food production avenues would dwindle, water catchments would dry up and wild life too would be on the decrease. In fact, animals like the Hoolock Gibbons which once populated the forests of Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills are now a rare species. It is unfortunate that those in charge of our forests and wild life see no danger signs in this unfolding environmental catastrophe. Hopefully these spaces will be re-afforded sooner than later.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 22, 1989

Heavy turnout in all 3 states

A heavy poll was recorded today in the assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, Mizoram and Nagaland, market by scattered violence in which a score of people were injured.

The heaviest turnout, eighty to eighty-five percent, was reported from Mizoram while voting was sixty five percent in Tamil Nadu, the decrease being ascribed partly to the boycott call by the Vanniya Sangham which has been agitating for separate reservations.

In Nagaland more than seventy percent of the six lakh voters exercised their franchise. Counting will be taken up in Tamil Nadu tomorrow and will continue uninterrupted until all the results are announced. In the other two states, counting will begin on Monday, allowing time for ballot boxes to be brought to counting centers from far-flung areas.

Three persons were injured in clashes in Nagaland where polling was suspended in all the seventeen booths in Tuli constituency and in one polling station in Arkakong constituency.

In Tamil Nadu film star turned politician and Congress (I) MP Mr. Vijayntimala Bali and fifteen of her party men were injured when their vehicles were attacked by some miscreants in Pailavaram, a Madras suburb. Mrs. Bali took refuge in a house from where she was later rescued by the police.

Two bomb explosions, one at a polling booth in Neruppur village in Dharmapuri district and the other at a railway track in South Arcot district were re-

ported. No one was injured.

There were attempts by the Vanniya Sangham activists to disrupt the poll in some places by police stepped in to prevent the intimidation of voters.

In Mizoram also, complaints were made to the authorities about harassment of non-Mizo voters.

In Nagaland, polling was interrupted for some time in two polling stations in Maongoya and at one booth reaching Wakching, Tehok and Aboi constituencies.

Today's voting, held under tight security arrangements, involved 35.5 million voters in Tamil Nadu, 600,000 in Nagaland and 334,000 in Mizoram. Seeking their verdict were 2,988 candidates for 232 seats in Tamil Nadu, 140 for sixty seats in Nagaland and 162 for forty seats in Mizoram. The election in two constituencies of Tamil Nadu have been countermanded following the death of two independent candidates.

In Nagaland at least three people were injured in clashes between rival party workers in separate incidents and Para-military personnel opened fire at Changtongiya to scare away mob which distributed the poll process, the authorities said.

He said polling was also disrupted by miscreants at certain booths in Mon district for some time. Polling was by and large peaceful throughout the state, he claimed.

RSS, Politics and Religion

By Morning Star Sumer

In an article, "Marching with the khaki: A fight back by a disappearing people" (ST Jan 30, 2016), Bhogtoram Mawroh has opportunely raised a storm over the bogle of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). By this simple statement I am sticking my neck out for the rabidly pro-RSS readers to make mince-meat of me. However, I hope that they may have the good sense to read this article through to the end to enable them to sift the grain from the chaff - which they would not be able to do if they don't (read through the whole article). That said, we are ready to talk seriously about what we are concerned at this point in time and place.

Until June 30, 2009, my opinion of the RSS was that it was a social organisation which was doing good work in Meghalaya by undertaking the onerous task of uplifting the less privileged members of our community to come up to the level of the more privileged or cream of society: in fact I had equated its work with that of the Ramakrishna Mission. Alas! on that date my rosy dream about the role of the RSS in our community was shattered beyond repair because, on that date the substance of the Tehelka expose of the insidious role being played by the RSS was carried on the front page of The Shillong Times under the caption "RSS embarks on mission to Sanskritise tribal children" (ST Jun 30, 2009) which, I consider to be the most bizarre of all that I knew about the RSS till then: never suspecting that there was an ulterior motive behind the facade of social work being undertaken by the organisation - in spite of the negative press country-wide against it that I had come across.

In the very first or opening sentence Mawroh had expressed surprise and discomfiture at the way the RSS had organised the event, purportedly, to honour Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on his 119th birth anniversary by taking a 'Path Sanchalan' (Procession) in Meghalaya's state capital on 23rd January, 2016. To most of the readers who are aware of the ideology and activities of the RSS it is an event that should raise eyebrows because, the insidious activities, under the façade of social services among the so-called backward indigenous people of NE India are well-known.

It is very interesting to

read that, "Tribals in India are known as Adivasi which roughly translated means native people." I would translate that to "indigenous people". The terms tribal or tribe are no longer appropriate to describe us or the so-called "Adivasis" at the present time. All in all Mawroh's article is a welcome sign that more and more indigenous people are aware of the dangers that confront them from those who profess to be their do-gooders and that there are more citizens who would come forward to air their views through the media - not just to see their names printed/viewed in the media - but to make wake-up calls and to raise the necessary alarm to avoid pitfalls: the very same step that I myself had started taking since 1986 and continue doing so even now though with no visible sign of resultant awakening among my fellow citizens. In that context/sense Mawroh's reaction to the RSS's involvement in the event to honour Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on the 23rd January, 2016 is necessary and timely.

Right or wrong, there is substance/wisdom in the adage that we are judged by the company we keep. Albert Thyrniang's reference to Subhash Chandra Bose's association with Hitler is telling (in "Debates are welcome not intimidation" - ST February 12, 2016), though one may admire his (Bose's) firebrand character in the freedom movement. However, the reference lends credence to Bose's detractors' negative views of his action and character notwithstanding. Abhijit Choudhury's apologia for Bose in "Facts are sacred in history" (ST Feb 10, 2016 page-6); which, incidentally, is a good read for students of Indian political history. Mawroh seems to have successfully drawn attention to the fact that Subhash Chandra Bose had nothing to do with the RSS: the reason why the event in Shillong is viewed with suspicion.

Quoting from a passage in Mawroh's article, B. K. Dey Sawian, in a letter to the Editor (ST Feb 6, 2016) states that, "...a belief in the concepts of secularism and plurality must first begin at home..." and continues by stating his personal knowledge that there

are Khasis who were either coerced or duped into conversion and asks a question if we think that "other socio-religious denominations are more secular and pluralistic than the RSS". This is merely a case of the pot calling the kettle black. He concluded his letter by alluding to "...the most successful and secular Congress Prime Minister who brought a change to this country..." and, who had started life as a pracharak. While we are grateful for the allusion to this "most successful Congress Prime Minister", we would be interested to know who that Prime Minister was and whether he continued to remain a pracharak while in office: if not, why did he ditch the RSS: that would be both interesting and revealing about the person and about the kind of persons holding important offices in political parties. In the over-all context of the article the chosen passage in B. K. Dey Sawian's letter is a true reflection of what most people in the country - including a large swathe of Indian intellectuals - think of the organisation's activities country-wide.

In a letter to the editor captioned, "Why meddle with indigenous faith?" (ST Feb 10, 2016), the writer had mentioned my name, among others who are marked as being inimical to the claim of Niamtre-NiamKhasi for minority status and raising "a hue and cry over the issue." I would request the writer of that letter to quote just one instance in my many speeches and writings that suggests even a hint of condemnation and hue and cry against Niamtre-NiamKhasi. On the contrary, I am the one who suggested that Niam Khasi or Niam Tre, being a Niam-Kur (Clan-Religion), every Kur (Clan) could claim minority status since each Kur is a minor among the other acknowledged religions even without counting/including the other clans in the State! Apparently, he has read my letter to the editor captioned "Religious minorities' rights in Meghalaya" in the columns of The Shillong Times of January 12, 2016, but did not comprehend its import. I would suggest that he reread that letter and weigh his opinion against its implication.

The RSS claims to be an apolitical organization with a socio-economic agenda. Its all-out support and ac-

tivities for the successful election campaign of Narendra Modi in 2014, contradicts that claim. Since then, it has been campaigning for BJP candidates in recently held election in Bihar as well as in the forthcoming elections in some states of the Union. Is it possible now to maintain or support the claim that it is apolitical?

Interestingly, we learnt from the grapevines that the RSS leadership had grudgingly given support to Modi's Prime Ministership candidature as well as to his choice of Amit Shah as President of the BJP before the 2014 general election: so, we know where his relationship with the RSS may be standing. At present most people, including me, are all admiration for the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his apparently sincere efforts to deliver on his pre-election promises though he was seen as the face of the RSS before the 2014 election. However, he may not continue to have and hold that admiration if he should allow himself to be led by the nose, by the RSS fanatics.

I entertain no animus towards the RSS or other like-minded organisations, but, as far as possible, I choose to be neutral with the option to either support or condemn any view/activity which may be perceived as being below or beyond the mandate of their own constitution or manifesto. My views are always based either upon personal experiences or well-researched facts and findings of other researchers and/or the published reports which I may accept as being credible. Since my disillusionment with the RSS, I have been pondering over the truth or falsehood of the many accusations against it. Now I address the RSS directly to either deny or confirm the truth or otherwise of the accusations which I have come across in the course of my study about RSS activities, the most serious and mind boggling ones relate to activities for collecting arsenal of arms, poisoning of food to be fed to children of ST/SC and OBC parents in schools etc. All these are contained in secret circulars issued by units of the RSS.

Religion and politics may not be separated from one another. It is sad that the RSS and members of religious and political parties have been selectively mixing them to dupe the unwary citizens.

in Siachen

Editor,

This refers to the editorial, "Too distant to matter?" (ST February 13, 2016). The agonising death of our 'never say die' brother Lance Naik Hanamanthappa Koppad and our other soldier brothers brings to mind Bob Dylan's song "Blowin' in the wind" and its lines, "How many times must the cannon balls fly/ Before they are forever banned?/ The answer my friend is blowin' in the wind/ The answer is blowin' in the wind." How long can the high and freezing glaciers remain a death trap for our brothers? It is time to find a technological alternative like stationing robots instead of soldiers at Siachen and monitoring the area with satellites.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De
Kolkata-700110

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.

Local Governance Opportunity

By Benjamin Lyngdoh

The Hon'ble Supreme Court has ruled and the dust has settled temporarily. This is the time to lift the foot off the accelerator and put for and counter arguments together and thereby derive at the most logical and effective modus operandi. At the outset, this discourse on local governance and its importance in the current scheme of things, rather it will only supplement their role and responsibilities with adequate authority which is appropriately defined. Overall, the district councils will not lose their sanctity and importance in the current scheme of things, rather it will only supplement their role and responsibilities with adequate authority which is appropriately defined. Overall, the district councils can be the enforcers of the regulation - legally, financially and otherwise. That way they will perform their designated roles without the dangers of duplication of responsibility and authority. For this to work, the state government regulation may give adequate space for the district councils in the planning and implementation of local governance matters.

Fourthly, the election of local governance officials is always a pressing issue. The pertinent questions here are - Who can stand? Who can vote? What is the term of office? In the current era, it is a medieval practice if candidature is reserved for a certain section alone. Election is a democratic practice and an open right. That way anyone and everyone desirous of contesting must be allowed to do so. The clanship and kinship denominations must take a back stage. Similarly, the voter eligibility and as-

pects of office holding can all be unambiguously defined in the regulation. In addition, our regulations and local governance processes have the opportunity to be a role model to other states that face similar issues in relation to their governance structures.

Secondly, it is high time that the KHADC and the state government work in tandem. This power positioning and one-upmanship is unnecessarily delaying and harming our local governance. This is extremely detrimental as local governance is at the heart of the day-to-day affairs of the populace. If it fails, the society as a whole fails. This may ultimately lead to anarchy. Hence, the lawmakers must keep the big picture in mind and end the squabbling and exchanges for position and power. In relation, if we look at uniformity, it is better for the state government to formulate the regulations. This will be applicable to the entire state. As such, the intra and inter duplication of responsibility and accountability between the three district councils and with the state government would be avoided. Needless to say, such an exercise needs consultations and synergizing of ideas between the district councils and the state government.

Election is a democratic practice and an open right. That way anyone and everyone desirous of contesting must be allowed to do so. The clanship and kinship denominations must take a back stage. Similarly, the voter eligibility and aspects of office holding can all be unambiguously defined in the regulation.

Thirdly and in relation to the second point, it is agreed beyond doubt that local governance must be under the supervision of the district councils. That is what they are there for. However, the fact remains that they are subservient to the state government in

bring the local governance offices under the provisions of RTI is highly commendable. It must be applauded. For all intents and purposes, any local governance office is a public office. As such, it is only appropriate that it be open to public scrutiny. This will ensure transparency in the local governance operations and processes thereby percolating into fairness, just and equitable delivery of benefits. More importantly, this will discourage intimidation and highhandedness on the part of the local governance officials (read the Pamrakmai issue).

Lastly, it is only natural that the government servants who hold local governance offices provide information and report on it to their respective government departments. This is only in keeping with the routine practice that the permanent employer must know of the additional responsibilities of its employees outside their primary space of work. They are first subject to the government and then all else follows.

(The writer teaches at NEHU)

TO THE EDITOR

Erratic power supply by MeECL

Editor,

At a time when the state is basking under the tag of being a power surplus state, I am dismayed with the power distribution services of MeECL to residents of Umpling Lumheh and parts of Nongrah. For the last four consecutive nights and more often than not, it has been a regular affair to be without power during the peak hours ie from 6:30 to 8 pm. The power available after these hours too is of such low voltages that ordinary bulbs do not glow. This is a time when students are busy preparing for their various Board examinations and the evenings too are still cold. Light and heaters for warmth are the immediate need of such students as well as for any person and the MeECL owes it to its customers to provide uninterrupted quality services. This is a humble request to the powers(pun intended) that be at MeECL to kindly ensure that power distribution to its customers should

be free from any interruption by installing quality transformers and taking whatever steps necessary to keep your customers happy.

Yours etc.,
A.S. Warjri
Shillong- 6

Students in suspended animation

Editor,

Through your esteemed daily, I would like to highlight the unfortunate experiences faced by some of the MBA students of Sikkim Manipal University, Shillong, who had appeared in the final MBA examinations 2015 conducted by the said University. The results of the said examination were declared in October 2015. Thereafter, a notification was put up in the Shillong administrative office, informing the students that their mark sheets and pass certificates would be sent by post to their respective home addresses from the University headquarter based at Sikkim. While

some students received their documents, there were many others who till date are desperately awaiting its delivery. The affected students had actually received alerts from the University headquarters that the documents had been dispatched via First Flight on 29th December 2015, but at the time of writing this letter there is no sign of the documents ever having reached their destination. Attempts had been made to track the consignment and also to approach the concerned authorities in Shillong for steps taken by them to solve the problem and to allay the anxieties of the students have all proved futile. Hence by highlighting the problem here, I sincerely hope that the Sikkim-Manipal University authorities come forward and take appropriate steps to address the plight of their students.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request
(Parent of an aggrieved student)

Station robots

"They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."

--- Andy Warhol

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 186 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2016

Outstanding finale to the SAG

APART from the medal tally for India in the 12th South Asian Games what has to be appreciated is the near perfect organization of the Games in Guwahati and Shillong. Except for the glitch in Basketball, all other sporting events went off without a hassle. For the SAG Organisers in Meghalaya it was a tall order putting together the event. Shillong has no 5-star hotel which was one of the prime requirements of the SAG officials. There is not a single hotel that is centrally heated. Yet the athletes were in high spirits and there was no word of complaint from them including the team from Bhutan which was being accommodated right in the heart of Shillong's market area - Iew Mawlong. Perhaps the hospitality of the people here won the hearts of the athletes. They would have been more exuberant had they been allowed to move around freely and were not under tight security throughout the day. But security is of prime concern in these troubled times. Any security lapse could lead to serious repercussions and give a bad name to both the SAG venues.

The Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs must be commended for holding his ground and bringing this prestigious event to the North Eastern States. But the chief ministers of both Assam and Meghalaya too must be commended for digging in their heels to see that the Games are organized in the most competent manner. The organizers of the different games in both the cities have imbibed several lessons which they would not have if the Games were held elsewhere. Now they have the confidence to organize similar games to come at par with the more advanced states of this country which are normally chosen as venues because of their easy accessibility. The athletes and the officials accompanying them must be commended for roughing it out to this corner of the country. It has to be said to their credit that they had all good things to say about their stay here. It has been a difficult fortnight for the local commuters as routes had to be changed to regulate traffic to the different Games venues. But the public of Shillong co-operated even though they felt that the Sports infrastructure could have been located away from Shillong city at a more spacious location. Perhaps these are points that the State Government needs to consider. Bigger and more spacious venues would also mean greater audience participation, something that did not happen this time.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 22, 1989

Saving Grace

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's disappointing show in the Tamil Nadu election have been somewhat offset by the heart-warming results in the two keys North Eastern States Nagaland and Mizoram. The near complete routing of the Congress (I) and other non-routing DMK parties is perhaps not the true reflection of DMK popularity. It is in fact a verdict of the Tamils for a party which projected a leader whose political stature is much higher than the rest in the arena. Neither Mrs. Janaki Ramachandran nor Ms Jayalalitha was any match for Mr. Karunanidhi. His only serious rival Congress (I)'s G.K. Moopanar is a relatively new name. Whatever his importance in Congress (I), the Tamils did not think much of him. In actual fact, the voters in Tamil Nadu had to decide who could fill the void of the Charismatic MGR. And they had very little to choose from. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi who is hardly known for his political acumen must have learnt the hard way that platitudes and promises of economic development cannot be a basis for winning election in a State where the party has no acceptable leadership. On a hindsight, few will disagree with the contention that the election in Tamil Nadu was won and lost the momentum the Congress (I) leadership

decided against having electoral truck with the AIADMK (JL). In the North Eastern States, on the other hand, the verdict in both Nagaland and Mizoram has been decisively in favour of the Congress (I). Perhaps, the more creditable of the twin victories should be the one in Nagaland where the party was pitted against the Nagaland People's Conference in straight fight in 44 constituencies. Stung by the imposition of President's rule in a dubious manner by the Governor last year, the opposition in Nagaland made a determined bid to keep the Congress (I) in check by warding off possibilities of split of the opposition vote bank. To a large extent, it was the firmness of the party High Command in picking the wily Mr. S. Chaubatoshi Jamir in preference to the sober and cleaner Mr. Hokise Sema as the party leader must have had its own effect. To what extent money and muscle have played their parts is a matter of conjecture. Published reports have it that both were in abundant supply. Without belittling the Naga wisdom, it must, however, be conceded that when money speaks everybody keeps quiet.

Courtship in Khasi Matrilineal Society

By Fabian Lyngdoh

There are many misinterpretations as well as misunderstanding about the Khasi socio-cultural and religious thought. This article shall review some aspects of the Khasi concept of marriage as it really was in the past, without glossing over facts wherever they appear ridiculous, and without demeaning them wherever they appear honourable, so that the youth of the present generation can see where they are, and set gear for the march forward. In the past, the Khasis, especially in Ri Bhoi region, constructed their residential houses with a particular design in all households, in tune with the underlying philosophy of 'ka tipkur-tipkha'. First, there is 'ka kyndur lait' (front yard) from which a door opens into 'ka kyndur jing' (covered portico). In the covered portico there is a heavy wooden ladder leading to 'ka tyngkong' (front terrace) about two feet wide. From ka tyngkong, a main door leads to a big hall called 'ka shlur' where there is an open fireplace which is used as the common living room. On the left side of ka shlur there is a door leading to an open balcony almost equal in size to ka shlur, called 'ka rympong' which is used for washing and drying clothes, and to while away time in recreation during the day. On the right side of ka shlur there is an entry leading to 'ka rympei' in which there is a second fireplace which is the kitchen cum dining room, and also serves as the bedroom for the parents. Ka rympei is considered sacred and no one belonging to other kurs should enter into it without invitation. On the left side of ka rympei, there is a bedroom for the unmarried daughters and minor children called 'ka kdong', which is the inner most private and sacred room into which uncles and brothers do not unnecessarily enter. It is also in this room that their documents, 'ki khor ki khriam' (silken clothing), jewellery, and other treasures are kept. There are no bedrooms for grown up sons within the Khasi traditional homes.

Young men of other kurs who want to court the daughters of a certain household would congregate at night around the fireplace in ka shlur. The girls too would venture to sit together around the fire, nursing their reproductive instinct in sweet-nothing conversations and laughter. Even though a boy and a girl may be secretly in love, 'ka thiah shlur' is necessary for the boy to convey message to the girl's parents and maternal uncles on his intention, and for the girl to hint her choice. It is called 'thiah shlur' because it is in this room called ka shlur that the boys start to venture for obtaining their full manhood. If the girl's parents approve their daughter's choice, they would provide further lead by occasionally inviting that particular boy into ka rympei on the pretext of asking for his help to kill and prepare a chicken, or to dress a pig's head for the next day's brunch. While the daughters of the house giggle to the boys' romantic jokes and stories, their brothers would be visiting the houses of other kurs for similar adventure, or spend the night in ka 'ting khynraw' (youth dormitory). I cannot definitely say of other areas, but in Ri Bhoi, there were boys' dormitories in every village in the past. There is no youth dormitory for girls among the Khasis. Girls have ka shlur in their own house where they can entertain the young men of the village who visit and court them. Except when it is extremely necessary, Khasi girls cannot spend the night anywhere other than in the households of their own kur.

Various manly skills were taught to the boys by 'ki baher' (mainly divorced and retired elders) in these youth dormitories. One of the purposes of 'ka ting khynraw' is to provide a rendezvous from which the boys would proceed in groups or singly to the houses of the girls they would like to court, which the Khasis called 'ka ialuh samla', or 'iamer samla', or 'thiah shlur'. The youth dormitory is also a common place where the boys can escape from home while other boys are courting their sisters. Boys from one kur visit or even spend the night in the

household of other kurs during courtship. That is the exchange of opportunity for courtship which is equally open to all young men of the village and also those from outside the village. Those who do not want to visit the girls' houses for the purpose of courtship would just remain in the youth dormitory. If the courtship goes smoothly to its logical conclusion, and the night of 'ka pynbuh' (marriage) arrives, the young man shall enter with his beloved right into 'ka kdong', the most sacred room in the household, among their household deities and among their treasures. It is on this philosophical basis that some modern Khasi scholars have created a new popular concept concerning the spiritual journey of a human soul from worldly life to heaven as follows: "From ka phyllaw to ka tyngkong, from ka tyngkong to ka shlur, and from ka shlur to ka rympei." But the process of a Khasi man's marital journey does not end with ka rympei, but continues right into ka kdong, the most sacred realm of marital union, where, even the male members of the kur can rarely enter.

At the night of the marriage, a ceremony of the whole process right from courtship is re-enacted as if the man and the woman meet for the first time and agree to enter into marriage. For this purpose, 'ki ksiang' (marriage spokesmen), one representing the groom and the other representing the bride are employed. Traditionally, ki ksiang are elderly men not belonging to the two kurs entering into marriage. There are three reasons why the Khasis authorize spokesmen not belonging to their own kur to represent them in so important a matter as executing a marriage covenant. The first reason is because all the conditions of marriage have been thoroughly discussed and settled by the maternal uncles of the two kurs and the actual marriage covenant was already concluded in their private and informal deliberation at the engagement, and the marriage is only a formalizing ceremony before the society. The second

reason is because all Khasi kurs are considered honourable and equal in status and dignity. This equality is based not on the economic or social positions of the kurs, but on the fact that each kur is an independent religious institution backed up by the spirits of its departed members, and by the justice of ka Hok. A Khasi man as an individual is called 'u rang-tyrwa' (man who offers himself), and the very process of the marriage covenant concerns with man offering himself as a husband to the woman of another kur. But the kur is not the 'kur-tyrwa'. So it would be a demeaning concept if it appears that the kur as a whole is offering itself to another kur for anything, other than blessing, through the verbal commitment of 'u kni' (maternal uncle). Moreover, a man cannot act as a ksiang for his nephew in the marriage covenant because it would imply that he is offering him for auction or sale, or 'pynshong braw' (mortgage as a slave) to the other kur. The third reason for employing ki ksiang is because the kur is consanguineous and stands as a neuter gender, and the intra-clan relationships are considered pure and holy. Nothing referring to male or female sexuality should come up to the collective consciousness or conversations of the kur members. U kni cannot act as a ksiang on behalf of his niece because that is considered immodest. A man cannot speak anything nor do anything that refers to the sexuality of his sister or niece. If u kni acts as a ksiang for his niece, it would be as if he is calling a man to sleep and indulge in sexual affair with her. That is immodest according to the Khasi concept. As far as possible Khasi men avoid involvement in matters referring to the sexuality of their female clan members in public. Even in the private affairs of the marriage proposal and engagement, only elderly uncles, mother and father of a girl take part in the discussion. All other younger and unmarried uncles and brothers do not bother anything, but would just go out of the house to ka ting khynraw or go 'thiah shlur' to other people's houses. So ki ksiang fulfill the purpose of safeguarding the clans' internal modesty, as well as maintaining the equality between them in external affairs.

therefore the KHADC has no right at all to interfere in the affairs of the state government. In fact, the KHADC should discipline its own employees who are indulging in politics and private business. Whenever I visit the KHADC office before 11.30 AM I do not find a single employee in the office. In order to maintain discipline and efficiency in government establishments it is important to make sure that the employees are devoted to their job, which is public service. While serving the Government, one serves the general public. Government employees should not be allowed to indulge in activities that go against the government otherwise it will affect the discipline, accountability, efficiency and loyalty to the one who pays the salary. Now that the Conduct rules are in place it needs to be enforced in letter and spirit. In this regard I would request the State Government to list out those Rangbah Shnong etc who are government servants and start disciplinary proceedings against them.

Yours etc.,
Teilang Lyngdoh
Shillong-2

TO THE EDITOR

Irresponsible statement!

Editor,

The news item in your esteemed daily captioned "Govt should keep out of Headman's affairs" (ST Feb 8, 2016) in which Dr Donkupar Roy the underdog leader of the UDP is propagating the idea that the headmen should be left unto themselves and to allow them to do whatever they want to do, is an opportunistic and irresponsible statement. That it should come from the mouth of the Leader of Opposition of the State Legislature of Meghalaya is unfortunate. His statement is the laughing stock for right thinking citizens of this state. From his statement we understand that he propagates that the State should be in the backyard and pave the way for non-state actors to run the show. If the authority of the state government gets reduced to a mere spectator then in that case the authority of the state legislature also stands reduced and this implies that Dr Roy is unbecoming of a leader of the opposition as he has nothing left to oppose when the state government has no more authority to make laws and rules and less control over the headmen. It is crystal clear from his statement that Dr

Roy has become too small for his shoes. It is high time for him to retire ceremoniously and hand over the mantle of the UDP to upcoming and prospective leaders.

Yours etc.,

Banrilang R Wahlang,
Shillong-2

Adamant Rangbah Shnong

Editor,

The news item in your paper (ST Feb 11, 2016) reports that there was a walk out by the Synjuk ki Nongsynshar Shnong from the meeting with the Chief Minister of Meghalaya. I am pained to note the adamant attitude of the headmen instead of applying their minds and conscience judiciously. Well, it is simple logic that no employer will allow his employees to get involved with a group that criticizes and agitates against him. I fail to understand why these group of headmen cannot comprehend this logic. We, government servants are like cogs in a machine; we have to function under a set of rules and norms; we are bound to follow government rules otherwise everybody will act according to his own whims and fancies. It would then be

next to impossible for the controlling authorities to coordinate things in the government leading to chaotic governance. When government servants become uncontrollable the government machinery fails. When there is failure of the government machinery including financial administration, public service delivery systems fail. Our salaries also will definitely get affected. Can the Synjuk ki Nongsynshar Shnong bear our salaries in case such crisis happens? In view of these implications, may I ask the Synjuk ki Nongsynshar Shnong as to what logic they apply when they oppose the Government's ban on government employees from becoming Rangbah Shnong?

Yours etc.,

Bibar Sing Pyngrope
Shillong-2

Enforce the Rules

Editor,

Apropos to the letters written by JB Sohkhhet and TR Wahlang (ST Jan 28, 2016) read with the news about KHADC's opposition to the Govt. Notification banning Government servants from getting involved in Non-Government Organizations, I would like to say that the District Council has already been indulging in anti-government activities,

Indo-Lanka Ties A new chapter unfolds

By Amrita Banerjee

India-Sri Lanka relations have not looked better, following Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj's recent visit to Colombo. Not only did she chair the 9th Joint Commission meeting with her Sri Lankan counterpart Samaraweera fruitfully to discuss the entire gamut of relationship pertaining to economic cooperation, trade, power and energy, technical and maritime cooperation but also discussed the fishermen's issue and rights of minority Tamils with the top Sri Lankan leadership.

The successful chairing of the Joint Commission (an initiative started in 1992 to foster bilateral relations) states the fact that the Indo-Lanka ties are in a happy space today. The new dynamics between the two followed the dramatic regime change in Sri Lanka in January 2015 when the Rajapaksa government (that was dangerously inclining towards China) was replaced by the Sirisena government. New Delhi promptly reached out to the new government and things got a reciprocal touch when President Sirisena made New Delhi his first port of call after assuming charge.

In no time, the neighbours cemented diplomatic ties in a series of high-level visits, Narendra Modi's in March last year, the first bilateral visit to the island by an Indian Prime Minister in almost three decades. Soon after, following victory in Sri Lanka's August parliamentary elections PM Wickremesinghe made his customary visit to New Delhi.

Eager to cash on the new goodwill, India has been pushing for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which New Delhi and Colombo have been discussing since 2000. India said the pact could be a breakthrough, for it would not only open up the Sri Lankan market for Indian goods, services and investment but would also further consolidate the Indo-Lanka economic relations.

To achieve this end, India also gets ready to address Sri Lanka's concerns on an economic pact by holding a workshop in Colombo in future. This was one of the outcomes of the Joint Commission. The initiative was in response to criticism from certain quarters that the proposed agreement would take away jobs of Sri Lankan professionals. The other take away from the Commission meeting was the reconstitution of CEOs forum to set up a special economic zone in Trincomalee and an IT park in Sri Lanka that could attract investments.

Positivity in their bilateral relationship also gets infused to a great extent by the baby steps the new government takes to bring about inclusion of the estranged Tamils in the Sri Lankan society like the recent proposal of the Sirisena government to convene a 'Constitutional Assembly' to draft a new Constitution for the island country. This would be indeed a historic opportunity for Colombo and its third attempt at Constitution making whereby the government seemed ready to devolve power to minority Tamils aimed at resolving the ethnic conflict and achieving reconciliation with them.

Besides this, the Sri Lankan government even lifted the unofficial ban on Sri Lanka's national anthem (imposed by Rajapaksa) which was also sung in Tamil along with Sinhala at the country's 68th Independence Day ceremony. Swaraj has not only lauded these efforts but added that her nation stood behind the Maithri-Ranil leadership on reconciliation and development. As domestic politics seemed to be played out blatantly over the issue of human rights in the country,

quite recently, the UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein even visited the country to review the measures taken by the island-nation to investigate alleged atrocities committed during the long civil war that left up to 100,000 people killed and hundreds still missing in the 26 year-old ethnic conflict.

In the hard-hitting report submitted by him at the UNHRC last September, Hussein had criticized Sri Lanka's failure to deliver justice to the victims. He has prescribed an international 'hybrid court' with foreign judges, prosecutors and investigators to Sri Lanka and also cited historical attempts to cover-up investigations through domestic mechanisms, rather than genuine processes to seek the truth.

The UNHRC resolution co-sponsored by Sri Lanka has mandated an accountability probe focused both on the government troops and the LTTE. During his regime, Rajapaksa ignored three UNHRC resolutions claiming these attacked the island's sovereignty. Even though the Sirisena government has adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the UNHRC, he has cited constitutional difficulties in allowing foreign judges to operate on the island and instead agreed to a domestic probe on human rights allegations.

Having said this, the Sri Lankan government seems to be at crossroads. At one side, there is domestic pressure from the Sinhala majority nationalists that has made the government reiterate the fact that it would 'protect' its soldiers in the investigations amounting to human rights violation; on the other side there is international pressure to do more to ensure reconciliation in the ethnically divided nation. The need for national reconciliation through a political settlement of the ethnic issue also has been reiterated by India at the highest level. The Lankan Government has conveyed its assurance that political proposals building on the 13th Amendment (as a result of Indo-Lanka Accord) to the Constitution will be discussed with the Tamil leadership.

In an effort to untie the knot, Swaraj not only reached out to the Sirisena government but also to the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) leader, R. Sampanthan to take a stock of the various reconciliation efforts made since January 2015. Even as the Minister lauded the various measures taken in the direction of reconciliation, it continued to remain concerned in getting the issue resolved "in a reasonable way and in an amicable manner".

At present a sticky issue in the blossoming New Delhi-Colombo relationship is that of the fishermen that invariably gets deeply intertwined with the 'Tamil Nadu' factor. There have been several alleged incidents of Lankan Navy personnel firing and also arresting several Indian fishermen fishing in the Palk Strait, much to the distaste of New Delhi. Not only this but Sri Lanka has also asked the Indian government to ban the use of mechanized trawlers in this region as they deprive the Lankan fishermen including Tamils of their catch, damages their fishing boats and is also ecologically damaging. So far no concrete agreement has been reached since India favors regulating these trawlers instead of banning them altogether.

India has always taken up the issue of safety of its fishermen on a priority basis with the Lankan Government. However, the Tamil Nadu government alleges apathy on part of the Centre and as they state that not enough has been done in this regard-INFA

(The writer is from the School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi)

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.

**“Today knowledge has power.
It controls access to opportunity and
advancement.”**

— Peter Drucker

The Shillong Times

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Public sector banks

FINANCE Minister Arun Jaitley has announced that the government will soon cut its stake in public sector banks. The reason maybe the fall in non-performing assets and in profits and market values in these banks. Jaitley's view was opposed to that of RBI Deputy Governor S S Mundra who said that the ownership of banks was not the point, it was rather governance. However, ownership and governance are difficult to delink. Though Bimal Jalan has said that public sector banks are not in panic, the NPA situation is far worse in them than in private banks. According to Prisal, 85% of banking system weak assets are in the books of PSDs. Data indicate that the effect of ownership cannot be wished away.

Nor is it true that ownership is unrelated to governance. The P. J. Nayak Committee report (2014) throws light on the matter. PSB board table far fewer issue and even such vital matters as financial inclusion and profitability are hardly deliberated upon unlike in private bank. Political interference in PSB is a serious constraint. PSB boards are powerless in the face of such interference. They merely discuss trivial matters. It is almost impossible to recapitalise PSB due the financial crunch. Even that does not grow far. The solution lies in the reorientation of the government's role from master to investor.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 26 , 1989

PM asks Jamir to provide clean, efficient ministry

A sixteen member Congress (I) ministry headed by Mr. S.C. Jamir assumed office in Nagaland today.

The two tier ministry consists of fourteen Cabinet Ministers, besides the Chief Minister and one Minister of State.

Governor Gen. K.V. Krishna Rao administered the oath of office and secrecy to the new Ministers at a simple ceremony in Raj Bhavan.

Mr. Jamir said he would allocate portfolios in a day or two.

He said he would make all efforts to bring the underground Nagas within the national mainstream, and sought the cooperation of the people in making Nagaland a peaceful and prosperous state.

Meanwhile, Congress (I) president Mr. Rajiv Gandhi today congratulated Nagaland Chief Minister Mr. S.C. Jamir and Mizoram Chief Minister Mr. Lalthanhawla for the party's victory in the assembly elections in the two states.

In separate messages to them, Mr. Gandhi expressed confidence that they would be able to give an honest and efficient administration in their respective states.

In his messages to Mr. Lalthanhawla he said "I am confident that you will endeavor to provide an honest, efficient and dynamic administration which will give an era of peace, stability and all-round economic development to the people of Mizoram.

In his message to Mr. Jamir he said, "It is the responsibility of the Congress to provide the people of Nagaland with an efficient honest and stable Government. I am confident that you will fulfill the trust reposed in you and in the Congress party by the people of Nagaland and work for their prosperity and progress in keeping with the ideals of the party".

Cong (I) dissidents to attend assembly following compromise

The winter session of the Bihar assembly began today amid uncertainty over the leadership of Chief Minister Mr Bhagwat Jha Azad and demand for the dissolution of

the assembly by the opposition.

The eleven-month-old leadership of Mr Azad came under cloud following a "compromise formula" worked out by the Congress (I) high command in a bid to tame the restive dissidents, who had set the deadline of this morning for the removal of Mr Azad. The compromise formula was announced by Union Labour Minister Mr Bindeshwari Dubey, at the dissidents' meeting before the start of the session. Mr Dubey, who led a team of high command's emissaries, talked to the Prime Minister over the telephone last night after the dissidents meeting and conveyed the gravity of the situation and "rebellious mood" of the dissidents.

Mr Dubey appealed to the rebels to attend the opening session of the assembly in a peaceful and dignified manner. He said the house would be adjourned till January 30 during which the high command would decide the leadership issue in consultation with all sections of party legislators. Mr Dubey also said that the Speaker's issue has been resolved since Mr Jha had considered himself as having resigned.

Sources close to the Chief Minister, however, expressed ignorance over any "compromise formula" or high command's move to remove Mr. Azad.

Khalistan general among 13 killed

Self styled General Amarjit Singh alias Fauji of the so-called Saffron Tigers of Khalistan and two other terrorists were among 13 gunned down in Punjab since last night.

The three terrorist were killed in Patiala district. Elsewhere in Punjab, ten people, including a Station House Officer (SHO) were killed and two powerful bombs exploded while security forces recovered 31 handgrenades during the period.

Of Debates, Intimidation and Advice

By Abhijit Choudhury

Reading Mr. Albert Thyrniang's article, 'Debates are welcome, not intimidation' (ST, February 12, 2016), I felt the necessity to respond. I agree with him that debates are essential for healthy democracy. Kong Patricia once told me, unless we take part in debates and discussions how could we nurture vibrant democracy. However, one fails to understand, how addressing a writer/commentator as "Fr"/"Rev" (as has been done by some participants in the on-going debates on Niam Khasi/Niam Tre and other issues), could be threatening. In fact, these are honorific designations, which indicate, apart from his being ordained, the public recognition of his status as a missionary. One may take cognition of the services the missionaries are rendering to the society at large. I don't know the attitude of the others, but having been associated with the Christian Brothers of India for a long time as a student and later as a teacher of St. Edmund's College, I have experienced the yeomen's service they have rendered in the field of education. Who can forget Rev. Brothers Vierra (who was my teacher too), Shannon, Barret, or Davis? In the last few years I have been associated with the Synod College in their academic programmes. I have seen the positive effects of the works done by the authorities of this college and of the Synod in spreading education especially among the youth of the rural areas. Similar type of social and educational services is rendered by the Rama Krishna Mission and the Bharat Sevashram Sangha everywhere including the North eastern region. During public discourses don't we address the Hindu and Muslim clerics and scholars as "Swami"/"Maharaj"/"Sant" and "Maulana" respectively? Similarly the Buddhist "Lama"/"Bhrante" are honorific addresses. Are such addresses not a mark of respect? Hence in my perception I cannot accept the writer's argument that addressing one as "Rev" is an insinuation upon one's person or one's Church!

While saying that many Hindu thinkers and activists "all over the country" are vehemently opposing the RSS through "their publications", the writer also alludes that they are from outside Meghalaya and the Christian majority states of the North eastern region. Is he insinuating that all Hindus living here are supporters of the RSS? Perhaps he does not know that many thinking Hindus here, also oppose the Sangh Parivar on ideological and other grounds. They cannot accept the stands taken by M. S. Golwalker,

Savarkar and their ilk. Because such doctrines, cited by him (ST, January 29), are as reactionary as those of the Wahabi clerics of India. The latter owed their allegiance to the Wahabi movement (originating in Saudi Arabia in the nineteenth century). They are aware that such creeds spelt disaster for the concept of India in contemporary history. Curiously enough, the writer does not mention an important chapter in the rise of Fascism and Nazism. It is related to the attitude of the Church to Fascism and Nazism. These doctrines were based on totalitarian nationalism, which demanded total subservience to the state and were racist in ideology. Pope Pius XI had condemned them for their anti-Semitism. Later, however, in lieu of some freedom (in policy matters) with certain restrictions, he would accept the offer of Mussolini for accommodation. It led to the Lateran Treaty (1929). Of course, there was a silver lining in that the Papacy had vigorously protested Mussolini's anti-Semitic decrees in 1938. In Germany the conditions were more complex. William Shirer, in his classic book, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, has delineated the long tradition of German racialism, especially anti-Semitic outlook. As early as in the sixteenth century, the great German leader of the Reformation movement in Europe, Martin Luther advocated brutal suppression of the Jews and the Gypsies. He stood for absolute obedience to political authority. In his book, Mein Kampf, Hitler railed against both the Catholic and Protestant churches. After coming to power in 1933, the Nazi state promised freedom of the Catholic Church through a concordat. But soon they violated their promises. Some Catholic priests were murdered and church bodies were suppressed leading to disillusionment of the church hierarchy, who tried co-operating with the new regime. Even when most of the Protestant clergy and lay members were opposed to the Nazi state, they were divided in their allegiance. Many became loyal supporters of the Nazi state, while the dissenters were murdered by the Nazis. Between 1937 and 1938, Bishop Marahrens of Hanover first eulogized "German manhood" as an ideal for the German Christians and then ordered all pastors in his diocese to swear personal allegiance to the "Fuehrer". A vast majority of the pastors obliged him. This is indeed a lesson for

all of us! Any perceptive student of history can take note of the fact that throughout history of mankind, religious institutions, sects and orders had compromised their position. Often they exhibited intolerance. Kong Patricia has subtly hinted at our jostling for space in given socio-political milieu, which gives rise to tension. So correct!

In his ire against what happened in Shillong on the occasion of the birthday of Subhash Chandra Bose this year (which many of the Hindus also do not approve of), the writer has unnecessarily dragged in his name. That also with a misinformation that Hitler and Bose were "mutual admirer"! He writes, "There was also an advice to verify facts before putting them in public domain". This is obviously a reference to what I had written (ST, February 10). How can I be so audacious as to give advice to someone? I placed my "humble request" not only to him but to all writers/commentators on this count. I am amused to read, "I still hold on to my views."! How? Is it based on historical facts or simply on imagination? If not imagination, then the two or three sources that the writer cites are not sufficient to substantiate his stand. Well, he wanted dictatorship in initial stage after India's independence. But that was to guide the Indians in governance. Dr Sun Yat Sen, the father of Chinese nationalism, too, advocated party dictatorship called "Tutelage", so that his people learn governance during transition to democracy. He did it in the 1890s. One of the sources (M.S.Sharma), the writer cites, had written, "Netaji seems to have liked Nazism more than fascism..." Where is the evidence? There cannot be any room for "seems" in historical method. Concrete evidence is needed. In Bose's own writing or speeches there is no evidence of his preference. One may consult the Essential Writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose (Ed. Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose), Bow of Burning Gold. A Study of Subhas Chandra Bose (Hiren Mukherjee), Brothers against the Raj (Leonard Gordon) and other works. As for the German sources, cited in my aforesaid article, one may see Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose through the British and German Lens (Nanda Mukhopadhyay). Yes, he wanted synthesis between national socialism and communism, as his source mentioned. But what was the extent? His correspondences suggest that he

would consider only their orderliness in governance and their economic programmes of reconstruction.

In my earlier article, cited above, I have given evidence of his disdain for their racist and imperialist ideology in his correspondences, interviews and speeches while he was in Germany during the 1930s. It is needless to repeat it here. I have also explained the background of his moving to Germany under compulsions of the situation. Any one conversant with that era of 'Real politick' would realize as to why he had to do so. One should read Mein Kampf to see Hitler's attitude towards India under the British rule. In a letter to Amiya Chakrabarty from Germany in the 1930s, Bose asked him to campaign against Hitler's observations on India. Even during his stay in Berlin, Bose's views and attitude towards Hitler was known to the officials of the Foreign Office like Voigt (which I have already mentioned). Nowhere in my article did I say that Bose did not meet Hitler. The writer has also cited another 'on-line' contributor, Sisir K Majumdar wondering as to how Bose could put up with this inhuman regime "for two long years". One has to study the available records to see why he did so. One must remember that Bose had to work in an atmosphere where the top echelons of the Nazi government showed indifference. He not only struggled to meet Hitler, but he had to work hard to form the Indian Legion from among the Indian POWs from North Africa and to establish the Azad Hind Radio etc. One must also note that though he had a number of German admirers, Bose had to work under difficult conditions. When he found that nothing was to come from the Germans he decided to shift to South East Asia. Anyone who does not understand the rigours of the then international situation cannot appreciate these facts.

If the writer still "holds on" to his views, then I have nothing to say! Before concluding, with reference to Mr. Morning Star Sumer's article, 'RSS, Politics and Religion' (ST, February 16), may I say that I fully agree with Mr. Mawroh that Bose "had nothing to do with the RSS". I had pointed out in the concluding part of my article that in our country today we are searching for "heroes". What happened in Shillong on that day reflected the current trend, which is unwelcome to any perceptive student of history. May I humbly point out, however, that mine was not an "apologia for Bose", as the writer makes it out to be! If he had read my article carefully, he would notice that I only tried correcting a misperception about the nature of his relations with Hitler.

India to focus on economic collaboration in brics group Energy security, liberalised visa system top summit agenda

By Nitya Chakraborty

India as the chairman of the BRICS group, will pursue a pro-active economic collaboration strategy to improve the economies of the five members of the group - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, at the coming summit in New Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi who made a major impact at the 2015 summit at Ufa in Russia by elaborating on his plans about speeding up the process of cooperation among the members in the context of the global financial crisis, is working on a renovative programme which will take care of the immediate issues confronting the BRICS members.

India is planning to push for an agreement among the BRICS nations on business visa liberalization and issuing business travel cards during the eighth summit in September this year. Despite the fact that the original four nation BRIC group held its first summit in 2009, the problems of business travel are still creating hassles for the industry people and in the last seven years, not enough has been done to ease the restrictions on visa for the businessmen. India wants to focus on this issue this time and the Prime Minister is working on a programme which will help the member countries in facilitating the process of setting up businesses with ease.

The visa liberalization proposal is expected to allow businessmen multiple entry business visas for a longer period of time. The objective is to see that there is easy movement of the industrialists as also high level professionals within the BRICS nations and more and more joint venture projects are set up. India is also focusing on the role of MSMEs and how the BRICS as a group can collaborate to set up more such units having big potential for job generation. India is pursuing its own Make in India programme and MSME development policy. Prime Minister wants to give that Indian imprint at the BRICS summit.

Sources indicate that the theme of the New Delhi summit under India's chairmanship will be Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions. The objective is to ensure that all the five nations will work together to find out solutions to the problems facing the BRICS economies in the context of the ailing global economy. As of now, excepting India, all other economies are facing crisis. Russia and Brazil are faced with severe crisis as a result of drop in the prices of crude oil and commodities, China and South Africa are having financial crisis. China was the model of development but the Chinese economy is showing signs of instability which is not good for the future of the global economy as also the BRICS.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi who is taking special interest in making the New Delhi summit a success, has instructed his officials to work on a ten point programme which will take the

collaboration among the BRICS nations forward in the background of the present global economic reality. India will be hosting the first BRICS Trade Fair and there is a proposal to set up a railway research centre as also agriculture research centre. Indian Prime Minister is focusing on the collaboration amongst the BRICS nations in matters of local government and urbanization. There is a proposal for also BRICS Sports meet. In fact, Indian policymakers are working on BRICS collaboration in every areas concerning people to people contact.

India has taken note of the Ufa declaration after the 2015 summit and as a follow up, India wants the New Development Bank (NDB) to work vigorously for financing the projects in the member countries as also in other developing countries in the areas of clean energy and infrastructure. India has its plans and NDB will be appraised of that. Presently Indian nominee KV Kamath is heading the NDB. The Ufa declaration adopted the strategy of Economic Partnership and as a follow up, India is working on the programme to expand trade and investment, manufacturing and minerals processing, energy and agricultural cooperation. India is also working into the feasibility of developing a BRICS, economic and investment cooperation trade map for the period upto 2020.

At the seventh summit at Ufa, India reversed its stand on e-commerce at the BRICS and agreed for a framework to e-commerce cooperation among the BRICS members. India is now a big player in e-commerce and this sector is growing exponentially in the country. India wants to play a proactive role in fostering the cooperation in e-commerce area among the BRICS group. The summit itself instructed the BRICS trade ministers to explore ways and means in strengthening cooperation in e-commerce. As the chairman in 2016, India is expected to play a leading role in making this e-commerce collaboration a big success.

As of now, the BRICS economies comprise 43 per cent of the world population with 37 per cent of world gross domestic product and 17 per cent share in global trade. Earlier, the BRICS contributed in a big way to the global growth with India and China leading the group. The latest slowdown in the global economy has hit the BRICS members and now, only through cooperation and joint fight at the global forums against the economic policies of the developed countries, the process can be reversed. India believes that the BRICS government have to effectively cooperate in the present period to make the body a proactive one and contribute to the economic growth. India will contribute its share to the optimum level as the chairman this year. (IPA Service)

are spoken by either aboriginal or tribal people. Their extinction would lead to the loss of a storehouse of information on tropical medicines and herbs available only in these languages. We are going to become almost an alien in our Mother Earth if we lose valuable information and knowledge about her treasure. So, it would not be an iota of exaggeration if we compare language imperialism with matricide.

On the day of 21 February, 2016, I must salute all the language martyrs of the

world. Now, it is time for me to call my own Mother wherever she is in this infinite universe to say, "Mother, I bow to Thee!" Then I will repeat the same to The Mother on her birthday and to all the Mothers of the world. Again, my tongue wants to say to my Bangla Mother and to all the Language Mothers of the world, "Mother, I bow to Thee!"

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

TO THE EDITOR

Hats off Meghalaya Police!

Editor,
Through your esteemed daily I convey my sincere gratitude to Meghalaya Police particularly Shillong Traffic Police for their immense effort in managing the traffic all over the Shillong town during the 12th SAF games. I also extend my sincere thanks to the NCC cadre for their restless presence. The Meghalaya police has made Shillong proud. Although this time it was a partial event but it has proved that Shillong is capable of organizing this type of mega event in full. Finally I congratulate all the concerned for the grand success of the 12th SAF games held at Shillong.

Yours etc.,
Krishnendu Deb,
Viaemail

Half-baked opinion!

Editor,
Apropos Banrilang R Wahlang's critique of Dr Donkumar Roy's statement through your esteemed daily, I only wish to thank him for his opinion which even the apex court seems to disagree with. However, this exposes his vested interests in trying to put Dr Roy in poor light by not reading the entire contents but simply interpreting the headlines. His lack of understanding of the intricacies of law and constitutional matters is clear and his opinion on the future of our President, is but best suited for him who undoubtedly does not belong to those who anticipate change.

Yours etc.,
Rayonald Kharkamni
Chief Youth Organiser,
UDP-State Youth Wing

Importance of Mother Tongue

Editor,
It was first announced by UNESCO on 17 November 1999 that 21 February would be observed as International Mother Language Day every year to promote the preservation and protection of all languages. The date, 21 February, was chosen to honour the language martyrs who were killed in the streets of Dhaka on this day in 1952 when they were demonstrating for the inclusion of Bangla as one of the national languages of East Pakistan. However, it is really interesting to find a motherly connection with those two dates with the life of The Mother (Born Mirra Alfassa in Paris in 1878) as 21 February is her birthday and 17 November is the day on

which she left her body (in Pondicherry in 1973). Is it mere coincidence? Now, let us recall another such sweet handshake between Sri Aurobindo's birthday and India's Independence Day. Is it just another game of chance? In his message on the day of India's Independence, Sri Aurobindo said, "August 15th is my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance. I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as a sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work I began life, the beginning of its full fruition".

Sanction and seal of the Divine Force must have been behind all the languages of the world. We need to protect them for our own survival. It is unfortunate that thousands of languages are under the threat of extinction. Most of them

"Grown-ups never understand anything for themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them."

--- Antoine de Saint-Exupery

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 188 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2016

Lack of Pragmatism

THE CPI (M) in West Bengal has made an offer to the state Congress for seat sharing in the coming West Bengal Assembly elections. The ball is in the court of the state Congress. But the West Bengal CPI (M) policy is a divorce from the political line of the party leadership at the centre, as Prakash Karat said and the present General Secretary Sitaram Yechuri has reaffirmed. He suggests that the CPI (M) central leadership is not very interested in the West Bengal assembly elections. If there is no tie-up between the CPI (M) and the Congress in the State, the coming poll will be a non-event for the CPI (M). The party's central leadership is against flexibility and pragmatism which characterised the West Bengal CPI (M) under Jyoti Basu. In 1996, it seemed that Basu could be Prime Minister leading the United Front Government (UF). But the CPI (M) had not even joined the alliance which Basu had called a "historic blunder". That was the only time when the CPI (M) could be on the political map at the centre.

Later the CPI (M) gave support from outside to the UPA government and had a major say in drafting the common economic programme. But Karat decided to withdraw support from the centre on a not very pressing issue like Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's proposed agreement with the US for nuclear energy. In 2009, the UPA romped in again but the CPI (M) was all but wiped out. The breakdown in UPA-Left relations helped the Trinamul party to sweep the assembly elections in 2011. Karat is no longer head of the CPI (M) but his dogma still seems decisive. An alliance between his party and the Congress in the West Bengal assembly elections seems up in the air.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 26, 1989

Vohra replaces Arjun Singh

A nine member ministry, headed by Mr Motilal Vora, was installed in Madhya Pradesh today following the resignation of Mr. Arjun Singh in the wake of the High Court judgement in Churahat Lottery case.

Mr. Vora and seven cabinet Ministers were sworn in by Governor Mr K M Chandy at a brief ceremony at the Raj Bhavan this morning.

Two hours later, Mr B R Yadav, who had failed to reach with others for the swearing in was administered the oath of office by the Governor in the presence of Mr Vora.

The cabinet ministers, besides, Mr Yadav, are: Mr Shiv Bhanu Solanki, Miss Vimala Verma, Mr Balendu Shukla, Mr Rasool Ahmed Siddiqui, Mr Durgadas Suryavanshi, Mr Shiv Pratp Singh and Mrs. Ganga Potai.

Mr Vora, who became Chief Minister for the second time after a gap of less than one year, was elected leader of the Congress (I) legislature party in the small hours of today after two days of deliberations by the party observers.

Mr Vora's resignation from the Union Cabinet was accepted by the President today. He, however, still remains a member of the Rajya Sabha.

All the three party observers - Mr Gulam Nabi Azad, Mr Vir Bahadur Singh and Mr Darbara Singh - besides Railway Minister Mr Madhav Roa Scindia, outgoing Chief Minister Mr Arjun Singh, Mr Kamal Nath, MP and a number of party MLAs and MPs were present at the ceremony.

Mr Vora was mobbed by a large crowd which had assembled at the Raj Bhawan lawns as soon as the ceremony was over.

Mr Vora told newsmen after the oath ceremony that he would expand his Ministry later in consultation with the high command.

Asked whether he saw any

Indian threat to his party, Mr Vora said there were no differences and his selection as Chief Minister was "unanimous".

Mr Vora said he would now vigorously implement the party policies in the state, especially for the uplift of harijans, adivasis and backward classes. He thanked Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi for responding faith in him by sending him as the state's Chief Minister for the second time. "I am happy, it is my home coming", he said.

Moopnar & Chidambaraam's resignation demanded

The dissidents in the Tamil Nadu Congress(I) who were keeping a low profile during the state assembly elections have come to the fore demanding the resignation of TNCC(I) president Mr G K Moopnar and Union Minister of state for Home Mr P Chidambaraam, blaming them for the party's debacle in the elections.

The dissidents led by two member of parliament Mr K Ramamurti and Mr C K Kup Pusamy had favoured an alliance with the AIADMK (JL) for the January 21 election, and were backed by some party central leaders. But Mr Moopnar was firm on going it in alone.

The dissidents have said that the Congress and the AIADMK (JL) together secured more votes than the successful DMK in 87 constituencies. Citing the voting figures in support of their stand they said that with their own strength of 53, the alliance would have got 140 seats.

Different notions of leadership

By Patricia Mukhim

The largest regional party of Meghalaya - the United Democratic Party (UDP) which has some semblance of following across the state is heading for its organisational elections. It prompted me to read up a few books on Leadership including one by John C Maxwell called 'The Power of Leadership and Influence.' Maxwell has written this book after studying the characters, words, deed and lives and of some of the great men of this world. He has recorded his thoughts in quotations. After reading this book I realised that many of the people we lazily term as leaders are actually not so. They have neither charisma to effect change nor the courage to go off the beaten track and walk the path less travelled. Many of them ride on readymade bandwagons of emotionally surcharged public outbursts.

The leadership vacuum at the moment is most clearly visible in the Congress Party at the national level. Someone commented on social media that she is totally confused as to why Rahul Gandhi the crown prince of the Congress has jumped in to the JNU imbroglio where students are shouting pro-Afzal Guru slogans and using words like "Go Back India." She says that Afzal Guru was hanged during the UPA regime and not a single Congressman demurred on the Supreme Court ruling. Perhaps there was a need then to prove to the world and to the hyper-nationalistic BJP that the Congress is more loyal to this country than any other political party. Afzal Guru's hanging then, when the atmosphere was surcharged with patriotic fervour, and a weak UPA dispensation, was, for the Congress an opportunity to score brownie points. If Rahul Gandhi felt a twinge of conscience against capital punishment for Afzal Guru (for the crime of attacking parliament, thereby leading to the loss of lives of several security personnel) then the time to express that remorse was then, not now. Now he is jumping from issue to issue for opportunistic reasons. And so too the Left parties! It's a typical copycat scenario. Predictable and not preceded by any thought or intellect! How can such a leader lead this disparate country of 1.3 billion Indians?

Yesterday in a tete-a-tete at someone's home, a

wag ventured to add that Dr Mukul Sangma has more grey matter and is better informed on many issues than Rahul Gandhi is at any given time. Recently in my interface with Jairam Ramesh the former Environment Minister in the UPA regime, a man who got one degree from Harvard and another from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), I asked him about the future of the Congress party. He gave a benign smile that spoke a thousand words. Congress has now been reduced to partnering with regional parties and coming second or third in every election since 2014. One wonders what will happen to the Congress in Meghalaya in 2018 if this trend continues.

And this is where the UDP as a regional party that is fairly well accepted is expected to rise and fill the vacuum. But can it do so under the present leadership? Dr Donkupar Roy is a good human being but I may be forgiven for stating that he lacks the charisma of a grassroots leader. John Maxwell says leadership is influence. How many of our political leaders actually influence our thought processes? Would they be able to hold their own, if for instance they are asked to deliberate on the current situation in JNU and on the different notions of nationalism; on what it is to be anti-national; and the very idea of the nation state? W Fusselman says, "Today a reader - tomorrow a leader." Maxwell avers that one of the principles he tried to practice is to be well read, adding, "I believe every meeting I enter without the preparation of good information is one where I can't easily assume my leadership role. Knowledge is power. As the leader I must know more about the options in front of us than my boards and committees. Reading helps my leading." This sums up a large part of the leadership role which is essentially to help the followers exercise their options and arrive at an informed decision.

Leaders don't just pick up issues from the streets and join the cacophony of the unthinking. That is not leadership. That is simply being an opportunistic politician. That is exactly

what the UDP has done vis-a-vis the Rangbah Shnong imbroglio. Does the UDP believe that the mode of functioning of the Dorbar Shnong as of today is a fit model to lead us to manage future challenges? Many of its thinking members know the problems in the so-called traditional institutions which have shut themselves up from absorbing and imbibing new ideas, but not a single UDP leader has come out to voice what he believes is a model of governance that will provide the public goods in the most efficient manner. And this is where the leadership vacuum is evident.

Some of the UDP bigwigs, many of whom are also holding the post of Rangbah Shnong are rigidly resistant to change. They want the status quo to persist where a Rangbah Shnong holds office for four decades. What sort of new ideas can such a Dorbar Shnong have? So far the post of Rangbah Shnong was treated as an office of burden where one does pro-bono work. But some Rangbah Shnong have been able to convert this office into a power centre and a remunerative one at that! Hence the disinclination to allow someone else to occupy the post!

We are in an era where redundancy sets in very quickly. Those in the Information Technology sector would know this better than most. This is also the world of Information. Governance can benefit from the use of technology. But would the redundant Dorbar Shnong ever want technology to be introduced in their day to day transactions, especially when many of them don't issue receipts for money received either by way of an NOC given to some person or a land deal transacted clandestinely?

There is a definite need for creative disruption of the status quo whether it is in politics, political parties or traditional and non-traditional institutions. Political parties with no courage to speak their minds at the appropriate moments and those that slyly encourage a visionless institution to continue to function will sooner than later become redundant. Their circle of influence will diminish. The reason why we have a retirement age is

because at a certain stage in life most of our neurons (which are left unused because we are too lazy to think out of many boxes and to tease them) have ceased to function. This is where young leadership is needed to infuse life and charisma into a political party and the UDP is one such party. The Congress too is led by a paternalistic figure but I guess no one heeds him any more so the damage is not too visible as it is in the UDP.

"The essence of leadership is a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet," says Theodore Hesburgh. What is the UDP's vision for Meghalaya? Do they have such a vision? Is there a mission statement that every worker (cadre) can rattle off the top of his/her head? Sometimes it's good to learn from companies and their market strategies. They are the best purveyors of ideas. Sample the Pepsi Cola Company's jingle... "The taste of Pepsi Cola on the lips of everyone in the world." At the time when this was envisioned it might have sounded far-fetched but now in every corner of the world you have a Pepsi bottle or can being sold and people consuming the fizzy drink despite health warnings. At the Pepsi Company every employee knew the jingle, internalised it and worked hard to achieve the goal of seeing Pepsi on the lips of everyone in the world.

Pray what is the cutting edge slogan of the UDP? In the elections we only hear one slogan, "Ha ka bom" (On the drum). That's not a good enough slogan because the drum by itself is a dudd. It cannot deliver anything. And people are getting wiser today. But is the UDP geared up for a population of 65% youth with sky high aspirations? I guess not! So where does that leave the Party? Can the UDP bigwigs answer? It would be interesting to listen! After all, the dictum, "Perform or perish" is what keeps companies afloat. A political party is also a company of people who believe in something and have got together to attain those common goals. The UDP has two MLAs who have been charismatic youth leaders in their time. They should lead the Party now.

Development and ICDS in Meghalaya

By Madhusmita Chowdhury

A study was done by North-Eastern Social Research Centre Guwahati in four blocks of Urban Shillong, Mawphlang, Samanda and Songsak on the functioning of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in Meghalaya. ICDS is a centrally sponsored scheme designed to reach the poor and disadvantaged sections of society. But its success depends both on the structure of the society and those who implement the scheme. The project has some good points but shortcomings were found in budgetary allocation, implementation and the social setting.

The study shows that the implementation of ICDS is not up to the mark. However, on many points it has made a positive difference to the people. The Rapid Survey on Children 2013-14 showed reduction in malnourishment and stunting essentially because of ICDS and the National Rural Health Mission. Under ICDS, convergence with the health department is a savior to many rural people. Even in the absence of the Anganwadi workers, the Accredited Social Health Activists accompanies the patients to the hospital or provides them with medicines. With the coming of AWCs, there is greater awareness of immunization. Today, almost all the parents in the rural areas immunize their children. The food provided at the AWCs is the main attraction because poor children get at least some food. The AW workers are appreciated for their contribution and willingness to work. Also, convergence of the Village Level Coordinating Committee, Anganwadi workers and the parents creates a vibrant environment for learning. People come together at the AWCs, interact and generate new ideas.

Therefore, it is imperative to ensure good functioning of the AWCs. That is where problems arise. Firstly expenditure on the scheme is lower than the budgetary provision from 2011-12 to 2014-15 except in 2013-14. So it is crucial to understand if the funds were utilized properly and whether there was proper monitoring. The study shows that Urban Shillong and Mawphlang in East Khasi Hills have more AWCs than Samanda and Songsak Blocks in East Garo Hills. In March 2015, Mawphlang has more AWCs but average expenditure per centre is less than in Urban Shillong. Though Songsak has more AWCs than Samanda, its average expenditure per AWC is lower than in Samanda. Thus, though the objective of ICDS is to serve the neglected and poor areas, in practice it seems to favour the urban areas.

For proper implementation of the scheme it is pertinent to understand the structural problems. The major problem in the functioning of AWCs is lack of infrastructural facilities, unrepaid buildings, lack of drinking water and toilets, inadequate utensils. The second is lack of access of people living in remote areas. They have to cover quite some distance on foot to reach the AWCs. Children like variety of food but there is monotony. In some AWCs preschools are not held regularly. Inadequate teaching aids hinder their learning process. Some AWCs have no fixed timings. Suppliers are supposed to supply on quarterly basis. But in some centers supplies are irregular. Suppliers refuse to go to remote areas so the village community is forced to spend money to get the supplies to the village. Lack of willingness of parents to attend meetings held at the AWC prevents them from enjoying the fruits of this scheme. One of the crucial problems is low honoraria of the Anganwadi Workers and Helpers. The AWCs and AWHs are supposed to get monthly honorarium of Rs 3,000 and Rs 1,500 respectively. But their pay-

ments are irregular and very low. That affects their morale. Officers do not go for field visits to remote areas. So monitoring is lacking. Provision is made for own buildings but they are not built.

The need of the hour is to make strategies for strengthening this scheme so that its benefit reaches the needy and poor. This can be possible if the Central Government ensures proper facilities such as drinking water, toilets, adequate utensils, and fuel. Since Supplementary Nutrition is the main attraction increase in the nutritional level of food items would attract the beneficiaries even more. Preschools should be held regularly and teaching aids should be provided adequately. Access should be ensured by having the centre where people are. Parents must be mobilized to send their children to the centers. Regular payment of workers' honorarium is essential to motivate them to contribute better.

ICDS should also be understood in the context of various interconnecting institutions. The economy both of the Garo and the Khasi is based primarily on cultivation which does not provide them adequate income. Better facilities should be employed for improving agriculture. Sufficient alternatives in the economy would enable parents to devote quality time to their children. A conducive environment for exercising of political rights would have provided an impetus to the functioning of other institutions which would have helped in efficient functioning of the scheme. For successful implementation of ICDS in Sixth Schedule areas, it is indispensable for us to look at the fund flow at various levels, followed by proper monitoring of the AWCs. For better monitoring of AWCs in far flung areas, access needs to be taken care of to check if the AWCs are functioning well. The irony is that the ICDS is programmed to reach the disadvantaged people but what is seen in reality is that the remote places lack monitoring. Children neglected today will again create the vicious circle of ignorance and backwardness tomorrow. Therefore, it is high time to make efficient and workable strategies for smooth functioning of ICDS. In 2015-2016, the Union Budget has cut down allocation for ICDS programme by more than 50 percent. This would further deteriorate the conditions in the sixth schedule areas. Instead, proper monitoring from top to bottom level would ensure better functioning of the AWCs.

Knowing the poor socio economic conditions of people, it is high time that the Central Government made necessary provisions to understand the real problems and explore the potential areas of development. At the same time cultural and social aspects should be taken care of so that people of all cultural backgrounds live in harmony. Development in this area is impossible without developing new technologies and ideas meant for the local people. But there should not be reckless exploitation of resources. Meghalaya has immense natural resources which should be used judiciously. Fertility of land should be improved so that crops are produced in large scale both for subsistence and trade. Local self-help groups can be involved in fisheries and animal husbandry. Sustainable use of resources would not only generate revenue for development but also create more employment opportunities. ICDS has to be linked to these development policies that support the people at the grassroots. The local community will then take care of ICDS and ensure its success.

The author is Research Associate at North-Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati

TO THE EDITOR

Plagiarism of ideas

Editor, Most newspapers including yours (Shillong placed at 53rd-ST Feb 16, 2016) reported about the cleanliness report of towns and cities in India. Interestingly the Urban Development Minister, Venkaiah Naidu during that occasion reminded Indians of MK Gandhi's speech at Benares Hindu University that, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness," and he even said that cleanliness is more important than freedom. May I remind our readers that MK Gandhi was not the originator of this phrase as billions of Indians seem to have been led to believe. It is an old Hebrew proverb used in the late 2nd century by Rabbi Phinehas ben-yair. Sir Francis Bacon used it in his book 'In advancement of learning' (1605). John Wesley used it in one of his sermons in 1791, "Slovenliness is no part of religion. Cleanliness indeed is next to Godliness".

Indian politicians are responsible for most of the mess in India today. And one of those is this sedition of facts and ideas (not so

much patriotism). People like Mr Naidu need to use their tongues with more circumspection. Young people need to investigate most of their statements because I believe we had been ruled by propaganda for needlessly too long a time. These are not only half-truths. They are liars and plagiarists of ideas. Is free speech the freedom to use a 2nd century phrase and post it as that of Gandhi who died only in 1948? If the Mantri thinks cleanliness is more important than freedom he ought to clean his tongue first.

Your etc.,
Rasputin Bismarck
Manners
Kolkata

Shillong loses its honour!

Editor, It was really a shocking as well shameful news that Shillong ranks 53rd in the list of "Clean cities" of India. Time and again the problems of Police Bazar, which is the heart of Shillong as well the hub of tourism is becoming dirtier day by day with the mushrooming of hawkers who not only occupy the paths

and roads but are also the main contributors of garbage accumulation. Now even mobile food stalls, barbeque counters have started operating in Police Bazar. It is said that the first impression is the last impression and in Shillong tourists go back with unpleasant memories of Police Bazar (Khyndailad) which has become an eyesore of the city.

The authorities have to put their heads together to improve the environment which is becoming unhealthy. Let's make our city clean so that we can become a better, cleaner city.

Yours etc.,
SL Singhania,
Shillong -1

The unfaithful servants

Editor, It is shocking to hear the group of headmen giving ultimatum to the government that it should allow the government servants to get involved in organization of headmen and other voluntary organizations without excluding those who are anti-government in nature like the pressure groups, militant groups and the

group of headmen. This exhibits the selfish, arrogant, belligerent, illogical and irrational mindset of these group of headmen. How can an employer allow his employee to join a group that is against his interests? In other words only a foolish businessman would let his manager ruin the business. May I ask Dr Kharshing whether he will allow his doctors of the Woodland Hospital to form a group that will take over the management of the said hospital? The government employees should also have some ethics in not taking the post of Rangbah Shnong or Secretary in the localities because it amounts to corrupt practices. As God fearing individuals and law abiding citizens one should keep this ethos in mind.

I would appeal to the Chief Minister and all those who are in the administration not to pay heed to these rogue elements who in the name of tradition are creating all sorts of nonsense which makes our society a laughing stock to others.

Yours etc.,
Banpynskhem
Myllemngap
Shillong-3

“Babies are cool, until you've done everything to do with 'em and you get bored. That's why T.V. shows about babies don't last more than a year.”

--- Gregory Thomas Garcia

The Shillong Times

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The Assam Puzzle

THE electoral scene in Assam is getting totally fragmented. Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi made a vague hint that there may be an unprecedented understanding with the Aso Gana Parishad (AGP) but that has proved wrong. The BJP also failed to step into the breach. The AGP has decided to go it alone. The BJP has gained its strength with Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally fighting Tarun Gogoi. It showed remarkable upswing in the parliamentary elections from 12% to 37% though the state has ethnic and muslim problems. It has now joined hands with the Boro People's Front (BPF). The All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) which represents muslim interests is also in the fray single-handed. Speculation about the Congress party going for a tie-up with the AIUDF was baseless as that would have lost the Congress a number of Hindu votes. Some Congress leaders like Himanta Biswa Sarma have joined the BJP but that may not alter the electoral calculation.

The BJP has a lot to reckon with. Modi may prove as much of a fiasco as in Bihar. A parliamentary election is quite different from assembly poll. The ruling Congress has achieved a bit of lost ground with ULFA leader Anup Chetia in the bag. The Assam gas cracker project has also finally got off the ground. Gogoi's special bid is to take the role of representing local cultural nuances which the BJP doesn't know. As far as sub-nationalism is concerned, it is the AGP preserve. It is not unlikely that the poll will end up with a hung assembly.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 28, 1989

Arjun Singh's ouster

The resignation of the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mr. Arjun Singh at the Congress (I) high command's behest following the verdict of the state High Court on affairs of the Churhat lottery has not come too soon. The Churhat Children Welfare Society lottery scandal involving Mr. Arjun Singh's family is not a recent development; it has been going on for the last seven years and has been focused off and on in the print media. Had not leader ordered an inquiry by an independent high powered agency into the allegation, the scandal would not have taken the political turn it has done now and would have perhaps remained as dormant as it had in the last seven years.

Although the High Court judgment reportedly did not personally indict Mr. Singh on grounds of corruption, yet the way timing of his ouster did spring a surprise. The AICC (I) high command did not think it wise to wait till the outcome of a probe into the Churhat lottery affairs and thought it expedient to sacrifice Mr. Arjun Singh rather in an undue haste if only to brighten the image of the party which it thought necessary immediately after the party's poll debacle in Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Arjun Singh was not new to the office. Last time he was the Chief Minister, the Bhopal gas leak tragedy struck the city. A court case then accused him with failure to deliver the goods in areas where there was need for prompt succor, especially the drought stricken district of Drug. The sacking of Mr. Arjun Singh now is a sad reflection on Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's crisis management which mainly consists of shifting of Chief Ministers in trouble to the Centre. Messrs Bir Bahadur Singh, Bindeswari Dubey and Motilal Vora are

just recent examples. Efficiency and speedy solution of problems were never considered by Congress (I) as absolutely necessary for party Ministers to stay in office as the rather long innings of the Orissa Chief Minister Mr. J. B. Patnaik would show. So far the Congress (I) high command has succeeded to shove below the carpet time and again dissident moves against Mr. Patnaik. Currently, however, the Congress (I) high command is face to face with a serious challenge to the leadership of the Bihar Chief Minister Mr. Azad as posed by the dissidents. The high command has earned a five day reprieve from the ultimatum of the dissidents who demand Mr. Azad's ouster before the winter session of the assembly which started on January 25. The ultimatum now is for January 30.

What is of interest in this Congress (I) crisis management is that Motilal Vora who had to be withdrawn from Madhya Pradesh last year after dissidents' movement against him had to be reinstated as the Chief Minister reportedly by a unanimous consensus vote of the legislators to fill the void left by Mr. Arjun Singh. While Mr. Vora was reportedly not particularly happy to be back on the hot seat, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was equally not particularly happy in not being able to put his nominee Mr. Madhav Rao Scindhia in Mr. Arjun Singh's place. It will now be equally interesting to see how the Congress (I) high command manages the imminent Bihar leadership crisis caused by the dissident's ultimatum.

“Pledge for Parity”, the theme for this year's International Women's Day (8 March) has raised expectations of women and men searching for relief from increasing problems the fairer sex are forced to face. Towards that end, the Women and Child Development Ministry is busy re-drafting the National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001 in the light of the current assessment of women's status.

Pertinently, the document, to be released shortly encapsulating national policy aims at “woman empowerment”, a specific task which comes after and goes beyond rights in democracies. It is in recognition of the truth that rights without empowerment which is a common phenomenon underscores persistence of much social discrimination.

Recall, the Government set up the National Mission for Empowerment of Women in 2010 to promote all-round development of the fairer sex and women alongside a coordinated approach of various Ministries/Departments in implementing schemes. A high level committee too was constituted for studying women's status since 1989 to help formulate appropriate policy interventions to improve their lot.

Notably, the Committee identified three burning issues which required immediate attention: Violence against women, the declining sex-ratio and economic disempowerment.

Besides, it empowered the National Commission for Women to go beyond reactive intervention. Among many of its recommendations, 50% reservation for women in decision-making bodies, gender responsive budgeting and gender auditing in real seriousness along-with a thrust on decentralization deserve consideration.

Especially against the backdrop that in the past 15 years since the adoption of the 2001 policy, gender discourse has intensified in the country. As also, instances of violence against women cases which are reported and discussed by the public. Moreover, the awareness level of the public on women's issues has increased despite any respite in crimes and violence against them.

The less said the better of overt and covert myriad

Women's Empowerment

Vital to usher parity

By Dr.S. Saraswathi

forms of gender discriminations imposed on them. According to press reports, the revised policy will call for change in societal attitude towards women and behavioral changes among boys, men and family institutions and organizations. The aim is to ensure adoption of inclusive strategies to cover females in equal measure.

Importantly, gender perspectives will be used to address discriminations faced by the vulnerable and marginal sections of women in environment policies and disaster management strategies. This policy will insist on gender-sensitive portrayal of women in the media.

Succinctly, the thrust of the plan is to adopt a “rights-based approach” for progress and development of women and to create a conducive social, cultural, and economic environment to enable the fairer sex to enjoy their fundamental rights. Evidently, the policy is being evolved to enact the rights granted on paper in the actual field of action.

In fact, recognizing the reality of the increasing female workforce in agriculture and the important role played by them in this sector, the policy might include granting rights and entitlement to women over land and necessary facilities to obtain credit, training, and equipment. The plan would also address problems of sexual abuse in public and private places and those arising through the social media.

Undoubtedly, women's empowerment concept as part of a global policy can be traced to the UN Economic and Social Council Resolution adopted in 1946 which established the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). It was dedicated exclusively to promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. And was instrumental in promoting female rights as well as shaping global standards in gender equality.

However, the term “empowerment” came into usage nearly 30 years later in social research and community work after the publication of a 1976 pa-

per on Black Empowerment vis-à-vis racism in the US. Feminists grabbed this term followed by several marginalized groups, disabled people and gays and lesbians.

As it stands, not all languages have a single word equivalent to empowerment. Hindi is fortunate to derive the term “sasaktikaran” thanks to its Sanskrit origin.

According to the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) the presence of “empowerment” is known by four principal indicators. These include the ability to acquire knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations may be changed.

Two, develop a sense of self-worth and belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life; three, gain the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power and develop the ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Thus, empowerment includes control over self, resources, social relations and ideology. It develops one's intrinsic capacities and is a process to enable individuals to think, act, and control independently. It also helps to overcome obstacles in the way, be it their own lack of confidence or external social barriers. It is an outcome seen in individual capacity to take decisions and exercise choice.

Consequently, empowerment has many dimensions and layers: psychological, social, economic and political. Bluntly, pious resolutions adopted under international pressure are not enough. A genuine will on society's (men and women) part and the State ability to address the problems is crucial.

In the case of women in India today, empowerment is urgently required because even as rights exist they cannot be exercised in full due to social obstacles. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen not only legal entitlements but also actual capacity to use these entitlements.

Evidently, India lags

behind in catching up with the Beijing Platform of Action adopted in 1995 for protecting women's rights and promoting their active participation in public and private spheres. This Action Programme was an agenda for empowerment on the lines of the Vienna Declaration adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights. Which states that women and the girl child's human rights are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights.

There is no gainsaying, while a majority of Indian women are struggling for bare human rights there are some liberated sections unencumbered by daily problems but subject to obstacles in their professional careers.

Remember, the first global code of corporate conduct was developed by Calvert Women's Principles (CWP). It focused exclusively on empowering, advancing, and investing in women in the corporate world.

In sum, Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) have been developed by UN Women, the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and empowerment of women along-with UN Global Compact. They are adapted from the CWP and comprise seven principles for over-all development of women to eradicate all types of gender disparities.

These include establishing high level corporate leadership for gender equality; treating all men and women equally at work with respect and support to human rights and non-discrimination; ensuring health, safety, and well-being of all women and men workers; promoting education, training and professional development for women. Additionally, implementing enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women; promoting equality through community initiatives and advocacy; and measuring and publicly reporting on progress to achieve gender equality.

Clearly, women empowerment is not possible without a change in the mindset of the people. A daunting task before the entire society. ----- INFA

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

JNU – anti-national? Come on, let us grow up

By D V Kumar

The events which happened on the 9th of Feb on the Jawaharlal Nehru University campus were the proverbial last straw that a certain political class was looking for to unleash a reign of terror on a University which proved a thorn in its backyard. The students and teachers of JNU always provided a stringent ideological critique against a monolithic idea of India (one religion, one culture and one nation) which is sought to be spread by this political class. It had to happen to JNU one day. But the only problem is that, this time, there has been clearly an error of judgement on the part of those trying to muzzle the voice of dissent on the campus.

They picked up Kanhaiya Kumar (President JNUSU), who was present in the gathering but was nowhere seen indulging in ‘anti-national’ and pro-Pakistani slogans. He was seen merely trying to check the id cards of those present in the gathering. In fact one is not sure whether those few people who were seen making ‘distasteful’ slogans were students of JNU at all. I too have a fundamental problem with the language used in the slogans by whoever it may be. As I understand, this kind of language forecloses a debate. It does not encourage a debate. Using such a language on a university campus such as JNU is unthinkable because JNU, (as a former student of JNU, I can vouch for it), is the space where ideas are allowed to clash with one another. Critical and creative dialogue among the contending propositions is the essence of life at JNU.

As far as Kanhaiya Kumar is concerned, clearly it is a case of witch-hunt by his ideological enemies. Arresting him on the charge of sedition was the ultimate mockery which the authorities inflicted on themselves. One only has to listen to what he had to say a couple of days earlier (maybe on the 6th or 7th of Feb) at a different location to a group of students on the campus. In that brilliant speech which has gone viral on YouTube, he referred to the oppressive conditions in which Dalits, agricultural labourers, women are living in India. He emphasised the need to dismantle structures of exploitation to ensure better deal for them and stand up for them. In the same speech, he reaffirmed his fundamental commitment to the Indian Constitution.

The charge of sedition on him is something which shocked the entire world. That perhaps explains the condemnation that has come from leading scholars across the world. Scholars from Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, IITs etc. have raised their powerful voice against what they consider the totally unwarranted arrest of Kanhaiya Kumar. Noam Chomsky, the leading thinker in the world who

condemned the arrest, should know a thing or two about the importance of dissent. He himself has fought against the hegemonic designs of the American establishment. The fundamental point which all of these scholars make is that democratic spaces should not be allowed to shrink and that is precisely the danger which can follow from the arrest of Kanhaiya Kumar.

What could have been an excellent occasion to engage the students in a debate about the very nature and ideology of nationalism has unfortunately been converted into an occasion where students and in fact the entire university are being subjected to harassment and physical threats. The idea of nation which had its roots in Europe where it was supposed to have an unproblematical hold because of a homogeneous cultural universe (one language and one culture, French, for example) had to contend with, over a period of time, a number of issues. It began to be challenged there itself. When it travelled to countries like India, it faced new challenges and issues. The diversity in terms of languages, religions, cultures, tribes posed a serious challenge to the very idea of nation. What is nation and whose nation are the questions that are being encountered. These are the questions that should legitimately form the basis of a critical and creative dialogue.

Be that as it may, castigating an entire university as anti-national is beyond one's reasoned comprehension. JNU would be the last university which can think and talk in terms of destroying India where it is located and to which it has contributed outstanding scholars, Parliamentarians, civil servants, social activists. Under the garb of nationalism the kind of frenzy that is sought to be created by some people against JNU and its students is totally unacceptable. Kanhaiya Kumar is not even being allowed proper access to justice. He has been attacked on court premises in Delhi despite Supreme Court's orders to ensure peaceful and orderly court proceedings. Even Kasab, who killed many people in Mumbai, did not have to face such a problem in courts. Kanhaiya Kumar whose involvement in objectionable slogans has not been established is being denied proper access to courts. This can only be explained in terms of a deep-rooted prejudice against one of the most prestigious universities in the country for consistently raising its voice against a hegemonic and homogenising ideological framework.

(D.V. Kumar teaches Sociology, Dept of Sociology, NEHU, Shillong)

applied for sweeper jobs in Government offices in Uttar Pradesh. Again this is becausea government job is more lucrative and secure. Besides the monthly salary, government employees enjoy pension benefits, Gratuity, Leave salary (salary for not working), free medical treatment for them and their dependents, free family joy trips (LTC), coming late to office, leaving office during office hours, leave the office before time etc. In some offices the employees (doctors etc) attend office only on market days. Our employment is secure because we cannot be terminated without following extra-long, complicated and exhaustive procedures and hardly anybody dares to terminate us from service. So these are the few examples that differentiate gov-

ernment jobs from other forms of employment.

Considering that we call ourselves a Christian majority state and most government employees here are Christians we should be grateful to the government which has given us such glorious opportunity and devote our time in serving the government. Therefore we should ourselves be involved in organizations that work against the interests of the government. All those government servants who are Rangbah Shnong and executive members should resign from such positions to avoid controversies and complications. Even God will not forgive us if we are not faithful to those who have done good to us.

Yours etc.,
Kyrshanlang Wahlang
Shillong-2

TO THE EDITOR

Shrilly nonsense!

Editor,

These Jadavpur “radicals” are the most fake and a sickeningly hypocritical lot Their move is the most farcical nautanki to date. If their antics are genuine even by an ounce they must have the backbone to scream in favour of GORKHALAND and KAMATAPUR too. If they are not the most spineless louts, they should utter “GORKHALAND and KAMATAPUR nehi hone tak jung jari rahega, jari rahega.” “Bangal se Gorkha our Rajbanshi ko azadi nahi milney tak jung jari rahega jari rahega.” Bangal ke barbadi hehi hone Tak Jung jari jari rahega” Do they have the guts to do it? But these shameless nerds are only the propagandists of Bengal chauvinism. They are behaving in typical fashion to get some cheap publicity. They should be lampooned for this street comedy. One should never take them seriously at all. Do they have the spine to write Kya Bole Bimal Gurung and Kamatapuri: AZADI. Until then they have irrevocably proved themselves to be Jadavpur Jokers,

Yours etc.,
Jyotirmoy Prodhani
NEHU, Shillong

Informative write-up

Editor,

This refers to your informative write-up “Should one revert to a stone-age diet to stay fit & healthy?” (ST February 19, 2016). It clearly shows that if we focus on nutrition and exercise, we can make a lot of healthy physical changes. Diseases occur because our bodies are poorly or inadequately adapted to environments in which we now live. An example would be eating large amounts of sugar or being very physically inactive leads to problems like diabetes or heart disease that then make us sick. We don't have the bodies that are able to cope with those levels of sugar, and the result is that we get sick. Stress can cause myriad problems. Exercise also improves circulation and body awareness, and regular exercise can help combat depression.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad – 380 015

Strait Brothers let us down!

Editor,
I am a country music

lover and a great fan of our local country band “The Strait Brothers” But bitterly they have let us down and that too on our ‘big day’(wedding day). I had contacted the band since November 2015 and even paid the full amount for their performance for our big day February 2016. One week before the wedding I called the lead vocalist to remind him again. Unfortunately on our big day they did not turn up to perform .At 6 pm I had to call them a dozen times but when the lead vocalist answered my calls he informed me that they would not be able to make it due to the demise of one of their relatives. I asked him when the bereavement happened. He replied, “Yesterday,” which means he had 48 hours to inform us . But we learnt from some friends that they performed at another wedding on that particular day . Whatever the truth be, I have lost respect for that band and I wouldn't recommend it anymore to anyone. The Strait Brothers are blessed with a God gifted talent. They are born to entertain people and not to disappoint people. But sadly they have disappointed us and that too on our wedding day (once in a lifetime event). Can you believe it? Hopefully we will be the last couple that they will disappoint. Anyway

through your esteemed daily I would request the lead vocalist to at least answer my calls and refund my money as soon as possible. All the best Strait Brothers.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Serve with faith

Editor,

Referring to the letters written by JB Sohkhhet and TR Wahlang (ST Jan 28, 2016) I would like to impress upon my fellow government employees that we are the fortunate lot of the society. This is because there are hundreds of thousands of people in our state who could not make it into the government service. I pity the young boys and girls who have completed their studies in and outside the state, but who are still running from pillar to post seeking employment in Government offices. They prefer government jobs than any other employment due to the facilities available in being a government servant. We are very fortunate because we work only about 225 days in a year whereas we get paid for 365 days. This opportunity is over and above the casual leave and earned leave that we enjoy. Recently about 17,000 MBA and B Tech graduates in UP

Did Tagore write the national anthem to please the British, Arup Dey tries to find out

Politics behind the recurrent controversy over the national anthem is bereft of facts. The debate on our national anthem, *Jana Gana Mana*, has started once again. Controversial BJP leader Subramanian Swamy in December wrote to prime minister Narendra Modi urging him to replace the wordings of the anthem with what Subhas Chandra Bose had incorporated in the Indian National Army anthem.

According to Swamy, the national anthem was originally composed to praise the British king -- words like 'Bharata bhagya vidhata' (the dispenser of India's destiny) and 'adhinayaka' (the ruler) were for King George V, who had visited India in December 1911. Earlier, in July 2015, Rajasthan governor Kalyan Singh had also questioned the meaning of the national anthem.

While addressing students at a convocation of the Rajasthan University, he demanded the removal of 'adhinayak' since it 'praises the English rule' in India. "Jana gana mana adhinayaka jaya hey... 'adhinayaka' for whom? It praises 'angreji shasak', the British ruler. It should be amended and replaced by words 'jana gana mana mangal gaye'," he said. But what is the reality? Did Rabindranath Tagore really praise the British ruler through *Jana Gana Mana*? Tagore himself made a clarification on this controversy. In a letter to Pulin Behari Sen

Jana Gana.. versus Vande Mataram

on November 10, 1937, he wrote, "A certain high official in His Majesty's service, who was also my friend, had requested that I write a song of felicitation towards the Emperor. The request simply amazed me. It caused a great stir in my heart. In response to that great mental turmoil, I pronounced the victory in *Jana Gana Mana* of that *Bhagya Vidhata* (God of Destiny) of India who has from age after age held

steadfast the reins of India's chariot through rise and fall, through the straight path and the curved. That Lord of Destiny, that Reader of the Collective Mind of India, that Perennial Guide, could never be George V, George VI, or any other George. Even my official friend understood this about the song. After all, even if his admiration for the crown was excessive, he was not lacking in simple

common sense."

Later, on March 13, 1939, Tagore once again wrote: "I should only insult myself if I cared to answer those who consider me capable of such unbounded stupidity as to sing in praise of George the Fourth or George the Fifth as the Eternal Charioteer leading the pilgrims on their journey through countless ages of the timeless history of mankind."

Noble laureate Tagore was a great poet and while reading his full poem, all five stanzas (only the first stanza was adopted as the national anthem), with a little literary sense, one could easily understand how baseless the charges are. The third stanza of the poem is remarkable in this regard. In English translation, it reads, "The way of life is sombre as it moves through ups and downs, but we, the pilgrims, have followed it through ages. Oh! Eternal Charioteer, the wheels of your chariot echo day and night in the path. In the midst of fierce revolution, your conch shell sounds. You save us from fear and misery. Oh!

You who guide the people through torturous path, victory be to you, dispenser

section of the English press made the misinterpretation that Tagore wrote the song for the emperor. The next day, on December 28, *The Statesman* reported: "The Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore sang a song composed by him specially to welcome the Emperor." No doubt, a song was sung in praise of the emperor but that was not *Jana Gana Mana*. It was 'b a d s h a h humara' written in Hindi by Rambhuj Chaudhary. Amrita Bazar Patrika stated



Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay

vande mataram
sujalam suphalam
malayajasitalam
sasya syamalam
mataram
vande mataram

subhra jyotsna
pulakita yaminim
phulla kusumita
drumadalsobhini
suhasini
sumadhura bhasini
sukhadam varadam
mataram
vande mataram

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of the destiny of India! Victory, victory, victory to you!" King George could have never been the eternal charioteer of India. So, how did this controversy arise? Actually, the composition was first sung during the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress, inaugurated on December 26, 1911. The national anthem was sung on the second day of the convention. As welcoming King George V was in that day's agenda, a

the order of events clearly. On December 28, 1911, it reported: "The proceedings of the Congress party session started with a prayer in Bengali to praise God (song of benediction). This was followed by a resolution expressing loyalty to King George V. Then another song was sung, welcoming King George V."

The annual session report of the Indian National Congress of December 1911 too is clear on this account: "On the first day of 28th annual session of the Congress. (Contd on P-VII)

Here's an idea for thoughtful people. Always carry around a large number of prosthetic limbs, so if you're assassinated the guy who does the chalk outline will be able to create a fascinating piece of conceptual art. Of course, it's obviously better if one doesn't get knocked off, but it's important to be considerate, right?

The fact is a steady growth of civility and politeness is seeping into the whole evil-doer/law-enforcer paradigm. I started thinking about this when a reader sent me a news cutting about cops raiding a suspected drug house in the US state of Illinois. During the 90-minute search for evidence, a regular stream of drug-buyers turned up at the front door with cash, and police had to post officers there to politely deflect them.

The actual conversations (repeated at least 10 times) were not recorded but must have gone something like this. "Here for illegal drugs?" "Yes, please!" "Terribly sorry, but we're doing a major police raid here. Would you mind coming back later? Have a nice day."

The report reminded me of a robbery in Malaysia some years ago. Armed villains took over a 7-Eleven store to steal stuff from the stock room. To buy themselves time, some gang members put on staff coats and served customers who came in. Afterwards, witnesses told investigators that the only suspicious thing was that shop staff were more courteous and attentive than normal.

That tale in turn reminded one of my colleagues about a thief who went into a McDonald's in Sydney and demanded cash from the till. The quick-thinking manager said: "Sorry, we can't open the till unless you buy something." The robber checked his pockets to see if he had enough

cash to buy the cheapest thing on the menu. He didn't. Again the exact words of the exchange were not recorded, but

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

across as needy. Always better to play it cool. Unless you work at a certain 7-Eleven, where it might make folk suspicious.

Hands up, please, thank you

must have been on these lines: "Sorry, bit short of cash today, I'll come back another time." "Sure, don't be a stranger."

Now of course committing robberies is still illegal whether you're polite or not, right? Maybe not. Your columnist asked a lawyer who said that a bank robber in the US last summer tried to use his civility as a legal defense. He argued that since he had waited in line, asked for the cash politely, and used the terms "please" and "I would appreciate it" on the note he handed over, the demand should be seen as a friendly request and the money handed over seen as a gift. The defense failed, but I do think he should have won some sort of award for Largest Public Display of Chutzpah.

The same goes for the prisoner from the famous lock-up at Guantanamo Bay who posted his profile on a big dating website, describing himself as "detained but ready to mingle". He had been locked away for eight years, so "ready" was probably a bit of an understatement. But then "half-crazed with desperation" might have

Mudejar art of architecture and embellishments in Spain offers a glimpse into a time when Christian and Islamic art fused and created beauty together, discovers Ranjita Biswas

Art knows no bounds. An oft-repeated axiom is more than reflected in the Mudajar art of Spain, mainly witnessed in its southern part, the Andalusian region. It is a style of architecture and craftsmanship that have fused Christian art sensibilities, call it European if you like, and Islamic art. In these times when in many pockets of the world intolerance and refusal to recognize diversity are escalating, a look back in history of art development, like Mudejar, is perhaps not overdue.

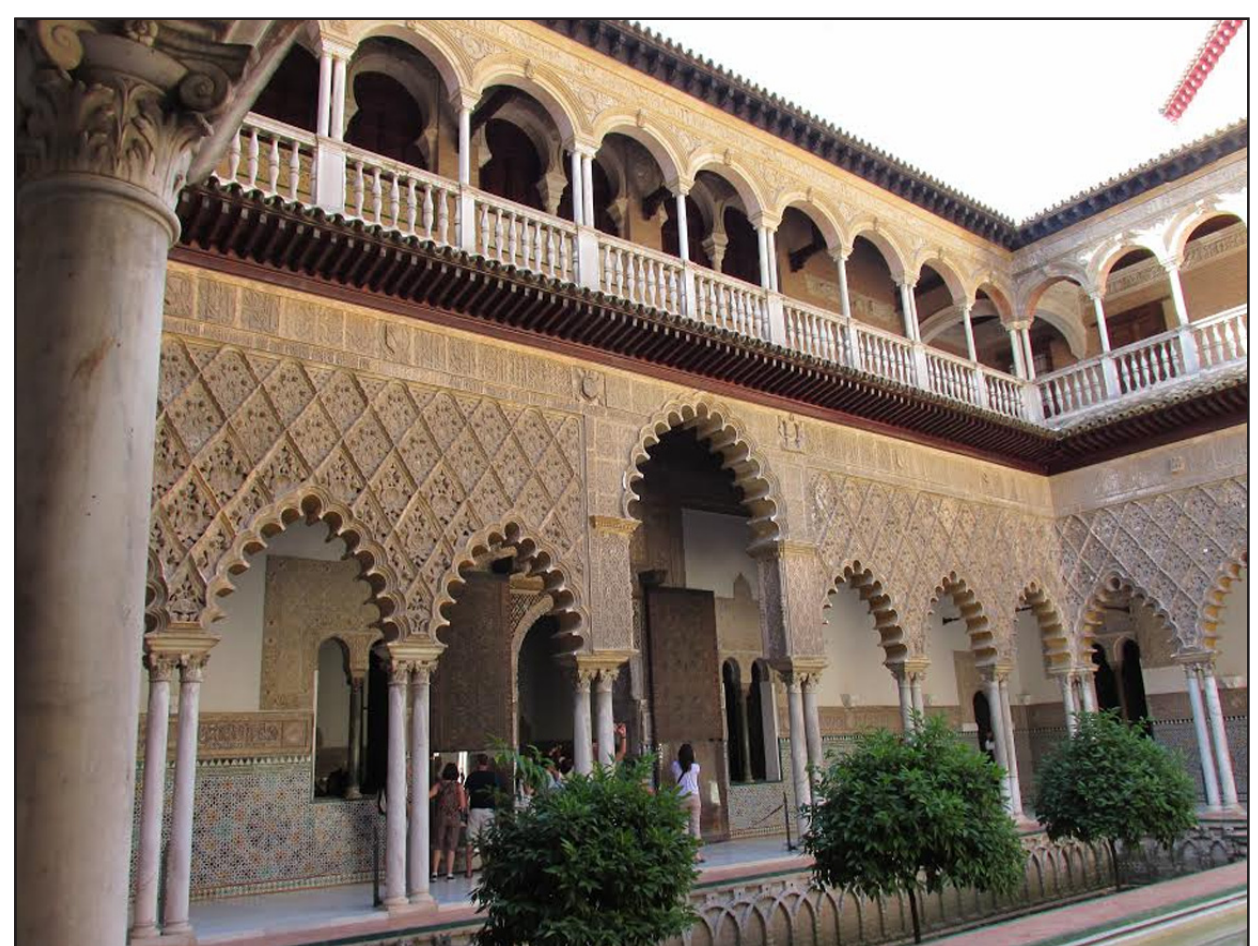
If you are from the sub-continent and while visiting this corner of Europe, you could well be struck by a

sense of familiarity as you encounter the architectural styles and decorations in many palaces, even churches, and in the well laid out gardens because they remind of those many back home highly influ-

enced by Islamic art under the Mughals.

Far away in Spain, the influence of Islamic art can be traced to its medieval history. The Moors from Morocco conquered the Iberian peninsula i.e. Spain

Perfect blending



and Portugal, step by step beginning in early 8th century and reigned there for almost seven hundred years. Some dynasties were tolerant, allowing Christians and Jews to practice their faith as in Seville and Toledo, and the constructions even in synagogues showed Islamic style embellishments.

The Reconquista- reconquest of the so-called Chris-

tian lands by the Catholic kings and supported by the papacy began sometime in the mid 12th century and continued for another two hundred years or so. Moor citadels fell one by one; the last great city to fall was Granada. But the remnants of such a long rule remained, if not among the ruling class, in the cultural motifs.

In Seville, for example, the great cathedral was

built where the huge Almohad mosque existed and where people of other faiths congregated too in the wide courtyard from time to time. Today, the minaret- Giralda, el giralddillo so called by the local people because of the weathervane atop the bell tower, is all that remains of the Muslim legacy. With its beautiful brick panels it is regarded as one of the finest exam-

ples of Almohad dynasty architecture. The minaret was used by the muezzin to call the faithful for prayer.

Nearby, the Alcazar (palace) is an astounding example of the fusion of Christian and Islamic architectural art in Mudejar style. Many Muslims stayed behind after the Christian reconquest, some even converted (Moriscos) and they were often hired by the new lords

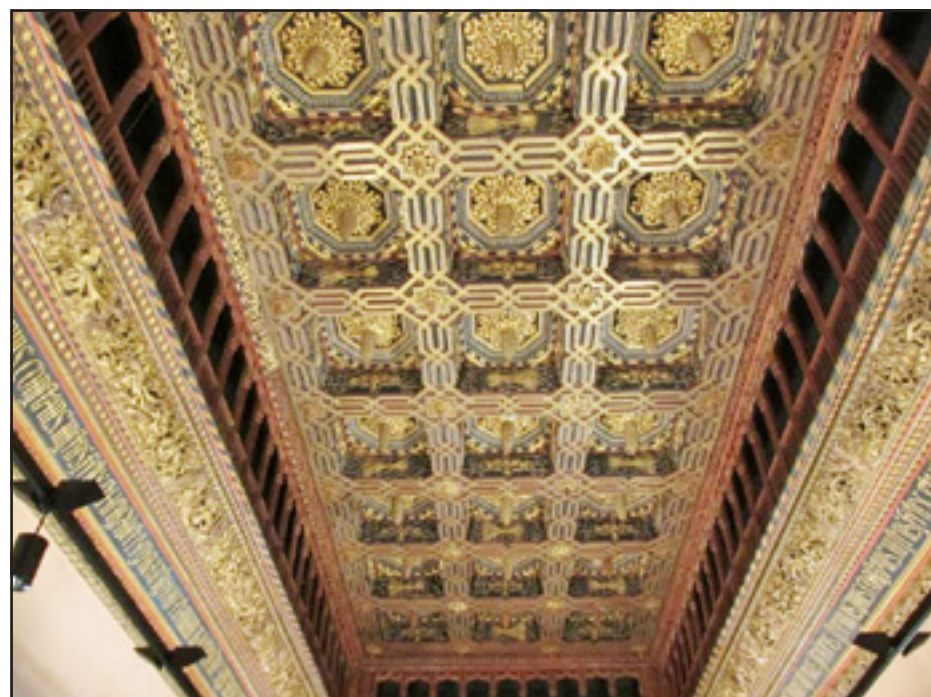
to decorate their homes. The evidence is there to see- in the brick work, plaster coatings, wooden ceilings, glazed tiles, and inlay furniture.

Mudejar art of decoration lays special emphasis on the techo artesonado, or ornately decorated coffered wooden ceiling. The spaces within the beams were covered with wood carvings, using geometric designs and plant motifs, or calligraphy. One of the finest examples, experts say, is this palace in Seville.

The Alcazar's trelliswork, the blue tiles, the fountains in the patio reflect a time of co-existence too. King Peter I was a friend of the still ruling Muslim emir of Granada of the Nasrid dynasty. He sent some of his top artisans from his Alhambra palace to work on Peter's palace.

The amazing Alhambra palace of Granada, a Unesco heritage site like the Seville Alcazar, has some of the finest Mudejar art ceilings and panels. The sunken gardens, hamams, the Lion square in the inner court, are more Muslim than Christian style in architecture. The Catholic kings, even after conquest, valued them and did not destroy. Today it offers an apt introduction to medieval art in the Iberian peninsula.

Segovia is another place, an old Spanish centre of power 91 km from Madrid, where the Alcazar shows off a richly embellished coffered ceiling (Contd on P-VII)



By Ankit Sinha

Journey of self-discovery

She has mesmerised the world with her brand of traditional Portuguese music Fado, playing sold out concerts and releasing albums that achieved Platinum and Gold status in her country. But singer Carminho reveals that behind her fame and success is one eventful journey to India 10 years ago, which led her down a path of self-discovery.

The singer, who performed at the maiden edition of the World Music Festival here on Saturday, says she came to India a decade ago and visited Rajasthan and Kolkata.

"I'm playing in India for the first time, but it is not the first time I have been here. I was here 10 years ago in Rajasthan and Kolkata," Carminho said.

"For me, it is very special because I started in India a journey of discovering myself when I was 21 years old. It was a journey to discover my vocation and my way of living. Actually, I discovered with that trip 10 years ago that I wanted to be a singer professionally," she added.

The 31-year-old said that returning to India as a performer from being a traveller is "like a cycle".

"For the first time, I can give back what India gave to me. I can give what I learned in these 10 years because India gave me so much," she added.

What are some of the changes that she has noticed during her second trip?

"I think a lot of things changed for better. Also, a lot of things I like about the culture stayed the same. I am always very welcome and people are very friendly and nice. I feel great here," she said.

Carminho, who enchanted the crowd



Carminho

with her brand of Fado in a language unbeknownst to most, describes the musical genre as the "blues of Portugal".

"Fado is a Portuguese tradition of music. It is acoustic, it started a long time ago in the poor neighbourhoods in the cities. It is like our blues. People with a lot of difficulties in life got a way to express those feelings in a good way, translating them into music," she said.

"They started coming together as a community with players, singers and poets. Firstly, it wasn't an artistic language, but a human language, which became an artistic way of expression," she added.

Carminho says that her music is steeped in tradition and while some other artists in the genre like to experiment with different styles, she prefers to play Fado the way it is supposed to be played.

"Fado has a lot of history, with rules and you

must remain within rules because then it is not Fado anymore. A lot of people like to mix it with different styles, which is also very nice, but I like to play traditional Fado. I play with acoustic and Portuguese guitar players, which is the traditional formation," she said.

Fado is said to be melancholic in nature, but Carminho says that it is not the best tag for the genre, as it is "the translation of the feelings of the heart".

"It is melancholic, but it is not just that. The music is deep, but not sad. Even if we sing the sadness deeply, it brings out the harmony and joy and intensity. I feel like an interpreter more than a singer.

"When you sing the life of people, you don't just sing sadness. I agree that Portuguese people are melancholic, but happiness is there too. It's more than that," she added. (IANS)



Be friend, philosopher to your....

By Uma Ramachandran

Adolescence is a nightmare for parents, but with some skills, the ride can be smooth through the monster years. It is never really easy being a parent. There are no thumb rules, with most shooting in the dark. The challenge never ends and parents are often plagued by self-doubt. You can just do your best by being there for your children, and in the end, take comfort in the thought that you may have just made it as a 'good' parent. That's another thing that the children, of course, may never agree. But one thing to remember at all times is that children require constant support, especially through adolescence, which is identified as a period of storm and stress. A major factor contributing to such 'stressful' notion is that ad-

olescence is a period of drastic changes in terms of growth and development. It is common to find parents who are apprehensive as their child begins to approach the teenage years, anticipating difficulties in parenting and disciplining the child. Teenagers and adolescents are in a phase of development, wherein they have an instinctive desire to explore their environment. As they want to get a taste of freedom, they often may begin to resist the authority of their parents, or other adults, around them, whom they would comply with earlier. Moreover, the peer group begins to play the most significant role during these years, as the teenager seeks the approval of his or her peers, often to the dismay of the parents. If not dealt with appropriately, the troubles of the teenage and adolescence could lead to scarring and irreparable damage to the parent-child relationship, not to forget the adverse impact on the teenager's future and the well-being of the parents as well.

As a parent to a teen, it is more important for you to be able to develop a connected relationship with the teen-

ager, rather than having him or her disciplined and within your control. It is vital for the teenagers to be able to identify with their parents. This is the stage they can begin to form deep and long-lasting bonds with you, based on an understanding towards each other. It is common to find that teenagers are not willing to confide every little detail with their parents. However, rather than being punitive towards them for their deceptiveness, it is more important for letting the teenager know and feel the presence of your support, and to realise that you would be able to understand where he or she is coming from. The aim is to create an environment where the teenager or adolescent does not hesitate to communicate openly. In order to manage the behavioural difficulties of teenagers, it could be useful to use the principle of reinforcement. Avoid giving punishments, and instead, use negative reinforcements by taking away a pleasurable reward. Make behavioural contracts and implement these consistently across time, people as well as situations.

This works best for teenagers and adolescents as involving them in the decision making processes not only gives them a sense of acknowledgement and responsibility, but also makes them more committed towards implementing and fulfilling those decisions. It is important not to overlook any inappropriate or undesirable behaviour of your teenager. Parents need to point out to him/her each time he/she violates the behavioural contract, and the teenager should be able to expect a known consequence (which has been decided through a participative process). At the same time, do not be overly harsh. Be firm and assertive, so the teenager learns and remembers your words without resenting them. Young minds are very easily imprinted by what they see or hear around them. There is no way that your teenager will learn to deal effectively with conflicts if he/she doesn't see you doing the same. Whether it be with your spouse, elders, or staff, you need to model appropriate behaviour, so that the teenager can learn from your example -- for instance, choosing to be assertive instead

of aggressive. Every instruction or restriction you give must be explained to the teenager. Do not expect them to simply obey your commands. Unless they understand the reason and intention underlying a rule, it would appear to be unreasonable and unjust, making it more difficult for them to respect and follow the rule. Therefore, always give the 'why' of what you say to them. Pick your battles, and remember that as a parent, it is important for you to be able to give in, at times. The teenagers need to learn that life doesn't always function as per their own will, and that we all need to be ready to compromise some times. However, you need to be cautious to choose more inconsequential things to give in to, so that you can be firm to refuse more major decisions.

In your efforts to persuade the teenager to agree with your point of view, remember that overdoing it can do more harm than good to the teenager as well as his/her relationship with you. Be there as a guide or facilitator, but also help the teenager to feel responsible towards him or herself. It's ok if your teenager does not agree to your point of view. Do not expect your kids to always agree with you blindly. While disagreeing is not a reason for being penalised, it is equally important to show him/her the significance of a discussion or negotiation before reaching a mutual decision. INAV

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambhani

Sunday, February 21, 2016

Moon trine Saturn on your solar return chart is indicative of a good year. You are disciplined and well organized as you systematically handle the work and multiple tasks that come your way this month. Vitality reflects in the work that you do. You develop new areas of interest which could bring you in the limelight. It's a good time to focus on priorities and cut through limitations and restrictions. You have achieved a balanced personal relationship that brings forth warmth, love and support. Children are a source of joy as they excel in their field. You socialize with a variety of people and this could open up new vistas and hobbies. Health of someone close could worry for a bit.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)
You tend to concentrate your vital force on self-nurturing as well as nurturing those close to you. It is a time to honor your roots, stabilize your home life, and build the connections you have with the family. It's a favorable time to open up conversations with loved ones. This is a good time to go for higher learning and joining new courses to enhance your professional skills and efficiency. Your mind is especially inquisitive and you bring in a new perspective too. Short trips, and other forms of communication and making connections, appeal strongly.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)
Your social life is likely to increase and bring you in contact with influential and helpful people. It's a good time to do something that requires additional bravery or courage, as some of your inhibitions are released and you live more spiritedly. Competitive activities, such as sports or business, thrive in this period. Career and reputation matters require extra attention. Realistic levels of optimism and confidence are with you, and you are able to attract fortunate circumstances into your life. Problems are easier to resolve.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)
You would be establishing a happy and harmonious work environment through friendly relations with co-workers. Tidying up your work area too comes into focus now. Romantic and social activities may revolve around your working environment. You are generally well liked and respected socially on the job right now. Some laziness is expected now, as you tend to be drawn to leisure activities. Perhaps you are socializing more than usual. You have good team spirit and are more tactful with your co-workers.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)
This phase brings new responsibilities. These are likely to present themselves and you would take them more seriously. You are especially fond of the home life and are more family oriented. Take care when it comes to presenting ideas, writing letters, and any detail work. You may not see the whole picture. Extra care should be exercised when it comes to real estate matters and domestic issues. Be as non-judgmental as you can with family members. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering; you have to positively use your talents and efficiency.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)
Matters related to higher education, religion and worship and publishing proceed smoothly. This is an excellent time to seek advanced training and further your education. You would work in association with well experienced people and this brings more confidence and you use your best talents and co-relate all activities related to augment the business and boost work opportunities. It may be challenging to keep a healthy perspective regarding deeply personal matters and family. It's an excellent time for entertainment and to pursue hobbies.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)
People in authority tend to be more inclined to appreciate you and recognize your work. This is the right time to share views, ideas and feelings with people around you. You would do best to allow yourself to explore your inner needs so that you can nurture yourself and others in a healthy, growth-oriented manner. You are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy for higher studies, travel, or brand new subjects. There are chances of new associations and beginnings as new opportunities and changes come about.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)



Any love affair begun now will be characterized by good cheer, having fun, and a fair share of emotions. You would enjoy increased powers of concentration. You may require solitude in order to get mental work done. Your memory is more retentive than usual, and your thoughts often turn to personal matters, family, and loved ones. Try to hold off on household repairs if you can. Put off decision-making with regard to home improvement, moving, and family matters for the time being. New initiatives surrounding home and property are best left for a better time.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)



You are less inclined to fall in love for the sake of love itself during this time: your tendency is to consider whether it is clever to do so. You're most successful doing tasks that involve cooperation and team harmony. You could find that your talents or skills are especially appreciated. Romantic and social activities may revolve around your working environment. You would be recognized or rewarded in some way for the efforts you put forth because you project a more responsible and credible image. This planetary combination promotes your good luck in physical and laborious work related areas this week. You could feel stressed and anxious while meeting people's expectations and approval.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)



This is a very self-expressive time when you have lots of energy, but not necessarily the self-discipline to match. You have more energy at your disposal to express yourself creatively, through activities with children, romantic activities, hobbies, or sports. This could be an especially passionate time as your love life may step up and you tend to put more energy into play and pleasure. You are more playful than usual, and especially magnetic. The flowing, expressive, and spontaneous energy surrounding you attracts like-minded people. Be sure to take time to enjoy yourself. You remain practical, realistic and your judgment is sound.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)



You would maintain an optimum balance between optimism and practicality. You might have a more materialistic view of life and are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of security and status. Your business partnerships are highlighted right now, and it's time to compromise and adjust. Insecurities in your partnerships are brought to light now, and the best way to handle this is to understand that you need others instead of competing. Trying to go it alone won't work just now. Concentrate on truly listening to those close to you, and on playing a supportive role. You feel reflective rather than expressive.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)



An especially busy, and perhaps hectic, period on the domestic front is indicated. For example, you might take work to your home or find that people drop by your home often. You may need to adjust your plan of action. Errors in judgment made now are likely due to impulsiveness and the overlooking of crucial details. You could have so many new ideas that you don't have time to implement. Your family, home, property concerns, and heritage come into focus and become a source of pride. Its perhaps not yet a time to make a vital presentation or to come on strong to the world.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)



You would express your sympathetic and compassionate side. The seeds you plant now, you will reap later. You might pay attention to various ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one avenue for monetary gain. Career and reputation peak at this time. Your credibility is important and efforts at self-promotion might be made now. You're at your best when you are showing the world your practical, competent, and responsible side. There will be a fluctuation in energy levels before a balance is achieved. Health will take a turn for the better.

Jana Gana.. versus Vande Mataram

(Contd from VI) proceedings started after singing Vande Mataram. On the second day the work began after singing a patriotic song by Babu Ravindranath Tagore. Messages from well wishers were then read and a resolution was passed expressing loyalty to King George V. Afterwards the song composed for welcoming King George V and Queen Mary was sung."

Yet, there was a controversy when it came to making a choice of the national anthem. Right-wingers were in favour of 'Vande Mataram' written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, and many Muslim leaders raised serious objections. They perceive this song as a hymn to Goddess Durga which was unacceptable to them, whereas 'Jana Gana Mana' was acceptable to all. Tagore had written it in Sanskritised Bengali but most of the words of the song could be found in all major languages in India. While singing the song, one could easily visualise the map of India. And people of that time had no doubt about Tagore's integrity and they knew the poetic meaning of 'adhinayaka' as well.

The founding fathers of our nation were wise enough to avoid any controversy on this issue. The resolution

regarding the national anthem had never been placed in the constituent assembly. On November 26, 1949, the assembly adopted the constitution without the national anthem.



On January 24, 1950, the constituent assembly met again and its president Dr Rajendra Prasad made a statement, after which 'Jana Gana Mana' became the national anthem and 'Vande Mataram' was given an equal status. However, the attacks on 'Jana Gana Mana' have never stopped. The right-wing politics has always put 'Vande Mataram' above 'Jana gana mana'. Objections from the Muslim community have always given the Hindu right-wing a chance to portray them as less patriotic. Because of such propaganda, many people now believe that 'adhinayaka' in the national anthem is none other than the British emperor.

In his letter to Pulin Behari Sen, Tagore had raised the question about the 'common sense' among the people indulged in the controversy. Nowadays too, the common sense becomes most uncommon when a political agenda lies behind. INAV

Perfect blending

(Contd from P-VI) in Mudejar style. The ceiling in the Pinecone room displays 1392 pine cones, each different from each other. Well-maintained, the golden 'carpet' of pinecones up above would surely dazzle your eyes.

Even in the north, Zaragoza has in its beautiful Aljaferia palace many samples of Islamic art and Mudejar panels and ceilings.

Toledo, old capital of Spain, is a great centre of Mudejar art too.

Its two synagogues, Santa Maria la Blanca (13th century) and the Transito synagogue (14th century) are in Gothic-Mudejar style where Christian and Arab heritage are merged with its Jewish heritage in a perfect jugalbandi. (TWF)

"I always prefer to believe the best of everybody, it saves so much trouble."

— Rudyard Kipling

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 191 SHILLONG, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2016

Uproar over reservations

The Jat uprising over reservations for sections of the backward class has left 10 people dead and about 150 injured. Trains have been disrupted and normal life has come to a standstill. There is also Hardik Patel who is on a fast unto death demanding reservations for the Patel community. The question is when will these demands end and how will things pan out in the long run if every section wants to get on the 'backward' bandwagon. Perhaps a time has come to review the Reservation Policy and to conduct an intensive study to find out whether it has actually helped to lift the most depressed sections of the SC/ST/OBC and other backward classes or whether it is benefitting the creamy layer of those reserved categories, thereby creating an elite class among them. Several suggestions have been proposed to government from time to time to make economics and not tribe, caste and class the determining factor for reservation. A classic case pointed out by Prof Ashish Nandy is that of Madhu Koda former chief minister of Jharkhand and a tribal to boot, who has amassed wealth from granting mining rights for coal and other minerals to various companies in his state. He is alleged to be worth almost Rs 6000 crore which is invested in foreign shores. Prof Nandy was castigated for making that remark at a Litfest at Jaipur because pointing out the bitter truth in these intolerant times has become dangerous. In fact an FIR was filed against Prof Nandy for defaming all tribals.

Coming to Meghalaya, if we scan the background of state civil service officers, barring an exceptional few, most of them come from families of politicians, bureaucrats or rich business families. This has created an elite tribal society that does not know what poverty is. Yet these same people are tasked to execute schemes for addressing rural poverty. This tribal elite is able to afford the best education, many of them outside the state and country (especially the children of politicians and bureaucrats). The Meghalaya Public Service Commission (MPSC) itself is mired in persistent controversies about how money plays a crucial role. In the last MPS selection tests, it was brought to the notice of the MPSC Chairman and other Members how majority of the candidates were allowed access to mobile phones in the examination halls to get their answers from the internet. The answer scripts of the candidates were shown to the MPSC Chairperson with proof of URL from where the candidates copied the answers from the net. It was a fit case for scrapping the exam and handing over the case for CBI investigation. But nothing happened. The MPSC went ahead and conducted interviews and declared the results. On examining the background of majority of the selected candidates it was found that they are children of powerful politicians, business families and serving police officers. That perhaps was the reason why MPSC didn't cancel the MPS examination despite producing evidence of mass copying in the examination hall. Hence the fruits of democracy and government jobs are cornered by the children of tribal elite families and creating tribal elitism. It is high time for the state to adopt a more nuanced reservation policy which addresses those who are economically weak and who are otherwise falling between the cracks and dipping further and further below the poverty line. This should be done while people's anger has not yet taken a turn for the worse as has happened in Haryana where the agrarian crisis has brought untold sufferings on many.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 28 , 1989

Repoll in 4 Nagaland constituencies peaceful

Repoll in four constituencies in Nagaland ended peacefully today Chief Electoral officer Mr T C K Lotha said. The Election Commission ordered repoll in three polling stations under Moka constituency in Mon District and one polling station in Thenyuzumi village of Chazaouba constituency, where Nagaland Peoples Council leader Mr Vamuzo is

looked in a straight contest. Repoll was also ordered in ten Polling stations of Tuli constituency in Mokochung district next Tuesday, Mr Lotha said. The counting of votes in all the four polling stations would be taken up this evening and results were expected by tonight itself, Mr Lotha said.

A case of pot calling the kettle black

By HH Mohrmen

It is a march like any other; but no other march in the state has ever sparked as lively and prolonged a debate as the RSS march in Shillong recently and I think the debate is good for democracy and the society at large. Incidentally, the RSS march also occurred around the same time that a PIL was filed in the court seeking minority status for the followers of Niamtre Niam Khasi in the state. This of course is sheer coincidence, but it is good that it happened the way it was meant to be. I also think it is not wise to separate the march and the case on the minority status of the members of traditional religion from each other. The two issues are but the symptoms of what is prevailing deep in the two organizations. We need to take a holistic view of the issue for they are two issues no doubt, yet, they cannot be treated in isolation because the two are interconnected if not two sides of the same coin.

To understand the issue, the first question that needs to be asked is how come Niam Khasi and Niamtre became minorities in the state? Niamtre and Niam Khasi were originally the only religion in the area, but now even in places where till very recently the traditional religion was in majority, they are now in minority. What led to the Niam Khasi Niamtre becoming a minority? The answer is because the followers of the native religion converted to Christianity. Almost everywhere the remnants of the followers of Niamtre Niam Khasi converted en-mass to Christianity. The truth is also because the followers of Niamtre and Niam Khasi are being targeted for conversion by every Christian denomination and they are virtually being wooed from all directions every day. We are not denying that people also convert out of their own free will, but let us go deeper and ask why do people convert to Christianity?

Let us call a spade a spade and ask ourselves whether it is not true that every Christian denomination targets the non-Christians and use every trick they know to woo them to their fold? Isn't it true that they entice or even threaten the followers of Niamtre Niam Khasi with hell fire if

they do not convert? The first trick that was used to attract them was to call them pagans or non-believers because they did not accept Christianity. Then their beliefs system was also branded superstitious. Followers of Niamtre Niam Khasi were being condemned to hell and told that they have no place in heaven or they will not be saved until and unless they accept Jesus Christ as their saviour. I am not saying that Churches should not convert people. Indeed it is within the church's right to woo people to its fold, but what I am trying to do is to ask the readers of this column to put themselves in the shoes of the adherents of Niamtre Niam Khasi and ask themselves how they would react if they were in the same situation? And if people keep pestering them to convert, what would they do?

How would you react if one says that heaven is only for Christians and not for non-Christians? How would you feel if you were condemned to hell for no fault of yours? How would you feel if people say that non-Christians cannot go to heaven simply because they were born in the "wrong" religion? The other question is: Isn't this a classic case of Christians having a holier-than-thou attitude towards non-Christians? The moot question also is whether this is not a case spiritual arrogance? What happened to the Beatitudes "Blessed are the meek?" Where is Christ's humility in this case?

Even in matters of holy matrimony, (although the Bible says, "For what God has united let no man divide) yet, almost all churches do not encourage inter-denominational marriages, and if a Christian marries a non-Christian the church would not even solemnize the wedding until and unless the non-Christian converts to Christianity. There are churches which suspend their members for having a live-in relationship with a non-Christian and in some cases even the children born out of the wedlock are not baptized till the spouse converts. People are say-

ing that the case of Niam Khasi Niamtre seeking minority status will only divide the Jaitbynriew, but do we care to ask how many broken families have we created just because the couple belong to different religion and were separated because they do not wish to convert to another religion? How many young couples who love each other dearly have their relationship estranged just because they belong to different religions?

In Jaintia hills village settlements were divided on religious line like Pohchnong (where non-Christians live) and Pohskur (where Christians live) and in some villages where there are no Niamtre, the settlements are divided into Presbyterian and Catholic settlements and called lum Pres/dong Pres/lum Raman/dong Raman, lum Trom/dong Trom etc. Sometimes the village is divided into 'A' and 'B' but on a closer look one will realize that the village is divided on religious lines - an invisible line that divides the jaitbynriew.

There is nothing wrong in people converting to any religion. The citizens of the country have every right to change their religion, but if one is to look at the issue from the Niamtre Niam Khasi perspective, the question to ask is what would Christians do if they were in that place? The answer is that one would try as much as one could to keep one's members within one's fold and prevent any further conversion, right? That is only natural. People will be defensive and resent the dwindling of membership in the Niam Khasi Niamtre. It is a threat to the group's survival and their very own existence and it is from within the jaitbynriew. Hence they have no other option but to look for help from outside the community.

For those who are ill informed, members of RSS have been in the Khasi and Jaintia hills since the late eighties. In fact one should pity the RSS that after working for about three decades they could only manage to get 200 people to march on the streets. Besides, I do not see anything wrong in

anybody joining any organization as long as the organization is legal. The fear that was created out of the march of mere 200 people is uncalled for. It is a case of calling a tree a forest. We don't yet know what RSS will do and so far they have not done anything wrong in the state. In the future if the RSS creates communal hatred in the community then we will deal with it. We'll cross the bridge when we come to it.

This write-up is not meant to be an apologist for any group. This is simply putting things in the correct perspective as one is given to understand. If one would like to understand why the flowers of Niamtre Niam Khasi react as such, the answer is because they have been forced to do so. The followers of Niamtre Niam Khasi had to file a court case in anticipation of state protection from the onslaught of being targets of proselytization by different religious groups. Perhaps it is the last resort they took to retain their identity. They became close with the RSS because when everybody around them looks at them as easy preys to be converted to their churches, the RSS is the only organization which genuinely wants to help them grow and progress.

Therefore the Niamtre and Niam Khasi are not to be blamed here. They are at the receiving end all along. And rather than asking why they have to seek minority status, or why they are getting closer to the RSS we should rather ask, what are the circumstances that led them to becoming a minority. Are we not to be blame for Niamtre Niam Khasi turning into a minority? And rather than blaming them for getting close to the RSS, we should ask ourselves what compelled them to do so. Have we been able to support or help them grow? Or do we still look at them as potential converts that we can bring to our fold to increase membership in our church?

Khasi-Pnar Christians need to introspect and ask ourselves if we have really been fair to our Niamtre Niam Khasi brethren. What kind of relationship or attitude do we have towards them? Do we really treat them with equal respect?

Dissent vs. Sedition: Need to draw the line

By Shankar Pandey

Dissent is integral to the right to freedom of expression. Right to freedom of expression, one of the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution of India is central to the democratic process. Indeed the democratic character of any country would look shallow if there was no freedom of expression guaranteed to its citizens. However, it is equally true that this right to freedom of expression is one of the most contested of fundamental rights and courts have had to repeatedly interfere to interpret its scope and limitations. Indian constitution itself states that fundamental rights are not "absolute" and are subject to reasonable restrictions. Recent anti India sloganeering by a group of students of Jawahar Lal Nehru University and subsequently by another group at the Jadavpur University, two of India's prestigious Institutions of higher Learning have once again brought the controversy surrounding the "freedom of expression to the fore, splitting the Indian society vertically over the issue.

While some "intellectuals" including media houses have vociferously defended the action of the students terming such acts as part of democratic exercise by the students, others have vehemently condemned such acts on the ground of being antinational and seditious acts.

Before taking a stand on the issue, it is important to put the action of the students in proper perspective:

A group of students at Jawahar Lal University, New Delhi were shouting anti India slogans such as "Pakistan zindabad" " Afzal Guru Zindabaad " Hindustan ki barbaadi tak ye jung zaari Rahegi -We will fight on till India is destroyed" And Afzal we will give sustenance to your dream.

It is important to take a recap of who was Afzal Guru? A dreaded terrorist, who was the mastermind of the attack on Parliament of India; the symbol of Indian democracy. The attack resulted in the death of our brave security men. It is anybody's guess as to what would have happened if the attackers had succeeded in entering the parliament premises. Scores of lawmakers from across party line would have been killed. It was only because of the heroic deeds of the security men who made the supreme sacrifice fighting the terrorist that such a terrible scenario was averted.

Now can the act of singing valedictory songs by the students in favour of such a terrorist whose only mission was to destroy India and also to take a pledge that "we" will fulfil the terrorists unfinished task of destroying India, be termed as mere "dissent"?

"Hindustan ki Barbadi tak ye jung zaari Rahegi" "We will fight on till India is destroyed" was another of slogans shouted by the students - Again it is evident that the students who were shouting such slogans have a single point agenda of "destroying" India. When you publicly take a vow to destroy your own country - you are crossing the line from dissent to sedition.

In Jadavpur University students were seen Demanding "Azaadi" or independence for Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur And even Kerala from India. Mind you that such anti In-

dia slogans were not made by members of an insurgent group but by educated students of a prestigious university. One wonders what could be the common point of reference in making such secessionist demand for independence of these states by the students; other than just plain visceral hatred for their own country, India.

It is saddening to note that where as our soldiers are laying down their lives serving in the most inhospitable terrain including Siachen, while protecting the territorial integrity of India, our educated and intelligent elites are openly declaring support to our enemy nation and are also vowing to destroy the very nation that they live in.

It seems that for some "activists" freedom of expression amounts to shouting anti India slogans and taking anti national stands. Some "intellectuals" in Shillong as reported in the Shillong Times have gone on to say that students have the right to be "anti National" if the policies of the government are anti people. They surely don't know what they are saying, for being anti government of the day is anybody's democratic right. One may or may not be agreeable to the government's policies and citizens have a right to express their disagreements with the government's policies by way of protests, marches and through any other modes. But there is a difference between being anti-government and being anti national. Former is a democratic right, latter is not. This difference, though fundamental, seems to have been lost on the people who are supporting the actions of the students

For far too long Anti India stance has been the mainstream of the so called intellectual narrative in India. One has not truly arrived in the "intelligent sphere" until he/ she has made some anti India statements and lauded Pakistan and the west. Many so called intellectuals who have defended the action of JNU students need to do a reality check. Dissent doesn't always mean saying "Pakistan Zindabad". Would the United States of America, an epitome of democracy for the "intellectual classes" have allowed celebration of the life of Osama Bin Laden in Its universities? And would American media and its intellectual circle have reacted in the way as its happening in India?

Universities are places of higher learnings where future leaders of a country are shaped. It is equally true that participation in issue based activism and organising and being part of protest and rallies are part of student life. Frees speech and right to criticize and express dissent with the government's policies is an integral part of democratic discourse. However such activities should remain within the realms of national interests and students cannot be allowed to go overboard and take anti-national and seditious stands in the guise of free speech and dissent. It is important to ensure that Universities or for that matter any institutions where young and impressionable minds are studying should not become hubs where anti national ideas are perpetuated.

(The writer is Co-convenor Forum for Integrated National Security - FINS, Meghalaya)

gave a formal undertaking that it would no longer dabble in politics but function as a non-political body promoting nationalism

Though the RSS was founded during the period of National Movement (1925), it did not participate in the Movement, yet they claim many leaders of the freedom movement like Bhagat Singh, Subhash Chandra Bose, Sardar Vallabhai Patel as their heroes. The role of Sangh Parivar heroes like Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Deen Dayal Upadhyay in the freedom movement is still a subject of research in the his-

tory of the Indian Freedom Movement. The only thing we know is that they speak out against the Muslims. The Hindutva forces have no hero in the National Movement. After assuming power in 2014, the BJP is busy collecting its list of heroes, as it has no icons of its own from the freedom struggle and it is also bent on erasing the name of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of modern India.

Can one promote the Hindutva brand of Nationalism?

Yours etc.,
Soo E Mi Langdoh
Viaemail

TO THE EDITOR

Times Now and fringe elements

Editor,
The Times Now news channel has shown the ugliest, undignified, unruly debates to the world. The irony is that it is considered the No 1 channel in India. Arnab Goswami's clandestine complicity with fringe elements is lucidly noticeable in the manner in which he conducted the debates - not allowing any panelist to have his/her say or wrongly portraying their views. The views are very cunningly twisted to mislead, misdirect and hence openly insulting the panelist that does not concur with the anchor's viewpoint. The most painful thing is that Goswami regularly pushes his own views and puts words in the mouth of panellists. Often he passes personal remarks on his the panel members when he wants to corner them. Still, he enjoys fame and a celebrity status! Times Now has polarised the viewers and a situation is created where participants yell at one another and rudely interrupt each other unscrupulously before a point of view can be out across.

When I see many eminent intellectuals and academicians who are gentle mannered, being harassed and bullied on Times Now channel, I feel so much pain

that this channel continues to win Television Rating Points (TRPs). It makes me wonder in whose India I am living, my India or otherwise. The other day, he furiously insulted a professor of Jadavpur University for no fault of his. But the calm and modest professor was unable to counter them in the same competitive manner and the belligerence and indecency of Goswami. Every time he was quoted out of context and chided. Arnab called him ignorant and questioned how he could teach in the university. It is Goswami's channel that can prove a hero to be a villain, a villain to be a hero. Still his is the No.1 channel. The nation is rocked by majoritarian communalism wearing the mask of patriotism and terror and violence are raising their tentacles and attempting to wipe out all dissenting voices by labelling them "anti-nationals". They claim that it's only the Sangh Parivar, its affiliates and sympathisers alone are desh premi (patriots) and the rest are anti-nationals." It looks like Times Now is in collusion with these fascist forces who are perpetrators of the current crisis in the nation.

Yours etc.,
Nsungbemo Ezung
Research Scholar
NEHU Shillong

Hazardous road

Editor,
The Gora Lane road in Shillong is perhaps the most hazardous road. Thousands of vehicles (including large trucks, buses) ply on this narrow stretch of road everyday without any restrictions. In fact it has become an alternative road to the national highway passing through Laitumkrah since people use this road indiscriminately. The road is so narrow (one lane) and hilly with deadly turns that it's a hazard to not only the occupants of vehicles but also to the pedestrians including school children and senior citizens. Many a times emergency vehicles like ambulances and fire engines are stuck on this road because of heavy traffic which can prove dangerous to people. Everyday there is long traffic jam on this busy road and there is hardly any space to even walk in the absence of footpaths. However, there is no concern from the authorities. I urge the SP of the traffic police dept or the concerned authorities to make this road a ONE WAY lane so that traffic is relieved on this road and accidents and injury to people can be avoided.

Yours etc.,
Dr. H. S. Ranhotra,
Shillong - 3

Hindutva brand of nationalism

Editor,
Apropos Elio Khiewkar's letter batting for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) (ST 15 Feb 2016) in response to Albert Thyrniang's articles, no doubt the RSS did a commendable service to the nation during the Chinese aggression (1962), Indo-Pak War (1965), Sikh riot (1984) and during natural disasters like the 2004 TN Tsunami, 2001 Gujarat earthquake, 2009 Karnataka-AP flood, 2013 Uttarakhand floods etc. But the RSS remains a Hindu nationalist organization with a purported objective to uphold Hindu values and a conservative agenda. It's sole agenda is to declare India a "Hindu Rashtra" - a nation of common culture, history and language. The then Deputy Prime Minister & Home Minister, Sardar Vallabhai Patel after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, had in his letter to the RSS Chief MS Golwalkar in 1948 written, "All their (RSS leader's) speeches were full of communal poison. It was not necessary to spread poison and enthrone the Hindus and organize for their protection. As a final result of the poison, the country had to suffer the sacrifice of the valuable life of Gandhiji.....". Sardar Patel banned the RSS. The ban was withdrawn only after the RSS

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

— John Muir

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 192 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2016

National flag and Academic autonomy

THE Centre made a move to make all centrally funded universities compulsorily fly the national flag. It is just the wrong thing it could have done in the wake of the rumpus over the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) crisis. Union HRD Minister Smriti Irani has passed the resolution. The first national flag will be hoisted at the JNU. All this suggests that the Centre thinks patriotism is not in the blood of University students, that it has to be rammed down their throats. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) should be aware that nationalism is not its monopoly and cannot be force-fed. There is no reason to think that a large section of young students do not love their country though there is always room for debate over controversial issues. JNU student union President Kanhaiya Kumar has spoken eloquently about his love for his country. The BJP has obviously taken a political move to suppress dissent among young students. Protest is anathema to it. The protest in the JNU called for sensitive handling, not the manhandling of a CPI Member of Parliament and pointless violence shown at the court by a huge number of lawyers whose values are always sold for high fees. It was preposterous bringing the LeT into the shenanigans.

The adoption of the national flag was the culmination of the struggle for independence. It symbolizes people's assertion of their sense of freedom. The Supreme Court recognized it in 2004 when it allowed individuals to claim and hoist it. But the flying of the national flag compulsorily at every centrally funded university may mean the stifling of democratic values and the youthful heterodoxy shown by agile students—especially at an august institution like the JNU.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 29, 1989

Political scene: How many fronts?

For a long time last year leaders of major Opposition parties were seriously discussing the possibility of the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi deciding to go in for a mid-term Parliamentary election, though Mr. Gandhi vehemently denied that he had any such intention. Now Mr. Devi Lal says that Mr. Gandhi may actually delay the poll as no one invites his political demise. Last year's speculation was fed by the belief that the Congress (I) wanted to thwart Opposition unity. The Haryana Chief Minister now seems to think that Opposition unity has been so consolidated that Mr. Gandhi and his party would like to avoid facing the electorate as long as possible.

The election, in the normal course, is hardly a year away, and there is nothing to indicate that it is not going to be held as scheduled. Mr. Devi Lal is his own greatest admirer. So is his Andhra Pradesh counterpart Mr. N.T. Rama Rao. Since the two of them played a leading role in the efforts to forge Opposition unity they have persuaded themselves to believe that they have succeeded in achieving the impossible. As recent events have shown, however, the Opposition remains almost as fragmented as it was last year or the year before.

The formation of the National Front was announced several weeks ago even before its foundations had been solidly laid, that is, before the Janata Dal, to be formed by the merger of the Janata Party, the Lok Dal (B), the Congress and the Jan Morcha and serious rifts in the Janata Party and the Lok Dal (B), while the Congress (S) decided to keep out of a new combination because nod-inclusion of the word Samajwadi in its name.

The formation of the Janata Dal was finally announced by its President, Mr. V.P. Singh, was immediately faced with an awkward situation when a large section of the Janata Party

publicly expressed its unhappiness over the composition of the J D's National Executive and Central Parliamentary Board in neither of which, it was complained, Janata Party had been given representation in proportion to its strength. At a meeting of the leaders held at Sohan in Haryana, Mr. Singh sought to satisfy all the groups by the simple expedient of enlarging the Executive's membership and appointing a committee to the 11 member Parliamentary Board. But some influential leaders of the Janata Party opposed abandoning its separate identity, and through a statement issued by Mr. Indubhai Patel, Mr. Deve Gowda, Dr. Subramaniam Swamy and Syed Shahabuddin revolted against the merger. This created a bizarre situation in Karnataka where Mr. Deve Gowda did not initially resign from what is now called the Janata Dal Government.

Mr. Bahuguna, though a nominated member of the presidium of the National Front, remained sore because of the centre stage importance seized by Mr. Devi Lal, who got himself nominated president of the Central Parliamentary Board of the Janata Dal. In fact, Mr. Bahuguna never felt at home in the essentially caste based Lok Dal, which Mr. Devi Lal, with his AJGAR formula, always wished to dominate. Nor was he happy in the National Front with its leader, Mr. V. P. Singh, whom he claims to have groomed as a politician, being projected as a future Prime Minister. The response to the convention that he organized Lucknow a few days ago gave him new heart and he announced that his faction of the Lok Dal will not merge with the Janata Dal though it would remain aligned with the National Front.

Dorbar Shnong ! Is it a sustainable institution ?

By Rudi Warjri

The purpose of this article is to raise a very fundamental question on the whole institution of the Dorbar Shnong and with it the Rangbah Shnong and to put things in perspective. And that is its sustainability; primarily the lack of financial sustainability. Where does its funding come from? Does it have a budget? Does it have a revenue model? I find it mind boggling when I am told that the primary source of funding of the Dorbar Shnong comes from the MLA scheme. Is the MLA scheme that big to take care of all the Dorbar Shnongs under a constituency? Some villages may do more with nominal contributions by each household in the village.

What are the services rendered by the Dorbar Shnong? Issuing residential certificates, dealing with garbage clearance, maintaining cleanliness in the localities, facilitating water or electricity connections of residents, assisting during funerals, weddings and other social events. Dorbars work with other governmental agencies for better roads, better water supply, better health facilities. They assist the authorities when there is a program for issuance of epic cards, ration cards, aadhar cards etc. Also they assist the authorities in situations relating to crime, vandalism etc. In the past they used to even intervene in divorce cases with mutual consent. Perhaps this is still prevalent in the interior villages. I acknowledge the work and sincerity of some of the Rangbah Shnong and Dorbar Shnong in doing their best despite myriad limitations.

What are the visible ills that we see today in our localities? Littering and spitting anywhere and everywhere; garbage where it says, "no garbage to be thrown." Stinking and clogged drains, unregulated and sub-standard sanitation and improper sewage system; urinating and even defecating on the road sides and by-lanes. This can cause diseases like typhoid, tuberculosis etc.. Then there's water shortage in one part and overflowing wastage on the other; potholes in roads; naked violations of parking where it says "no parking." Footpaths for pedestrians are blocked by hawkers; narrow roads that have no footpaths for pedestrians and school children to walk on. This is made worse by random stoppage of cars especially taxis anytime, anywhere, thereby making life hell for rule observing motorists.

Going a step further, what can I as a normal enlightened citizen in this age of technology and aspiration for a Smart city expect from my Rangbah Shnong and the Dorbar Shnong! Not to talk of fifty years from now! To deal with the growing pressures on infrastructures because of increasing numbers of multi-storied buildings; four cars in a

house; tenants looking for a house with parking space, good roads, sanitation and sewage standards, garbage collection etc.. We see rivers gradually narrowing or even disappearing because of garbage dumping on the slopes down to the river. There is also the maintenance of law and order where localities are free from drunks and drug addicts. What about parks for children to play in every locality? It is sad to see children playing on the roads and by-lanes because of lack of recreation spaces. And then dealing with major issues like earthquakes? Let us not forget that one of the biggest earthquakes in the world took place here in 1897.

The draft Village Administration Bill (VAB) of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) has sections on Powers and Functions of the Dorbar Shnong; Duties and Responsibilities of the Dorbar Shnong; Duties, Accountability and Responsibility of the Rangbah Shnong and Village Development Council. Wonderful! Why not, if it can be done! It is however totally muted about where the funding will come from. For that matter the KHADC itself has to depend on the State Government for its sustenance. And let us keep in mind that even the State Government gets 90 funding from the Central Government.

The subject of Dorbar Shnong in Khasi Hills has been a subject of intense debate for quite a while now, ever since the Meghalaya High Court questioned the constitutional validity of this institution because of arbitrary actions and abuse of mandate by some vis-à-vis issuance of 'No Objection Certificates' (NoC) and ostracizing of people in some villages. The subject has become even more complicated after it became a turf war between the KHADC and the State Government. KHADC had since then claimed to be the sole authority on the subject of Dorbar Shnong and appointment of Rangbah Shnong. It has come out with the aforementioned multi-pages VAB draft which was submitted to the Governor for his assent. The VAB was referred to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for its comments. MHA has returned it with further queries. When the matter will settle, God alone knows. The State Government did come out with a shorter ordinance of its own to empower the Dorbar Shnong but allowed it to lapse for reasons not publicly known.

The subject has attracted responses from scholars and academics and those whipping up emotions and protests. The plethora of pressure groups or so called NGOs

and competing political parties have joined in the melodrama. Emotions run high particularly because the Dorbar Shnong is portrayed as traditional and part and parcel of Khasi customs and therefore nothing should be done to disturb the age-old customary practice. Whether the institution has outlived its utility or not, should not be questioned, according to the protagonists. Threat to the indigenous (in a State ruled by the indigenous) has been propagated and a culture of fear being escalated. Sane and circumspect thinking has taken a back seat. In fact it has become an 'ego' tussle and a fight for prestige. Even more complex, is the desire to get the best of all worlds by some who serve in the Government but at the same time demonstrated bellicosity towards the same Government in the name of Tradition. The angle of sustainability of the institution particularly financial sustainability is totally missed.

I am very much for tradition but not traditionalism. I am for what the preamble of the VAB states about tenets of Khasi values, "to acknowledge man is to acknowledge God; to strive for righteousness and justice; to accept what is right and reject what is wrong; to hold on to propriety and honour; word of honour and upholding the honour of the spoken word." These are also basic human values not simply Khasi values. Traditionalism is an ideology and a dogma. If at all, the dogma should be pragmatism. William Somerset Maugham says "Tradition is a guide, not a jailer". The renowned Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti says, "Tradition becomes our security. And when the mind is secure it is in decay". And this is exactly what is happening here!

Coming to financial sustainability, no human being or creature can live without food. For a human being to buy food some resource is a must, be it income or loan or charity. The same applies when the human being has a family. His / Her effectiveness for the family depends on the income or loan or charity that can be generated. The more financial resource a family has the better it can afford housing, education, health. And for the more well to do even annual vacations! This norm applies to the community or village and society as a whole. And since according to practice the Khasi village is headed by a Rangbah Shnong, his effectiveness in the village depends on the financial resource he is able to generate.

Assuming that the VAB becomes operational, the Dorbar Shnong would need an office with at least minimum facilities like telephone, computer, stationary, supporting staff, proper furniture for holding

meetings, etc. Now coming to the core part, to expect voluntary service and to execute all that is listed in the VAB is living in a fantasy world of make believe. Can the existing institution of Rangbah Shnong and Dorbar Shnong do justice as stated in the VAB without any proper funding? NO!

So the next question that arises is what are the options? Time to have a look at the 73rd amendment of the Constitution and adopt the Panchayati Raj model, in which case the funding which has been denied so far can follow like in the rest of India. The grassroots elections under Panchayati Raj also means grassroots democracy. Under the present system of Dorbar Shnong there are no proper elections. The argument that party politics will enter into social governance is untenable. Politics exists between two human beings. It exists in families. It exists within the existing institution of Dorbar Shnong. It exists in Churches. So let us not fool ourselves by pretending to be worried about party politics camouflaged by our own entrenched vested interests. Take the example of the Shillong Municipality, one of the reasons that it failed to deliver is denial of funding from the Centre due to its inability to hold municipal elections. Like the Panchayati Raj there should be clarity about election, authority, responsibility and accountability with a paid salary and a full time job subjected to RTI, PIL etc.

Tradition, culture and customs mean nothing without an economic base and resource. Empires have fallen and cultures have disappeared when economic resource dwindled. Learn from history. I repeat, we cannot have the best of all worlds. Wanting to have palatial houses, fancy cars, gadgets and gizmos and Smart city and yet medieval in thinking is a no brainer.

Let's accept that even though there are lots of rich people the State is poor. Majority of the population are allergic to the word 'income tax.' Therefore any opening and opportunities for resource from the Centre or any other source should be explored. Ineffective institutions and white elephants should go. In my view the earlier the redundant Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) are abolished the better. The very rationale for the creation of the State of Meghalaya was the infirmities and shortcomings of the ADCs to serve the interests of the hill people. Abolition also applies to the several a dime a dozen Chairmen and Co-Chairmen of something called Employment Generation Council (God alone knows how much resource it has generated); Resource Mobilization Council (God alone knows how much resource it has mobilized) and many other such other parasitic institutions. Lack of transparency has allowed these institutions to thrive. Time to dismantle them!

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Mid-Term NDA II budget crucial for economy, BJP

Jaitley should focus on investment, not disinvestment

By Nantoo Banerjee

The national budget preparation for 2016-17 is appearing to be a daunting task before Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in view of somewhat unprecedented ensemble of pre-budget economic and political turn of events. Few finance ministers in the past have faced a situation as difficult and tricky as the current one with economic positives being heavily overshadowed by a host of negatives on which the present government seems to have little control. The massive bad loans on the books of public sector banks; stock market collapse; poor performance of the core, manufacturing and infrastructure sectors; falling exports for 14 months in a row; high retail inflation; steadily sliding Rupee; rising gold import; unemployment and growing political campaign against the government — from the president's rule in Arunachal Pradesh to the police action at Delhi's JNU — by the opposition seems to have overtaken some good work done by the Centre on the opening up of economy, ease of doing business, financial inclusion and transparency in policy making and execution.

While the good works being done by the government are meant to have more of a future impact on economy and the society than leading to instant results, the administration has achieved little in addressing immediate economic concerns and in converting the windfall benefit derived from the gradual petroleum and natural gas price collapse in the global market within months after the BJP-led NDA government installed at the Centre. Some-what inexplicably, the country's continued large gold import agenda substantially negated the benefit derived from the lower oil import bill at a time when India was consistently losing its export market following a global commodity collapse.

In 2015-16, the government may ultimately save about 40 per cent in its oil import bill. In 2012-13, oil import cost was \$164 billion out of its total import bill of \$491 billion. The huge oil import bill was primarily responsible for India's record current account deficit (CAD) of 4.8 per cent, that year. According to an ICRA estimate, average Indian basket price of crude is likely to stand at \$49 a barrel in FY16 compared to \$84 a barrel in FY15. The difference translates into \$35 a barrel or a total of \$48 bn savings on oil imports. The value of India's oil imports would stand at \$65 bn in 2015-16, compared to \$113 bn in FY15. Did the government convert the benefit into an opportunity to invest large in the country? The PSU disinvestment by the government is not helping fresh wealth creation for the country which it normally should. Nor did it help the government take appropriate programme to beat the slowdown in the important brick-and-mortar sector. The government — neither under UPA, nor under the current disposition — used the disinvestment proceeds to insulate the real economy by ramping up public investment to unleash domestic employment and demand. It may be mentioned that the failure to push the GST bill through Rajya Sabha has practically nothing to do with the current pressing economic negatives.

There is no guarantee that it will raise investment in capital and employment-intensive sectors. Given the limited choice

of the government to seriously tackle the current economic negatives, the 2016-17 national budget would do well to launch at least a dozen high-value, hi-profile infrastructure and core sector projects. This will help in creating a sort of economic miracle that will also silence the critics of India's slow pace development in a number of key sectors. Since the Modi government came to power in May, 2014, there has been a ceaseless campaign on the need for investment in electronics and ITes. The campaign has started paying off. Almost all global majors in the two fields, including a host of firms from China, have positively responded to the campaign. Large foreign investments have been pledged. Global electronics and IT firms are setting up ventures in India. The government itself has committed large funds to promote the national optic fibre network (NOFN). This is very good. But, the electronics and IT industry alone can't help feed the country's 1.3 billion people. India needs basic goods and services, including agriculture and farm products, housing, healthcare, education, roads, ports, water supply, good sanitation and social infrastructure like play grounds, parks, libraries and clubs. It needs strong physical and social infrastructure. In a developing economy such as India, the government — central, state and local bodies — must invest in such projects if the country's profit-oriented private sector enterprises don't come forward to these activities at this stage.

The government should act as a co-promoter of select infrastructure and core sector projects with, if necessary, participation from overseas investors — since domestic private sector finds projects with long gestation period unattractive — offering them the mandate to build and commercially operate the projects. The government may later sell its equity stake, partly to the co-promoters and partly to the market. The budget 2016-17 must usher in such government investment initiatives, which will flow in tranches as the projects progress. The fear of a larger budget deficit should not hold such projects in a developing economy. India has to learn more from Keynesian economics to boost growth and employment under its present state of development than from modern day laissez faire or market economists.

Let the inflation continue for some more time till the supplies improve. The government has to act as an employment and demand driver. The size of the 2016-17 budget is expected to be close to Rs. 20 lakh crore. At least 15 per cent of the total expenditure should be earmarked for direct government investment in the infrastructure and core sector projects. The 'Make-in-India' message should entice both the public and foreign private investors to set up projects in the country. This will positively rub off on the stock market, improving earnings per share and encouraging fresh private investments in a host of sectors—from steel, coal, cement and capital goods to FMCG, auto, chemicals and pharmaceuticals. The coming budget provides a great opportunity to the government to tone up the economy and make fresh large investments to create new jobs, income and domestic demand. (IPA Service)

who are a threat to the security and peace and tranquility of the state. Accordingly, I would like to congratulate all the staff of the law enforcement from the top ranks to the lowest ranks who are serving on the field and out of the spotlight as well for their unwavering service and dedication towards the public to whom I owe my highest gratitude. I admire what they do and support them in every aspect of the job. God bless those parents who bring forth such brave sons and daughters to serve

with the prestigious Meghalaya Police Department. I hope to see this same kind of public service spirit continue and improve in the coming days and years and develop a strong and good police-public relationship and make Shillong a better place to live in.

Next time you see a cop. Just say, "Thank You".

Yours etc.,
Melamshwa Allya
Law Student of NEHU,
Shillong-2

TO THE EDITOR

Lest we forget

Editor,

I wish to draw the attention of the public to the unsung Shillong Police personnel of the East Khasi Hills District, DEF, Shillong. The staff of the police department of our district have worked tirelessly and cheerfully during the 12th SAG here in the city to see that everything was done excellently in terms of providing security to the players and in and around the venues, controlling the traffic in the city (which was not a piece of cake to handle). While many of us were busy rushing to different venues to witness the games, they were busy handling the huge crowd in a professional manner with security checking, arranging queues and maintain-

ing law and order in and around the venues. They have given a good image for the Shillong Police to the foreign and national players. Their sacrifice should be exceptionally noted by the public. Of course, there were inconveniences and shortcomings to meet the interest of the public and keeping in mind that they are also human beings. In spite of these errors, they did their duty effectively as expected and worked with all their hearts, mind and might. Their good works are often unnoticed and unreported by the media or individuals. I believe they should be given the credit and appreciation for what they did.

Not just on special occasions but on a daily basis as well, they have shown their

dedication, valour, spirit of servant hood and integrity towards their job. They put their lives on the line every day. It is not something they do, it is who they are. They stand on guard in the city streets from morning till midnight throughout the four seasons. Traffic police stands at every busy road junction in spite of extreme weather conditions controlling the heavy traffic and observing that no drivers violate the motor vehicle laws. For cops, there is no Christmas season, New Year, Diwali etc and no social life. They work during the holidays so we can enjoy ours. It is actually on these occasions that they have to redouble their efforts and work more and plan their strategies. Cosmopolitan Police stations like

Sadar, Laitumkhrah and others are in extra full swing during the festive seasons. Law enforcement work is more than a job to most who get involved in it. These are the unsung heroes who are facing extraordinary circumstances and acting with courage, honour and self-sacrifice. Cops deals with crime scenes painted in hell, coax a confession from a child abuser, comfort a murder victim's family, apprehend illegal offenders, running here and there for absconders, and then read in the daily paper how law enforcement isn't sensitive to the rights of criminal suspects. Police men and women are keepers of peace and protectors of the public. They are the backbone of the nation's domestic defense to those

"One of the most beautiful qualities of true friendship is to understand and to be understood."

— Lucius Annaeus Seneca

The Shillong Times

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Has the executive failed completely?

THE Supreme Court of India on Monday came down heavily on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led Delhi Government for not resolving the water crisis by talking to the Haryana Government and instead approaching the court on an issue that is purely the brief of the government. Justice TS Thakur even went as far as pointing out that the AAP minister in charge of water resources should have been talking to his counterpart in Haryana instead of being present in the apex court. The water crisis arose on account of the Jat protest for reservation which prevented the pumping of water from the Munak canal situated in Haryana, to the residents of Delhi. In recent times matters related to day to day administration are increasingly being decided by the courts of law. It would appear that the executive is failing in the discharge of its basic responsibilities. That citizens approach the courts for various grievances including for environment related issues would imply that they have tried various means and have approached the courts as a last resort.

In Meghalaya a certain student who was prevented from appearing for his final CBSE examination on some untenable grounds has approached the High Court for justice. Several other individuals are left with no option but to knock the doors of the court with public interest litigations. Lately different departments of the state government have had to appear before the High Court and to file their affidavits relating to various acts of omission or commission. This does not bide well for governance. The executive has certain functions that it needs to discharge. So too the legislature. In fact, it is the legislature that should be keeping a watch on the functions of the executive but since this is not happening the court seems to be the last resort of the aggrieved citizens. It is time for the Government to pull up its socks and deliver due governance and for other institutions to ensure that they discharge their duties without waiting for judicial push and shove.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 29, 1989

Tales of Tiger conservation

In 1973, India launched with World Wildlife Fund support one of the most ambitious wildlife conservation projects ever conceived to save the majestic Indian tiger from extinction.

The emergence of project Tiger, was in a way a panic reaction to the fact that less than 2000 of the species were left behind in the rapidly dwindling forest stretches of India.

Unchecked game hunting, deforestation and severe pressure on the ecosystem essential for the thriving tiger population which as the turn of the century numbered more than 50,000.

Interestingly, in the sixties India's flag carrier Air India need to float ads on tiger hunting. But soon the vanishing Indian tiger entered to red book of the International Union of Conservation for Nature and Natural Resources.

Being at the apex of the food chain, a flourishing tiger population is key to a sound ecosystem.

The operational philosophy of project tiger is based on the concept that rather than a single species, entire habitat, including all the floral and faunal species must be protected. The holistic philosophy of project Tiger derives its substance from the fact that survival of deer, pig and many other species is essential to the sustenance of the tiger population. Significant to the project Tiger is the presumption that if left undisturbed the tiger and other carnivores would not go out from forest and enter areas of human habitation and if a respectable distance is maintained the tiger will not

attack visitors under Project Tiger a number of parks and reserves were set up in various parts of India with a core area where all human habitations were banned and buffer zone where selective inter mingling of man and beast was permitted. As many as 17 tiger reserves and parks that were created under Project Tiger helped save many endangered flora and fauna along with this spectacular beast considered universal symbol of power and pride.

The success of Project Tiger is a tribute to the vision of the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi who as keen wildlife lover showed intensive personal interest at every stage of the implementation of the project.

And today, fifteen years after the project, wildlife experts say forest reserves in India are getting choked with tigers to such an extent that there is every chance of sighting a cat every 5 km. Right now, there are estimated to be around 4,500 cats in India and in couple of years their number is expected to reach 5,000.

This is despite the fact that 17 reserves and national parks are experiencing severe human pressures on their boundaries. A study by the renowned ecologist Dr. Paul Newton says the Kanha Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh has become one of the best place in the world to watch tigers. According to Mr. Newton this 1945 sq km tiger reserve reveals many African game sanctuaries.

The truth is sometimes extremely bitter that it is almost impossible to swallow. Hence, for the sake of personal benefit, the best way is to keep silent and sweep such bitter truth under the carpet rather than displease anyone, and call that, 'tolerance'. That is what the crafty politicians normally do without a prick of conscience. But to most of us, the truth is more important than electoral politics and cheap academic honours based on mutual flattery; hence, the stinking truth lying in rot under the carpet pricks the conscience. Therefore, accept it or not, for the knowledge of the general Khasi population today, especially the younger generation, I would like to point out that the traditional religion of the Khasis as established by the ancestors is no more in existence, and today all the Khasis have adopted various new religious faiths to keep spiritual relation with God and fellow human beings. The traditional culture is also lost; even the present matrilineal system is no more the original system as established by the ancestors since time immemorial, but it has drastically changed to accommodate emerging circumstances.

The primary and most sacred aspect of Khasi tradition lies in the matrilineal kur system with avunculate leadership together with its 'ka niam-im' (religious rites for the living) and 'ka niam-iap' (religious rites for the dead) which centred on the intercession of the spirits of ka lawbei, u Suidnia, and later ancestors between man and God. This is the foundation of 'ka hok ka sot' Khasi which constitutes 'ka daw-ying' (internal foundation or cause), and all other religious ceremonies and festivals at the raid or hima level are secondary and constitute 'ka daw-lum' (external foundation or cause). The primary religious duty of the Khasis was to set right 'ka daw-ying' before attending to 'ka daw-lum'. No religious rites can be performed for 'ka daw-lum' as long as 'ka daw-ying' is not at peace.

The traditional socio-religious thought of our ancestors is still dynamic in the society, and we don't have to believe as gospel truth everything that the indigenous writers of the late nineteenth century or the

New religious faiths in Khasi society

By Fabian Lyngdoh

early twentieth century had to say. We can clearly see in their writings and preaching, what are modern extrapolations and what are traditional. We don't have to pry into old books, or excavate the earth, or resort to semantic exercise to find the tradition and thought of the ancestors, because their footprints and thought are still clearly visible in the daily life of the people in the rural areas if we ever care to seek and find them in their true nature.

The so called Khasi indigenous faith professed by a section of the Khasi population today in the name of traditional religion, is in fact a new religious faith evolved within the society towards the end of the nineteenth century, mostly under the influence of Hinduism and Christianity so as to fit in with modern circumstances. There are hundreds of evidences to prove this fact. Rev. T. Rodborne in his book, 'Ka Niam jong u Khasi Pnar' has pointed out in detail how this religious reformation took place, and a new Khasi religious faith emerged. This new faith was established by indigenous leaders, and based on some indigenous precepts, hence it may be considered as indigenous though it is not traditional, and fit for those who are willing to accept it.

This new faith includes an annual pilgrimage to the top of Lum Sohpetbneng around an altar on the highest spot marked as 'sanctum sanctorum' in Latin, and the distribution of Eucharistic rice and holy water or 'ka Birosilan' or 'ka Umksiar Umrupa' whatever they may call it, though such a practice had never been there in the past among the Khasis, except the worship of a natural stone figure of a female goddess called 'ka Mei Mawbuh' on the wall of a cliff on the northern side of the Sohpetbneng range by the founding clans of Raid Mawbuh, and the worship of 'Mai Parbat' by the resident Nepalese a few decades ago. Khasis from other Raids in Ri Bhoi region never worshipped God on

Lum Sohpetbneng, but they had their own sacred places of worship in their own Raids.

Being a new religious faith it has every right to establish new forms of religious rites with scriptures and hymn books, and assemble in weekly religious gathering on Sundays for sermons, prayer and worship like the Christians. It also has every opportunity to incorporate doctrines from Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, or any other religion, and also a mission to propagate the new faith through conversion. So it is not a question of dwindling number of believers of the Niam Khasi as might have been assumed, but it is a matter of winning more willing members into the new faith. Indeed, some Christian leaders had been converted and became important leaders in the Seng Khasi. Man has the personal freedom to shift from one religious faith to the other if he feels the need to circumvent certain man-made moral responsibilities.

There had also been attempts to interpret the Khasi religious thought in Biblical context. Dr. Homiwell Lyngdoh as well as U Soso Tham were of the view that the purpose of the religion of the Khasis was only to guide and lead the tribe in the right path until the arrival of a superior being, called variously as, 'u Simpah u Singsong, u Simkaro, etc., who would bear all the sins of mankind, 'ban khala ia ka hok ka sot' (shower abundant grace), 'ban sneng ban kraw' (to counsel and teach) and 'ban pynpura ia ka niam ka rukom' (to bring up religion to perfection). Their conclusion is that the Khasi religion is waiting in expectation for the coming of that superior being or Saviour of mankind to lead all human souls to the house of God. The duty of the sacrificial cock would come to an end with the coming of 'u Syiem Simpah Singsong, and eternal peace shall reign on earth when the King of Heaven shall trample Satan under his feet. The concept of 'u Simpah u Singsong' has also been used by some Catholic Priests in prayer and sacrifice of the Mass in the Shillong Arch-

Diocese.

Everything evolves including religion; and Niam Khasi or Niam Tre has the right to evolve and move on from the religion at the clan level as established by the ancestors, to a faith of individual believers at the community level bypassing the clan. The members of Seng Khasi or Sein Raij have every right to practice their religion as they understand it and move on in the direction they wish, and progress in the way they want to. And, no one has the right to meddle with their faith. But if any organisation claims to represent not only its faithful members, but also the whole tribe, then it is not only a matter of right, but it is also an obligation for every Khasi to be concerned about its movement and activities for the interest of peace, unity and order of the tribe.

The unity and honour of the Khasi tribe cannot be achieved by converting a new found faith of a particular group into a universal faith for the whole tribe. It is easy to invent a new tradition and give it a tag of, 'time immemorial', and people from outside the tribe would believe. But people belonging to the tribe would not believe it. We can cut and paste things of the past into the living present, but we cannot paste things of the present into the bygone past. The honourable thing to do is to admit the truth whether it is sweet or bitter, and move forward with the time. With genuinely good intention in our hearts to lead our souls to eternal happiness and for the wellbeing of the society, we can never go wrong whether we follow the traditional religion of the ancestors, or the new Khasi religion of the nineteenth century, or adopt any other new religion. None of us is without sin, so let us not throw stones at each other, but let us throw matters of fact for discussion so that we may positively contribute to the intellectual development of the tribe. And, in this general situation of 'ka sah khyllung sah khynnah' with various new found faiths in the society, whatever faith we may profess, it would be more glorifying if we learn to respect others and restrict our faith to ourselves and to those who are willing to believe

Universities In Crisis Academic autonomy vital

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

There is much talk about events happening in universities across the country. Though politics had entered higher education institutions a long time ago, recent developments 'engineered by the NDA Government' are a pointer that there is a growing vindictive approach towards the administrative system in universities. The events at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and subsequent sedition charges have sparked off controversies in other institutions of higher learning, wherein outside forces are trying to curb the freedom of students and free flow of ideas. Earlier, the death of Rohith Vemula at Hyderabad Central University sparked a huge uproar, with the Opposition grabbing the opportunity to hit out and accuse the Government of being anti-Dalit.

It is indeed shameful that the turmoil in JNU has drawn international criticism from renowned personalities such as Noam Chomsky, the well-known social commentator, Judith Butler, gender theorist, Orhan Pamuk, Nobel laureate author, all of whom, in a statement, condemned 'the culture of authoritarianism that the present government in India has generated' and that those in power are replicating the dark times of the oppressive colonial period and the Emergency. In fact, Chomsky is reported to have asked the JNU VC 'why the police was allowed to enter the University when it wasn't legally required.'

Sadly, at a recent meet of Vice Chancellors vital issues such as politicisation of universities and its students' bodies were not discussed for reasons best known to the educationists. However, during a lecture former UGC chairperson Sukhdh Thorat stressed on policies that would enhance equity, non-discrimination and inclusiveness in higher education. What goes unanswered is how to tackle the party in power, whether at the Centre or in the States, which frantically try to thrust their politics on student bodies in Universities. In recent times, many an academician feels that caste and religion along with force, engineered by the powers-that-be, is vitiating the academic bodies.

A resolution seeking appointing an anti-discrimination officer to ensure a transparent, proactive mechanism for grievance redressal of the university community, including students, staff and faculty, may not be very much successful an idea if the parties in power don't refrain from meddling in institutions of higher learning. The university should not be treated as a centre to exert influence, for the students unlike rural voters will not be swayed away by political pressure. Moreover, students by and large, have modern minds which tend to find acceptance in leftist ideas and not those propagated by BJP's student and youth fronts.

One may mention here an appropriate observation of Jawaharlal Nehru: "A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards ever-higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people".

But this quote doesn't hold good today. The quality of university education cannot improve if such politics as being witnessed at JNU, Hyderabad University, FTII etc enters the system. The lofty ideals enunciated by India's first prime minister, himself a statesman in his own right, is indeed very difficult to make this a reality unless the political system changes and is geared for the same.

Moreover, the recent trend of appointing teachers, not to speak of VCs who

follow and trumpet government policies, even though their academic standards may not be of a high standard, has indeed been a very disappointing trend. Whether in Central or State universities, all if not most VCs are selected on the basis primarily if they find favour with the party in power. Academic considerations are rarely and not the main criterion.

Reports indicate that many VCs have been forced to resign because they did not toe the government's line in matters of admission, giving importance to the demands of the students' wing of the party in power, putting obstacles to those teachers who may not be toeing the government's line etc.

Coming to the academic status of universities there is some good news that the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati and Savitribai Phule Pune University are among the global top 20 as per Times Higher Education World's Best Small Universities Ranking 2016. While IIT has acquired the 14th place, the Pune University is placed for spots lower at 18th. Universities having fewer than 5000 students, offering teaching and research across four disciplines fall in the category of small. Only 20 small universities in the world have been considered world-class, as included in the Top 800 World University Rankings.

This need not instil much satisfaction in us, specially educational planners and analysts, considering the large number of higher educational institutes in the country catering to such a huge population. Many of the Third World countries, which are much smaller in size, have fared much better, the primary reason being there is virtually no—or very little—interference in the administration of institutes of higher learning.

While total non-interference of the State hierarchy may be a utopian idea, heads of academic bodies should be given a free hand in running these institutes. A strict administration with faculty of high standards would go a long way in restoring the universities to their pride of place. Only those demands of students that are rational and judicious should be entertained. The VC should be one who is a model leader and an academician cum administrator having the capability and enterprise to lead an institution.

Another point that needs to be stressed is the recent question raised by Prof. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Chairman of Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), that for how long should the degradation of educational institutions be tolerated? The administration has to be strict in governing the universities but the opinion and wish of students have to be kept in mind as, according to him, "the idea of university is in danger".

However, to conclude one cannot deny that as most academicians agree the basic factor needed to improve performance and quality is to give more autonomy to these institutions and less interference, specially by political leaders. Reiterating this in a recent article Prof. Suranjan Das, VC of Jadavpur University (also mired in controversy), stated that a university's autonomy is sacrosanct though he observed that students have a moral responsibility to promote and preserve academic excellence".

Thus, there is need to synthesize both to make the institutions of higher education vibrant while at the same time maintaining discipline. In a country like ours with diverse cultures, a good university or institution should look like the society in which it exists. If academic standards have to be relaxed to some extent in the interest of social diversity, that in itself should not jeopardize its contribution to civil society. —INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Hawkers a menace!

Editor,

Apropos the news item, "Shillong placed at 53rd in clean cities list (ST Feb 16,2016)", I would like to draw the attention of authorities that a city in the State of "The Abode of Clouds" to be placed at this level in the list of "Clean cities" of the country (India) is indeed a disgrace to the State and it's people. I believe the main cause for such a poor honour of Shillong is mainly the hawkers who have over time marred the beauty of the city by occupying almost every corner and paths and shamelessly producing large chunks of filthy garbage. Police Bazar is seen to be teeming with hawkers converging on the roads and footpaths. Mini eateries have sprung up with no concern for hygiene. On the view of Motphran area, I had earlier written about the hideous surrounding of the area and I would like to reiterate that the number of hawkers at Motphran is increasing at an alarming rate. They have marred the area and it's surroundings turning it from bad to worse. More and more indigenous street vendors are seen occupying nearly half of the tombstone

in Motphran creating a lot of chaos and nuisance and not allowing traffic to ply smoothly. In no time they will engulf the entire tombstone thereby creating further disruption. I sometimes wonder whether vehicle drivers are to blame in case of accidents. This personally vexes me! It doesn't mean that just because they are indigenous people (Khasis) they can do whatever they like in their own land even if it affects the interests of the people at large.

I strongly condemn such shameless actions! It is also seen that recently along Motphran to G.S Road, grilled partitions were constructed along the footpaths, but to my horror, these partitions serve the hawkers as grills for hanging their products (viz. clothes, electronic accessories, etc) being put on sale. It is such an unpleasant plight to see our surrounding teeming with a large numbers of hawkers day by day! But above all this, the district administration seems to be blind. Where are the EAC's and magistrates who were there few months back to keep an eye on these hawkers? Can't the local representatives of these adjoining ar-

reas raise their voices on these matters? Is the Urban Minister not seeing or even aware of such a plight? Where is the voice of the so called NGOs on such issues? Why is the SMB not taking stock of such crucial matters? Such issues should be dealt with sternly and strictly.

I request all the concerned authorities to keep an eye on such matters and to take steps to improve our unhealthy and hideous surroundings.

Yours etc.;
Mewan Pariat,
Shillong-2.

Misplaced priorities

Editor,

Kudos for the editorial, "National flag and academic autonomy" (ST 23 Feb 2016)

It is indeed amusing to note that while a lot of hue and cry gets registered by the State and the middle-class (who are leading a lavish life thanks to the so-called economic boom) whenever the tricolour or national anthem is shown "disrespect", no protest is made about the hunger, poverty, illiteracy and injus-

tics our impoverished fellow citizens are forced to suffer on a daily basis. This only goes to prove that in "educated", "enlightened" and "elite" India of attainment of Mars orbit, the value of a piece of a cloth or a paragraph of music is infinite times more than the life and dignity of innumerable unfortunate souls.

When will the middle-class and the State wake up to the fact that national flag or anthem is merely the symbol of the nation? Rather it is the common people who form the real nation. The national flag flying aloft the ramparts of Red Fort. Government offices or academic institutions may make a good sight, the great immortal song of the genius named Rabindranath Tagore might give us goose bumps; but only a hunger-less, literate society enjoying basic human rights, dignity and justice can form a truly prosperous and proud nation.

Yours etc.,
Kajal Chatterjee,
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.

"When you focus on being a blessing, God makes sure that you are always blessed in abundance."

— Joel Osteen

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 195 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2016

Haryana aflame

LAW and order has collapsed for a number of days in Haryana. 19 people were killed, public property and private establishments were badly damaged as Jat protesters and other caste groups in the state went on a rampage. Thousands of crores of rupees went down the drain. The Haryana government showed singular inactivity. The Police looked away, presumably because a large number of them belonged to the Jat community. Senior police officials could not act as the state government did not give them any orders. Violence spread to such an extent that the state government had to call in the army within 24 hours which was also precipitate action. The main reason for the total chaos was the inexperience of the chief minister, Manoharlal Khattar and others in the cabinet showed equal ineptitude. Haryana is one of the most important states in the country, bordering Delhi. Train services from New Delhi were partially disrupted for a day or two. The BJP had failed to hold fruitful talks with the Jat community agitating about the Jat quota and so a number of districts in the state witnessed considerable violence. How long such anarchy will continue is anybody's guess.

It is evident that the Centre would have reacted much more firmly if Haryana did not have a BJP government. Khattar has visited many countries to invite investment for his state which is very pro-industry. It has Gurgaon, one of the industrial showpieces of the country. A global investor summit is expected to be held in the state on March 7. But the continuing chaos in the state must have sapped investors' confidence in the region.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 31, 1989

Power failures MeSEB crisis amidst plenty

Meghalaya is turning out to be a land of paradoxes. There seems to be crisis amidst plenty. Cherrapunjee has earned the sobriquet of the wet desert with perpetual water scarcity on the wettest spot on earth. While that may largely be attributed to Nature's vagary, it baffles people why the state, with surplus power at its disposal, should have frequent power failures, shuts down trips and what have you. Not a day passes with some form of disturbance of power supply in some part or other. Ask the industrialists, business organizations and domestic consumers. They invariably give a common answer it's awfully bad.

The MeSEB Chariman Mr. R. V. Lyngdoh attributes this mess to a combination of factors. Taking to this reporter recently he said that the distribution network in the town is outdated. The 33 KV electric line of Shillong were installed way back in 1922. These lines being old, and the load having increased manifold since then, these lines cannot bear the load and as a result frequent breakdowns occur. It is only recently that the authorities have started installing 11 KV lines for augmenting the load capacity.

Secondly, there has been no proper planning of the distribution network. Power connections have been granted to consumers in a very haphazard manner without taking into account the load factor. For instance, one single pole may have more than 30 connections while from the next pole a few feet away, there may be just two connections. This over loading inevitably leads to breakdowns.

Thirdly, power supply has to shut down at times to carry on the necessary repairs like changing of transformers etc.

All this clearly reveals that there has been no proper planning in advance by the MeSEB authorities and even as ongoing work is concerned, it had been uncoordinated, haphazard affair carried out clearly on ad hoc basis a charge readily admitted to by the senior MeSEB officials.

The MeSEB Superintendent Engineer, Mr. K. P. Roy had some interesting facts to reveal. According to Mr. Roy, the main cause of the interruptions in power supply is the widespread practice of power pilferage. Mr. Roy said that in 1977 there were 12,000 consumers in Shillong, in 1988 the figure stood at 28,000. But according to the Department's estimates, there are about 40,000 actual consumers in Shillong. Thus, about 22,000 consumers are tapping power illegally. Mr. Roy further added that the MeSEB loses more than Rs. 1.5 crore due to pilferage.

And what is more, such illegal power tapping is carried out with the active connivance of unscrupulous persons in the Board. Some industrial consumer have also been resorting to Power theft. Cases of consumers tampering with their meters have also been detected. Moreover, there have been numerous instances of consumers imposing unauthorized load on their lines. Initially, these consumers get an electric installation for their house. But when the house is expanded later, the same line caters to the extra rooms while, according to the law, a new connection should be taken. Such illegal acts impose extra loads on the transformers resulting in breakdown and interruption of power supply.

It is only recently that the Board woke up and took stock of the malaise afflicting the system. While admitting to laxity in his department in the past, Mr. Roy pointed out the lacunae in the laws which helped errant consumers go scot free. It was only recently that Section 39 of the 1948 Electricity Supply Act was amended. After this amendment, the authorities have been empowered to inspect any premises with the magistrate's permission and book errant consumers, and submit penal bill, nonpayment of which will result in disconnection of electric supply.

Community: A problematic western concept

By Patricia Mukhim

In Meghalaya we must be having the largest variety of classifications for forest. They range from clan owned (Law Kur) to Village owned (Law Shnong) to those owned by Lyngdohs (Law Lyngdoh), sacred forests (Law Kyntang and Law Blei) and even forest for graves (Law Lum jingtep) to name a few. How each of these forests is managed is a conundrum. But what is objectionable is when those engaged in the social sciences term them as "community managed forests." First of all there is no equivalent of the term community in the Khasi language. If there is one it would be good for linguists to tell us what that word is. Words are powerful because they give expression to an abstract idea; words awaken our imagination and give meaning to our lives. We can relate to circumstances when we understand the meaning of the word or words used.

Francis Bacon said, "Men suppose their reason has command over their words; still it happens that words in return exercise authority on reason. A bad and unapt formation of words is a wonderful obstruction to the mind. Nor can the definitions and explanations with which learned men guard themselves in some instances afford a complete remedy - words still manifestly force the understanding, throw everything into confusion and lead humankind into vain and innumerable controversies and fallacies."

Perhaps the most basic understanding of community comes from Phil Bartle who says, "Community is not just as a collection of houses but a social and cultural organisation of humans. Community has a life of its own which goes beyond the sum of all the lives of its residents. A community is a system of systems and is composed of things that are learned rather than transmitted by genes or chromosomes. All the social or cultural elements of a community, from its technology to its shared beliefs are transmitted and shared by symbols." I would conclude therefore that a community is envisaged to be having shared beliefs, shared goals and a shared idea of how to achieve these goals.

Having said that let us look at what constitutes community in our own context. Take the example of a village with a hundred households. This village

would have a Dorbar Shnong whose members are selected by the male members of that village. Women have no role in that selection. Hence they are not stakeholders. And neither do the poor have any voice. To me Voice is the greatest agency. It helps amplify people's grievances, their needs and aspirations etc. Without voice we merely exist; we don't live and cannot contribute or are not allowed to contribute to the organism called community. Hence when decisions are taken about setting aside a forest for the purpose of mining in an area that is ostensibly said to be 'managed' by the community, which section of that community actually takes the decisions? That forest land is also a catchment that stores water for our collective needs; it is a repository of medicinal herbs that can heal minor and major ailments; it has mushrooms which provide proteins; it has all kinds of edible herbs and roots that provide vital iron and vitamins and therefore provide nutrition. Women see the entire forest eco-system as a vital part of their food chain. Men see the forests as the woods and the trees therein and are more interested in what can be gouged from beneath the earth after the wood is cleared. Does the community therefore have any role in deciding what activities are taken up inside a forest that is their life-blood?

The word community - a borrowed word - has deceived us for generations. International funding bodies like the World Bank etc come into our socially fragmented societies and talk about 'community-led forest management projects' etc. There isn't any community with a shared vision in the Khasi society. If there were, then hectares of forest land would not have been destructed for the sake of timber. Nor would forests be leased or sold to coal or limestone mine owners to exploit everything from inside the earth without caring about the consequences that such action would have on the larger eco-system on which the larger society relies on for its oxygen; its food and its medicines. This lazy acceptance by our governments and universities of foreign words

and terms and implanting them into our consciousness does not really work. We cannot relate to the word 'community' because of the absence of critical characteristics that define a community.

Khasi society is not without hierarchy. Hence it is not egalitarian. But the society was not always so. The chieftain was called the Syiem and was not royalty. But later a whole clan came to be known as the Syiem clan and therefore assumed the right to govern over a number of Raids or conglomeration of villages. How the Syiemship then became a hereditary right of one family within the clan (example is the Nongkrem syiemship) requires honest, robust research. A society with a clear hierarchy which then assumes that those at the head of the pyramid have the divine wisdom to take decisions on behalf of the hoi-polloi at the bottom cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called a democracy. The voice of the weakest and the poor are excluded. So who is community here?

Each time someone speaks about 'consultation with the community' before implementing a project, I am confused because when I ask people in that same village if they are aware of such and such project all they do is smile shyly and say, "We don't make decisions; the Rangbah (men) and Ki nongialam (leaders) do. What do we know about these fancy projects (skim)." Now tell me then where is that stakeholderhood we talk about? In the village today, it's the more educated, the more empowered, the more affluent that push their agenda and which benefit from manifold government and non-government schemes.

At the moment the Khasi society is confused and in a state of flux because our written word does not go back even two hundred years. Oral tradition is weak and anecdotal. It lacks the rigour of written recorded history. Add to this confusion the infusion of Christian ideas into our worldviews and we have a complex concoction of words and ideas that we now lay claim to be part of our culture and history.

I was non-plussed when at a conference organised by INTACH recently, a college professor said that the black Dhara (a

ceremonial dress) used to be worn by Khasi aristocracy when a member of the family dies. Khasi aristocracy? Black as a sign of bereavement? But aren't those very British and Christian concepts/symbols connected to sorrow and bereavement. The Khasis are colourful and this is evident from their 'Ryndia thoh-rew stem (a shawl/stole made of the eri silk worm) which is woven of in checks of bright yellow and maroon threads coloured with plant dyes. Black is therefore borrowed and so is the idea of Khasi aristocracy. That this concept has entered our academia makes me worried as to how much of history and memory we are able to retain and how much the present generation knows of its past. In fact the very idea of the Dhara which was a topic of research by a scholar of Ambedkar University did not throw up too many insights.

Hence, words like aristocracy, community and many more indeed need to be translated both literally and metaphorically so that we don't use them lazily without delving into their etymology. Perhaps the reason why projects fail to take off and community mobilisation is such a slow process in Meghalaya is because the implementers come with their own assumed ideas of 'community' and development goals when the people they are about to work with in the villages do not even have a shared value system; leave alone a shared vision and objective of how they want their village to look like; what are the development priorities and how people could be taken to the next economic level by being part of this shared vision. It's also a clash of worldviews. Our worldview is the sum and substance of our own belief systems which then influence how we see the world. But worldviews within the same society can differ. Today the worldview of the mine owners is to profit from a system of 'tribal rights' (Sixth Schedule) that allows free exploitation of the land and what is inside that land. It is an individualistic and selfish worldview. Such individuals cannot be considered part of the same society which suffers on account of the cruel exploitation of the environment by these profiteers/capitalists. Can the twin then ever meet? So what is community then?

When NSF stated "Naga Inhabited areas" I am confused whether their statement lies under Nagaland jurisdiction only or any other states as wells for NSF does not exist in Manipur State. I am also shocked to notice that intellectuals and state representative students took such an ugly and irresponsible step that could lead to communal violence.

As a responsible citizen I feel sad about this incident and I believe in peaceful co-existence so I urge the Government of Manipur to strictly investigate the matter and book the culprits as per the laws of the country without further delay. I also appeal to the NSF to kindly review its stand over the restriction of plying vehicles owned by Manipuri / Meitei / Meitei over Naga inhabited areas, as I believe it would lead to unnecessary communal tension in the two states.

Yours etc.,
Chongtham T Meetei,
Shillong - 3

I would like to mention further that the people of Manipur are called Manipuri and so the term Manipuri does not necessarily mean he Meetei / Meitei only but all the different ethnic groups of Manipur as well living in different hilly areas of Manipur. So, pointing out one specific community and making common people the victims of their ire would be wrong and unwise.

Yours etc.,
Chongtham T Meetei,
Shillong - 3

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

Budget & 7th Pay Panel

Will Babus get a bonanza?

By Vinod Sharma

Expectations among our bureaucracy are at an all time high vis-à-vis the presentation of the general Budget on 29 February. The day, when Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley is expected to announce a budgetary provision of Rs 1.11 lakh crores for implementation of the 7th Pay Commission Report recommendations and the One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme which is being considered by the Empowered Committee of the Secretaries before the final nod by the Cabinet.

Recall, unlike the 6th Commission set-up in July 2006 which was implemented only in 2008, the erstwhile UPA Government constituted the 7th four-Member Panel headed by Justice (retd) A K Mathur in February 2014 to encash it in the May general elections.

But the report, submitted in August 2015 only saw light in December last, perhaps to allow the NDA Government make alterations/deletions due to the OROP announcement along-with keeping it within budgetary constraints.

Pertinently, since Independence a pay commission is set up every 10 years to review and recommend the work and pay structure of the civil and military workforce of the Central Government.

In keeping with the practice the 7th Report recommended a 23.55 per cent increase in salary, allowances and pension to benefit approximately 47 lakh employees and 52 lakh pensioners totalling an additional outgo of Rs 1.02 lakh crores every year.

True, this amounts to merely a little over 2 per cent growth annually in pay and allowances of an average Central Government employee, who is facing rising inflation, less promotional avenues, tough working conditions and having to compete with hefty pay packets in the private sector thanks to due globalization.

Undeniably, the financial impact of the 7th Pay Commission is staggering for the Central and State Governments. Already, post implementation of the 5th and 6th Commission, the Centre's annual wage bill crossed a whopping Rs 10,000 crores and Rs 8,000 crores respectively. Thereby, breaking the back of India's developing economy with many States unable to pay staff salaries.

Arguably, the impact of a further increase in salaries and allowances, even if it is a moderate 23 per cent, will impose an additional wage bill of Rs 1.2 lakh crores on the Centre alone.

It remains to be seen how the Government will square this bonanza with the commitment to eliminate revenue and fiscal deficits to make the economy flourish. As it stands, Jaitley has proposed to lower the fiscal deficit at 3.5% of the GDP and 3% in the 2016-2017 budget from the present 4.1%.

According to experts, the Budget outlay for implementation of the pay panel and OROP would account for 0.5% of the GDP. But the additional financial burden on States would be more staggering. This would force inordinate delay in States implementing the pay panel's report on the pattern of the Central Government.

Therefore, in the pre-Budget consultations with the Finance Minister, his State counterparts have strongly pitched for additional grants to square up the burden.

Notably, as statistics

show the Union Government's total workforce is around 47 lakhs, of which over 30 lakhs are in two major sectors, Railways and Defence. The rest are scattered in over 500 Ministries and Departments across the country.

Moreover, both Railways and Defence employees' services are not only of paramount importance but also indispensable as Railways is the backbone of the national economy, besides being the biggest revenue earner for the Government.

Similarly, defence personnel posted mostly in trouble-torn and tough areas are guarding the country's borders and their valuable services cannot be weighed in terms of financial benefits extended to them. Not only do they work under immense stress and in highly trying climatic conditions whereby any amount of money to them would be justified. The recent martyrdom of 10 soldiers in Siachen speaks volumes about their valour in safeguarding our borders.

Besides, national security is not negotiable. Hence, the country would not be losing anything while increasing pay packets of defence employees. Instead, it would immensely add to their morale, efficiency and devotion to duty.

The general assumption that Government employees are handsomely paid and under-worked is untenable. Like the private sector, an average employee is equally devoted to his duty and is also prone to the practice of hire and fire.

However, unlike his counterparts in the private sector, a Government employee is poorly paid despite six pay commissions. With the introduction of the annual work appraisal scheme and several other performance-oriented reviews, a Government employee has no other option but to work, and, as he could lose the so-called job security.

Additionally, he is subjected to more stringent official rules and regulations. His earning from salary and other allowances is taxed at source, even as the Government fails to realize huge taxes from lakhs of big-wigs in the private sector.

Since all Government offices have introduced the biometric attendance system and with the Right to Information Act in force, the working of 'babus' has become more transparent and accountable. Still there is always room for administrative reforms from the top echelons of our bureaucracy; otherwise people will continue to believe that their hard-earned money is being squandered on non-responsive babus.

There is no gainsaying, corruption and dilly-dallying tactics in Government offices must be dealt with sternly so as to make the bureaucrats fully accountable to the needs and requirements of the common masses.

Clearly, there is an urgent need to generate additional funds from sources hitherto unexploited and untapped and by checking wasteful expenditures on pompous shows, luxurious foreign trips of Government employees by making sure that every penny earmarked for development is properly utilized and not squandered by unscrupulous elements in the Government and private sector. It is hoped that Government employees will get their due in the ensuing budget. (INFA)

TO THE EDITOR

A helpless parent's appeal

Editor,

As a mother of a middle school student I request the teachers not to burden the students with mindless homework every day. The new academic session has just begun and most students have already started to suffer from tremendous mental and physical strain. If there are eight periods in a typical day and a student spends a minimum of half an hour in each subject (in most cases it is more than half an hour), then at least four hours are spent in doing homework every day. After long hours of sitting and writing in school, the student spends the entire evening also doing homework. This leads to mental and physical strain and fatigue. When does a growing child play and relax? I agree that homework is necessary and students need to study. However, the type of homework given is actually detrimental to learning. For example, textbooks have a lot of subjective type of questions. Teachers usually give the answers in the class and tell the students to copy all the questions

and answers at home in the exercise books.

Another example is the trend to mark the answers in the textbooks from a certain sentence to another. The students have to copy these answers verbatim. Most of the homework is merely copying questions and answers. This leaves no time for the students to read and understand the lesson; it hinders their ability to think and frame their own answers; it sucks away their creativity and curiosity and takes away the joy of learning. Therefore, I request the teachers to put themselves in the shoes of the students and be more child-friendly. I beg of you, please don't kill the joy of learning.

Yours etc.,
A helpless parent

"A communal move"

Editor,

I wish to draw the attention of the concerned authorities through the columns of your esteemed newspaper to the bandh imposed by Naga Students Federation on all Manipur/Meitei owned vehicles. While I condemn the act of Manipur Commandos

"People who get nostalgic about childhood were obviously never children."

--- Bill Watterson

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 196 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2016

Railway Budget

RAILWAY Minister Suresh Prabhu's budget has little to commend itself. The good things are: there has been no hike in passenger fare unlike in previous budgets. Freight rate may be reduced. Special facilities are proposed to be offered to senior citizens. The Indian Railway's gross receipts for the current fiscal are slated to fall short of the budgeted target of Rs 1, 83, 578 crores by Rs 15,744 crores. The current slowdown has dented most goods and passenger earnings. Staff costs and pension outgo would increase by roughly Rs 28, 600 crores as a result of the adoption of the Seventh Pay Commission recommendations (SPC). A plan size of Rs 1, 21,000 crore has been estimated for 2016-2017. The bulk of it come from extra budgetary resources which consist of investments through special purpose vehicles/joint ventures bringing finance from foreign pension funds, insurance companies and other outside sources. The IR work expenditure is estimated to be Rs 7, 660 crores next fiscal. It will be difficult to raise the money.

Prabhu is banking on cost cuts through lowering of diesel prices and increased electric traction. Power may be procured at competitive prices but will that be enough? Prabhu has focussed on a few major projects which should continue to grow. The proposed Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) will considerably reduce transit time for goods. Land acquisition is already underway. The corridor should be ready by 2019. These corridors will also increase the speed of passenger trains. New DFPs have also been proposed. By and large, neither a good nor a bad budget.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 31, 1989

India in Twilight Zone

Way out for National Resurgence

The infiltration of corruption in different spheres is a manifestation of our declining standards it is now assumed that if you have to grease some body's palm. There is not merely corruption at administrative level, persistent stories are also heard about corruption at higher political level. This is extremely disturbing for corruption has a nasty habit of percolating down. If it is there at political level, it is bound to pollute the administration below for political corruption is foster mother of administrative corruption. Although corruption any where is reprehensible, developed countries can somehow afford this vice despite it how they may because their economy is already well developed.

In the case of developing countries corruption arrests and often retards the process of development and the nation pays a heavy price in terms of loss of moral values. Nothing causes greater public dismay and shakes more the faith of the people in democratic process than the sight of those elected to high offices by the people using their power and authority for self aggrandizement and personal enrichment. Purity of administration has much greater significances in the countries recently freed with economies yet in the process of development.

The devaluation of our different institutions is another disturbing feature of our polity. Institutions constitute the backbone of the country, the life force of the nation. They have a permanence about them. While the individuals come and go, it is the institutions that sustain the community and its administrations, particularly in times of crisis. The way we have tempered with the institutions, subjected them to grievous blows and denuded them of their inner strength has resulted, as it must in undermining their quality and efficacy.

Experience shows that the democracy has functioned most effectively in countries with two major political parties and in the absence of that coalition of likeminded parties. Prolonged rule of one party, history tell us, results in arrogance of power, false nations of infallibility and attitude of taking people for granted. This apart, it provides a fertile soil for evils like political corruption to grow and expanded. In India we have had except for a short period rule of one party. The absence of a strong well knit opposition with potentialities of providing a viable alternative government has led to number of vices to creep into the system.

A nation, it needs to be remembered, should not always except wise and sagacious persons to be at the helm of affairs, like Gandhi and Nehru in India or Washington and Lincoln in America. Recently efforts have been made to forge a united front as a viable alternative to the party in power but clash of egos and frenzy of personal ambitions has been thwarting the process and proving a stumbling block. All this has given rise to a feeling of disillusionment and skepticism in those yearning for two viable parties.

The situation as it has so far emerged is that on one side there has been an erosion in the credibility of the ruling party because of its failure to control inflation and spiral of rising prices, its being besieged by scandals involving illicit payments of colossal amounts, the percolation of corruption at a wide scale in almost all spheres of administration and an impression of misuse of state power for party ends.

Whose Meghalaya is it anyway?

By Michael Makri

After returning from a foreign country I have observed that Meghalaya is 'a society that has lost its conscience'. Critics may disagree with me but to support my observation let me cite few examples. Conscience as the dictionary defines it is 'a person's moral sense of right and wrong which acts as a guide to one's behaviour.' Further, if taken from the Christian perspective of conscience, 'It's a voice calling people to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil.' For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths (CCC1776). Based on these two definitions quoted above let me put forward a few points for discussion and appropriate action.

Conscience for Cleanliness: In the past few months, I visited about ten to fifteen tourist spots in Meghalaya particularly in the Khasi-Jaintia region. To my utter disgust, the places are filthy and with no maintenance whatsoever. Plastics and wrappers, bottles, cigar butts, orange peels are strewn all over the place. In some places there are dustbins but no one cares to use them. We might say that's not the Meghalayan but the tourists who dirty the place. True, but if the places are kept clean and tourist guides do their jobs sincerely this could be solved. Forget the tourist spots for a moment, look at our roads, streets, footpaths and lanes. The tourists don't come there, but our roads, streets, footpaths and lanes are no different from a garbage dump. We clean our homes and throw the dirt in the streets, rivers etc.. This shows that we have lost our conscience for cleanliness. The worse scenario I observed a day or two ago was a mother telling her daughter to throw the rubbish collected from their home into the street that leads to my home. What conscience formation will take place in her children, your children or our children? So, whose Meghalaya are we living in?

Conscience for one's duty: Probably the only state in the country that preaches Christianity but practices just the opposite is Meghalaya. God's Word 'if anyone will not work, neither let him eat' (2 Thess 3:10) has become outdated for our Christians here. We have lost our sense of duty. Our Christian leaders, Church workers, and the different Christian NGOs are the last to put that part of 'God's Word' into practice. Let us take few examples. Why do the majority of government employees not do their duty? You doubt me? Install CCTV cameras in all their work places and review them. Ministers, politicians and underlings in the bureaucracy work the least - they have lost the sense of duty and obligation as leaders. Priests and pastors too put some other interests before their duties. The way from Mawsynram to Nonghyllam is a hell of a journey. But what caught my attention were two youth literally using their knives and stones to cut and damage the pipelines along the road that brings water to the villages around there. I stopped and asked them not to do it, but from the look on their faces I got the message - 'don't mess with us, mind your business.' Such incidents are galore; you can't deny not seeing them. Our youth and children in the future will be no different from the elders now. The sense of duty is dead in Meghalaya.

Conscience for morality: In one of my facebook posts I made observations about the way people dress and behave in society. My mentor literally told me to remove it. That's true, I should not poke my nose at other people's affairs but what has become of Meghalaya today? Rape cases are reported daily in our local newspapers. A close friend of mine who is in the AIDS control society told me that the rate of HIV in Meghalaya has risen and we are moving to a new class or category in HIV related scale (for more information contact NACO). Morality in the way we dress, eat and drink, lifestyle, gestures and language is quickly dying. The dignity of morality is buried under the cloak of, 'It's my life, I live the way I want.' Conscience for morality is dying and as long as we fail to differentiate the real from the reel brought about by media it will con-

tinue to die. No doubt we are good at imitating Phareng (Foreign) cultures - but our culture, which is so rich in morality, dignity and respect for all is foreign (Phareng) to ourselves. It is a sorry state of affairs. Parents are hurt if someone corrects their children for speaking bad words, so what morality is left to teach?

How many of you have gone to the JN Stadium to witness the SAG games or the football matches played there? If not, you are saved from the assault on your ears by the vulgar words uttered by spectators against referees or players. In another disgusting scene I saw young boys in a drunken state, shouting vulgar slogans in Khasi while spitting kwai (betel nut) all over the stadium. Woe to you if you dare say anything to these youngsters.

Conscience for intelligence: The literacy rate of Meghalaya is quite high at 72.89% (2011 census). This means people in Meghalaya are very intelligent, wise and knowledgeable. But then why is such knowledge, wisdom and intelligence not manifest in our day to day life. Why do we allow the other 27.11% to ruin Meghalaya? Let me give you few concrete examples. Wise people will definitely want development, then why do some of us oppose the railways? Why are things complicated for completion of the airport? Why do we hinder people from starting shopping malls or multiplexes. The list goes on. The forests are destroyed, the mining of coal is illicitly carried out, the rivers have dried up. The main rivers are filled with rubbish thrown from our houses. Why is the 72.89% being ruled over by the 27.11%?

The intelligence of any person is judged by his/her contribution for the good of society. These can be in the form of writing books, articles, inventing something, but always contributing towards the larger good. I see very little of these in Meghalaya. On the contrary I see people who take advantage of other people's rights and dignity, and rob others of their existence. Then can we call ourselves wise and intelligent? No way! Ask a child, a youth or an adult how many books they read in a

year except the textbooks prescribed in schools. The answer will shock you. The reading habit is dead in Meghalaya. If you don't read then part of your brain becomes dead. If we don't read, we can't think and write. That's the reason very few Khasi/Garo articles appear in our own newspapers and magazines. Parents are culpable for this - they prefer to buy toys or PC games or Xbox as gifts for their kids rather than some good books. Our conscience for intelligence is dying.

Conscience for corruption: Once upon a time, corruption was considered taboo in our society. We heard of our parents exhorting and practicing sincerity and honesty. They were the hallmarks of our society. Hence a corrupt person, a corrupt leader or member would be punished because through corruption that person brings the wrath of god on that society or family. I still hold firm to this truth. If Meghalaya with all its beauty is still one of the backward states in India it is due to the wrath of corruption at all levels. Beginning with our leaders who literally sit on thrones, the bureaucrats, the leaders, the Sengbha (pynsniew)lang down to the boy selling kwai in the roadside shop are guilty of corruption. Our conscience for the ugliness of corruption is dead and it will take time to resurrect in our state.

Conscience for time: Another dead conscience found in Meghalaya is the conscience of time. A friend of mine told me once, 'we in Meghalaya have emulated all foreign (phareng) cultures except punctuality. I totally agree with her. We eat like Phareng, we dress like Phareng, we talk like Phareng, everything except respecting the dignity of TIME. In case some are not convinced they should check the different offices and work places. Time is money it is said. If so then Meghalaya will remain poor till its citizen's conscience are awakened to respect the dignity of Time.

We can go on and on, and the list will be long. But what difference will it make when most of us do not even have time to read, think, reflect and act on what we have done and needs to be done. Many of us ask too much from the state but do nothing to contribute for the good of the state, the society or even our small locality. So, whose Meghalaya is it anyway?

TO THE EDITOR

Extortion at NHAH toll gate

Editor,

I am amused to read your news about the situation that prevails at the toll gate of the NHAH (ST Feb 19, 2016) wherein it is mentioned that one day the K5U opposed the toll gate and after negotiation the opposition was withdrawn; the next day the FKJGP did the same and withdrew after negotiation with the contractor. In Ri Bhoi District there are pressure groups like the K5U, FKJGP, RBYF, RBSU, CORP, RAWA, HANM, and many others. Each one of them try to bully the contractor of the toll gate and extort from him right and left to extract as much money as they can from the toll gate on similar style as they have been doing at the Umiling check gate where each coal truck pays Rs 1800 per trip to them to avoid checking at the gate. If the NHAH contractor has to negotiate with all the groups and pay them I cannot imagine how much money he would have shed to bribe these groups at the cost of the innocent motor-

ists who pay the toll while passing by the said gate. All pressure groups are making hay in Ri Bhoi District because of lack of effective administration in the area. Policemen are deployed at the toll gate only to facilitate these groups to extort money from the NHAH contractor and at times from the hapless truckers.

Yours etc.,
Sedin Pyngrope
Shillong-8

Appropriate ruling by SC

Editor,

Referring to the news item about the order passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India on the status of Headmen (ST Feb 13, 2016), I would like to express my appreciation to the balanced decision taken by the apex court. The ball is now in the hands of the State Government to make relevant laws in line with the directives of the apex court. Few suggestions that I may contribute here are (i) All Traditional Heads be the syiems, sirdars, nokmas., rangbah shnongs, wahadadars, doloi,

lyngdohs, matadors, etc. who head the villages and localities should be covered under the ambit of the RTI, which would bring transparency in village administration. Only the corrupt and the dishonest elements will oppose this idea. (ii) A provision should be inserted in the law for appeals in case injustice is meted out to citizens by the traditional heads. Appellate authority should be the Deputy Commissioner concerned (iii) The office of traditional institutions should be regarded as Office Of Profit for all purpose. This is because the traditional heads in Meghalaya although they do not enjoy regular salary, do receive some kind of benefits through MPs / MLAs/ MDCs, politicians, through various government schemes and also because they take commission for land transactions in the localities. At times the amount collected by them is as huge as the amount collected by MDCs. The Headmen of Malki and Bishnupur fought court cases time and again to retain their positions because they did not want to hand over their luxurious positions and lose such financial benefits. (iv) The tradi-

tional institutions should have their proper offices where all records are prepared and maintained so that when there is change in incumbents the office will continue. This is important because as of now many traditional heads use the office as their personal property. The moment they demit office they take away with them all the documents and records and destroy them. (v) As of now election of traditional heads is simply by voice vote or by raising of hands in favour of the candidate proposed by the head of that village or locality. Even if one does not favour the proposed candidate one dare not oppose him for fear of intimidation/violence or victimization. Therefore elections for the post of traditional heads should be conducted by secret ballot. Lastly, some of the traditional heads hesitate to convene the general dorbar for years together because they fear that they may be removed. Hence, elections should be conducted at regular intervals. That is all for the moment, let the readers react to these suggestions.

Yours etc.,
Maykordalin Lyngdoh
Shillong-8

Haryana Jat Stir Govt failure, lesson for others

By Insaaf

Utter failure of the Haryana government to rein in the rampaging Jat protestors should send warning signals to other States, bitten by the reservation bug. The complete collapse of the law and order machinery and administration is a sad reflection on Chief Minister Madan Lal Khattar's ability to run the State. Inexperience cannot be an excuse for this failure, which saw the State burning for over five days, 19 people killed and public and private property worth thousands of crores destroyed. Worse, the NCR districts such as Rohtak, Sonapat, Panipat witnessed the worst violence and water supply in the nation's capital Delhi was hit hard. With a helpless administration or call it deliberate inaction because of vote-bank politics, the Union Home Ministry was asked to send in the Army, but too late. It's ironic to say the least that the BJP-led government at the Centre was seen to be busy dealing with slogan-shouting students of JNU and calling them 'anti-national' rather stern action against those destroying 'national' property in the BJP-ruled State!

Khattar and other Chief Ministers, specially of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh entangled in Jat quota demand, would do well to make a note of the Supreme Court's recent observation while hearing a petition filed by Hardik Patel seeking sedition charges by the Gujarat government against him be dropped. It stated: Strict action must be taken against individuals or political parties (whether the BJP or Congress) that destroy public property during any of their agitations. "We cannot allow people to burn nation's properties and hold the country to ransom in the name of agitation." Wonder whether the State governments will act or force the apex court to step in at the risk of being accused of usurping executive powers?

Arunachal Govt

Curtains are half down in Arunachal Pradesh's Assembly drama. So far so good for the newly-appointed Chief Minister Kalikho Pul, as he won the vote of confidence without any Opposition on Thursday last. His predecessor Nabam Tuki along with 16 Congress MLAs chose to remain absent and all 40 members present including Pul, 11 BJP MLAs, two Independents and eight Congress MLAs, believed to be Tuki loyalists, raised their hands in support and were duly counted. Recall Pul was appointed CM on February 19 amid a political storm and President's rule. Asserting that his was a Congress government, Pul said his fight was not against Tuki but corruption and he was happy that the BJP supported on the issue. However, the battle is not yet won. The storm arising out of "a special session" of the Assembly on December 16-17 last year in which Tuki was "voted out" in absentia, reached the Supreme Court's door and the apex court is to give its final decision. It could go either way. Many a finger would be crossed till then.

Railways Tracks States

"Saath saath" (together) is the Railways vision. It has reached out to State Governments to undertake projects with it, guess for better or worse. Announcing its 'Partnerships' venture while presenting the Railway Budget on Thursday last, Minister Prabhu stated 44 new 'partnership works' covering about 5,300 kms and valuing Rs 92,714 crore will soon get the green signal. The joint venture plan offers to open up new vistas for sharing the ownership of Railways, enhance bandwidth for project ex-

ecution, strengthen cooperative federalism and enable States to jointly decide their priorities for development of backward regions. The idea has rolled out well with 17 States giving approvals in principle. Of these, 6 MOUs have been signed. This apart, Rail Bhavan is going all out to improve suburban traffic in country's financial capital Mumbai, the metro in Kolkata, reviving the ring system in Delhi, have partnerships with Gujarat, Telengana and Tamil Nadu for developing suburban sections etc. Additionally, the Minister wants tech hub Bangalore and God's own country Kerala to have suburban rail system. All he asks of them is to "stagger office timings to reduce peak load on suburban traffic". Will they oblige?

J&K Encounter

The recent encounter at Pamore on the outskirts of Srinagar may prove statistics wrong that the Jammu & Kashmir is witnessing fewer terrorist strikes. More so as come to think of it, just three terrorists were able to engage security forces in a gun battle which lasted 48 hours. Apparently, the LeT terrorists who took refuge in the four-storey Entrepreneurship Development Institute building had come prepared with lot of arms and war-like ammunition. And the Army says its main concern was to first evacuate 100-odd civilians who were in the building. The operation thus took long but at the end it was a success and the civilians were safe. However, it lost three brave soldiers. Undeniably, the encounter signals the dire need for a strategic review by New Delhi. There can be no room for complacency.

Punjab's Gun Culture

Punjab has a penchant for guns! In a case being heard in the Punjab and Haryana High Court seeking a ceiling on the number of private arms licences issued in the border State, it came to light that 4.5 lakh arm licences have been issued to civilians and worse three firearms on a single license. Plus, the State with just 2.3 per cent of India's population can boast of nearly 20 per cent of the total private licensed weapons in the country. Another estimate is that the State police would have just 7 per cent of the total private licensed firearms. Apparently, 11 of Punjab's 22 districts figure in the top 50 district in the country with maximum arms licences and politicians, property dealers, landlords and officers are among the proud owners. According to all-India figures, 21 lakh-odd private arms licences have been issued and Punjab figures in the third spot, with UP topping the list--11.17 lakh. Will the Court be able to pull the trigger and have the Government bring down the number of licences? Though the police want to do so, it but such moves have proven futile as political influences often prevail while granting licences.

Mercy Killing of Dogs

Dog lovers are up in arms in Chennai. In response to an RTI, the Greater Chennai Corporation has said that 2,790 dogs were how the civic body identifies euthanized over the past four years in Tamil Nadu's capital city--in 2011-12 (768), 2012-13 (696), 2013-14 (698) and in 2014-15 (628). These were dogs suffering mortal wounds or an incurable disease is the corporation's claim, which has been questioned by activists who ask how they identify dogs for "mercy killings." Further, the claim of the corporation that it hands over stray dogs to three animal welfare organisations for sterilisation programme is under dispute, as the activists insist there is no transparency in either of the claims. ---INFA

By Shweta Patwardhan

Imagine yourself heading home after a long day at work. You are a woman with a hectic career that takes up much of your time. The taxi that you hail is air-conditioned and spacious and comes with a female driver who is trained in martial arts. As you sink back into the plush seats, you sip on the 'most beautiful vodka in the world'. And then you try and forget the worries of the day by tuning into a women's radio that plays your favourite retro numbers and serves up some hot gossip on the side. Sounds interesting?

It is, and quite true too. Many such women-centric endeavours are trying to tap into the minds and lives of the most-preferred customers --the female, fraternity. The whole exercise, that could easily be based on the ditty 'Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus', could be a fruitful one, that is if women buy the concept. Pinky Vodka, packaged much like a perfume bottle, is marketed by the UB Group as 'the most beautiful vodka in the world'.

In comparison to other vodkas, which have the alcohol quantity of 42.8 per cent volume by volume, Pinky has a volume by volume of 40 per cent. But that doesn't take away from its charm, assures Anant Iyer, business head, United Spirits Limited. "This is a premium vodka for women, who are well educated, emancipated and don't let anyone take them for a ride," he says. "India is so ready for a product like this."

Priced at Rs.2,000 per bottle, the vodka is aimed at



want to do that? Does it really make sense to drink special vodka for women, when you could drink the male equivalent for much lesser? "Maybe, maybe not," says actress Lekha Washington. "But I am quite frustrated with the assumption that women like all things pink. I am much more of a black and blue girl. But sometimes, it's quite nice to have some girl space to get in touch with one's femininity, such as a radio channel, with a sensitive and bitchy side," she says, as she tunes her car radio to 104.8 Meow FM.

For women only

appeal to a listeners like Lekha for sure. The station has shows that tackle issues ranging from parenting to relationships to even slightly personal issues such as sex and virginity during their late-night shows. The callers are all women, but the station figures show that as much as 42 per cent men

day, feels that the men might just be getting sensitised to women's issues by listening in. "I think the women of India needed a place where they could speak out without being judged." The best part: Even the music that is played is the kind that would appeal more to a woman than a man, so hard rock and metal are a big no-whereas soft rock is the ideal choice. "We do play Bollywood, but our retro time is the most popular. We have made sure we play stuff that women can relax to," says Anil.

But some women may feel that the effort to tap this market is futile. "I don't even believe in Women's Day," says model Jasmine Dawda. "I don't think you need a radio station or vodka to show that you matter. Have you ever seen man-centric services? It just widens the gap between a man and a woman. It's all depends on the marketing strategy rather than a demand."

Therein lies the tricky question. Are such services creating division where there need be none? Are we taking the whole 'blue is for

boys, and pink is for women' belief a bit too far. Anand Halve, brand consultant, Chlorophyll Brand Communications, sure seems to think so. "The question we need to answer is this: Does the product delivery cater to fundamentally different requirements for a man and a woman? Or is it just attempting to create a difference where you really shouldn't," he says.

"Why do we need a different radio channel? Will a woman react to something like inflation differently from a man? And the vodka -- when you add the tonic or any aerated drink to it, it is going to taste like any other vodka. So what's so special? A service that would be really necessary is a service that will empower women, much like a taxi service."

What Halve has in mind is a taxi service like For-She Travels and Logistic Pvt Ltd, which also offers women security guards. For-She cabs will pick you up from anywhere and everywhere, and with a

woman driver for company, you needn't worry what time of the day it is. Revathi Roy, managing director, has a unique approach: She is aiming to empower women at all levels.

"How are we doing that? It's simple. We empower the upper class lady by providing her with safety and independence at any time of the day. And we empower the lower class woman by giving them jobs that bring them dignity and respect," she says, and it reflects in her academy, where women mill around in the blue and pink uniforms, looking confident and sure of themselves. Though right now Ravathi faces restraint in pricing, as the cabs do not have a permit to function as metre taxis, she is sure that thing will change soon. "Until then, we will just do the best we can," she smiles calmly.

Whether they are successful or not depends on how many women embrace the idea of separate services that pamper their every need. But as the great Ovid had once said, "Whether they give or refuse, it delights women just the same to have been asked." INAV

The end of gender is upon us

This columnist has a deeply personal announcement to make. After much consideration, I have decided to remain as a male.

I know modern society pressures us to declare ourselves transgender, transitioning, transsexual, trans-curious, trans-fat and the like, but I have decided to forgo all that trendy stuff and I hope you will support my decision, as my family comes to terms with the hard truth that dad is a man trapped in a man's body.

Have you read the news lately?

A father just gave birth to a baby. This was after a man born a woman married a woman born a man. In each case they changed sex but kept a selection of their original parts. You can do this now: doctors have a menu. "I'll take two of those and one of those."

This switch-over couple's offspring is going to have a tough time explaining this, said reader Aalia Shan, who sent me an AP report about a mixed-up family in Ecuador. "That's my Dad. He's my Mom. This is my Mom. She's my Dad."

"Who wears the trousers in that family," I asked. "This is 2016," Aalia replied. "Everyone wears trousers except the Pope."

I threw this odd-but-true news report into the lunch discussion at the local noodle shop. An unmarried young man was intrigued by the concept of partial sex changes. "I have a very strong aesthetic appreciation of the female bust, but have no access to such. Should I get my own?" The general consensus was that he should consider doing so for experimentation's sake but should be prepared to get no work done for weeks afterwards.

A colleague said there was a recent case in the US of a woman who gave birth to her own grandchild with help from a doctor. Again the child ends up with the tough job of explaining it: "This is my male?"

You are not alone. (The writer is an Asian-based frequent traveller. Send ideas and comments via his Facebook page)

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

This is my Mom. And this is Mommy, she's my sister."

A UK reporter said that



socially-upward women, who can shell out the moolah. But would women

Meow's catchline is 'Thodi meethi, thodi catty', something that would

tune into the show. Anil Srivatsa, COO, Radio To-

Women prefer dark, brooding men, says study

The secret is out, hopefully for the last time. Women are drawn to men with the dark, brooding looks that suggest they are mad, bad or dangerous to know, according to new study released today.

Psychologists from the University of Liverpool, who worked with colleagues in Poland and Finland, found that it is not the love of danger that attracts women to Wuthering Heights Heathcliff-like characters, as previously believed, but a primitive desire to find a mate who appears mentally strong, confident and physically attractive in order to have healthier children. Such men have facial features that display the "Dark Triad" of personality traits -- Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy -- said research for the journal Evolution and Human Behaviour.

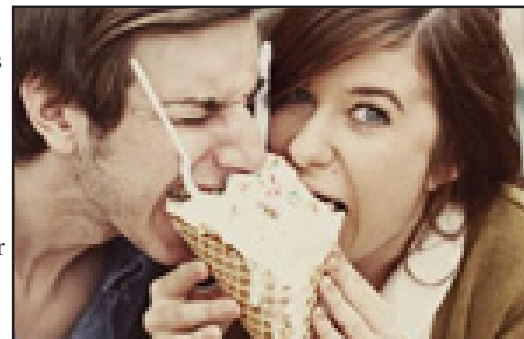
A total of 2,370 adult female volunteers were shown a selection of computer simulated men's faces in sets of two -- with one face with more or less of the Dark Triad features than the other. Women were asked which of the two they were most attracted to.

Some were attracted to men with strong features associated with psychopathy or Machiavellian traits or narcissists while others were not. (PTI)

INTERESTING FACTS

Not your upbringing, your partner's lifestyle can make you obese

If you're struggling to maintain a healthy weight you might want to have a word with your partner. Why? Because researcher have claimed that the lifestyle a person shares with his/her partner has a greater influence on their chances of becoming obese, than their upbringing.



Scientists from the University of Edinburgh claimed that the choices made by couples in their middle age including those linked to diet and exercise have a much greater impact than the lifestyle each shared with siblings and parents growing up. Although by middle age siblings have a shared risk of being obese, this is mostly attributable to their shared genetic inheritance rather than any habits instilled during their shared upbringing.

Researchers said that their study will help scientists better understand links between obesity, genetics and lifestyle habits. Lead researcher Professor Chris Haley said that although genetics accounts for a significant proportion of the variation between people, their study has shown that the environment you share with your partner in adulthood also influences whether you become obese and this is more important than your upbringing.

He added that the findings also show that even people who come from families with a history of obesity can reduce their risk by changing their lifestyle habits.

In royal Rajasthan, the walls are no longer empty spaces. They speak through their vibrant colours and tell a story. From dreary, boring railway stations to splashy coloured auto rickshaws, one can now encounter art at every nook and corner of the state's bustling towns. Rajasthan Post-TWF writer R Pal reports

Rajasthan: High on Art

High on art! That is how the regal Rajasthan is buzzing now. A state of incredible hues, many of its cities are turning into riot of colours. Not just its famed Shekhawati region known for its intricate frescoed havelis, but the entire state is turning into an Open Air Art gallery.

So roads, bridges, railings, walls, stations, hoardings and even rickshaws and autos are all getting artsy. The newest initiative is being conducted at the state's railway stations--both big and smaller junctions. Not just a new coat of paint and cleaner surroundings but they are fast earning the tag of public art galleries.

The tourism and culture department officials observe that Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje has an eye for all things artsy. So Jogi art, a form of Rajasthan's living folk, tribal art found their way on hoardings, bus shelters, bus panels and even auto rickshaws across the Pink City a few months back. The project, which claimed to be the first of its kind in the country, was to honour the tribal arts and artists of the desert state.

The next project was to transform the unkempt, dreary, boring railway stations into places of art, so that even common man, who has no time to appreciate the finer aspects of art, in the humdrum of his daily life, does exactly so while at the station. The idea was not only to make the surroundings pleasant but also help in providing a platform to local artists to showcase their talent and earn livelihoods.



ful graffiti, bold colours, green hues and the stunning tiger trails.

Rajasthan in partnership with Indian Railway, has now taken up painting other railway stations in the state as well. Jaipur Station is being painted up with Jogi Art, an art form that hinges around dots and lines.

Jodhpur station is being done up with Phad

paintings, the essence of which are that they are completely natural. Phad paintings are huge paintings done on cloth and depict stories of local deities and gods. Scale of the figures in the painting depicts their social status of the character in the story. What is also interesting is that the figures face each other, not the audience. Phad paintings are unique because as per traditions, a thirty feet long

and five feet wide work is done using natural vegetable colours. Additionally, material like squirrel hair is also used.

Floral motifs from Badal Mahal are being used to decorate the station in Bikaner while Udaipur is using representations from the Mewar School of Art. Mewar painting is one of the most important schools of miniature painting of the 17th and (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career option in Political Science

Students in humanities are familiar with subjects like Political Science. All the colleges or senior secondary school offers this subject in humanities or in social sciences. Students take this subject in higher secondary level or all college level.

A section of people think that this is just an ordinary subject and has less scope. Lack of awareness and information is a cause for such thinking amongst many. This subject brings lot of opportunities for young people who wanted to make their career through this subject.

Political science is a social science discipline that deals with systems of government and the analysis of political activity and political behavior. It deals extensively with the theory and practice of politics which is commonly thought of as the determining of the distribution of power and resources.

It is the study of politics and power from domestic, international, and comparative perspectives. It entails understanding political ideas, ideologies, institutions, policies, processes, and behavior, as well as groups, classes, government, diplomacy, law, strategy, and war.

Political science draws upon the fields of economics, law, sociology, history, geography, psychology, anthropology, public administration, public policy, national politics, international relations, comparative politics, political organization, and political theory.

There are different opportunities for students

studying political science. Aspirants who are eager to become lawyer need to understand more about this subject. People who fully understand the nature and meaning of constitutions, rulings and regulations often pursue political science and law can go on to law school and become lawyers.

As this subject is available in all the colleges of arts so one of the demanded profession could be teacher in schools or in

Associates for carrying out policy relevant projects.

Political science graduates choose to become involved in print, television or radio journalism, where they apply their expert understanding of political systems to create reports about current events. Political scientists might cover elections, conduct interviews, or attend press conferences where they often have the opportunity to ask questions. Political sci-

strategies where graduates of political science may get involved. Knowledge of foreign language would help one to work outside. Subjects like peace and conflict studies are also associated with political science which brings more opportunities for young people of North East to study conflicts for bringing changes in positive way. Our region has been affected by conflicts, so authentic studies and research related to conflicts may bring positive changes in the society and also help government to make new policies and programmes.

Exams Update:

1. NERIST: Aspirants may apply for NERIST Entrance Examination (NEE) 2016 for various courses like Base Module (Certificate Course), Diploma Module & Degree Module Courses in Technology streams and also Degree Module course in Forestry. Last date for application is 7th March.

2. MGIMS: Last date for applying for MBBS course at Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Science is 18th March. Entrance test would be held on 17th April, the entrance examination is consists of paper of physics, chemistry and biology with multiple choice questions and Gandhian thought shall be of long and short answer type.

Scholarships Update:

King's College London offers King's India Scholarships for Indian students for pursuing their research programs at King's College London. Candidates must be due to commence an M.Phil/PhD research degree program at King's College London. Last date for applying is 29th February.

(The writer may be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)



college. Like teaching another areas where students of political science gets associated is research. Many teaching positions, particularly in the universities but also in colleges, Information Technology Institutes, Management Institution require research activities. One can do research in a variety of employment settings-in a university, institute, business or industrial firm, N.G.O. or even in the non-profit or advocacy sector. There are some premier Universities and research institutions in India which need Research Analysts/ Research Fellows/Research

ence graduates can also join the media as political correspondent/analyst/ researcher. Many students of political science after finishing their graduation and masters or post graduation prepares for examination like civil services. This is possibly the most popular choice of many political science students.

In a country like India where politics or elections are common, so there are many different opportunities for the students who studies political science. These days political parties also hire experts to make and plan election

paper of physics, chemistry and biology with multiple choice questions and Gandhian thought shall be of long and short answer type.

Writing for children not easy: Ruskin Bond

Writing for children is not an easy task as one has to get their attention from the first page itself, said legendary author Ruskin Bond. Delivering the annual Penguin lecture at Delhi recently, the 81-year-old also shared memories spanning 65 years of his writing of beautiful mountains, unrequited love, ghosts and more.

"Writing for children is not an easy task. You have to get their attention in page one itself or they will keep away the book. You got to tell the story," said Bond adding that he started writing specifically writing for children only at the age of 40. However the writer, who has more than 150 titles to his credit, said that he enjoyed writing for both adults and children.

Littered with his trade mark wit, the lecture titled 'The joy of writing' was lapped up by hundreds of Ruskin Bond fans who turned up at the Stein auditorium at India Habitatat centre. As the auditorium couldn't accommodate overflowing audience, the organisers had to arrange LCD screens outside the venue.

According to Bond, writing in India has come of age so as the publishing scene. "Publishing in India has come of age and writing too. I would say that publishers are giving good royalties. Good writers needn't go abroad to get published anymore. People can make a living out of writing," said the Kasauli born writer who has settled in Mussoorie.

Admitting that he is a lazy writer, Bond said "I don't work very hard. I take many naps a day," he laughed

Sharing tips to become a good writer, Bond advised aspiring writers that only an avid reader can turn in a good book. "A writer's job is to create magic. Books will give us not just pleasure but companionship too. The other day, when I ran out of books, I picked up an



Oxford dictionary and I found myself reading it page by page," said the author who has won multiple awards, including the Sahitya Akademi Award for English writing in India and the Padma Bhushan and the Padma Shri - India's third and fourth highest civilian honours.

Some of his books which made their way to Bollywood are "The Blue Umbrella" (of the same title), "A Flight of Pigeons ("Junoon") and Susanna's Seven Husbands ("Saat Khoon Maaf").

"I played a cameo role in Saat Khoon Maaf directed by Vishal Bhardwaj. I was clumsy and they had to go for seven takes in the scene

where I give a fatherly peck on Priyanka Chopra's cheeks. Then Bhardwaj said that I was doing it deliberately", Bond laughed.

Talking about his autobiography, he said that it is still in the process. "The autobiography might take some time. One has to stick to truth while writing it. Most of the times, you have the tendency to go off the track, but you have to pull yourself in," said the author who weaves magic with his pen. Rusty (as he is fondly called), has no intention to grow up, he said. "When people ask me this question, I tell them that may be after my 15th or 16th birthday!" as his latest Rusty adventure titled, "Rusty and the

Magic Mountain" has been released recently.

Ghoulis characters may be lurking around the corner of his cottage in Landour, but the author says his ghosts are friendly. "You can see ghosts anywhere if you want to. My ghosts are friendly. I keep seeing them, but I don't believe them. A girl once asked me to make my ghosts scarier.

And the author also revealed that writing is the biggest source of joy in life. "I enjoy being an author and writing stories, probably because that is what I have been doing the best, besides playing football. Except that at 81, I can still write but not football," he signed off. (IANS)

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, February 28, 2016

Moon trine Sun on your solar return chart indicates that this is a good time to go ahead if you are thinking of partnerships and collaborations. Having reinforced your self-belief you will move ahead with renewed confidence. Many of your ambitious projects can now be initiated. Those associated with creative fields will shine. You might be caught between some mixed happenings on the financial front and it would require a lot of effort on your part. Your academic performance and intellectual accomplishments will be exceptional and will also win you praise. Good news will raise your spirits and there would be a celebration in the family. There are all in all good times with your beloved. Journeys, outstation meetings and conferences will generate gratifying results.

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)
This period brings good results through self efforts and continuous hard work. You are committed, bold and adventurous right now and cannot tolerate delays, restrictions, or any form of authority that prevents you from behaving exactly the way that you want. Your drive for personal freedom and insistence on your rights is pressing, and a confrontation in which you have to stand up for yourself is likely. 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 is indicated. Health will take a turn for the better.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)
This is a phase that brings love, harmony and entertainment in family and personal relations. Some romantic short trips may be undertaken for pleasure. People look upon you with more respect, tolerance, and acceptance. You don't feel the need to prove yourself, and that feels good. You have the chance to shine, largely because you are projecting yourself with self-respect and modesty. This is a very self-expressive time when you have lots of energy, but not necessarily self-discipline to match. You might spend a lot of time in traveling and visiting friends and relatives. It is easier than usual to be sensible about your diet, health and fitness needs.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)
It is an excellent time for travel, higher education, communications, and higher learning. Your belief systems and personal philosophies are especially important to you, and you are more inclined to share them with those younger than you. You are in the position to inspire others through what you create. Income from foreign sources could also figure. You might be considering furthering your education and hobbies; it is a fabulous time to do so or simply broadening your knowledge in a more informal manner. Some form of pleasant result in your professional life brings rewards and recognition.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)
This phase brings fabulous results for domestic and work related matters. You are strong and masterful while turning things around in a positive direction at work. You show your responsible, managerial, ambitious, and constant side in your personal and professional relations. Avoid hasty and rash decision when it comes to change. Media and the arts involve you in creative pastimes while professional ventures and assignments bring financial stability. Sports persons also benefit from this planetary alignment as they are infused with positive energy and gain recognition for their talents and hard work.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)
You would see an increase in funds, monetary gains and you may earn from investments and insurance done earlier. Your most natural talents would meet with reward and acceptance. There will be times when you feel stressed over details or the job you do and the recognition you get for it. Travel, promotion, or publishing could also figure in your career and benefit you. You have more faith in general regarding your career and the direction in which you are headed. You will have the ability to build up financial reserves and resources, for this placement can bring a good deal of success in all monetary pursuits.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)
It is an excellent period for money, career, and romance. Cooperation and a focus on harmony and understanding benefit you professionally and enhance your reputation and public standing. Your career matters come to the fore. Feeling secure and comfortable on the job is important to you now.

You are likely to enjoy a strong feeling of happiness and solidarity in friendship and love. This is a good time for research and meditation; but do avoid being dragged down by issues that have outgrown their worth and purpose. You are physically fit and on top of things.

Libra : (September 23 - October 23)
The planetary configuration brings sincerity, cooperation and harmony in relationships. This is an excellent time in which to work on resolving differences in values or problems with joint finances in a close relationship. Old friends and close family communicate good news and remain in touch when you need to share views and feelings. Your heart is with your home and family, if you happen to be traveling, a romantic adventure may be on the cards. Income from foreign sources could also figure this time.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)
This phase brings responsibilities, seriousness and sensitivity in relations. You are bold and adventurous right now and you cannot tolerate delays, restrictions, or any form of authority that prevents you from behaving exactly the way you want. You will be needed to provide inputs and your presence may also be required at home and at work and you will have to divide your attention according to priorities. Increased public recognition and professional success characterizes this time. You give attention to fitness and health related programs.

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)
You can look forward to financial gains and profits from business. This would be a time of achievement, career advancement, and success in business. Work-related travel and reaching out to more people is possible now. There could be a promotion or new job opportunities. Recognition is likely to come your way whether you ask for it or not, and the responsibility that comes right along with it. Do what you feel is right, keeping in mind that you are at your most visible during this period. You might also enjoy analyzing different health or nutrition programs. It's a great time to make improvements to your regular routines.

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)
The planetary position brings excellent opportunities for love and fun. A love affair may become a little more serious. Spending time with someone special is a focus. You pour more energy into self-promotion or business activities. It's a good time to work out money problems or other issues of sharing with a partner. You tend to be expansive and generous when it comes to love. An event may occur that expands your career or professional interests, and you derive more pleasure from these activities. More freedom is likely to be experienced in your career. This is an especially spiritual time for you—a time when you renew your energy and consider what things are important to you.

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)
Your popularity increases as you cooperate and harmonize at work and home. Taking care of business is a focus. You need the energies, companionship, and support of other people, and they may also seek out your support and companionship. It's important to include others rather than to go solo for the time being. Teamwork would yield better results. You need to be on the lookout for opportunities that come your way. You must be clear and precise when dealing with competition or in the face of opposition.

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)
You are patient, laborious and clever with material aspects and manage finances and business ventures with ingenuity and success. Showing your authority and a take charge attitude is important now, but gentleness is important as well. If you feel you're stuck in the same old routine, do yourself a favor and plug into your interests. You may begin to take on more responsibilities on the job front or participate in social work. Your job could become rather tedious and boring, or working conditions may be demanding, or frustrating. This is an excellent period under which you bring more harmony and pleasant interactions in your relationships with loved ones. Spending time in solitude among natural surroundings is therapeutic.

Rajasthan: High on Art

(Contd from P-VI) 18th centuries developed in principality of Mewar. The works of the school are characterized by simple bright colour and direct emotional appeal. An increasing number of paintings were concerned with portraiture and the life of the ruler, though religious themes continued to be popular.

The two smaller stations in Jaipur are also being done up with paintings of traditional Rajasthani Puppets and the Jaipur skyline.

Even one of Jaipur's new Metro stations, Mansarovar got a new 200 feet graffiti wall, replete with the city's landmarks and all cultural icons that makes the city unique like puppets, mandna, elephants, festivals like Navratra, Gangaur, folk art and others.

Next in line is the Ajmer station which will see secular calligraphy, typical of the city of Dargah Sharif while Bharatpur, the haven for birds is to be done up around the theme of birds and Kota station with stylised vegetation typical of the Bundi School of Art.

Bundi painting, an important form of miniature painting lasted from the 17th to the end of the 19th century in the princely state of Bundi and its neighbouring principality of Kota. The earliest examples show Rajasthani features, particularly in the depiction of men and women, but Mughal influence is exceptionally strong. The Bundi school is characterized by a fondness for lush vegetation, dramatic night skies, a distinctive way of depicting water by light swirls against a dark background and vivid movement.

Raje, who hails from the Gwalior royal family and was married into the Dholpur royals, devotes considerable time on decking up her state with unique ideas, beginning with cleaning and beautifying Jaipur and other cities by planting flowering plants, placing huge potted plants on the main thoroughfares, widening traffic logjams, straightening, sheltering roads around religious places for devotees.

There is evidence that art flourished in Rajasthan as early as 2nd-1st centuries BC and continued over the centuries. In Baroli in Hadoti region, presence of several sculptures proves that a regular art school existed in the 10th century. The cave paintings, terracotta and other stone sculptures excavated at different sites corroborate this.

Each period of Rajasthan's history witnessed its own contribution to the thriving art scene. History of Rajasthan reveals that the kings and their nobles were great patrons of arts and crafts and they encouraged their craftsmen in activities ranging from wood and marble carving to weaving, pottery and painting.

Art seems to have been an obsession with the inhabitants of this parched landscape. The desire to decorate their insipid surroundings was very strong. Nothing was overlooked. Animals from the regal elephant to the lowly donkey, the great palaces and the inner chambers of forbidding forts were decorated with as much attention as were the walls of humble mud huts.

The people also wanted to look their best when it came to adorning themselves. It was not only the women who beautified themselves, the heroic warriors extended equal attention to their clothing and armour. They went into battles with meticulously ornamented swords and shields. The horses and elephants that took the warriors to battles received the same care, jewelled saddles and intricate silver howdas were just some of the ornaments that were used to adorn them.

For women, there was infinite variety tie and dye fabrics, embroidered garments, enamel jewellery in-layed with precious and semi-precious stones, leather jootis. They put their lives indoors to good use by decorating the walls of their mud-huts with painted geometric designs and simple ones like flowers and birds. Also women painted intricate patterns on tiles. Outdoors they used straw and twine to turn into the most beautiful items.

When the Rajputs came to dominate this region, it was a period of constant strife. They were almost always in battle with their neighbouring kingdoms. When a kingdom fell and a new ruler took over, it was time for changing paintings depicting the new rulers victory, scenes from the battle and processions of the victorious march were faithfully reproduced on the walls and handmade paper.

Other than the paintings, the new rulers also influenced the existing crafts of that area. Despite their love for the battlefield, the Rajputs have been patrons of art. Their 350 years of contact with the Mughals led to a very strong influence on their lives and arts. Quite a few folk arts received the refinement and delicacy of the Mughal courts. They borrowed freely from the Agra and Delhi courts and in some cases, also sent their skilled craftsmen to adorn the Mughal courts.

Not just art junctions across its various cities, Rajasthan also unveiled its new tourism logo recently in January this year. With an objective to double the annual footfall of international tourists from 1.5 million to 3 million by the year 2020 and increase domestic visits from 33 million to 50 million tourists on an annual basis, the new campaign also focuses on the lesser known destinations of the state, till now relatively undiscovered and to tell its tourists that Rajasthan is no longer a one season destination but a year round travel delight. The domestic tourist inflow in Rajasthan increased by eight percent last year in the previous 2014.

So next time, tourists visit Rajasthan, don't forget to go on the colourful, cheery, street art trails. (TWF)



“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”
— Soren Kierkegaard

The Shillong Times

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Education that stifles creativity

EVERY parent shudders to see the kind of education imparted to their wards. If we talk about a free and liberal space in institutions of higher learning, at the primary, middle and high school level cramming and conformism is the order of the day. So how can students articulate their hopes, aspirations and dreams if these have been stifled in their early and formative years? Those students who step out and try to be different are marked as trouble makers. There is no space for creative thinking or expression of original ideas. Everything is bookish. The students are not encouraged to bring to bear their grasp of the outside world into the classroom. Similarly, they don't know enough to apply the lessons learnt in the classroom to the world outside the campus. The insistence on scoring high marks rather than problem solving has turned education into a humdrum activity. Most students drag their feet to school. Many are paranoid about being reviled for not knowing their lessons or completing their homework. Parents too are burdened by the load of homework which deprives their child of his/her play time. Is this really the meaning of education?

But who will take a call on revisiting the pedagogy adopted thus far. What is the nature of education being peddled in our schools? How motivated are our teachers? Often we confuse education with schooling. What most teachers do is not something we can call education. Blame it on the system or the syllabus but teachers are pushed, into 'schooling' by trying to drill learning into people according to some plan often drawn up by others. Paulo Freire (1972) famously called this 'banking' – making deposits of knowledge into a student's head without drawing out his corpus of wisdom. This quickly descends into treating learners like objects, things to be acted upon rather than people to be related to. Educators draw out the best in the child, encouraging and giving time to discovery. It is an intentional act. At the same time it is, as John Dewey put it, a social process – 'a process of living and not a preparation for future living'.

A true educator brings out grace and wholeness in the learner by identifying his/her unique gifts. As Pestalozzi constantly affirmed, education is rooted in human nature; it is a matter of head, hand and heart. The learner only finds meaning and purpose in life 'through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to spiritual values such as compassion and peace. In short, to educate is to set out to create and sustain informed, hopeful and respectful environments where learning can flourish. It is concerned not just with knowing about things, but also with changing ourselves and the world we live in. As such education is a deeply practical activity – something that we can do for ourselves (what we could call self-education), and with others. Not everyone is therefore called to this noble task because it involves both passion and sacrifice both of which are lacking in many who take to the teaching profession today.

LOOKING BACK

Jan 31, 1989

Amarnath, Sidhu eligible for selection

Navjot Singh Sidhu, implicated in a murder case, is eligible for selection to the Indian cricket team.

This was revealed here today by Mr. Ranbir Singh Mahendru, Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India. Mr. Mahendru told reports after the meeting of the selection committee to select the India captain that under the Criminal Procedure Code Sidhu was eligible for selection since he had granted bail. However he would have to seek the court's permission to leave the country after selection. It would be known only on the basis of the court's decision whether he could leave the shores of the country, Mr. Mahendru said.

Vengsarkar Indian skipper for W. Indies tour

Dilip Vengsarkar has been retained as skipper of the Indian cricket team for the West Indies tour commencing next month.

The decision to name Vengsarkar as skipper was unanimous one. According to Mr. Ranbir Singh, secretary of the BCCI, who announced the decision to the press, no other name was considered.

All the five national selectors were present at the meeting chaired by Mr. Rajsinh Dungarpur.

The Real Nongshohnoh

By HH Mohrmen

It's that time of the year again, when the gusty wind blows on the rolling green hills and there is dryness everywhere. The sky and everything around it is grey; the earth is waiting for the first rain to help it rejuvenate again. The downpour that will help trees grow new leaves and bring new buds and the warm weather which make birds start chirping around the forest is eagerly awaited. According to the local lore this is also the time of the year when u Thlen's (serpent) thirst for human blood is at its height and the keepers know that they must some way or the other try to quench its thirst. The nongri Thlen (keepers of the thlen) know that if they cannot feed or provide the serpent with blood then they will be in trouble so they hire the nongshohnoh to do the job.

The nongshohnoh were given some (khoodyp) magic rice, pipe like apparatus, and a scissor. When we were kids we were told that they even carry a gunny bag with them. I don't know if the gunny bag is simply used to scare kids from venturing away from our homes, but it is something we believed that nongshohnoh carried with them. It is said that nongshohnoh can either be woman or man, hired by the keeper to help them feed the serpent. There were several methods that nongshohnoh uses to attack the victim. The most dreaded method was to use certain apparatus to extract blood from the victim's body parts, usually from the nostrils. After the blood is drained, the victim is then left in a secluded place to die. In fact that is also why the name nongshohnoh was given to those believed to practice in the craft. Nongshohnoh can also throw magic rice on the victim and the spell will have an effect on the victim and enable the nongshohnoh to do whatever he likes with him. The other method use is to cut few strands of hair from the unsuspecting victim especially kids and offer the same to the Thlen. The Thlen will then cause sickness to the victim and if

proper care is not taken the victim will even lose his life. Instead of strand of hair, the nongshohnoh can also cut pieces of cloth and the same is offered to the Thlen and the victim is believed to suffer till he or she dies a slow death.

From the context of the Pnar people only the Khyntiam (Khasis) keep the Thlen. There is no account of any Pnar family keeping Thlen. The Pnar even have a kind of a derogatory term of calling the people from Khasi hills 'ki khyntiam chohnoh.' And also there is no story of ki Khyntiam keeping the Taro another belief where the keepers of this can cause harm to a person they wish to. The Pnars are always blamed to be the keepers of the Taro. Only 'ka bih' or 'kymbad' as it is known in Pnar is common to both the Khasis and Pnars.

I will save the readers of this column the long story of the origin of u Thlen and how the supernatural serpent came to dwell in the home and hearth of humans but would rather look at the story from a different angle. Like any other etiological stories in the world, the account about u Thlen is not meant to be taken literally, but instead only what it represents. Rather than taking the story in letter and spirit, we should look at something more profound – the hidden message behind the myth.

U Thlen is a story about greed which knows no bounds and which can make a devil out of a man. It is a story of how a person who worships or holds greed in high esteem can go to any extent to achieve his goal, even if it means taking a human life.

The time is here again when the rumour mongers start spreading wild stories of nongshohnoh roaming around the village and kids are advised not to venture out. Everywhere the community becomes extra vigilant and organises night vigil to keep the nongshohnoh away. Rumours spread thick and fast and sometimes unsub-

stantiated stories are reported in the press to create more fear in the society. In Jaintia hills a family was recently attacked by a mob and the husband unfortunately lost his life while his wife is still in a critical condition in the hospital. Another story that was reported based on a FIR lodged with the police was that a Tata Sumo vehicle was lurking around the village near Jowai and the FIR even mentioned the registration number of the vehicle. But after the news was reported the owner of the vehicle came to complain that the car with the registration number mentioned in the FIR belonged to him and that it is not a Sumo but a Bolero. He also stated that he was nowhere near the village when the incident occurred.

The story about nongshohnoh lurking around the village does the rounds every now and again but have we been able to catch even one real nongshohnoh? In a village I visited recently a man narrated an incident when a nongshohnoh was caught by the community and they have even confiscated a bottle containing blood, a pair of scissors and what not from him. When I confronted him and asked him the specific location where they nabbed the nongshohnoh, he said he didn't know the exact place because he overheard the story in a tea shop. This is how rumours are spread and we are party to the crime if we continue to spread the rumours without confirming the story. Instead of stories of the nongshohnoh being caught, what we have repeatedly read in the newspapers is the unfortunate loss of life when mobs attack a person suspected one. I wish this would be the last time that a mob will lynch people suspected to be nongshohnoh, but we know this is not going to happen. Few years ago we lost many precious lives in the name of the Nongshohnoh. All were cases of mob attacks on suspected nongshohnoh in Smit and Wahiajer to

name few cases. There was no evidence to prove that those killed were Nongshohnoh. But there is also a nagging question as to how the village dorbar remains a mute spectator in the entire episode.

The other pertinent question that needs to be asked is, how can a mob attack anyone or how can anything happen in the village without the knowledge of the dorbar shngong or the Rangbah Shngong. The Rangbah Shngong cannot feign ignorance of what happens in the village, so it is fair to conclude then that a mob attack can only happen with the tacit support of the Rangbah Shngong?

I love traditions but I am not a traditionalist (to borrow from Rudi Warjri's article Dorbar Shngong! Is it a sustainable institution? ST Tuesday February 23, 2016). Traditions are important only if they are not detrimental to the progress of the society. Still there some traditions which are like heirlooms; they are only meant as keepsakes. Traditions are necessary as long as they are relevant and are not static or that resist change. We should welcome change if need be. We should also be open to new insights and understanding of our tradition. I also believe that traditions and stories that are woven around them are open to new interpretations if they are to continue to be relevant to the contemporary society. Stories will have meaning only when we can tell them as we are given to understand them. After all many stories and narratives have lost their relevance in course of time. When we read stories of nongshohnoh and loss of dear lives to a mob attack the question that needs to be asked is, who the real nongshohnoh is in this case. The real nongshohnoh is not the victim lynched and killed by the mob, but the perpetrators of the crime. But what happens to those involved in these kinds of attacks? The culprits and in many cases the mob is instigated by some vested interests are always allowed to go scot-free. So where is justice? What is it about this time of the year that we associate it with u Thlen and Nongshohnoh? I wonder!

Campus unrest in the country is nothing new. In fact a Vice Chancellor was shot dead in Jadavpur University almost four decades back, if not more. There have been unrests in Calcutta University, Presidency College, colleges in Delhi, more recently in Hyderabad and Jawaharlal Nehru University. But the ominous sign is that they are getting more and more politicised: caste issues, ideological issues, loyalty to political parties, and now if it really happened, the warning signal: Anti Indian slogans. The question is why? Who are at the helm of this? Are they politicians, or someone who has got political clout.

taken up on many occasions in other rivers like the Wah Umkhrah and the Umshyri stream in Shillong. No doubt participatory annual cleaning drive of our rivers is a healthy public contribution to protect our rivers and streams but the need of the hour is to pre-empt further damage to the rivers by providing solutions that will have long lasting, favourable impacts on their quality. Otherwise we will forever face the ignominy of having to clear the ever growing filth and garbage in our rivers which in any case may become dead weights if not protected.

Some time ago this newspaper reported of prohibitory orders being imposed by the same District Administration to prevent indiscriminate activities on the Myntdu river and its banks around Jowai. The news item carried a headline portraying the Myntdu as a "dying" river and accompanied it with a photograph showing people washing vehicles in the river. Since such prohibitory orders were imposed in the past the news report would indicate that such efforts must have been breached and that too not always surreptitiously, possibly, because of poor monitoring or perhaps there is a staggered approach in applying the law. However, the difference in the prohibitory orders imposed this time is that a specific mobile number is circulated to the public to report to the District Administration for follow up action. It is now up to the people to cooperate.

While it is hoped that

Unrest in university campuses

By Ananya S Guha

There is a crisis in one of the country's leading universities. People are talking about it, writing about it and of course reading about it. Many are not sure what has happened as there are different versions and interpretations. There is talk about videos being doctored with prime television channels as they are wont to do quickly capitalizing on the happenings in JNU for some of our gullible masses to swallow. The debate by and large is sharply divided. One group is castigating an entire university known for its great teachers and social scientists? The second category also very vociferous says that all who raised anti-Indian slogans must be punished by the law, JNU or no JNU. No one is quite sure as to what exactly these slogans were, and thirdly the interpretation of the word sedition is being furiously debated.

Now this raises pertinent questions as to the functions of a university, its pivotal role in enhancing learning, research, cultural activities and enhancing the much touted teacher student relationship which has remained in India at least an arcane myth. It is very well known that college and university campuses are highly politicised. It is a known fact that many students' unions are affiliated to political parties, it is also proven that during students elections, politicians hobnob with their ring leaders openly in campuses – a practice which must be done away with. But the point is that if the teachers and Heads of Institutions openly, and shamelessly flout their political allegiances, how can the situation be different? Why blame the students only? Selections in university campuses are biased. Most of them take place after some recommendation either of a political leader, or someone who has got political clout.

Campus unrest in the country is nothing new. In fact a Vice Chancellor was shot dead in Jadavpur University almost four decades back, if not more. There have been unrests in Calcutta University, Presidency College, colleges in Delhi, more recently in Hyderabad and Jawaharlal Nehru University. But the ominous sign is that they are getting more and more politicised: caste issues, ideological issues, loyalty to political parties, and now if it really happened, the warning signal: Anti Indian slogans. The question is why? Who are at the helm of this? Are they politicians, or someone who has got political clout.

indiscriminate activities would be prevented if prohibitory orders can be consistently enforced, the encroachment of human settlements towards the river as visible upstream will pose a challenge in applying the law if alternative sites elsewhere are not available for private land owners to build their shelters. For this reason settlements at the banks of the Wah Umkhrah and its tributaries flourish since appropriate actions were not taken timely to avert such encroachments. The adverse result is there for us to see and for which we now lament. On the other hand, the farsightedness of our rulers a century ago to take over land from the people led to the establishment of the Laitkor Protected Forest and the adjoining forests near Shillong. This has paid dividends as till date these forests continue to be the source of unending water supply to localities below them and this may continue for perpetuity.

These forest areas also exude a favourable microclimate and are a source of recreation. They also give Shillong a pleasant ambience. Unfortunately such farsightedness seems to be lacking in our present generation of rulers

are they naxalites, extremists or what? Or to circumvent this, did this actually take place, or even if it did, does it reflect the mindset of students and teachers?

The teachers and students of JNU see this entire thing as a game plan to dishonour a University, where getting admission is tough, where there are eminent social scientists and thinkers, and a university which has a distinguished alumni. So a university as a whole cannot be tarnished because of that episode. But the fact is that even from last year public innuendoes were made against this university, calling it a den of iniquity and so on and so forth. This is patently unfair. Over the months this must have riled students and teachers and climaxed into something like what recently happened. We have to remember that herd mentality works in any community, religious, ethnic, and in this case the teacher student community, loosely an academic community.

The solution as I can see it lies in the extirpation of political behaviour in campuses, but this can happen only when appointments of academic staff is apolitical. And, if university campuses are made virtual battle fields to settle scores between political parties, and students join the fray, then the latter loses out most sadly. The political machinery can grab them, arrest them and make all kinds of charges against them, seditious or not seditious, as it happened in this case. A university or a college is a seat of learning, exchange of ideas may not always be acrimonious, nor should it only be, ideological 'based. Bertrand Russell proposed free thinking in universities and in abodes of learning where there is exchange of ideas (not heated). In India there is too much of heat everywhere, no point of view is unacceptable, if it is not one's own. There is no inclination to see another's point of view mostly among politicians and sadly enough among the educated and even the academics. Surely many of India's intelligentsia have not read the letters of Nehru, Vivekananda, Subhas Chandra Bose and his exchange of views with Mahatma Gandhi, or Tagore's exchange of ideas with the latter. Dissent as we are all speaking of now is fine, but dissent also means assent – to accept another's point of view, to see it, may not be necessarily to accept it. But there is no 'assent' in India, it is only acrimony, hateful revenge and sullied attacks against individuals and groups. Sad, but true.

as apparently there is no consideration to take over even twenty metres of land in vulnerable spots on both sides of important rivers and to bring such lands under protective cover for their long lasting care though the rivers are exploited for many purposes. Probably the inclination if any is fazed out by the perennial pretext of fund constraints while wasteful expenditures in a number of instances elsewhere down the years does not seem to matter.

For so long the Myntdu river is the lifeline of the people of Jowai as it is the source of drinking water, irrigation and recreation. Life for the people there centres around this river. It is terrifying therefore to visualize that one day the Myntdu river could become a "dead" river. For this not to happen, it is up to the people of Jowai to raise the power of public reasoning in elevating the issues of protecting this river well before the 2018 election. By then and at the opportune time they can pose the hard questions and seek for answers to safeguard their long term interests.

Yours etc.,
K L Tariang,
Via email

TO THE EDITOR

Future of our children

Editor,

Reference is made to the letter titled "A helpless parent's appeal" (ST 28th Feb 2016) which so vividly illustrates the anguish, pain, torment and sense of helplessness that each and every citizen feels about the state of education in Meghalaya. In a nutshell it brings to the fore the pertinent question that is on every thinking person's mind "In the name of Education, what are we doing to our children?" It's obvious that there is need to re-evaluate the strategy adopted for our school going kids. At present the focus seems to be on the quantity of education being imparted rather than the quality. To burden the student's mind rather than to liberate the thinking process seems to be end objective of our education policy.

Many conscientious teachers are not only concerned but thoroughly alarmed by what is going on. One of them told me that her school assessed her by her ability to finish a course rather than her ability to impart education. It says it all! Many parents believe that their children are getting educated when they come home loaded with home work as doing home work or going for tuition after class keeps the child out of mischief. The teacher knows best! A parent recently checked on the home work her child was doing only to find that he had been asked to copy an entire paragraph from his text book to his

rough book. Sheer stupidity! Why is the system so keen on making education such an unpleasant task for the child?

If education is to enable the individual to read and write, then no doubt Meghalaya can boast of 80% literacy. If however the end objective of education is to empower the mind; to facilitate comprehension of the world around us and to rationalise the thinking process, then we have to admit we have failed and failed miserably. Rote learning, the ability to cram for exams and to memorise whole passages can no longer be taken as being educated. The process has only managed to produce robots and zombies. We see them walking the streets everyday and we end up asking "Where is the future of this Jaibnyriew?".

Education in Meghalaya seems to suffer from two fundamental problems. The first a policy lapse wherein we have failed to identify the real objective of education. The trust has always been on the ability to access Govt jobs. Now that such jobs have become saturated, the education system followed has become redundant. It demands reassessment! Secondly administrative control of the Education Department over its multiplying constituencies has broken down. The inspection unit of the department has become overloaded with administrative red tape that they don't have time to enforce regulations, especially on

schools. Once again quantity overtakes quality!

If this generation of parents are really serious about the welfare of their children; about the quality of education they are receiving and if teachers and schools are concerned over the system of education they are imparting, then the time for all stakeholders to get together has come. Time to hold seminars, panel discussions, debates and workshops; time to engage with the Govt (not confront) on this important aspect of our children's future. The author and ICARE are willing to spearhead such a movement. The revolution however will depend on the involvement of stakeholders, the parents, the teachers, the Govt, the educational experts and everyone who is concerned. Citizens are requested to come up and express, in whichever way they can, their views and opinions on the subject.

Yours etc.,
Toki Blah
(President, ICARE)
Contact toki@neline.com

Can we retrieve our rivers?

Editor,

The Shillong Times (Feb 22, 2016) came up with a coloured photograph with a caption depicting school children and other participants engaging in a cleaning drive of the Myntdu river in West Jaintia Hills Districts. This was done at the initiative of the District Administration. This is to be appreciated. However, such initiatives have been