

"Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please."

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 52 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2016

Across the Border

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi had advised against precipitate action against Pakistan to avenge the Uri outrage. But he did not mean inactivity. Indian commandos attacked terror launch pads across the LOC. In its Islamabad declaration of January 2004 Pakistan had promised that no territory held by it would be allowed to support the terror infrastructure. But that commitment has been repeatedly violated. The LOC has harboured terrorism causing incursions into India a number of times last year. New Delhi had requested Pakistan to cooperate in investigations into such terror attacks. But the Pakistani government always supported and facilitated the terror infrastructure. On a number of occasions, blood spilled with Indian soldiers and civilians getting killed. India is fully justified in hitting the terror launch pads. The recent strikes are only of a surgical nature. The Modi government had taken initiatives to clarify its peaceful stance. It carried out only a diplomatic war. Pakistan has been isolated as India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Bhutan have boycotted the SAARC summit which was scheduled to be held in Islamabad. Meetings of the Indus Water Commission have been deferred until the clouds of terror have lifted. At the same time Modi made it abundantly clear that his country was prepared to do its best to maintain friendly relations with Pakistan.

This is an occasion for the Opposition political parties to rally round the Modi government. Political analysts support India's surgical operations across the LOC. It is high time that New Delhi met the persistent terror challenge. The Kargil war was one but Pakistan retaliated with frequent pin pricks. First came the IC-814 hijacking, then the orchestrated release of terrorists like Masood Azhar who formed Jaish-e-Mohammed. It is also possible that Pakistan will incite anti-Indian terror cells on Indian soil. The diplomatic campaign is fine but India also has to keep its powder dry. Of course the recent attack across the LOC may lead Pakistan to strike back. If it does not, peace may dawn and relations between India and Pakistan might be normalised.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Centre to appoint Commissioner for Women's Rights

A commissioner for rights of women will be appointed to ensure, among other things, timely action in cases of the atrocities against women. Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi announced in the Rajya Sabha today.

Steps would also be taken to provide reservation for women on important institutions like the Planning Commission and the Union Public Service Commission. The state would also be advised to do so.

He said efforts would also be made to give 30 percent reservation to women in local bodies.

Mr. Gandhi listed various other measures for the uplift of women while intervening in a four day discussion in the Rajya Sabha on the motion of thanks on President's address to the joint session of Parliament.

Khan Choudhury denies plan to quit Congress(I)

West Bengal PCC(I) president Mr A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury today denied a report that he might quit his post and asserted "Under no circumstances I am going to leave Congress. Reacting sharply to a report appearing in a Delhi based daily, Mr Khan Choudhury said it was "absolutely a baseless story" floated by some opposition people, who liked him to leave the Congress. Mr Khan Choudhury said he had received telephone calls from

the party high command and his admirers in regard to the report. Mr Khan Choudhury said "I am in the Congress not for any personal gains, adding "only my death can separate me from the party." He said opposition people had a "peculiar method" of circulating "many lies". He described the report about him as "distorted and motivated."

Rushdie's effigy burnt

Agartala : An effigy of India-born British writer Salman Rushdie was burnt at Kailasahar in North Tripura district yesterday a report here today said. Nearly 5,000 people witnessed the incident organized to protest the author's controversial book "Satanic Verses" the report said.

Assam refused to undertake flood control work

The Assam Government had refused to undertake maintenance work relating to the Brahmaputra flood control scheme despite the centre's offer to foot the bill, Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi informed the Rajya Sabha today. Intervening in the question hour, Mr Gandhi explained that during his recent visit the Assam Government had demanded 20,000 crore to Rs. 30,000 crore to execute flood control measures to prevent recurrence of natural calamities. UNI

Social reforms: A distant reality for Meghalaya

By Michael Makri

The recent shuffling of ministerial posts by the Chief Minister and the various allegations brought about by the opposition party on various issues are not going to bring out masses of the poor to take sides. To them, the turmoil is a power struggle within the leadership class and it distracts from the central issue in our society - poverty and inequalities.

There is an elephant in the room and the 'competing powers' are too preoccupied with the part of the truth in front of them to see the reality of the whole. In the process, many matters of more urgent priority to the poor are being neglected; the latest being the rising crime rates in the state, which still happen despite the fact that the police department are doing all that they could.

The 2013 election put the oldest and the most experienced political party at the helm of government, with the promise to make the big decisions for the big changes that the people really want. To the poor, it was the dawning of a new day. That new day remains a promise. The task now is no less important - liberation from the yoke of poverty that will make democracy more meaningful to the citizen especially the poor. It is not only guns that kill. Poverty kills. It is slow death from hunger; from diseases that we thought no longer existed, from the loneliness of a life with an empty future. It is also the dying of dignity. Three years since that election, where are we on that promise? If a survey is conducted, no doubt the family of those in

government offices will show that the rate of poverty went down. But, taking the State as a whole, our poverty scale has risen.

Inequality has not changed since decades. The top one percent of families has an income equal to the income of the bottom 99 percent. Studies show that there is very little of a middle class in the State. This means that most of the 99 percent are also poor. I have not seen reports of our State economic growth although our CM is constantly on foreign trips. History has not been kind to our poor, has it? We are a state of two worlds. The world of the few, with gated areas, with access to superior education, a health care system enjoyed by first world citizens, private multistoried housing and leisure areas, and the money to control our politics and policies; and the world of the majority, with urban sheds and rural huts, inferior public schools, playgrounds that double as public streets and highways, poorly equipped and poorly manned public-health centers and marginal access to public office.

What is worse, our society is still feudalistic, dominated by a leadership class that rotates among themselves the steering of power through changes in administration. This one percent of families makes the laws, dispense justice, and implement programs according to their whims and fancy. The good people among them go to church, participate in community projects and donate to charities. They sincerely think that using their power and influence to advance self-interest is part of the

dynamics of democracy. Sadly, however, they miss the point. There is nothing wrong with wealth and power, and special connections, but there is something very wrong about using them to worsen the already gaping inequalities or to deny or delay justice to the 99 percent in society. That is the root of our problem. And we know this must change. The widespread perception that real power is not with the people is enough for them to distrust government and make it even harder to govern. We encounter that phenomenon every day. People engage in corruption because everybody else does it. People violate simple traffic rules because no one is obeying them anyway. And we know this must change.

We can cut away the branches of a tree of evil but it will keep on growing until we strike at its roots. Every political party has an agenda for change - growth with equity, an inclusive growth. But, as far as my knowledge goes, none of them have produced the desired results. Is this because no administration has the political will to implement these agendas or because these agendas do not strike at the roots but only at the branches? The poor might have no platforms to express themselves either in the Assemblies or in Press Clubs like the one percent is doing it. But for those having human feelings, their conditions for survival should be the only platform. It is true that few programs for the poor have been initiated by the CM. But the poor are saying, the programs are not reaching them, or improving their lives. Then, what is the point of the

fisheries scheme or the various other schemes?

Are the one percent rich and the powerful willing to accept the challenges of change? The challenge to speak out on specific cases simply because justice demands it! The challenge to disallow projects that 'socialize costs and privatize benefits,' (as Paul Krugman, would call it) such as mining and deforestation the biggest problem cited in Jaintia Hills, Khasi Hills and Garo Hills - where social divisions through the wrong use of money is created. The challenge to Church, business and political leaders to commit their social power and political capital to promote the agenda of the poor, even when it is against their own interests! And finally the challenge of a vision of a society finally rid of feudalism.

These are difficult demands that the poor ask of those who have the wealth and the power to reduce their greed and consumerism for the common good. But that is what is needed to help destroy the roots that feed the branches that kill rather than sustain life. The stakes are high. We are engaged not only in fighting poverty but also in saving our State's democracy. And until the two worlds around us become one; until we do away with the contradictions in our society, and in the words of Michael Sandel in his book, 'Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?' Until there is a larger purpose to what we do, when citizens finally bring the habits of the heart to public life and find a way to cultivate civic virtue, we cannot speak of unity and of ourselves as one State.

Kingdoms of Swachcha Tiny States Show The way

By Insaf

On the second anniversary of India's Swachcha Bharat Abhiyan tomorrow Prime Minister Modi has much to be pleased about. Two tiny States Sikkim and Himachal have put to shame their larger brethren by notching up the title of being the Kingdoms of Swachcha. Pertinently, both have the maximum percentage of villages that are 'open defecation free'. Surprisingly, three cities in drought-hit Karnataka coastal Mangaluru, Udipi and Mysore too boast of similar credentials. Sikkim topped with all its four districts being squeaky clean followed by Himachal with a score card of 55.95 per cent. Other better performing States with village level achievements are again small Haryana and Meghalaya with 41 per cent each, Gujarat 37.58 per cent, Chhattisgarh 24.91 per cent and Rajasthan 23.83 per cent. In fact, Mysore has topped the list of clean cities since this Abhiyan started and with Mangaluru snapping at its heels. On the household toilet front Kerala leads with 19.92 per cent. However, performances of other States have been abysmal. The less said the better of Kejriwal's Delhi which perhaps will go down as the filthiest Capital in the throes of Dengue and Chikungunya.

This is not all. The BIMARU States: Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh seem to have turned a new leaf and are the torch bearers of urban municipal reforms. A finding

if there is no money in the State exchequer how can I implement your pay hike, seems to have worked magic.

Rampant Power Theft In Punjab

Amidst the power tussle in the run-up to the State Assembly poll in Punjab, power of a different kind has tripped many senior Akali leaders. Scandalously, the State has lost over Rs.880 crores in two years due to electricity thefts in areas under the control of the ruling Akali Dal legislators. Worse, the constituencies of the State's First Family Badals' have reported the biggest losses. Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal's constituency suffered around 32 per cent distribution loss much higher than the State's average of 12.71 per cent and Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir's area too reported a loss of 31 per cent. More shocking is that bureaucrats are refusing to take action against SAD leaders indulging in power thefts given that an enforcement team was assaulted and locked up in State Finance Minister Majithia's constituency but no FIR was registered. Predictably, this has added fodder to SAD's political rivals specially the Aam Aadmi Party and Congress. Additionally, the BJP too is red in the face over cutting a sorry figure when it comes to promoting the NDA Government's radical power sector reforms with an aim of lightening every home in

The State Government plans to rationalise posts in each department by merging unnecessary jobs. Towards that end, the Administration intends increasing the use of technology thereby reducing the dependence on manual labour.

by the Union Urban Development Ministry after 23 States and Union Territories submitted their claims for 436 of the 500 cities covered under the renewal mission, AMRUT. It was found that these four States topped the charts vis-a-vis e-governance, double entry accounting, water and energy audit and 90 per cent collection of municipal taxes and user charges. The icing on the cake for these States is a reward of Rs.400 crores under the aegis of the Indian Sanitation Event. Also, UP's Lucknow, Allahabad and Mathura, Madhya Pradesh's Raipur and Dewas alongwith Chandigarh, Surat, Thiruvananthapuram, Vijayawada, Aizwal and Cuttack showed a collection of 90 per cent in municipal taxes. Add to this Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat topped the clean chart among big States as best performers. The competition for betterment continues.

Rajasthan For Belt Tightening

Tighten your belt is the clarion call resounding in Rajasthan wherein Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje has cracked the whip in the face of an acute revenue deficit and a Rs.10,000 crores burden of the seventh pay commission. The State Government plans to rationalise posts in each department by merging unnecessary jobs. Towards that end, the Administration intends increasing the use of technology thereby reducing the dependence on manual labour. Undeniably, these measures will not only help reduce the bulging salary bill but would also make cash available for schemes for people's betterment. But this is easier said than done given that the bureaucracy is not willing to eliminate posts, instead they would like additional personnel. However, crippled by a revenue shortfall of over Rs.15,000 crores the Chief Minister refuses to play ball with her officials. Her mantra:

the country by 2019. It remains to be seen how it will cover up this loss of power!

Jobs Not Azadi In Kashmir

There is a ray of new hope in strife torn Kashmir. With the valley's youth preferring police jobs to stone pelting and cries of Azadi. Boasting of high unemployment and sloganeering not putting food on their tables the harsh reality of life has led youngsters to line up for jobs to improve their prospects. Many of the slogan shouters have applied for post of Special Police Officer, a temporary position with a start-up salary of Rs. 5,000. So far over 26,000 youth have applied for jobs in the Kashmir Police Force even as the Government weeds out hardcore processionists students. The State Government has its fingers crossed that this is the first break through in the violence which has gripped the State in its vicious tentacles. Will a desire for jobs banish cries for azadi.

Kerala Politicos Kill Dogs

After the hullabaloo over the carcasses of cows in Gujarat and UP, Kerala is in the eye of a novella storm by its politicians showcasing and parading the carcasses of stray dogs. This comes on the heels of the death of a woman after she suffered dog bite last week alongwith another old lady being devoured by stray canines in Capital Thiruvananthapuram. Led by the DGP Kozhikode angry workers of the Youth Front (Mani) killed ten dogs and took out a rally in Kottayam even as Union Women's Minister and dog lover Maneka Gandhi cried foul. Till date this year over 51,000 people have been bitten by dogs and four deaths have been reported. According to the Youth Front President should dogs take precedence over humans? All eyes are on how Kerala deals with the canine menace! ---INFA

TO THE EDITOR

The much needed strike!

Editor,
My heartfelt gratitude goes to our soldiers in the Indian Army and Indian Air Force for carrying out the successful surgical operation across the Line of Control (LOC) in Jammu and Kashmir. It was a much needed operation to teach these Islamic terrorists across the border and the terror state of Pakistan, a lesson or two. This is a strong message sent by India to its hostile neighbor that it will no longer be cowed down by such acts of terror. I am no supporter of any political party but I will not fail myself from acknowledging our Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The terrorists and the terror state across the border have taken our country for granted as if we are unable to reply and have misjudged our patience. But it is a case of our sovereignty and when that is challenged than a nation has every right to defend itself. Had Sonia Gandhi's remote control puppet Dr Manmohan Singh still been the Prime Minister, we would have only seen some spineless diplomatic talking and urging, whereas Modi has done what he said recently that he would never forget this attack and the perpetrators would be punished. And rightly so they were punished in their own den.

In the aftermath of the Uri attack expectations were high that this government would act decisively which it has with this surgical operation. No other government I can bet would have ever thought

of taking such an action at least in the volatile Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). I am sure that the family members of the 18 soldiers who were martyred in the Uri attack will find much fulfillment from this operation although loss of human life is irreparable. Undoubtedly only a charismatic leader can effect changes. This Kashmir issue would have never bled our country incessantly had it been dealt with strongly by the weak-kneed Jawaharlal Nehru. The Himalayan blunder that the Congress government under Nehru had inflicted on this nation and its people will never be forgiven. Frankly, this country would have been better off without Nehru at the helm of all affairs, post independence.

Yours etc...
PK Dwivedi
Shillong - 1

Congrats Indian army!

Editor,
The well-planned and carefully orchestrated surgical strike deep inside Pakistan Occupied Kashmir by Special Forces of the Indian Army is a well-deserved honour to be given to our men and women in uniform who have dedicated themselves to the task of protecting the integrity and sovereignty of this nation. Pakistan has been left licking it's wounds after the surgical strike and moreover being sidelined by major Western countries at the UN and particularly the US. History of strategic restraint is old hat that the Congress government had adopted. That is over and done with. With the current dispensation of the NDA at Delhi things are going to change for India in this geopolitical map of Asia and

its neighbours.

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

Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein
Via email

Need to isolate Pakistan!

Editor
I strongly support the grand proposition made by the Indian National Congress to call a special session of the Indian parliament and to discuss security issues threatening the integrity of the nation and to declare Pakistan as a Terrorist State. India needs to do that immediately before other major global forces consider doing the same and placing strong economic sanctions against Pakistan for supporting, funding and coordinating cross-border terrorism and other covert operations against India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Bangladesh and Afghanistan also need to do the same to isolate Pakistan which is the hub of global terrorism and is a constant threat to the peace, stability and economic prosperity of South Asia. All the countries in this region need to unite and fight against cross-border terrorism sponsored by Pakistan.

The US Congress has already tabled a bill on declaring Pakistan as a Terrorist Nation, India cannot lag behind in this significant initiative for global isolation of Pakistan.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu,
Lethbridge AB Canada
T1J4B3

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.

NE Musical Euphoria Grips India

By Azera Parveen Rahman

A delicious line-up of music and cultural festivals are enchanting visitors from across the country and abroad to different parts of the beautiful northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. Revealing the little-known facets of myriad cultural heritage and offering the perfect stage of pristine natural beauty, the festivals are becoming a must-do on music lovers' itineraries.

Already underway in Arunachal Pradesh is the Ziro Festival of Music (September 22-25). Tucked away in a discreet part of the country, amid lush hills and rolling paddy fields, is Ziro — the perfect setting for notes to flow unhindered. In its fifth edition this year, the festival has garnered a lot of enthusiasm and is already one of the most looked-forward to events in the country.

Lubna Shaheen, who has been closely associated with the Ziro Festival since its inception in 2012, says conceptually the festival aims to create a space where there is a synergy between the North East and the rest of the country. "And in these five years, this is what exactly has happened," Lubna told *The Indian Diaspora*.

The festival found its roots when, in 2011, the band, Menwhopause, who were on their maiden northeast tour, had to postpone their Itanagar gig because of a curfew. "The local promoter, Bobby Hano, then decided to take up to Ziro, where he is from. This is where Anup Kutty, the guitarist of Menwhopause, and Bobby talked about doing a festival in the valley, and the Ziro festival was born," Lubna recalled.

The band line-up sees an equal division from the North East and the rest of the country, with a few from abroad. "In 2013, we saw Lee Ranaldo and Steve Shelley of (the American rock band) Sonic Youth fame. In 2015, the Burmese rock band, Side Effect, performed, and in 2016, we will have Italian band, GramLines, and Gambian musician Kora

A delicious line-up of music & cultural festivals in northeastern states, including Meghalaya, is becoming a must-do on music lovers' itineraries. The next halt is NH7 in Shillong...



player, Dawda," she said. There will also be a theatre performance.

Vishal Sharma, a "true blue Bombay-ite", as he calls himself, is one of the many already at Ziro, camping in the open and "living the festival". "I was here last year, am here now, will be back again. This is the most awesome outdoor music festival," he said.

Following close on the heels of Ziro Festival is the Bacardi NH7 Weekender in Shillong (October 21-22). Nicknamed the 'Happiest Music Festival', this musical treat has some impressive line-up of artists and bands — Rock artist Steven Wilson (of Porcupine Tree); American alternative rock band, Vertical Horizon; Farhan (Akhtar) Live; Papon (of East India Company), Vir Das' Alien Chutney, Soulmate, to name a few. Like in Ziro, there's ample opportunity to discover the beauty of folk-fusion music here as well, right in the

pretty setting of the 'abode of the clouds'.

This is the second edition of the Weekender in Shillong. A limited number of Phase 2 season tickets are currently available. Following its first stop in Shillong, BACARDÍ NH7 Weekender will travel to Hyderabad for the first time on November 5-6 and before culminating at its home city Pune for the seventh year on December 2-4.

Last year, the festival brought Megadeth and The Wailers — generating an electrifying excitement and attracting music lovers from across the country. According to Vijay Nair, CEO of Only Much Louder (OML), which runs the festival in Shillong, was a dream destination ever since the festival started in 2010.

Nair reveals some interesting tit-bits to up the attraction quotient.

Soulmate, he says, will have an interesting set, with a choir joining them on stage to narrate the evolution of blues as a genre; Farhan Akhtar, after a long movie shoot in the North East, will debut in the festival, and Manipur-based Imphal Talkies will return after a stellar performance last year.

Come December, one of the most well-known festivals in the North East now — the Hornbill Festival — will get underway in Kohima, Nagaland.

Though it's more of a cultural festival aimed at showcasing the rich tribal heritage of the state, music plays a big part. Folk dances add splashes of colour to the festival and the Hornbill National Rock Concert in the evenings is a big attraction.

Celebrated in the first week of December every year, the Hornbill Festival takes place in the Kisama Heritage Village, about 10km from Kohima. Started in the year 2000 by the state government, this cultural



YOU FILL UP MY SENSES: After the Ziro Music Festival (top right) in Arunachal Pradesh, music enthusiasts are eagerly waiting for the Hornbill Festival (top left) in Nagaland and the NH7 Weekender in Shillong

extravaganza attracts a lot of foreign tourists.

John Staal, a Belgian, along with some of his friends, is among the many

who have booked their air tickets to be at Kohima to attend the festival. "I have been told that the festival offers you a sneak peek



This is the second edition of the Weekender in Shillong. Following its first stop in Shillong, BACARDÍ NH7 Weekender will travel to Hyderabad for the first time on November 5-6

friend from that region. So we are really enthusiastic to know more," Staal said over email.

So if you are a music lover, or a nature enthusiast; someone looking for a quaint holiday in the hills (or valley), or are simply curious about the North East, you have plenty on the menu to choose from and get drenched in an experience worth remembering.

(*The Indian Diaspora*)

New laws are silly, should go through Beta testing

A colleague asked me to be her baby's god parent but her smile faded as she watched me trying to operate a microwave.

Not my fault. There's obviously a hidden law which says "All Microwave Ovens Must Be Impossible to Turn On in a Different Way".

Hidden laws are troublesome. For example: A school recently rejected a woman who applied for a job as a Spanish teacher because she could not speak Spanish. You might think that was a reasonable decision, but the woman, Tracy Rosner, took out a lawsuit against the Miami school under an "affirmative action" law guaranteeing jobs for ethnic minorities.

"Most new laws look good on paper but cause problems in real life," said reader Alison Au, who sent me the report.

So true. I told her about the problem in Hengshui, a city in the Hebei province of China, where officials recently passed a law forcing all taxi drivers to switch to electric vehicles. This made the officials appear very forward-looking — but horrified taxi drivers since the city had no electric car charging stations.

Hengshui's taxi fleet might not be able to move, but it will look great. Citizens will have to go back to their bicycles which will be better for their health and for the

planet, so I guess the world needs more officials like these.

Meanwhile, back in the United States, a reader reports that a new law in Arizona has made it illegal for any adult to touch the private parts of anyone under 15. This sounded wise until residents realised that all the babies in the state now have to change their own nappies and give themselves baths, or their parents can be arrested.

"Olympic hopefuls", a phrase much used on TV. They are useless at sport, but there's no law against being hopeful, right?

The advantage of having a testing period is that we could try out much-needed laws which might be controversial. Case in point: There clearly needs to be a law saying that once a year, all singers need to sing in public without auto-tune. This would lead to the tragic ends of the careers of Britney Spears, Rihanna, Justin Bieber, Kesha, T-Pain, One Direction and the like. It would also mean that my children would stop talking to me. Good news upon good news.

Before I had kids, my favourite game was "rock paper scissors". This is because, as a writer, I loved the fact that this game recognised that paper should actually be classified as a powerful weapon. But now I have kids and they beat me every time, as the game shamefully penalises people who are loyal to any particular commodity.

By the way, did I mention my kids are Olympic hopefuls?

The legal sector needs to copy the system used by tech people, having a "beta" period where new laws are tried out. The official objection to this is that social engineering is evil.

I dispute this, since a great many of us already do social experiments on human beings, a technique known as "parenting". For example, since the Olympics, I have encouragingly referred to my children as

"Olympic hopefuls", a phrase much used on TV. They are useless at sport, but there's no law against being hopeful, right?

The advantage of having a testing period is that we could try out much-needed laws which might be controversial. Case in point: There clearly needs to be a law saying that once a year, all singers need to sing in public without auto-tune. This would lead to the tragic ends of the careers of Britney Spears, Rihanna, Justin Bieber, Kesha, T-Pain, One Direction and the like. It would also mean that my children would stop talking to me. Good news upon good news.

Before I had kids, my favourite game was "rock paper scissors".

This is because, as a writer, I loved the fact that this game recognised that paper should actually be classified as a powerful weapon. But now I have kids and they beat me every time, as the game shamefully penalises people who are loyal to any particular commodity.

By the way, did I mention my kids are Olympic hopefuls?

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

Jesuits to choose new superior

By Walter Fernandes

On Sunday, 226 Jesuits elected by 80 provinces across five continents will gather in Rome to begin their 36th General Congregation, what other religions call their general chapter. Forty-six of them are from the 18 administrative units of India and two of Sri Lanka and Nepal. They include Fr Arul Soosai, head of the Jesuits in the Seven Sisters.

The General Congregation that can be called their Parliament is the 36th since they were founded by Ignatius of Loyola on September 27, 1540. It is expected to last about six weeks. The delegates will give a new direction to the work of the Society of Jesus (the official name of the Jesuits) to help them face the challenges of the contemporary world. They will also elect a successor to the superior general Fr Adolfo Nicolas who has offered to resign. Till the 1960s the Jesuit General was for life. Now he may offer his resignation in case of being disabled by ailment or age but his resignation becomes effective when the delegates vote for it.

The delegates represent the world's 16,000 Jesuits, down from 36,000 in the 1960s. Today a majority of them are in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

As in the rest of the Church in the Jesuit order too, the average age in Europe and North America is over 60 years while in Asia and Africa it is in the 40s. It means that the new direction of the Society has to come from these two continents. Till the 1960s the West gave this direction. In the 1970s Latin America began to show the way through declarations such as "preferential option for the poor" at the 32nd General Congregation of 1975.

From the 1980s, South Asia has been contributing to new thinking. The demographic change itself gives this mandate to Asia, particularly South Asia that accounts for a big proportion of relatively young Jesuits. The first Jesuit, Francis Xavier, reached India in 1542 within two years after they were founded. The Jesuit Archbishop Menezes was a major actor in the events that led to the split in the St Thomas Church of Kerala.

In India, Jesuits run 50 colleges (two of them in the North East) and hundreds of high schools, many research

centres, retreat houses and social action units. In the 1950s the Government of India appointed Fr Santapau as the Director General of the Botanical Survey of India. Among those who have continued his work and Fr Cecil Saldanha with whom are identified the flora of Karnataka. The open school system owes its origin to a Jesuit, Fr Thomas Kunnunkal. The research component too is strong. Around 40 craters on the moon are named after Jesuits who discovered them, so are rivers and mountains in the US, some parts of Africa and elsewhere. They also contributed some of the best theologians within years of their foundation.

The General Congregation has to reflect on all this work in the context of the refugee crisis caused by western invasion of Iraq, Syria and Libya in order to control their petroleum. They have to discuss the environmental crisis and climate change, growing poverty amid the

consumerism of globalisation and other issues. The new superior general will have to face these challenges when he takes over from the 80-year-old Adolfo Nicolas who was elected to this post in January 2008.

Fr Nicolas, Spaniard by origin, opted for Japan while still a student preparing to be a priest. At first he served poor immigrants in a parish in Tokyo and was later appointed head of the Jesuits of Japan. In the 1980s, he became director of the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila. He was head of the Jesuits in East Asia and the Pacific till his election as superior general. In all the capacities he has kept asking Jesuits whether they are free and available to go where they are needed and has challenged them to "recover a sense of being Jesuits first" and be available for the universal mission of the Church. He hands this legacy over to the person who will take his place.

(The author is Senior Fellow at North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati)



Raising a storm at UNSC

Enam Gambhir's short and crisp reply to Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's speech on Jammu and Kashmir at the United Nations General Assembly recently raised a storm. The astute diplomat, a 2005-batch IFS officer, referred to Pakistan as "the land of Taxila, one of the greatest learning centres of ancient times, is now host to the Ivy League of terrorism." She said, "It is ironical therefore that we have seen today the preaching of human rights and ostensible support for self-determination by a country which has established itself as the global epicentre of terrorism."

After Sharif spoke about women and children being killed by India, the Indian statement reminded of the way women and children are treated in Pakistan. The young First Secretary in the Permanent Mission of India to the UNSC has since been applauded for her eloquent delivery.

Gambhir is from Delhi and was assigned on the Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran desk. After a year's sabbatical, she was assigned to the Permanent Mission of India in New York where she looks after disarmament, international security, UNSC reform and counter-terrorism issues.

~ Abhishek (Boney) Singha

Tough race ahead for top slots

By Ranjan K Baruah

Most of the students ask me about civil service examination. We are aware that civil service examination is the most prestigious. The civil service examination is a nationwide competitive examination in India conducted by the Union Public Service Commission for recruitment to various civil services of the Government of India.

As the first stage is the preliminary exam, it is being held once in a year at different exam centres. The Preliminary Examination for Civil Services is also popularly called CSAT or Civil Services Aptitude Test. CSAT is actually the second paper of General Studies that was introduced in 2011. The system was different before and it has changed now from what it was a few years back.

Before the introduction of the aptitude type there were two papers, comprising a subject and general studies that include most subjects. Through CSAT, the UPSC intended to choose suitable candidates who not only have the knowledge but also the aptitude for reasoning and analytical power.

Through CSE, efficient and dynamic individuals are selected for the following services:

- Indian Administrative Service
- Indian Foreign Service
- Indian Police Service
- Indian P&T Accounts & Finance Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Audit and Accounts Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Revenue Service (Customs and Central



- Excise), Group 'A'
- Indian Defence Accounts Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Information Service (Junior Grade), Group 'A'
- Indian Revenue Service (IT), Group 'A'
- Indian Ordnance Factories Service, Group 'A' (Assistant Works Manager, Administration)
- Indian Postal Service,

- Indian Defence Estates Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Information Service (Junior Grade), Group 'A'
- Indian Trade Service, Group A (Gr. III)
- Indian Corporate Law Service, Group A
- Armed Forces Headquarters Civil Service, Group 'B' (Section Officer's Grade)
- Delhi, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli Civil Service, Group B
- Delhi, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli Police Service, Group B
- Pondicherry Civil Service, Group B
- Pondicherry Police Service, Group 'B'

the upper age for appearing for the preliminary exam is 32. There is age relaxation for candidates belonging to Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste and also for Other Backward Classes. Age relaxation is there for physically challenged candidates.

The minimum educational qualification to appear in the exam is graduation from any recognised university. There is limited number of attempts for general students, which include six attempts. There is relaxation in attempts by reserved students like students from SC, ST or OBC categories. There is also relaxation for the physically challenged students. The exam fee is Rs 100. However, female candidates and candidates belonging to SC/ST or physically challenged category are not required to pay any examination fee. We shall publish about syllabus and pattern of questions and about preliminary exam in our forthcoming editions.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 9864055538 for any career related queries)

The number of vacancies that is filled every year varies but it is more less 1,000-1,200 every year. This number might change depending on available vacancies in various services. There are reservations for physically challenged, scheduled tribes, scheduled castes or other backward classes as fixed by the government. There has been a change in the upper age and at present



- Group 'A'
- Indian Civil Accounts Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Railway Traffic Service, Group 'A'
- Indian Railway Accounts Service, Group A
- Indian Railway Personnel Service, Group 'A'
- Post of Assistant Security Commissioner in Railway Protection Force, Group 'A'

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, October 2, 2016

Moon opposite Uranus on your solar return chart indicates satisfactory results this year. Routine matters will progress with the impetus you give. You would face some challenges and there could be delays but you will be able to overcome them. Out of the box thinking and looking at the macro picture will be beneficial. Some expenses could take you by surprise however financially you will be stable. A new understanding will enable you to get along better with your partner. Both professional and personal interactions should be enhanced to get support as and when needed. Travel will be meaningful. Energy levels may fluctuate so do take due care of your health.

'This week for you'

Aries: (March 21 - April 20):

You would express yourself with charm and grace, whether it's through what you express verbally or write. This is a cycle of completion and transition. It is a time when we need to let go of things that no longer serve their purpose, and hold on to things that have a future. You would express your sympathetic and compassionate side. The ideas you plant now, will benefit you later. Others might find you less sociable, as you are busier than ever and you focus on your activities and your needs. Still, you are outgoing and your initiative is stronger than ever. You would stand alone, take action and start fresh.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

There is perfection and beauty in emotional relationships as you come from a deep and spiritual space within to relate in a new way with your loved one. You display great skill in sports or physical activity that wins you appreciation and brings an opportunity to travel. Beware of a covetous and suspicious person around you who could cause misunderstanding in your personal relationships. Avoid being lazy and laid back as temporary gain or success in business needs to be followed up with hard work and dedication. You desire to learn and improve your practical and creative skills.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You would improve your professional and personal relations, as you express yourself in a gracious and exalted manner. There could be a change in ideas or plans, increase and decrease in finances and fluctuation in business. You can be lead away by enthusiasm unless careful inner balance is maintained. Marriage, business partnership and collaboration are strengthened through understanding and commitment. You are just fair and generous in family and professional situations. Your sense of humor takes you smoothly out of difficult situations.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

You are likely to get business and work opportunities from overseas and engage in multiple activities. You may be tempted to spend lavishly on things that make your life more comfortable and pleasant. It is a good time to organize your workplace and make it more efficient and equipped with good infrastructure. 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.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

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. Your social life will likely increase and bring you in contact with more influential, powerful and helpful people. Matters related to universities, higher education, organized religion, publishing, legal affairs, and foreign interests proceed smoothly. You would be able to see the world around you in practical terms. This is an excellent time to seek advanced training and further your education. Remember to be thankful and humble.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

This is a significant time for romantic relationships as you move ahead together. It's a great time to exert your personal influence, as you come across as especially cooperative in



Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

Socializing, romance, and stability are enhanced and in focus. Love, friendship, and relationships are emphasized. You are creative and you succeed in areas that allow you to make something beautiful, attractive, or entertaining. Any artistic or musical talent you have is more prominent. This helps you to stay on track and to meet your responsibilities. Your concern for your future is stronger than usual, and you may find that projects you start, or investments you make, will benefit you for years to come. This period brings joy, understanding and harmony in personal and professional relations.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

You may be recognized or rewarded in some way for the efforts you put forth. Because you project a more responsible and credible you, people in authority tend to be more inclined to appreciate you and recognize your work. Practical matters come into strong focus and demand attention. You would achieve success at work and complete projects through interplay of ideas and correlation of subjects since communication is your ability. You could be restless and pay occasional visits to friends and relatives.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You would have positive feelings towards religion and religious people during this phase. You have a passionate nature, although you display self-discipline with people around you. Work and relationships go through a transformation. You may be thrown by certain developments in the family and feel compelled to take a strong stand or things can go out of hand. Complications in financial matters can be expected this week. Avoid confrontations. It's also a good time to break bad habits and start a healthy living routine.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

This phase brings confidence, pleasure, involvement, and grace in personal and professional relations. This enhances excellent work opportunities for people in a creative line, marketing, media, show business, consultancy and related fields. Romantic affair and pleasure-seeking activities come into focus. Stick to your regular exercise routine and regular pattern of nutritious diet. Your confidence attracts opportunities and some of you may be promoted or your career could take a new direction.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

You would face new circumstances, changes and unfamiliar situations. A positive approach and well-spoken words would benefit and gain favors from people in authority and power. You may take up new assignments and projects that would bring creativity and innovative ideas. Your inner hopes and desires come to the fore even as you tackle your job with a realistic and practical purpose of mind. More loving and appreciative relationships with your children may also figure at this time. This is an especially spiritual time for you—a time when you renew your energy and consider the things that are important to you.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

This phase highlights friendship, romance and love in personal relations. Your thoughts turn to children, pleasures and worship during this time. The fine arts are inviting and involving as you channel your creative energy into it. A new person or opportunity leads to renewed interest in creative fields. Fresh attitudes and a new perspective are needed. You give and receive affection and love from friends and relatives. This is a good time to build your skills, get organized and attend to your health and well-being. Children do you proud.

Amazing Andaman

(Contd from last week)

Named after the marine assessor Daniel Ross, now no human settlement is permitted in this island by the authorities.

North Bay Island was next in our itinerary. Acknowledged as the coral paradise, North Bay has earned a place in the Rs 20 note of the Indian currency. Stirred profoundly by the film *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, I was impatiently looking forward to my first scuba diving experience. Besides there were options for snorkeling, glass boat riding, sea walk and other water sports activities, we opted for scuba. An experience of a life time, the sea world is a heaven in itself. The boundless blue, the variety of multihued sea fish and reefs amazed me despite the fact that breathing underwater was by no means easy and it was little freaky and one may feel claustrophobic. Yet the experience and its reminiscences will never fade. With a beam on our faces and some striking experiences on our minds we returned back to our hotel carrying some more zing and vigour for the next day's schedule.

DAY 3: The third day started a quite early. We got ready by 3.40 am and waited outside our hotel, dreadfully missing the warm cozy bed of our hotel room and at the same time the stimulation to see something new was hammering our hearts. For this trip a bus was hired by our travel agency. The bus number and time was informed to us the previous day along with the usual dos and don'ts. We were asked not to forget our ID cards. The most appreciating thing about Andaman people is their punctuality. They notified us that the bus will arrive at our hotel entrance by 3:50 am and to our sheer amazement, it did. We were the penultimate tourists for them to pick up for that day's schedule. It was a foggy crack of dawn.

The bus started and stopped with a joggle after around two hours. The tour operator got down from the bus and did the necessary paper works at a check post and then the bus started to move in a convoy because we were about to take ride through the Jarawa tribe heartland, the Jarawa Reserve Forest. We were instructed not to take photographs. It was a heart-breaking command. The flourishing green forest with wide array of flora and fauna where you can see all hues and shades of green, how can you not click a photograph, just once?

But then, like obedient students, none of us even unzipped our camera bags. It was a three-hour journey through the forest. My eyes were becoming heavy due to premature crash of sleep; still I put forth all my force and strength to keep them wide open because I was utterly tempted to see the tribal people in their natural locale, sitting on the edge



+Scuba-diving at North bay Island (above) and Radhanagar Beach, Havelock

of my seat. My husband was already dozing and I don't know when my sleep also won over me. At the jolt of our bus I woke up to see we reached Baratang, where a government ferry was waiting to go ashore. Our tickets were prearranged by our travel agent.

Jam-packed by people, the ferry started off to catch the speed boats to Lime Stone Cave from Baratang. We were provided life-jackets in the boat and as the speed boat started picking

DAY 4: The fourth day had a surprise in store for me and it was a voyage to Havelock Island via private luxury ship named 'Coastal Cruise'. My thrill knew no limits when my husband broke the news. Havelock is a quaint beauty with fair sandy beaches and verdant forests with all shades of green. It is one of the populated islands in the whole Andamans. After reaching our resort, we bathed and had a light breakfast and went to Radhanagar beach,

Then we went to see the Natural Bridge formed by a rock, best visible during low tide. After coming back from the natural bridge we decided to spend the evening in Laxmanpur beach, which was just in front of our resort. We both sat down on a log engraved as a bench for hours looking at the golden sand and the foamy water of the sea. The sun sat lazily with the hope of rising the next day, afresh, anew.

DAY 6: The whole of India was splashed in colours: blue, green, yellow, pink, red because it was the day of Holi. We were all set to return back to Port Blair that day. Before the cruise arrived, we dropped down at the Bharatpur Beach. The forever stretching sea was drenched in turquoise blue and the sun was masked with a carrot colour.

The private cruise, Makruzz, arrived and with a heavy heart we bid adieu to Neil Island and headed off to Port Blair. After reaching our hotel at Port Blair, we had our lunch and started again for the Munda Pahar beach in Chidiya Tapu (aka Bird Island).

DAY 7: *Wherever you go becomes a part of you somehow.* ~ Anita Desai

Finally, We boarded our flight to Kolkata from Veer Savarkar International Airport around 9 am and after a one-hour stopover in Kolkata, we boarded for Shillong and reached at 2pm.

Andaman is a place of no technology, no gimmick, just nature unfolding its splendour layer after layer, a spree of a lifetime. It was an experience that rejuvenated our mind and soul. I was downhearted at leaving behind such a beautiful part of the orb and at the same time the verve and spirit to start off with a further one, to a different corner of the world, was making me cheerful. A place dressed in pristine beauty of nature and offering you utmost peace and picturesque view, Andaman should be on your nature bucket list too, unarguably, before its beauty tarnishes in the peril of development.

~ Sunayana B. Goswami



up speed, the scenic beauty we came across was beyond depiction. With mangrove forests on both sides I felt like travelling through the Amazon forests.

After reaching a particular point we got down from the boat and went on feet to the limestone cave. It was about 2 km walking distance to the cave. The limestone structures, the stalactites and the stalagmites, the unusual artistic patterns of limestone in these naturally formed caves were fabulous to watch. Some parts of the cave were dim and dark inside and slippery too but were worth watching. Then we went to see the Mud Volcano or mud domes, created by natural gases, geo-exuded mud and water, mud oozing and erupting out of the small volcanoes like molten lava, a nature's marvel. Baratang is the only identified instance of mud volcano in India.

Jarawa forest, Baratang mangrove boat ride, lime stone cave and mud volcano were in our itinerary for the day 3. It was a full day trip to Baratang, which is usually not part of many travel packages but a visit missed to Baratang makes one's expedition to Andaman incomplete.

one of the magnificent beaches of Asia with pearl white sand and a dark green forest canopy. Crowned as the best beach of Asia and the seventh best in the world, Radhanagar beach can spellbind anyone. Starting from snorkeling and other water sports to elephant ride, one can spend a full day in this beautiful beach without any regret.

DAY 5: The day was reserved for a voyage to Neil Island on a government ferry. Neil Island, an elfin yet strikingly beautiful island located on the south of Andaman Islands, is popularly known as the 'Vegetable Bowl' of the archipelago. A calm serene island with lush green vegetation and white sand but deserted beaches compared to the din and bustle of Havelock, and that tranquility, quietness and easygoing tempo of life made me fall in love with Neil Island instead of Havelock. After taking a casual tour in the local markets, we went to see the Sitapur beach, a lowly occupied serene beach where one can sit and relax and forget all the worries just by looking at the sparkling water of the sea.

Living in parasitic world

(Contd from last week)

The guinea worm *Dracuncululus medinensis* larvae are ingested by water fleas, which enter humans when they drink untreated water. The stomach acid dissolves the fleas, releasing the larvae which burrow through the intestinal wall. Male and female mate with as many as 3 million embryos inside the female at one time. The female slithers down to the human foot. She pierces the skin.



Because it burns, the human dunks the foot in water which is exactly what the worm wants. The female then pokes her head out and vomits embryos from her mouth into the water. Those are eaten by fleas and the cycle starts again.

When the caterpillar's body liquefies, the ooze drips down onto other caterpillars — creating more robots.

In the California salt marshes, the fluke *Euhaplorchis californiensis* reduces the ability of its killifish host to avoid predators. It makes the fish swim close to the water surface where it can easily be swallowed by egrets, a bird the parasite needs to complete its life cycle. Uninfected fish swim far below the surface. Why do parasites modify host behaviour?

Many require several hosts of different species to complete their life cycles and have to rely on predator-

prey interactions to get from one host to another. So it is vital that they change the behaviour of infected hosts, to make transmission to other hosts more likely to occur.

Believe it or not, some people intentionally infect themselves with parasites. Patients with diseases like ulcerative colitis swallow worms in an attempt to have them clean up their insides. Could they have had their behaviour changed by parasites which already exist in their bodies?

(Concluded)
To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in

*"Be careful about reading health books.
You may die of a misprint."*

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 54

SHILLONG, MONDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2016

SAARC Summit abandoned

THE eight-member South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is an inter-governmental association established in December 1985 in Dhaka by the Governments of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka for the purpose of economic and regional development and cooperation. The 19th SAARC Summit scheduled to be held in Islamabad in November 9-10 this year has been cancelled after India used its diplomatic clout to dissuade member countries from attending it, following the attack on Indian army base at Uri in Jammu & Kashmir on September 25 by Pakistani trained terrorists which killed 18 Indian jawans. This is the second attack after Pathankot on January 2.

Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives pulled out of the Summit after the Uri strike clearly established Pakistan's involvement in attacking a member state. Only Nepal remained steadfast, perhaps due to that country's proximity with China which is an ally of Pakistan. A statement from the Pakistan Foreign Office said that the spirit of the SAARC Charter is violated when a member state casts the shadow of its bilateral problems on the multilateral forum for regional cooperation but stated that the Summit would be held at the earliest. It is unfortunate that SAARC has never really been given the thrust that is needed in what is seen as a South Asian conglomerate for better economic cooperation. But the fact that Pakistan has been consistently fomenting terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir makes a travesty of SAARC and violates its spirit. How can there be collaboration with a country that is intent on inflicting India with a thousand cuts? SAARC has therefore become a non-starter because without India playing the leading role it is almost a defunct entity. There cannot be economic cooperation with a country that is now a potential enemy. Hence India also seeks to revisit the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status on Pakistan which it had earlier granted in order to enhance trade and commerce between the two countries. At this rate it looks like SAARC is set to remain non-functional unless Pakistan mends its ways which is unlikely!

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Defence notes

Information and security

One of the tips from seniors during my initial years in Journalism was: Try to attend all the function you are invited to even if the subject is of little interest. The famous Durga Das, "Lalaji" to us himself practiced this until his last. He used to tell us that there is information in every function, and if you have the initiative, you can make a good "copy". I try to follow it, as far as possible. Last week there was an invitation from the Defence Ministry for an International Conference on Bibliographic Databases and Network. Far away from the subject, essentially for librarians and computer scientists, I attended wondering what the Defence Ministry has to do with a matter of extremely sensitive to information. Everything for them is "secret", not to be disclosed in "national interest."

The Defence Minister, Mr K C Pant in his address at the inaugural session welcomed the idea of creating information databases in his Ministry, whose Defence Scientific Information and Documentation Centre "DESIDOC" was a cosponsor of the international conference. Mr Pant said that information "plays a big role in the Defence sector and it has almost unlimited non-military applications. Developments in information technology will further revolutionise human life. It is for man to decide the end uses to which he will put these technologies. Are we going to use supercomputers and new technologies to destroy human civilization in a

nuclear war? Or are we going to use these technologies to create a more humane and caring a city in which the fruits of scientific and technological progress are with in the reach of every human being?

The Director of the DESIDOC while welcoming the delegates believed "Information is all pervasive. There is no activity where information is not required or used". The Ministry has planned a library network. It organized a Seminar on Defence Scientific Information Network (DESINET). Based on the recommendation of this seminar a network of connecting various libraries in the Ministry of Defence is being designed at the DESIDOC. It is now to be seen what information about Defence is considered "safe" to be fed into the proposed database. In this context a remark by Mr Sam Pitroda, Prime Minister's Adviser on Technology Missions, is interesting. The new information technology, he said, breaks the barriers in our system and it breaks the bureaucratic barriers. Indeed, these barriers are major irritants in developing a system which does the country a lot of good.

Information seeking on defence matters has no doubts become difficult task, even though journalists were told by the Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, at a Luceon Press Club meeting, 'try to find out and ask'.

Tourism Hotspots of Jaintia Hills

By H H Mohrmen

The week that was important because it also coincides with World Tourism Day. On this day (Sep 27) and subsequent days, many tourism-related articles were published in The Shillong Times. This should serve as an eye opener to those who continue to lobby for extractive mining that there are viable alternative livelihoods which are also sustainable in nature beyond mining.

Many communities in the state are now seeing the benefits of their area turning into a tourist attraction. In War Jaintia area of Amlarem sub division, a village like Shnongpdeng is beginning to reap the benefits of tourism. The problem is that while few villages have been able to achieve those heights other villages with the potential to attract tourists are yet to be able to develop themselves into places of tourist attraction par excellence. The good news is that many communities are now engaged in promoting their areas as places of tourist attraction.

Amlarem sub division or the War Jaintia area as the area is commonly known as is a tourist hotspot which is yet to be exploited. The entire region has the capacity to develop into a big tourist circuit if the people and the government are able to work together. The total number of villages in the sub division is 86 and being a border area, the villages in the region are located in the altitude which varies between 150 and 1200 metres above sea level which means that the area enjoys at least two climatic conditions.

The distance of Amlarem, the sub divisional headquarter is 27 kilometres from Jowai which is the district headquarter of west Jaintia hills district and the total area of the sub division is 398 square kilometres. The total population of the sub division as per 2011 census is 43,844 and the people who live here comprise the Wars, the Pnars and the Khyriams like in the village of Amtapoh. The Pnars live in the villages closer Jowai; from Demthriin to

Mupyut till Shkentalang and in Amlari village of eleka Satpator while the Wars can be found in the rest of the villages which begin from Thangbuli to Muktapur and Dawki in the border area. There are four elekas or dalloships in the War Jaintia area; they are eleka Amwi, eleka Nongtalang, Satpator and Darang and some villages although situated in War Jaintia area, fall under the jurisdiction of the eleka Jowai.

Villages closest to Jowai like Moosakhia and Samanong which have the potential to attract tourists were selected and promoted by North East Slow Food and Agro-biodiversity Society (NESFAS) as visiting villages during the last Indigenous Tera Madre (ITM). Few kilometres down on the Jowai Amlarem road also known as Jowai-Amlarem-Dawki road is the area known as Thlumuwai. To the left one can see a huge stone bridge and near the bridge there are collections of monoliths which fall in the category of resting stones (maw shong thait) on the famous royal path from Nartiang to Jaitiapur. To the right is Thlumuwai falls which till recently was abandoned due to the pollution of water from coal mining upstream. Two years after the NGT ban on mining, the quality of the water in the river is beginning to improve thereby attracting picnickers to the falls.

Travelling towards Amlarem the two villages which have the potential to attract tourists are Thangbuli and A(U)mlatkhor and the unique selling point (USP) of these villages is the fact that they are the only villages which produce smoked fish. The District administration on a convergence mode has not only been able to develop the Jarain lake nearby but the DRDA West Jaintia hills in collaboration with the Basin Development Unit (BDU) West Jaintia hills district has been able to build the capacities of those involved in the activity very quickly. Using the MNREG scheme, DRDA will fund the construction of working sheds which also include a chimney for those involved in smoked fish activity in

both the villages. This unique livelihood activity of the people in the two villages coupled with good working sheds and proper environment can also attract tourists to the area.

A large area in the Thangbuli and A/Umlatkhor village falls under the jurisdiction of the raid or the Buam clan. The area comprises a considerable track of forest land and it is also very close to the famous Krangshuri fall of Amlarem. The clan is working in tandem with the District administration to develop the area to increase footfalls to the already popular Krangshuri falls. Near the waterfall is yet another incomplete stone bridge over a small stream call U/Amjakhiah with few beautiful stone carvings which could also attract tourists. Jarain village is famous for the pitcher plant and another recently discovered rare phenomenon which could be a potential tourist attraction are the migratory birds that come to a stream which villagers term as salt water. This phenomenon attracts birds by the hundreds between the months of July and October every year.

On reaching Amlarem, if one takes a left turn and proceeds on the Amlarem Muktapur road, the next important tourist spot in the area is the Syndai village. Syndai has many caves but the most popular cave is where the ancient temple is located and it is popular because it is one of the few tourist friendly caves in the region. This cave used to be a place of worship where the priest from Nartiang would perform puja in the temple near the cave. Stories abound that in the olden days, people from Nartiang (where the temple which is believed to be one of the shakti peeth is located) would walk on foot from Nartiang to Syndai to perform puja in the cave. With proper planning this place can also be promoted as a place for adventure and religious tourism.

Syndai not only has potential for adventure and as a place for pilgrimage for Hindus from across the country, but the area is also famous for its sculptures

such as the Rupasor bathing ghat. The other sculpture is that of the elephant on the bank of the river Umpubon and near the cave and the temple is a huge sculpture of Ganesh which could also attract pilgrims to the area.

The road from Amlarem to Muktapur which is on the Bangladesh border could also be promoted as a cycling trail and it can continue till Dawki on the border road. The view of Bangladesh on this route is enchanting to say the least. Before reaching Muktapur if one takes a left turn one will reach Kharkhana village which has a tourist friendly cave recently discovered by the Meghalaya Adventurers Association. The cycling trail can also be from Amlarem to Khliehriat via Kharkhana, Borkhat and Bataw in the East Jaintia hills and another trail can be from Amlarem to Rymbai in east Jaintia hills via Pdengchak and Lechka hydro project.

From Amlarem one can take the first left and travel to Padu which is only about 11 km. Padu is famous for its treks to the many root bridges and falls but Nongbareh has the most accessible root bridge in the area. Nongbareh is also famous for the fish sanctuary which has the rare chocolate mahseer which is on the list of endangered species of fish. Further down Nongbareh village is Kudeng rim which also has a root-bridge.

The area is also rich in culture and many villages still practice the joint family system. The houses in the villages are built in a unique village planning system where houses have no fencing between them. The entire village is a thoroughfare. Nongtalang which used to celebrate Rongkhli festival is also rich in culture and tradition, but Lamin village which is a few kilometres away from Jowai- Dawki road is a repository of culture and tradition. Dawki and now Shmong is the leading light or a role model in attracting tourists to the area. One only hopes that the government along with the community will be able to exploit the potential of the area to create livelihood opportunities for the youths of the region.

Modi Flexes 56 Inches Crosses the Rubicon

By Poonam I Kaushish

It was a tumultuous week. On one hand we paid obeisance to the apostle of peace and non-violence Gandhi. On the other Prime Minister Modi radically changed the rules of the game in India's Pakistan policy post the Uri army base attack. Bluntly, the surgical strikes in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) destroying nine terrorists' launch pads and killing terrorists marked a huge strategic and tactical shift, accentuating an-eye-for-an-eye, and tooth-for-a-tooth plot. It takes two play hard ball!

Undoubtedly this measure was long overdue and round one has gone to Modi. Both domestically and internationally. Faced with a belligerent national mood encapsulated by BJP senior leader and Kashmir interlocutor Ram Madhav's "For one tooth, the complete jaw," coupled with social media awash with parodies on Modi's 56-inch chhatti and 2014 muscular election speeches, the Prime Minister was left with no space to manoeuvre.

In one fell stroke, even as Modi showcased that New Delhi had changed its mind about the risks of confronting Pakistan, he simultaneously indicated that he is no trigger-happy country yokel but a seasoned politician will aware of the omni-present nuclear threat. Towards that end his Government would continue treading with care when it comes to its Pakistan dealings. Already he has turned on the diplomatic pressure tap on Islamabad, Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj sought global help to dub Pakistan as a "terror state" and dubbed Pakistan "the Ivy League of terrorism" while emphasizing that (terrorism linked to) Pakistan is a challenge not just for India but also the rest of the world.

There is talk of rescinding the Indus Water Treaty Pact, waters are being rippled in the Arabian Sea, Pakistan's Gateway to the east with the Indian Navy carrying out fleet exercises on the Gujarat Coast, plans to make Indian skis a no-fly zone for Pakistan Airlines, there is furious drum beating of Islamabad's brutality in Baluchistan culminating in the Prime Minister challenging his counterpart to a different war, "If you have the strength, come forward to fight against poverty...let's see who wins Pakistan or India."

Underscoring this paradigm shift in its Pak policy, New Delhi made plain that past precedents were not binding on it in its dealing with recalcitrant Islamabad and its terrorists' army. This was communicated to over 25 countries. Modi's success internationally can be gauged by the firm US backing to the strikes, no condemnation along-with neighbours withdrawing from the forthcoming SAARC conference in Islamabad thereby isolating it. Undeniably, his extensive foreign tours had paid off.

After two and a half years of following the conventional beaten track of policy vis-à-vis Pakistan for, Uri made Modi realize that one could not preserve peace by exuding goodwill. This was not only silly and dangerous. But also tempts the aggressor. Thus, New Delhi highlighted two points: One, the attack was in PoK not Pakistan, two, it was a strike to annihilate the non-State terrorists and not a war against the Pakistani Army.

True, there have been surgical strikes in the past but they have been kept under wraps. Primarily because the limited aims and slow tempo of such campaigns allows both sides time for diplomatic gestures and stock-taking in the hope that some day their paths would converge on smoking the peace pipe.

South Block knows only too well a war with Pakistan would cast a shadow over India's growing economy—it's the fastest-growing big economy in the world—as well as raising international alarm. Holding out threat of

a nuclear threat is more of a deterrent as it a well established norm that since Hiroshima in 1945 technology in a unipolar world talk of nuclear war is baloney. Hence the plan to escalate this diplomatically and politically.

Pakistan has got caught between a rock and hard place. Obviously, it had no option but to deny the surgical strikes within its territory. Any admittance would tantamount to hara-kiri as it would be forced to retaliate. Also it would be construed as confession that it was actively harbouring and promoting terrorists, consequently it has been forced to distance itself from its illegitimate children. Hence the killing of its two soldiers has been ascribed to cross border firing on the LoC.

Yet, India can not let its guard down given that a hurt Islamabad might be licking its wounds but is readying to fight another day. In fact the Pak armed forces have already sharpened their knives. History tells us that after every Indian attack, Pakistan retaliates and how. Post Agra, there was Kargil, followed by Kandhar, Mumbai 26/11, hanging of Afzal Guru and Kasab led to Pathankot and Uri. Besides, in Pakistan democracy is merely a soothing platitude. The military holds the strings with a puppet Prime Minister. The nation psyche is military fed on a staple anti-India tirade since 1947. Make no mistake when it comes to India the army, ISI, politicians and civil society beyond its Lollywood and Coke studio hi society have the same view.

What next? New Delhi new assertiveness would need all the wisdom and restraint to ensure that it remains in control of the Indo-Pak script. One way is to adopt the Israeli Defence Forces strategy in which the aim is to cause the opponent more damage (quantitatively and qualitatively) than the opponent caused Israel in the same time span. The fear of punitive retaliation would, it was hoped, delay the next conflict and restrain the enemy's ambitions.

For the success of this new strategy of "limited" war one needs national will more than readiness to use military power. War is an option every nation prepares. This entails a clear view of where the dangers lie, and of what kinds of responses are necessary to meet those dangers. It includes also a basic, crystalline faith that India is on the right path and that Kashmir is worth defending.

Certainly, in this zero sum game the muscle-flexing, war rhetoric and one-upmanship will continue till there the core issue of Kashmir is resolved. In the ultimate, New Delhi cannot wish away Pakistan and nor can Islamabad bully India in to being a passive bystander.

Our leaders must understand the nature of the threat they face and adopt a strategy that is more in tune with the demands of the situation. Foreign and military policy and strategic plans are not a one-shot affair but requires long-drawn cohesive planning, calibrated force and diplomacy. The worrying possibility of a military flare-up hasn't disappeared unless terrorism completely and miraculously disappears. Till then Modi cannot give up on that option.

He knows only too well staying ahead is the name of the game. The nation which survives is the one that rises to meet the moment, which has the wisdom to recognize the threat and the will to turn it back, and does so before it is too late. Modi has made plain: Let not any one kick India around with talk of bleeding India with a thousand cuts! Will Pakistan heed? ----- INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Naming only after Gandhi family

Editor,

It's interesting to go through a mind-blowing article titled, "Drop the Rajiv Gandhi tag from IIM Shillong" by Ms Patricia Mukhim published in a web-based news portal. I recommend that everyone read it at least once. The article analytically portrays the funniest part of the Indian political jamboree where a certain political party demonstrates its quirky habit of naming the top institutions, roads, stadiums and so forth only after the Nehru- Gandhi family.

Yes, idolizing and commemorating the great works of eminent personalities through some events or by naming key schemes, plans and institutions after them is a sign of gratitude and also inspirational. It boosts one's inner strength, widens the vision that works as a guiding light. But such idolizing is undesirable, if it is imposed on a citizenry.

Frankly speaking, blind sycophancy and meek adoration should not be promoted by any ruling party or clique. Again, how people choose who to idolise is a very dicey affair in this make-believe world.

However, the yardstick should be pat tributes only to those with a time-tested reputation for their flawless character, outstanding works and great sacrifices and not those political figures who are doggedly committed to achieving their personal goals.

It is idiosyncratic that political leaders of the Congress party can find no other great personalities to be worthy of adulation and emulation, apart from their own bosses. Sycophancy and blind admiration for one family is apparently the hallmark of the Party. What is awkward is that we have hundreds of schemes, plans, roads, academic institutions named only after the Nehru-Gandhi family. Of course, the public would not have complained if they were within fair limits --- in view of the Gandhi family's sacrifices.

Today people are no longer naïve. Social media reveals all and calls a spade a spade. Many jokes have done the rounds on this clichéd naming of schemes after political idols. Needless to say, being a leader in the Congress Party is very stifling. Here leaders can't speak their minds. They can't even hold out worthy ideas and suggestions for the well-being of the Party. Indeed it is difficult to fathom why among hundreds of seasoned veterans in this oldest party, special applause and

crowns are reserved for only one family. Is not something amiss? Why are other good leaders within the party so mercilessly marginalized here? Hon'ble Pranab Mukherjee was cut to size. Our beloved PA Sangma was sidelined. The vocal Shashi Tharoor is gently muted. Is this not against the spirit of democracy? Many political pundits have stated that too much of one-family-adoration by ignoring other worthies is only inviting nemesis.

Incidentally, in our home state, many are grudging now why IIM Shillong has been prefixed with Rajiv Gandhi. The whining is getting louder with the BJP making its presence felt. By the way, would it not be more fitting if we rather choose to prefix this prestigious management institution of Shillong with Adam Smith or Alfred Marshall, pioneering economists of modern times? It would be a great tribute to them who really added precious content to the idea of Economy. Along similar lines, it would have been appropriate to named our Power plant as 'Voltage Power Plant', Chemical industry as 'Dalton Pharmaceutical', Voltaire Stadium, Aryabhata Academy instead of prefixing them only with Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi! Let's honour the deserving philosophers, scientists, artists whose life-long

labour and creative imagination have given us what we call the modern age of convenience and opulence.

Yours etc.,
Salil Gwal
Shillong-2

Reigning in prejudices!

Editor,

The setting up of a behavioural unit by the Government of India is welcome. However, we need to be on guard that it does not become a weapon for any ruling party. The need of the hour is to monitor and censor all regressive advertisements and programmes in the powerful electronic media (TV and Internet) that are doing great harm to our socio-economic conditions. Government should come out with a comprehensive plan "to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform," as has been enshrined in Article 51A (h) of the Constitution of India with the help of electronic nudge for behavioural change. At the same time, government is also supposed to check its own behaviour whether to see if it is ruled by any prejudice like supporting vegetarian midday meal menu.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

"Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest."

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 55 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2016

Border fencing - A Hamlet-like predicament

THE attempt by pressure groups under the umbrella of the Coordination Committee on International Borders (CCIB) to stay the fencing of the Indo-Bangladesh border is indeed strange. On the one hand this same group has been proclaiming to be the avant-garde of the society and wants an Inner Line Permit (ILP) to be imposed to prevent easy access to people from the rest of India into Meghalaya. On the other hand the same group resists the idea of border fencing on the plea that the Deputy Commissioner had not consulted the locals before allowing the agencies such as BMC and NBCC to conduct surveys to determine the actual boundary lines along which the fence will be put up. The fencing of the Indo-Bangla border is the mandate of the Central Government. Meghalaya shares over 400 sq kilometers of boundary with Bangladesh, most of which is porous and easy to and fro access. Infiltration from Bangladesh is a pernicious problem that states like Assam have been clamouring about. As a result, today, fencing along the Assam-Bangladesh border is going on in right earnest. So why are the pressure groups in Meghalaya against the fencing of an equally porous border? The international boundary is a well established one and claims and counter-claims that large parts of Khasi and Jaintia Hills now lie in Bangladesh is an issue that has to be taken up bilaterally by India and Bangladesh. But until such time the borders cannot remain open.

It is also a fact that unofficial border trade is a lucrative business and people from both sides of the border have been beneficiaries of such trade with little revenue accruing to the state. The coal and limestone lobby has a big stake in the unofficial transactions happening along unguarded and porous borders. Hence they have a vested interest in keeping the borders unfenced and unpoliced, if they have their way. Such vested interests don't care about the larger implications of infiltration from across the border. But that groups which ostensibly profess to care about the demographic profile of Meghalaya and want its borders with the larger Indian state to be policed but argue that the fencing along the Bangladesh border be kept on hold, appears both ambivalent and suspicious. Whose interests do these groups really represent? And should the State Government continue to expose its soft underbelly and keep this important task on hold indefinitely?

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

India-Windies President XI tie drawn

India today made no real attempt to force a win over the West Indies Board President's XI in their opening tour fixture which subsided in a tame draw. The home side, left with an overall deficit of 417 runs and four hours to bat to save the match, were 183 for three at the close, this score containing a breezy 116 not out by opening batsman Phil Simmons.

The main contribution to India's second innings which ended seven minutes before lunch was a fiery 97, off 102 balls by Kapil Dev, who hit 14 fours. Kapil Dev overnight partnership for the seventh wicket with skipper Dilip Vengsarkar, who made 60 was 110, the only century stand of the match. Clearly, batting practice was more important to the Indians than trying to win the match. But the only batsmen to achieve this objective today were Vengsarkar, who batted for well over three hours and Kapil Dev.

Their partnership formed 21 minutes before the close yesterday, lasted for 72 minutes this morning and then Vengsarkar attempting a rare hole shot was caught at mid wicket. He had hit only three fours in his long way.

Actual, the stand could have been cut short 30 runs earlier when Kapil Dev mistimed a flick off the leg at Ferris and lobbed an easy catch, which was missed at mid wicket by Roland Holder a young substitute. Kapil was eighth out edging a cut at leg-spinner Robert Haynes and being brilliantly caught at slip by Carlisle Best, who was fielding in the position only because its regular occupant, Jackman, was off the field. The innings folded quickly after Kapil Dev's departure Sanjeev Sharma tried a big hit off the next ball and hoisted a catch and five runs later, Arshad Ayub was run out. Even during the Indian innings, the ball was often seemed to torn and its bounce also became more variable. It was a rank shooter from Shastri that trapped Carlisle best LB at 54. Shastri also toppled Keith Arthurton encouraging him to drive and getting him stumped. But then the two Trinidadians Phil Simmons and Brian Lara added 78 for the third wicket and after tea, there was less pressure on them from Srikanth bowling at one end.

Supplement to the debate on Pak-sponsored terrorism

By Fabian Lyngdoh

It is interesting to watch the panel discussions on TV channels on Pakistan terrorism and reactions from the Indian side. To fill the gaps in the discussions I feel compelled to write this article as a supplement, for general information and intellectual nourishment. History tells us that the nationalists of India mistakenly believed that their only enemy was the British Government, so they sought the good will of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League in driving out the British, innocently unaware of the emerging dragon of communalism. Jinnah exploited the situation and aggressively staged his multiple demands. His stubborn attitude led to the failure of two 'Round Table Conferences' beside the Shimla Conference. Jinnah was harbouring communalism in his mind; his clear cut stand was that the Congress represented the Hindus while the League represented the Muslims. Mahatma Gandhi engaged Jinnah time and again in negotiations to resolve the communal deadlock, but such negotiations simply raised the political stature of Jinnah, and his arrogance and obstinacy increased after every negotiation with Mahatma Gandhi.

The Cabinet Mission Plan in May, 1946, ruled out the League's demand for Pakistan and recommended an undivided India. But Jinnah remained obstinate; bid good-bye to the constitutional methods and called upon his followers to observe 16th August as a direct action day. Before Independence, the interim Government, with Nehru as the Prime Minister assumed office on 2nd September, 1946. There followed large scale outbreak of lawlessness, looting and arson in Noakhali and Tipperah Districts of East Bengal in October, 1946. It was an organized attack planned by the Muslim League with the connivance of the executive officials, in what is known as the League's 'direct action'. The gap between the standpoints of the League and the Congress became unbridgeable. One stood for partition, the other for undivided India.

The country was in the brink of anarchy, and Lord Mountbatten devised a new Plan and impressed upon Nehru the desirability of getting rid of the League by allowing it to have its Pakistan. Mountbatten's Plan proposed the division of India into two Dominions; but contrary to

the League's demand for a Pakistan that included the whole of Bengal and Assam in the East and the Punjab in the West, the Plan excluded Assam completely and also proposed the partition of Bengal and Punjab. Jinnah refused to accept the proposed territory of Pakistan; nevertheless, he had to submit to Mountbatten's pressure. On 15th August, 1947, India emerged as a sovereign nation, the nationality of which was set to be built on the unity in diversity of races and religions and satisfied with the territory thus apportioned, and Pakistan emerged as another sovereign nation, the nationality of which was based on religious communalism, with a bitter regret and insatiable hunger for the territories it was compelled to forgo. That was the beginning of the bone of contention between India and Pakistan.

Now let us discuss present debate on Pakistani terrorism and Indian reaction. The Indian media houses have tried their level best to bring some Pakistani intellectuals to parley with Indian intellectuals on the panel discussions on the nature of the continuous conflict between India and Pakistan, but it seems that the attempts were futile. It is futile to bring two sets of people of different emotional conditioning to a common understanding. The Indian panellists are brought up and emotionally conditioned in an atmosphere of non-violence, tolerance, and spirit of unity in diversity, while the Pakistani panellists are emotionally conditioned in the atmosphere of religious communalism, violence, intolerance, and hatred. The blood of civilians especially that of innocent women and children, shed as collateral damage of military operations would bring tears and emotional distress to Indian military jawans, but such bloody carnage would cause no concern to the emotionally stunted Pakistani military, terrorists, political leaders and state intellectuals. For the Indian leadership, the safety of one innocent civilian is worth the blood of a hundred soldiers, but for the Pakistani leadership the safety of one terrorist is worth the blood of thousands of innocent civilians. The Pakistani political leadership is a suicidal regime, and that is the reason why it is ever eager to threaten India with a first-strike nuclear attack, though knowing full well that India has the capacity to retaliate with force sufficient to transform

Pakistan into a nuclear desert. Therefore, it is useless to engage Pakistani leaders and intellectuals in a rational discussion on the same panel with Indians.

It is disheartening to notice in the media debates that some Indians, who feign to be lovers of humanity, rationalize the need to tolerate Pakistan's terror strike on India on the ground that the common people of Pakistan had no hand in it. The irony is that these Indians who are losing sleep and aggressively assert opinions on behalf of the common man of Pakistan, but showing apathy towards Indians' loss of blood to Pakistan's bloody exercise, do not seem to care about the welfare of the common man of India. This only reveals their secret support for Pakistan against India. Indeed, they can be categorised as Pakistanis with Indian citizenship just to avail the wide ranging rights and freedom guaranteed by this benevolent country.

It is interesting, as well as amusing to observe in the media debates the body language of the panellists. The loud-mouthed Indian panellists could still smile and contain their composure in spite of apparent anger in their hearts, while the Pakistani panellists speak less with their hoarse voices, and more with weird facial expressions. I have especially noticed one Indian lady who seems to be ardently supporting the Pakistani stance, and one Indian gentleman who argued for the innocence of the Pakistani actors and celebrities nourished on the Indian soil. It was really impressive while observing how the beautiful and handsome faces of the lady and the gentleman gradually transformed under the emotions of hatred, anger and desperation into something which cannot be described, something wrong in their appearances, something displeasing and downright detestable, as R. L. Stevenson described of Mr Hyde. This is the result not of rational argument on the fact of justice, but of a rage in their defence of the indefensible.

It was also argued that there were many common Pakistanis who went to the streets to protest against their Government's connivance with terrorist groups, and that many of them were arrested, persecuted and even executed as martyrs of peace. If righteous people of Pakistan, who live in their own country, dare to speak against their Government's policy of terror, then what reason have the Pakistani

actors and celebrities who suck wealth, fame and honour out of Indians' charitable hearts and under the protection of the Indian State, to withhold their condemnation to the Pakistani Government's involvement in acts of terrorism? Yet we dare glorify these self-centred, media-created artificial greats as ambassadors of peace!

There can be no ambassador of peace between India and Pakistan, because the Pakistani leadership would never be at peace until they are able to occupy the whole Jammu and Kashmir, and until Jinnah's dream of a Pakistan that includes North East India, Bangladesh, West Bengal and the whole of Punjab is realized. We can only have formal political ambassadors just to fulfil the norms of international relation, and that too, only as long as armed conflicts between the two countries can be averted.

A new form of cold war has today emerged in which the USA assumes the leading role for maintaining the full employment of its economy, while Russia and China, for their own separate interests, assume vigilant role. India, as ever, remains a sober nation with neither fear of, nor ill will against, any other nation. It is a nation friendly to all nations; but to maintain that status it also has its own axe to grind for defending itself. Hence it cannot afford to deal softly with traitors. Romulus, the founder of Rome, killed his own brother, Remus and exclaimed, "So perish all who dare leap over my walls." Tullus Hostilius, the third king of Rome, killed his own sister and exclaimed, "Away with thy unreasonable grief, forgetful of thy dead and of thy living brothers, forgetful of thy country. So shall perish every Roman who mourns the death of an enemy." In the same spirit, I should say, thumbs down to all Indians who are forgetful of their dead and of their living brothers and sisters, and forgetful of their country, and dare to express sympathy with the Pakistani military and its terrorist auxiliary, when the country is in a deep security crisis.

Though as Indians, we all want peace and abhor war, but in the present security crisis that India now is facing, the rational statement is, "Let the State of Pakistan be responsible for the common man of Pakistan, and the Indian State be responsible for the common man of India."

TO THE EDITOR

Generalisations are dangerous

Editor, In the article #MySelfieWithaCop, (ST Sep 13, 2016) Patricia Mukhim wrote about the Shillong police. I understand that some police personnel are annoying and insensitive but there are noble exceptions. Some are courteous and helpful including those at junior levels. Just yesterday a traffic constable, Chandan Singh, stopped all traffic to enable my old mother to cross the road and I am sure there are many more like him. So perhaps it is not good to generalize about the entire police establishment. May I remind you that along with officers the lower ranks also successfully and bravely fought the HNLC and are still fighting the GNLA and many have been martyred. May I also remind you that police personnel also come across many types of people from criminals to honest people, but mostly cheats, killers, rapists and

other notorious characters. If police also generalize all people as criminals then the situation will become worse for everybody.

Ms Mukhim has access to the media and her opinions get wide publicity. I hope this letter with dissenting views is also published.

Yours etc.,
A L Marbaniang,
Shillong-2

Patricia Mukhim replies: In my column mentioned above, I referred specifically to the officials of a particular police station hence the question of generalization does not arise. In my profession I have to engage regularly with police officers and men and maintain a cordial relation with them, which is why the behavior of the officials of that Police Station was irksome. Also, I wish to place on record my salute especially to the Shillong Traffic Police!

Loss of indigenous culture!

Editor, Apropos the article,

"Seng Khasi's Mahatma moment" by Uma Purkayastha (Sunday Shillong Oct 02, 2016), I hope the author meant "Welsh Mission" and not "Wells Mission" as she had mentioned, which may have inadvertently missed the "welling eyes" of the SS Editor, too. Having said this, the nefarious activities of the Welsh Mission cannot be undermined at all. They are the ones who robbed the traditional Khasi tribesmen of their culture, tradition, beliefs, practices and all that is associated with their lifestyle amidst nature and in return inflicted a foreign religion and culture alien to their existence. In 1875, Babu Jeebon Roy urged the Provincial Government to the need for a Government High School in Shillong which could not fructify due to the inability of the government to spend on a new school in the aftermath of the then great plague. But Babu Jeebon Roy did not give up and approached the Welsh Methodist Calvinistic Presbyterian Mission and corresponded with T. Jerman Jones to convert the Minor School, which he had started

into a High School. But Jones rejected the plea on the ground that Khasi boys and girls were not fit for higher education (Ref: "The Spirit of Service" WD Jyrwa, Jeebon Roy Memorial Lectures). Later when he along with some educationists urged upon Jones again about upgrading his Minor School into a High School he was scorned by Jones, "We have come here to preach, not to teach". That says it all and the doomsday for this region in fact started then, when slowly and gradually, the tribesmen were alienated from their hearth, home, traditional religious practices, customs et al and pushed into a setup that has its repercussions as we get to see today.

Mahatma or no Mahatma, that historic moment was momentary as there is nothing Mahatma-like about it. Nonetheless, Uma Purkayastha is correct in a sardonic way since the Welsh indeed ran a Wells Mission here.

Yours etc
PK Dwivedi
Shillong - 1

A new step towards Paris Treaty

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

On 2nd October last year India took a step towards allaying global fears with regards to its commitment in combating climate change. It announced the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions to reduce domestic emission of its gross domestic product by 33% - 35% by 2030 from 2005 levels. This year India has taken a step further by agreeing to ratify the Paris deal which aims to contain Earth's increase in temperature by 2 degree Celsius and if possible within 15 degree Celsius above pre industrial levels.

The history of the global fight against climate change can be traced back to Rio Summit of United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in 1992. Since then countries around the world have come to recognise that climate change indeed poses a larger challenge and a larger qualified global initiative must be mounted against it. Some initiatives such as the Montreal Protocol- which seeks to reduce use of CFC gases which harm the ozone layer, have been successful. Yet others like the Kyoto Protocol have still not been ratified by a large number of countries. Nevertheless there is a large agreement today that climate change is a menace that has to be fought globally in a collective manner.

As with any global negotiations climate change talks too hinges on a few factors. The principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) is at the core of climate change negotiations. CBDR recognises that while all nations of the world have a stake at climate change the responses should also encompass historical as well as current responsibilities. Translated into more common terms it means while India and USA would have equal stake at fighting climate change today, the responsibility of USA is more because of its historical pollution (industrialization). Another component of CBDR includes the capacity of countries to deal with the problem in technical and economic terms.

India has always been strongly committed towards combating climate change in tune with global concerns. And thus it comes as no surprise that India has agreed to ratify the Paris deal towards combating climate changes. The Paris Agreement will come into force when 55 countries contributing to atleast 55% of the global emissions ratify the deal. So far 61 countries have ratified the deal and deposited their acceptance or approval. India has committed to diverting 40% of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2030. India will also seek to include production of 175 GW of renewable energy by 2022.

Yet the Paris deal has to be approached carefully for a number of reasons. Lately the issue of CBDR is being pushed to the background and talks of "incremental pollution" have begun to make rounds. Being the third largest polluter in absolute emission terms there was a pressure on India to ratify the deal. Yet one must remember that in per capita terms of emission India still stands in one of the lowest polluters of the world. Also while discussing incremental pollution the developed nations tend to forget the historical damage that they have caused to the environment. Hence ratification of the deal must be accompanied by negotiations which root itself firmly around the notion of historical pollution.

Another major aspect in this debate on climate change is the question of finance. No global mechanism has been reached upon yet which would ensure transfer of finance and technology to developing nations, to combat climate change. The Global Environmental Facility GEF is one such financial mechanism which sought to finance technologies to help combat climate change. While the GEF set laudable goals for

itself, it has failed to collect the kind of finances that the countries had hoped to achieve. Countries have also failed to capitalise on the "carbon sink" mechanism which would have financially benefited countries which would maintain such sinks. Thus it is worth mentioning that despite well intentioned measures a number of mechanisms have failed to take off. On the flipside it must be remembered that at the same time larger polluters are beginning to commit themselves towards climate change combat goals. The success of Montreal Protocol towards reducing the ozone layer has infused new optimism about the fight against climate change. This week EU too ratified the Paris deal making it one of the largest groups to ratify the same.

It is in the context of this that India's role must be analysed. India must equip itself on two front negotiations as well domestic action. On international negotiations India must continue to stick to the context of historical responsibility. It must also argue that polluter pays principle has to be seen in the context of per capita emission rather than absolute numbers. These positions are important since globally the developing nations also see India as a leader in these negotiations, negotiation on their behalf. Hence it is important that India must stick to these positions, while continuing the fight against climate change and displaying solidarity on the global front.

It is on the domestic front however that larger steps have to be taken. Climate change has affected monsoon patterns which have adversely affected agricultural productivity. Hence India must work on the twin principle of adaptation and mitigation. In the past few years India has achieved laudable progress towards its afforestation goals. The forest cover in the country has been increasing albeit slowly. While critics argue that dense forest cover has not increased it must be understood that dense forest cover happens over time. Hence the fact that forest cover has been increasing is a laudable step in itself.

India has also set up ambitious goals towards using alternative renewable energy sources. The National Solar Energy Mission is an example of the same commitment. Focus on wind energy is also on the anvil. At the same time India seeks to restrict nuclear energy to 4% of the total non renewable energy which is a welcome step in itself. These figures points to the fact that India has a firm plan for alternative renewable energy sources in place.

Yet what India has achieved so far is not enough. New technology needs to be mounted towards stemming falling water levels. Droughts have become a regular phenomenon in the country which often leads to political instability as the recent Cauvery droughts have proved. New agricultural technologies have to be developed which would give higher per acre yield, have better drought resistant seeds and so on. And not all of this is possible on its own. This is where global finance and technology has to flow in. The target of reducing emission by 33%-35% is itself not hard to achieve. But in order to do so it would require persistent efforts of the Indian government and the global community. India remains firmly committed to its role in combating climate change however as reiterated the global community must fulfil its responsibility as well. Now that the Paris deal has been ratified a clear roadmap must be drawn for the journey ahead.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

“Facts are stubborn things, but statistics are more pliable.”

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 56 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2016

Building harmony requires creativity

THE Central Puja Committee of Shillong has been observing the unique convergence of people of goodwill in a function named, “Get Together for Harmony,” since 1993. This was a felt need after the celebration of Durga Puja in Meghalaya was disrupted due to communal tensions that began in 1979. This programme which has now become Shillong’s annual event was initiated by a few right thinking individuals who felt that the only way to promote and sustain the pluralistic nature and cosmopolitan spirit of Shillong is to bring people of goodwill on a common platform. And that it did! Year after year since 1993 the ‘Get Together for Harmony’ has included people from all faiths, cultures and walks of life making it a much anticipated event. There is a sense of bonhomie as people join in praying for harmony, peace and prosperity. However, like every observance, this one too faces the prospect of turning into a customary ritual that has gradually lost the essence with which it was conceived.

A Get-Together by its very name suggests an interaction among those who attend the function. It is not meant to be another lengthy, formal speech-giving ceremony laden with VIPs while the rest of the invitees sit in quiet deference and do not even have the opportunity to interact with fellow Shillongites to wish them a peaceful and happy Puja, which is what the function is intended for. This is a much awaited season, hence a time for exchange of pleasantries. There are too many Government and non-Government functions where speeches are the order of the day and people suffer in silence listening to boring lectures. A Get-Together for Harmony is expected to be a much better conceived programme where participants are drawn from all faiths. In the past this happened and the stage was adorned by eclectic groups each paying tribute in the way they know best. There was a genuine sense of participation. That is not the case today for reasons best known to the organizers. It reminds us of Tagore’s exhortation, “Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit.” It is indeed easy for an observance to turn into a meaningless ritual!

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Bengal to meet Delhi in final

Underdogs Bengal today entered the finals of the Ranji trophy, after a gap of eighteen years, dislodging holders Tamil Nadu by virtue of a 61 run first innings lead on the concluding day of the four day semi final encounter at the Eden Gardens here.

After bowling Tamil Nadu out for 535 runs, 85 minutes after lunch, the home side coming to bat for a second time scored 76 losing one wicket when the stumps were finally drawn. This was Bengal’s ninth entry into the final. They won the coveted trophy only once in 1938-39 defeating Southern Punjab by 178 runs. Bengal made it to the final last in 1971 when they lost the match to Bombay.

Bengal will now meet Delhi in the final. The final is scheduled to begin at Delhi from March 22. Authoritative sources, however, said the date was likely to be changed in view of Holi. Meanwhile, at Bombay, Delhi entered the finals by virtue of their first innings lead of 88 runs over Bombay. The semifinal match between the two ended in a dull draw at the Wankhede Stadium here today. Maninder Singh, who gave them the lucky break through yesterday was adjudged the man-of-the-match. He finished with match figures of 7 for 105.

Bombay’s tail failed today and they finished at 321 with 24 runs coming as penalty for bowling six overs short.

Delhi disappointed the few faithful who had come with the hope of their team waging a battle by batting for

75 overs in the 2nd inning and scoring 176 runs for five wickets. Skipper Madan Lal ended the agony by declaring the innings after 15 of the 20 mandatory overs were bowled leaving no time for Bombay to bat again.

Govt releases Jodhpur detenus

Altogether 104 Jodhpur detenus were taken to Punjab today by plane following special court judge Mr Khemchandra Sharma’s order for their release. Two detenus were taken to Delhi. The remaining 82 detenus ordered to be released, including former SGPC Chief Mr Gurcharan Singh Tohra, will leave tomorrow. The judge issued the order after the prosecution moved an application seeking withdrawal of all cases pending against them, including that of waging war against the state.

The court was moved following Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi’s announcement in parliament on Friday of a package of measures including release of Jodhpur detenus to initiate the process of normalization in Punjab.

Formalities in connection with the release are expected to be completed by this afternoon. The detenus are to be taken to Punjab according to official sources. The judge issued the order at 1100 hours after accepting the government’s plea for withdrawal of the cases against the detenus.

Another International Day has gone by, this time it was for elder persons, on October 1. This year’s theme was designated by the WHO as “Take a Stand Against Ageism”. It was intended to rouse everyone to consider ageism – the negative attitudes and discrimination based on age and the detrimental impact it has on older people.

India is presently proud of the much publicised demographic dividend it is blessed with. The age-structure of its people with a large working age population is unlike many advanced mostly western countries facing ageing population. Still, it has its own share of problems relating to the elderly, some of which need urgent action.

The World Health Assembly adopted a resolution relating to WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health in May 2016. It called upon the organization to develop a Global Campaign to combat ageism and achieve the ultimate goal of enhancing the day-to-day experience of older people and optimize policy responses.

Ageism in this context is a problem of the elderly related more to treatment and attitudes towards them rather than providing for their physical welfare. India still has not dealt with care of the aged physically and has to go fast to catch up with the pace of the world organization.

Ageism denotes stereotyping and discrimination on the basis of a person’s age. It was coined in 1969 by Robert Neil Butler and was patterned on sexism and racism and implies a negative image of the elderly. He used it to depict three interconnected inequalities – prejudicial attitudes towards older persons, old age, and ageing process; discriminatory practices; and institutional practices and policies that perpetuate stereotype ideas about elder people.

A resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 called

Elders International Day Shed dependency ratio myth

By S Saraswathi

upon member-States to have a legal instrument based on holistic approach in the fields of social development, human rights, and gender equality to provide security to the senior citizens.

Security in the case of the elderly includes, in terms of this legal instrument, both “rights” and “dignity”. Theoretically, both aspects are well protected in India – rights through some legislations and also by tradition, and dignity by the common family structure and values. Problems of the elderly today are due to fading away of traditional status of elders, changes in family structures, and the demands of changing societies widening generational gaps.

In 1991, the UN General Assembly had adopted 18 principles pertaining to elder care grouped in five categories, namely, independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment, and dignity. In the same year, first International Day of Older Persons was observed. The Second World Assembly on Ageing held at Madrid adopted the Madrid International Plan of Action in 2002 which addressed key challenges in building a society “for all ages”. India has endorsed the plan.

The census organization of India has estimated the population of 60+ group in 2016 as 103.9 million, that is, 8.6 per cent of the total population (8.2 % among males and 9.0 % among females). The percentage has grown from 7.4 recorded in 2001 census and the number 77 million. It is expected to reach 324 million by 2050, which will be 17 per cent of the total.

Senior group (above 80 years) among the older will number about 48 million. The rate of growth of 60+ group will be far higher than the rate of growth of overall population. One-eighth of the senior citizens of the world will be in India.

The average life expectancy at birth in India was 37 years in 1947. It rose to 64.6 years by 2000 and has presently reached 69.3 for females against 65.8 for males. At the age of 60, average remaining life is

expected to be 18 years – 16.9 for males and 19.0 for females. Old age dependency is rising faster than the rate of decline in child dependency. Progress in medical science produces some quick results to increase longevity, but population control measures take time to produce results.

Estimates of projections made by different agencies do vary. But, all estimates point to the end of the present youth bulge and the demographic dividend available with growing working age population. They also indicate a major transformation in the age structure of the population. This means, in conventional thinking, a drastic change in various characteristics of the Indian population – workforce pattern, family structure and functions, inter-generational relations, dependency ratio, migrations, etc.

India adopted the National Policy for Older Persons in 1999 with the professed aim of strengthening their legitimate place in society and helping them “to live the last phase of their life with purpose, dignity, and peace”. It provided for financial security, health care, shelter, welfare and other needs, protection against abuse and exploitation, and opportunities for participation and development of the potentials of the older persons.

The policy remained on paper and hence arose the need for a revised national policy in 2011. It aimed at strengthening the family system to play the role of primary care giver for the elderly and incorporated a range of welfare measures to provide minimum standard of living for all.

In 2007, the Maintenance and Welfare of the Senior Citizens Act was passed under which it is mandatory on the part of children to look after their parents in old age. This Act puts the primary responsibility for the maintenance of parents on their children, grandchildren, and even relatives who may possibly inherit their property. Violation of this responsibility is punishable with impris-

onment or fine or both. State governments are to open old-age homes and reserve beds for the aged in hospitals.

Not many seem to be aware of this law. And the well informed who are aware of their legal rights are not likely to take to legal course to assert their rights or to fight abuse by their own children. Parental bond and the notion of family honour are strong restraining factors that make laws inappropriate to determine parents-children relationship.

Policies, programmes, and legislations generally seek to cover the elderly under social security schemes. What is sadly ignored is the contribution the elderly people make in every field of activity.

The age 60 recognized generally as the age of retirement is not really so. The entire female population which is running their homes doesn’t and cannot retire until they are bed-ridden. Their work includes baby-sitting in rich and poor households, at home and abroad – work that demands extraordinary stamina. The self-employed and those in unorganized sector continue till they break. Pensioners look for second employment. A Cabinet consisting of members in the age-group 60-80 is considered an achievement of youth power.

The very concept of “dependency ratio”, which is the proportion of 60+ group to 15-59 age-group is misconceived. It is after the age of 60, most persons make their maximum contributions to their families and to society and become most useful members with their knowledge and experience whether at home or work place.

To classify them as “dependants” is the worst insult that must be immediately removed by national and international policy declarations. What we need is “an age-integrated society”, which seeks to enhance “interaction between generations” and give up age criteria where it is irrelevant. ---INFA

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

TO THE EDITOR

Khasi culture

Editor,
I refer to a letter by P.K Dwidivedi in your esteemed paper (ST Oct.4,2016) titled, “Loss of indigenous culture.” I am not acquainted with the gentleman, but from his name, I presume he is not a Khasi and has therefore not really understood Khasi culture. A vast majority of our Khasi – Pnar people would also not agree with his views on the work of the Welsh missionaries. We, the Khasi-Pnar society owe a lot to these selfless missionaries for being what we are today. Thanks to their far-sightedness, our society has been able to preserve and uphold the basics of our culture that really count and define us as a society. To name just three of these basics: our matrilineal system, our strong bonds of family and our language. The author referred to religion as another aspect of tradition. Even here, in spite of the plurality of individual faiths, the basic belief in “U Blei” as the one and only deity is universal in Khasi society.

U Babu Jibon Roy is one of the great personalities that our society has produced. His

contribution in the field of literature and education is immense. He was also a product of the education system established by the Welsh missionaries. Quoting one stray incident out of context does little justice to the overall contribution that the missionaries have made. Societies and cultures are not static but dynamic. They evolve with time, for better or worse. And so it is with Khasi society and culture, and religious beliefs have very little to contribute to this evolution and change. We live in the 21st century. I don’t think any Khasi-Pnar today would want to go back to what we were 200 years ago. Had we not evolved and changed with the times we would by now have become relics and specimens fit for display in the Don Bosco museum!

For the benefit of the author, he should know that Christianity prides itself as a faith that upholds and nurtures local culture wherever it has spread.

Yours etc.,
R.Wallang,
Via email

Urgent road repair

Editor,
Through your esteemed daily, I would request the PWD to kindly repair the

road leading from Mawroh junction towards NEHU (St Stephen Memorial Road). Portions of this road near the Aganwadi Centre- 2 and near the connecting bridge are in real bad shape with pot holes as big as 3 ft in diameter. This road is very busy these days as it leads to NEHU and all sorts of vehicles ply on it. Last year the road was repaired and the pot holes near the bridge were filled up but the work done by the Department was so shoddy that in some portions the coating has peeled off once again. The regular showers in the past few weeks have exposed the bad condition of road construction in the city with questions being raised on the ability of the PWD to construct all weather and durable roads. Many requests have been made at the locality level but to no avail.

Potholes on Shillong roads are aplenty in almost all the internal roads in the city. Residents have alleged that the potholes have grown both in number and dimension since the PWD pays no attention to fill such potholes when they are just beginning to break. The Department it seems would wait till the whole road is damaged and beyond repair. I do not see any logic in this. If repairs are done on time then wastage of money and time will be minimised. I

would also requests our learned friends from NEHU to voice their concerns to the Govt for urgent repairs since many of the vehicles plying over the road are NEHU bound. Indifference will not help!

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

It’s Jaintia language

Editor,

At the outset, I would like to pose a question to the Jaintia Students’ Union and Pnar Alphabet Committee of the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council. What organization is the Jaintia Students’ Union leading and what Autonomous body is the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council running - the Pnar Students’ Union or the Jaintia Students’ Union, Pnar Hills Autonomous District Council or Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council. What Pnar alphabet are you talking about? For their information the alphabet in Jaintia language is not new to us. It has already been sold to the public in the nineties and early twenties by different writers of the district. Khasi Jaintia and Garo are the recognized

Pakistan is in confusion over next step

Army Chief dominates as Sharif takes back seat

By Amulya Ganguli

For the Pakistan army, India’s “surgical strikes” on the jihadi camps across the Line of Control (LoC) have proved its longstanding contention about an existential threat from India.

The Deep State (DS) comprising the Pakistan army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) can now claim that they always knew that India hadn’t accepted the existence of Pakistan, notwithstanding Atal Behari Vajpayee’s visit to Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore in 1999 to signify India’s acknowledgment of the reality of the 1947 partition.

The DS will now feel confident that no further attempts will be made by the leaders of the two countries to take the road to peace – at least not in the immediate future.

In the past, whenever such attempts were made, as by Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf or by Narendra Modi and Nawaz Sharif, the DS had engineered a terror strike to frustrate the civilian leaders.

Now, not only will the civilian establishment in Pakistan desist from reaching out to India, but it will also take a back seat at a time when the looming clouds of a war threaten the subcontinent. The army chief, General Raheel Sharif, is now the “real” Sharif, as is currently being said in Pakistan.

The Pakistan army has returned to its familiar role, therefore, of being the master of all it surveys in the country. It can pat itself on the back for having achieved the objective yet again of being the de facto rulers without having to organize a coup, which is rarely appreciated by the international community.

Having strengthened its grip on Pakistan, the army will have to figure out the next step. One disadvantage is that it may have to be less proactive in the matter of carrying out terror strikes on Kashmir or elsewhere in India, a la 26/11, not because it has become wary about the acts of provocation, but because the jihadi mayhem will confirm India’s accusation of Pakistan being in the ivy league of terror.

Yet, the army cannot afford to sit idly either, for that will give the impression that it has been unnerved by India’s sabre-rattling. For the first time, there is open talk in India of overt and covert action. The Pakistan army will probably wait for a decent interval, therefore, before sending jihadis across the LoC.

At the same time, the gap between Uri and the next target cannot be too long if only to ensure that the separatists in Kashmir do not feel being let down.

But it isn’t only putting its pet rottweilers of the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) on hold which will be problematic for the army as

the reaction of outfits like Tehreek-e-Taliban, the so-called “bad” terrorists, which are not friendly towards Pakistan, as opposed to the “good” terrorists like LeT and JeM.

In view of the likelihood of Pakistan moving a substantial portion of the army towards the border with India in the east, the western regions will be left largely unguarded against the anti-Pakistan Islamists. If the latter step up their depredations, taking advantage of the army’s absence, Pakistan’s reputation as a dysfunctional state apart from being the nursery of terror will be highlighted.

Such a state of affairs may enable Pakistan to claim that it is a victim of terror while the unrest in Kashmir is the handiwork of “freedom fighters”. But there may not be too many takers for this line, for as the Afghan vice-president, Sarwar Danish, told the UN general assembly, “the world knows where Taliban leaders live”.

The increase in terrorism in Pakistan’s western regions will be a cause of despair, therefore, for the army which will not be balanced by its success in emasculating the civilian leadership and establishing its stranglehold on the country.

In addition, the army will undoubtedly rue the signs of proximity between India and Afghanistan, which have an unmistakable military dimension. What was regarded by the Pakistan army as an area of strategic depth in the event of a war with India, has now been converted into an area of strategic vulnerability.

Although there is unlikely to be a war, the presence of the Indian army in the east and of the Afghan army backed by India in the north cannot but be a matter of concern in Rawalpindi, now the “real” capital instead of Islamabad.

Pakistan’s only solace at present is the support which it is getting from China with, first, its blockage of water in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra in retaliation for India’s threat to undo the Indus treaty and, secondly, by standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the JeM’s Masood Azhar.

But, in the process, China itself will earn a bad name, confirming its reputation for irresponsibility as after its refusal to abide by an international tribunal’s diktat on the South China Sea.

India, on its part, will know that of the two rogue nations to its north, Pakistan’s dysfunctional status cannot but increase as the “real” Sharif recognizes that he can no longer pursue his policy of waging a proxy war via the jihadis without paying a heavy price. (IPA Service)

languages of the state.

Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council is written as ‘Jaintia’ and not in ‘Pnar.’ Almost all the organization, institutions, etc. in the past and present bear the name Jaintia in the first place. For instance Jaintia District Sports Association, Jaintia Tribal Trading Association, Jaintia Fishing and Environment Association, Jaintia Dorbar, Sein Jaintia, Jaintia Kingdom, Syiem Jaintia, Khasi-Jaintia Category in Reservation policy and so on so forth. The controversial Pnar alphabet is not acceptable to the Khasi and Jaintia people. Shall the Pnar Alphabet Committee say ‘Ki Syiem Pnar’ in place of Syiem Jaintia, Pnar kingdom in place of Jaintia Kingdom, Khasi Pnar, Bhoi War etc. category

in Reservation policy.

We have been listening to Jaintia programme everyday from All India Radio since its establishments till date. All India Radio has a long outstanding history and has done a lot in its services for the Jaintia people and in propagating the Jaintia language. But the Myntoilang cable news which came into existence only recently does the opposite, creates confusion, is misleading and engaging in double talk.

Yours etc.
Stelin G. Laloo
Jowai

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.

"How hard it is, sometimes, to trust the evidence of one's senses! How reluctantly the mind consents to reality."

--- Norman Douglas

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 57

SHILLONG, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2016

War and Peace

THE festive season is ahead. It is a pity that tensions between India and Pakistan are mounting. India quite rightly retaliated against Pakistani terror strikes by carrying out surgical operations across the LoC. Pakistan attacked a Rashtriya Rifles camp housing a unit of the BSF at Baramullah. It has also made a number of ceasefire violations across the LoC. Indian Security Forces had to strike back. The gathering storm is cause for concern in New Delhi which is against military action. The ISI-military complex in Pakistan must be equally tensed. It is getting increasingly difficult for Indian troops to carry out counter-attacks. The emphasis should be on beefing up defence and tightening security in border areas. Delhi has received 100% diplomatic support. The SAARC meeting in Islamabad has been postponed. First, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Bhutan pulled out. Sri Lanka, Maldives and Nepal followed suit. Islamabad must be miffed at Russia backing India after sending armed contingents to join military exercise with it.

What is important is that Indian ministers should not generate heat to undo diplomatic initiatives. War is an extension of diplomacy and must be avoided if diplomacy works. New Delhi should not overreact to Islamabad's baiting. Pakistan is naturally putting out false propaganda. Delhi should do well to persuade China to ostracize terrorists like Masood Azhar. It is regrettable that the Government and the Opposition parties are said to be fighting over the issue. Lives are at stake and what is wanted is de-escalation on both sides.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

In Assam

Two more killed in unabated violence

In unabated violence two people were killed in the past 24 hours as the 175 hour "Assam Bandh", called by the All-Bodo Students Union continued for the sixth day today. Altogether 16 people have been killed including eight Bodo extremists since the "bandh" started on Thursday last, Director, General of police Mr S V Subramanian said.

He told newsmen that one Demi Ram Hazarika was killed when 150 miscreants armed with gun and other lethal weapons yesterday raided a house in Odala-Tamulbari village under Udalguri sub division. The raiders set ablaze the house owned by Mr Deben Saikia. Some more houses were also burnt down at Tatapara village under Paneri police station of the same sub division from where a charred body was recovered last night he added.

Mr Subramanian said the house of a plains Tribal Council of Assam's member was set on fire at Gendabael village in Kokrajhar district. Attempts were made to set on fire a bridge on Gossaigaon Tamarhat road in Kokrajhar when a police party reached there the extremists exchanged fire with police. No casualty was however, reported on either side. The extremists burnt down the forest quarters at Tipakai in Dhubri district and exploded at least 37 crackers in which three of them were reported to have been injured. The DG said police arrested 20 Bodos and recovered some arms and ammunition from them during a combing operation at Routa and Orang areas of Udalguri.

Altogether 83 extremists were arrested, during the bandh hours when 52 arsons, 22 explosions and 30 attacks on security forces, besides eleven on general public were reported, he said.

The bandh, however, had no impact except in the Bodo inhabited Kokrajhar district and Udalguri sub-division of Darrang district. Mr Subramanian said while passenger train services rained suspended, operation of goods train was maintained. About 800 trucks and other vehicles piled on national high way no. 31 under police escorts from Srirampur, on the border of West Bengal.

Meanwhile, ABSU vice president Mr Pradeep Kumar Daimary alleged that the government was terrorizing the people to crush "the peaceful movement" and trying to make a "genocide" like situation in the state. He, however, denied Assam government's version that the Congress(I) was behind their movement for a separate "Bodo Land" and that it was meant to destabilize the government by indulging in violence. The ABSU never professed violence, he added.

District Level Planning boards in Tripura

The Tripura Government is setting up district-level planning boards for decentralizing the developmental activities in the state.

Chief Minister Mr Sudhir Ranjan Majumder inaugurated the west district planning board's office here yesterday. (UNI)

Armed youths loot Rs. 1.39 lakh

Armed youths looted about Rs. 1.39 lakh from the Art and Culture Museum here yesterday, official source said.

The sources said three youths came on a motor cycle and escaped after looting the sum from the museum cash at pistol point. Police investigation is going on

Labour or profession as an element of economic growth

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

In a profession there are neither friends nor enemies. Through this writing, I am trying to address economic growth from the third eye which is by itself an element of growth. In economic terminology, it is described as labour, a factor which constitutes the working class, because apart from the availability of raw material and infrastructure such as land and machine, labour is a major contributing factor to economic activity. In return, labour is the only factor that receives its reward in the form of wages. Labour is nothing but the service of a person hired to do work. It includes technical, mechanical and physical including those who are keeping records or doing paper work. On the other hand, labour is complex because it deals with human beings who have feelings and emotions and above all, the will to function. In the macro concept, labour is always seen as profession or occupation. Today, labour has become more of a consumption factor rather than a contributing factor. This is detrimental to economic growth. With the advent of management science, labour is now referred to as human resource that further necessitates its development and professional management in order to make a person more productive according to the concept of Human Resource Development (HRD).

A labourer is not hired because he/she is a close friend or relative, nor is labour denied to another because the person is a stranger. But, all types of professions, directly or indirectly contribute towards the economic growth of the society or its GDP. It is important here to understand that if one of the components of labour is not performing or doing his job, he is not contributing anything to that economic activity, and therefore, no reward or wage is deserved. The same principle should apply at the macro level too; in other words, the economy of the state or country. As a matter of fact, in the private sector, economic activity has

reached a level of stability and sustainability because the profession has graduated to professionalism, where the quality of service and performance is never compromised at any point of time. In contrast, in the public sector including government establishments, this concept is still far away from being accepted or realized.

The common understanding of profession is simply a livelihood but those who earn from a livelihood should also realize they are also contributing something to the resources of the society in the form of transferred payments or revenue. Therefore, we can call the working class as operators of this engine for economic growth. Further, profession and professionals are divided into various categories depending upon their ability, experience and knowledge of the work such as the workman, the managers, the planners and the decision makers. When the respective category focuses on its role with commitment and devotion without encroaching into another's domain, the mechanism of growth is kept running and expanding. But the failure to understand this role and purpose has cost many big establishments to collapse, leaving behind a huge burden to the state.

In reality, the employment and recruitment system is shattered by one perspective i.e. a share of reward. Employment is seen as a right to a livelihood and not as a privilege to do something to contribute to the overall growth of the economy. It is this desire to get a share of reward from the collective resources without contributing to the growth engine that has destroyed the morale of the working class and led to its complete collapse. As a result ethics and principles have disappeared and professionals from all categories and classes are no longer exhibiting those work ethics. People are pushed into professions, preferably government funded or sponsored because they think that at the end of the month their reward is assured for

attending the workplace, whereas the workmanship spirit is not evident and the outcomes are not measured. Workers are only interested in a job from where personal benefits accrue and then only the level of interest and enthusiasm is high.

Further, the mindset and attitude that only close friends and relatives should be recruited first has destroyed the very function of the workplace that ultimately affects the entire machinery. What will happen if only friends and close relatives are in the same workplace? Believe me, rules and regulation will not prevail; there will be only goodwill and adjustment which is completely opposite to professionalism. It is an open fact that there are many salaried people languishing in many departments with practically no job to do but earning their monthly salaries. Government jobs are seen as a lifetime security of assured salary. But in fact, government resources depend entirely on the revenue received from the society by way of taxes. The higher the revenue, the higher will be the spending of the state, but there is a big gap here because there has been a misuse and dishonesty at various levels. In the absence of a clear benchmark for measuring work ethics it is difficult for a person to take any corrective measures against anyone who is not performing at all because that defaulter may be his own relatives or close friends. If an establishment is moving in the right direction, workers should work without favour and the need to be intimidated.

Recently I learned of an incident involving two colleagues of a particular central government school. One of them being the head solicited the favour of his colleague to share his vehicle in order to reach their workplace daily. But when his colleague reaches five minutes late to the class, a memo is issued by the head. On one hand, this action sounds harsh and vindictive but professionalism demands that a job has to be executed in a specific period. There is no friend or enemy only colleagues because if one of the colleagues is not

performing adequately and effectively the entire team suffers.

Most people have only a vague idea about labour as a factor of economic growth. Some people don't understand that the only reason they are paid is because they are part of the production process that moves the business establishment or society and economy to higher levels of growth. Because of this misconception, entrepreneurship is hardly sustainable unless the entrepreneur himself or herself is able to perform his duties in case their employees are absent. Let us not forget that those who invest their money outside their geographical boundaries will not blindly put their funds without studying the nature and types of labour that exist in that country or region.

Kudos to those who are regular and punctual to their workplace, but, at the same time it is very disheartening to see only a handful of people who are punctual in the entire State Secretariat. What about those employees who are beyond the purview of the constant surveillance system? It's a pitiable state of affairs to think of their situation. How many more years it will take for people to understand and how long will our state continue to remain underdeveloped because of an unproductive workforce? The unemployment rate is growing but the ability to absorb this work force is completely absent. Those who want employment should be aware of their employability and competency. One of the factors that determine employability is skill, commitment and loyalty to the job without pre-conditions whether cultural or social.

Unless and until our people understand the meaning and concept of labour and professionalism, it is very difficult to expect any achievement or growth in the economy. Since the driving force behind this is the mindset of the people who constitute the work force or human resources, in the absence of a sincere working force, economic progress will never happen and sustain in any manner.

Meghalaya's reproductive health care

By Phrangngi Pyrtuh

In 1978, at the Alma-Ata Conference, ministers from 134 countries in association with WHO and UNICEF declared "Health for All by the Year 2000" with the onus on primary health care to achieve the target. For most developing countries including India the declaration remained a distant dream. Even after 35 years of the Declaration India's primary health care indicators remained grim and among the lowest. Progress in primary health care is essential for countries struggling to achieve the 2015 targets of health related Millennium Development Goals (MDG) such as infant and maternal mortality rate. On both counts, India's infant and maternal mortality rate remained below the world's average. Current figures on infant mortality rate (as per SRS of 2013) is 40 per 1000 live births. India was supposed to achieve 39 per 1000 live births in 2015 as stipulated by the MDGs.

The Indian state had initiated extensive steps for improving infant and maternal mortality rate especially through the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). Under the "Janani Suraksha Yojna" cash incentives were provided to pregnant women and those who choose the option of institutional delivery. The policy initiative is to encourage pregnant mothers to visit a healthcare center for safe delivery of the new born baby. The JSY is specifically targeted towards ST/SC and BPL population whose primary health indicators leave a lot to be desired. The JSY is a well thought out scheme to bring changes in delivery preferences and improving the immediate health care requirements for the mother and the child. Though there are signs of improvement yet there are variation in states, region and target groups. Generally urban areas have lower maternal and infant mortality due to availability of adequate health care services. Moreover, states with higher literacy levels tend to have lower maternal and infant mortality rates.

It cannot be denied that institutional delivery is a significant parameter for healthcare services. It is a good practice to have a child within the premises of a health care center where the safety and security of both the mother and the child is assured. The probability for the mother and the child remaining healthy is higher if the delivery occurs within the premises of a health care facility.

Institutional delivery can resolve the problem of both maternal and infant mortality rate. India's institutional delivery stands at around 49%. Among all South Asian countries, Sri Lanka has 99% hospital delivery. Its success in achieving low maternal and neo-natal death rates is attributed to the introduction of selective primary healthcare and investing a substantial amount of GDP on health. On this count India lags behind in terms of absolute spending on health.

Furthermore their intention is to facilitate border crossing of militants, which transpires that these cohorts, under the name of tradition and NGOs, are faithful agents of various militant groups of the North Eastern states operating from Bangladesh.

fencing survey" (ST Sep 27, 2016) I would like to say that the traditional bodies and NGOs under the CCIB have exhibited their true colours in opposing the proposed fencing of border with Bangladesh. The motive of the fencing is to stop infiltration by Bangladeshis and militant groups and theft by Bangladeshis. We have suffered a lot due to intrusion of miscreants from across the border who come in groups and steal our crops. Now that the CCIB is opposing the border fencing it shows that they are in favour of infiltration by Bangladeshis and are against the safety and security of lives and property of the Indian citizens living in the border areas.

Yours etc.,
Philip Marweñ,
Shillong-2.

Yours etc.,
Robin Rynngksai, PS
Iawram,
Shillong

Facilitating infiltration!!

Editor,
Appropos the news item captioned " Stop Border

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.

CHCs due to absence of doctors and basic health infrastructure. The people complain against the apathy of the city based doctors who have no passion to serve the rural folks. Doctors complain that quarters are inhabitable. General complaints are the lack of medical provision for newborn, inadequate medicines, negligible ambulances services to cater to emergencies etc.

It is no wonder that institutional delivery in Meghalaya is unsatisfactory. The situation is similar in other north eastern states. Despite the various programmes implemented to augment institutional delivery, the response in the region is low. Barring Mizoram and Sikkim all the other north eastern states are outliers and way below the national average of around 49% as per the National Family Health Survey-3. Meghalaya's institutional delivery rate stands at 30% with Nagaland occupying the bottom of the table at 12%. Institutional delivery for the rural areas of Meghalaya would be even less than 30%. Not much would have changed with the new NHFW-4. The lack of response in the North East has frustrated policy makers. Recently JP Nadda the Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare raised the issue and asked for new approaches to tackle the problem.

Different states are coming up with different schemes to promote health services. The Meghalaya Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS) was launched with an objective to provide financial aid at the time of hospitalization and reduce out-of-pockets expenses for residents. Many pregnant mothers have availed the insurance for hospital delivery since the scheme would cover all expenses. An audit exercise is prudent to find out how many have utilized the MHIS specifically for hospital deliveries. Has it increased over the years or remained stagnant? And importantly how many of those deliveries involved caesarean operations? Since the Caesarian section is expensive (than natural births) all expenses would accrue to the government via the MHIS. It would be interesting to see if Caesarian operations have increased after the MHIS was launched in Meghalaya. How can MHIS improve the low malnutrition count of the state as revealed by the NFHS-4? These are important questions as they would bring out the quality of health care services being provided through insurance which is increasingly considered superior than traditional health care provision via the PHCs/CHCs.

It is time to have a holistic approach to health care services. There are complaints of malpractices, incorrect diagnosis, discrimination by doctors etc compelling NGOs to intervene and aggravate the situation. Patients' grievances against a doctor or a health care facility must also be addressed with proper compensation for any wrongdoing. The health care system needs to be comprehensively revised to bring in transparency and accountability. This would also bring to an end the blame game and NGOs interference in the working and functioning of a health care institution. The benefits of such an exercise would accrue to those who need basic health care the most.

"The secret of success is sincerity. Once you can fake that you've got it made."

--- Jean Giraudoux

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 58

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2016

Education Reform

EDUCATION is one of the top priorities in India. The UPA decided to make Class X CBSE Board Examinations optional. It had also decided to introduce a no-fail policy up to class VIII. The objective was to enable students to breathe the air of freedom at school and not prompted to drop out. However, this policy has had an unfortunate side-effect. It has resulted in a decline in learning outcomes in several states. These states have asked the Centre to withdraw the no-fail policy and make Class X CBSE exams compulsory. But will the fear of examinations improve learning outcomes? What is apparent is that the government has failed to implement Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) as mandated by RTE. It is not students who have failed and they should not be punished. It proves that the government is not all that serious about the vital area of education. Political parties come and go out of office and policies change. Assessment and accountability go awry. There has been a qualitative deterioration in the recruitment of teachers.

90% of aspiring teachers fail the Center's Teacher's Eligibility Test year after year. Teacher absenteeism is as high as 40% in the poor states. English teachers cannot speak English. Teachers' recruitment is in a sorry mess. Before pondering over examinations, the quality of teachers should be in sharp focus. Critical thinking among teachers should be encouraged and ability in that area should be amply rewarded. What students need is not elimination of examinations. It is availability of good teachers and good jobs after the completion of their educational course.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Tripura's Industrialisation

Thanks to its abundant potential of natural gas, Tripura bids fair to come up very fast and prominently on the industrial map of India. It may not indeed be too tall a claim on the part of the Chief Minister, Mr Sudhir Ranjan Majumdar that the State government was determined to take up the challenge for developing backward Tripura into an industrially advanced state by the turn of the century. The industrial scene had already started looking up and a few gas-based industries were working satisfactorily. Finalisation of a few more industrial projects was on the cards. An agreement has been signed earlier this month for setting up a 50-tonne capacity vanaspati unit between a Delhi based private company and the Tripura Industrial Development Corporation. A proposal for the setting up of a nearly Rs 115 crore methanol plant was now nearing finalisation. The methanol plant has the distinction of being the first to have attracted an investment of Rs 9 crore from the Oil and

Natural Gas Commission as equity. A decision to approve ONGC's investment in the methanol plant was taken recently by Its Board. This is in line with the giant public sector undertaking's new policy of taking part in the equity of gas-based projects to be set up in and around Tripura. The Union government agreed to allow ONGC setting up joint ventures with State governments in the north-eastern region and power plants, methanol projects and sponge iron units were being mentioned in this context. The project cost is estimated at Rs 114 crore and the time schedule for its implementation is 36 months after the zero date. What additionally contribute to the Chief Minister's optimism is perhaps that leading industrial houses in the country are evincing keen interest to set up industrial units in Tripura. Official sources said that several of these houses have submitted

proposals for launching their projects and the State government was interested in taking advantage of the "experience, technical know-how and investment capabilities of those reputed concerns". Several industrialists from different parts of the country had recently visited the state and substantial progress has been achieved towards setting up of a few big industries under Joint sector, sources added. While the State government would offer the infrastructural facilities, what appears to have been attracting entrepreneurs is the cheap availability of natural gas and also man power.

Against this bright prospect looms large the deepening economic crisis in Bangladesh at the other end of a tenuous 800 km border inviting ceaseless infiltration from that country. The fact that many of the infiltrators are only day-time intruders offering cheap labour or attending cinemas, getting treated in hospitals and then returning to their country in the evening may not pose a political problem as such but its economic implication is bound to be grave. The more industries are opened at our end, the more would be the incentive for such migratory labour offering unhealthy competition with the locals who many eventually be driven out since the entrepreneurs would more interested in getting the cheapest labour irrespective of their nationality residence. A good percentage of them would in due course settled down permanently, which is a possibility directly affecting the tribal-nontribal demography raising thus a grave political question. The long international border must therefore be brought under effective vigil on all kinds of infiltration to make the benefits of on-going industrialisation safe and secure for the locals of all categories.

The Importance of being late: A new VIP status

By Patricia Mukhim

Someone has right said, "Being late does not make you an important or special person. Whoever you are doesn't reserve you the right to be late."

We used to be a society that did not know the meaning of class and the VIP culture. Thanks to a misreading of the Indian Constitution, today every elected representative or any head of an institution feels he/she has the right to take the citizens for granted. I am saying this from the context of a citizen who attends sundry meetings and has to wait for a VIP to arrive at every meeting before things get going. In recent times one has been to several such gathering /functions where the VIPs were late, not by a few minutes by over an hour. The wait for the chief guest at the recently held seminar organized by the ICSSR to launch the ASEAN Study Centre at the Convention Centre, NEHU ran to over 90 minutes while we all sat fiddling our thumbs as if we had nothing better to do. The VIP who was the chief guest did not consider it important to apologise and neither did the organizers consider it their duty to explain the delay. It's taken for granted that the VIP has the right to be late and lesser mortals have the right to wait.

This week there were two functions where in each of them the Chief Guest as usual turned up late. One was the inaugural function of the North East AgroBusiness Trade (NEAT) organized by the North East Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP) an NEA-IFAD collaboration and the other was the Get Together for Harmony organized by the Central Puja Committee. The chief guests for both functions turned up late as usual. For the first function a number of students were invited to fill up the Soso Tham auditorium and they were seated there since 12.30

pm. Being a captive audience and school children they could hardly protest. Out of deference for the organizers some of us arrived five minutes before the scheduled time of 1 pm. At 1.30 pm the compere announced that the chief guest had arrived. But instead of coming to the hall since he was already late, the VIP went to the stalls to see the goods exhibited. I guess the organizers from NERCORMP were too beholden to the VIP to even tell him that there were people waiting in the hall and that he was already late by 30 minutes. Seeing this utter disregard for punctuality some of us decided to leave the venue. That was one way to protest this nauseas VIP culture.

At the CPC get together too one tried to arrive by 3.40 pm since the programme was scheduled to start at 3.45 pm. And when a VIP is expected at any function the common person is always warned to be seated at least 10 minutes before the Honorable arrives. So people were seated well before time (at least most people who respect themselves and respect time were seated by 3.30-3.40). The invitation said the function would start at 3.45 pm. It finally started at 4.15 pm. This is a travesty of discipline and respect for other peoples' time. We have arrived at a point in history when time is at a premium and people are busy. No one is just sitting around waiting for an invitation to a function unless one is a social butterfly. So to take the audience for granted and to expect them to stand and welcome a late-arriving VIP is to me a mockery of everything I have learnt in school and at home.

People who are invited as VIPs to a function must understand that it is the Chair they are currently occupying which is being respected here and not their personal bearings. So if they arrive late at any function they are discrediting the

positions they hold and perhaps prove, inadvertently that they are not worthy of the positions they hold. A VIP can never claim that he/she was held up in a traffic jam since the roads are cleared and sanitized for that worthy to travel on. Hence being late is not an excuse. But perhaps there is a degree of chauvinism that is operating at some psychological level that this is a tribal state and the tribal audience should jolly well wait to be given a lecture by those whom the Gods have blessed to be born elsewhere other than in a casteless society. This, to my mind plays a big role in the manner in which VIPs take their responsibilities.

But there are VIPs and VIPs. Some are too well groomed and genteel to make their audience wait. This whole culture of informing a VIP that the hall is not yet full and hence he should not be making appearance is something very Indian too and the rigmarole must have emanated from some ego-driven individual sitting in Government House at some point in time. If a VIP is told that a function is starting at 4 PM and the audience is asked to be seated by 3.50 PM then the VIP should be in the hall at 4 PM whether or not the hall is full. The programme should start with the audience already seated. Those who lack self respect and enter late to a function should also be shown their place. This kowtowing to VIPs and cool acceptance of late comers has become Meghalaya's bane. No wonder we are unable to progress. How can a state with an elite that's lacking in punctuality and a citizenry that disrespects discipline ever make progress?

We waste so much time waiting for VIPs to arrive at sundry functions that if we were to count those minutes they would run into hundreds of precious hours. I can't recall any meeting I have attended in recent times which has started on time. We are late for appointments. At meetings

we beat around the bush because we are unprepared and never really get to the point. We give long-winded speeches because of the sense of self-importance and because we love to hear our own voices.

In this respect the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi does not tolerate filibustering. He wants people to come to the point. We experienced this when as a group at the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) we had to make a presentation on a potential security doctrine for India. Our chairperson was a seasoned diplomat but even he suffered the jitters before making this presentation knowing that Mr Modi has time neither for bureaucratise or pleonasts (someone who uses more words than necessary). Indeed many of us speak a lot without saying anything much. In other words there is no substance in what we speak, whether this is in a church or a formal function. The sub-text of our speech is empty rhetoric. It becomes a colossal waste of collective time if we multiply the number of people in the audience by the time taken in each function we attend.

So what do we do then? Continue with "business as usual" and molly-cuddle our VIPs just because they are VIPs and never let their consciences prick them when they keep hundreds of people waiting? If a VIP does not understand that he is wasting everyone's time by arriving late at a function then does he deserve to hold that dignified position? I wonder who has the courage to break the protocol by starting a function on time and calling a young person from the audience to be the chief guest. But I guess we will never get there because we are too beholden to the VIP for favours of all kinds! So long live VIPism and long live Patronage Democracy!

TO THE EDITOR

Surgical strikes across the LOC

Editor,
The successful surgical strikes carried out by the Indian army across the LOC against terror launch pads have taken almost everyone by surprise. This is a significant departure from the age-old policy of strategic restraint where you create a pandemonium in the international forum post any such brazen attack as Pathankot and Uri and finally retreat to the dialogue table. It's difficult and too early to gauge any upper hand and edge India will gain from these strikes. Nevertheless, I salute the political will of the present central government for taking the fight to Pakistan hitherto unseen in any of the previous governments. The capability of the Indian army was never in question, often hailed as one of the most professional armed forces in the world. It's just that not many governments in the past had the courage to give a free hand to the army to show the enemy its might.

Now the big question is that since for the first time India has retaliated militarily towards Pakistan's persistent provocations, what are the possible repercussions India must be vigilant about.

Firstly, Pakistan could strike through terror

outfits like the LET, JEM, HIM etc. who are part of their state policy and carry out major attacks on military installations in J&K and elsewhere. Secondly, these outfits could activate their sleeper cells which are present in many major Indian cities to plot and plan a major terror attack similar to 26/11. However, any attack on civilians involves the risk of inviting widespread international condemnation and further isolation of Pakistan. Thirdly, Pakistani army could abet massive influx of terrorists into J&K to exploit the ongoing unrest there and attract world attention on Indian atrocities. Fourthly, attack Indian interests in South Asia like the 2008 bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul given Pakistan's history of deep terror inroads in Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

It'll be interesting to see what options Pakistan handpicks. With this embarrassment, the stakes are indeed high and pressure immense on the army to respond adequately. India with its first ever surgical strike has in clear terms sent out a message to Pakistan that it has had enough and any further provocation in any form will lead to further military actions. And make no mistake, the army will up the ante next time and it'll be a much bigger strike than these surgical ones. It's entirely up to Pakistan now whether it chooses to fall in line or climb the escalation ladder.

Yours etc.,

Of lengthy speeches!

Editor,

I sincerely hope somebody is going to take cognizance of the Governor's marathon speech while the children were fainting in the field. Can somebody please bring this to their attention so they would have more common sense and be more sensitive to such things.

Your etc.,
Albert Steven,
Viaemail

Comparisons are odious!

Editor,

Apropos the letter by Krishnendu Deb about the degeneration of Shillong, I think it is wrong to allude to Shillong Shillong as the Scotland of the East. In my understanding, as a student of history and tradition, the English didn't refer to Shillong as the Scotland of the east because of its beauty. In fact there is nothing to compare Shillong with Scotland merely because of one open golf course. Scotland is a land surrounded by seas and oceans which for us in the Khasi hills is unimaginable. If there is one thing where Shillong can be compared with Scotland it is the age old tradition of the clan and family support system that Scots also share. It also brings forth the argument of a certain Dr. Singh teaching

in Oxford and Cambridge, and a Meitei by birth who in his treatise pointed out the fact that of all tribes in the Northeast, only the Khasi Tribe migrated from the west to the east and that the XY chromosome indicates the eastward movement and that the tribes moved in an eastwardly direction after portions of them settled down in the Khasi Hills and that these chromosomes are found all over Southeast Asia. The tradition of electing selecting chieftains is similar to that of the Scots. In the traditions of the past, we know of, "U Syiem kampher la dei u mraw, hima synshar u rit u khraw" (It matters not if the chieftain is a slave/ rule of the Hima is by the humble and the mighty), the practice of which can be studied in Scottish history. The tradition of raising monoliths and megaliths is also ery Gaelic in its existence. Is it not about time that some scholarly study is done on these seemingly small but significant facts?

I am writing this from Vietnam where I have been traveling to Laos also to see the similarity in the rural areas of these nations

Yours etc.,
D Kitbok Rynthiang,
Viaemail

Use of outdated book

Editor,
I wish to draw the attention of the MBOSE

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

SHIVPAL YADAV GROOMING SON ADITYA TO CHALLENGE AKHILESH

As Shivpal Yadav has pitchforked his son Aditya to challenge his nephew Akhilesh Yadav., acrimony between the Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav and his chief minister son Akhilesh has risen to such heights that they have stopped talking to each other. Akhilesh supporters however blame his step mother Sadhna Gupta. She is alleged to be behind all that is happening in Mulayam Singh Yadav's family. The acrimony between the father and son has reached such a height that they are not even talking to each other. Unhappy and jealous over the discrimination of her son Prateek and his wife Aparna, Sadhna is alleged to be the cause behind the differences between Shivpal and Akhilesh resulting in the isolation of Akhilesh. Mulayam is said to have become a puppet in her hands and is dancing to her tune. After all it is his old age marriage said a senior party

war room in Texas by Amarish, the Indans find themselves closer to Trump because of his anti Pakistan stance but his migration policy has worried the Indians. Amarish however told his father KC Tyagi not to be too shocked as his trip to US was only professional and had nothing to do with his ideology. And that his ideology remains the same as before.

ASHOK BHARTI, THE NEW DALIT ICON AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Ashok Bharti is the new star n the dalit horizon. This is giving jitters to all the dalit leaders in the country including Prakash Ambedkar, the grandson of Baba Saheb Ambedkar. Prakash Rao Ambedkar, the grandson of Baba Saheb Dr B R Ambedkar has recently been in news for his hectic action that he has been doing in North India. Recently, he organised a joint rally with Sitaram Yechury and Sudhakar Reddy, both being the top leaders of CPI(M) and CPI respectively. However,

The acrimony between the father and son has reached such a height that they are not even talking to each other. Unhappy and jealous over the discrimination of her son Prateek and his wife Aparna, Sadhna is alleged to be the cause behind the differences between Shivpal and Akhilesh resulting in the isolation of Akhilesh. Mulayam is said to have become a puppet in her hands and is dancing to her tune.

member who is supporting Akhilesh. She has put all her powers behind Shivpal against Akhilesh who she wants to see to be removed from the chief minister's post and replaced by her son or daughter in law. Aware of Akhilesh's popularity and scared of the possibility that such a move in haste can boomerang, she is now backing Shivpal and his son Aditya. Both Sadhna and Shivpal have pitchforked Aditya as a challenger to Akhilesh. These days, Aditya has started looking after the work of his father. It is he who first met people and then only Shivpal meets them. Shivpal is grooming him for the future.

K C TYAGI'S SON AMARISH GAVE ADVICE FOR DONALD TRUMP CAMPAIGN

Socialist leader K C Tyagi, known for his anti America antecedents, was shocked to hear from his psephologist son Amarish Tyagi that he had gone to US to help Trump in his campaign. Amarish was invited by Alexander Nix, the CEO of the company Cambridge Analytica that is looking after the campaign of the Republican Party in US Presidential elections. He was however put up in in Texas that houses their war room and is the headquarters of Donald Trump./.. Amarish was invited to work there with the West Asians as also Non Resident Indians settled in US. The Indians in US are the third largest community in America only after the Chinese and the Philipinos. The NRIs constitute about 3.18 % of the US population as per the report submitted to Matt Czokowski, the head of the

Prakash Ambedkar failed to mobilised his party men to Parliament Street Sit-In as he promised to the left leaders. Mr Ambedkar complained to one of the senior bureaucrats in present dispensation that his party has been hijacked by Ashok Bharti in Delhi. Ashok Bharti, a renowned Dalit face in Delhi told the left leaders that Prakash Ambedkar directed him in Mumbai in August that he need not mobilise his people for this left supported program and accordingly he sent the same message across to the people, resulting scanty presence of members of RPI.

SHEILA DIKSHIT LOOKING FOR SAFE SEAT FOR ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Sheila Dikshit, the chief ministerial candidate of the Congress for Uttar Pradesh is still reluctant to go back to UP. She has yet not identified a safe constituency from where she wants to fight the assembly election. Among the constituencies that have been identified for her are Kanpur Noida, Allahabad, Sheher buxi ka talaav in Lucknow, and Varanasi Cantt. Jitin Prasad is said to have offered her the brahmin and muslim dominated Maholi in Sitapur. It is supposed to be the safest seat for her. But she is more interested in the Sahibabad assembly segment which is populated with the east UP people. But the fact is that she wants to be spared from contesting. She wants only to campaign but there is pressure from within the rank and file that if the leader does not fight, what will the cadres do. (IPA)

officials to the use of an outdated book in Class IX Computer Science. The programming language we are studying in school is basic which is the most outdated among the programming languages available today. As we know this is known as the 'digital age' in which computer technology is advancing at a rapid pace but our MBOSE is still stuck in outdated programming. As a student

I request the MBOSE officials to look into this matter and update the book at the earliest. I would

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

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.

"If my hands are fully occupied in holding on to something, I can neither give nor receive."

--- Dorothee Solle

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 59

SHILLONG, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2016

Rahul Gandhi's disparaging remarks

FOLLOWING the surgical strikes by the Indian military across the Line of Control (LOC) at Pakistan's terror launch pads, all political parties had closed ranks and supported the Government's retaliation to Uri and Pathankot by abandoning the non-committal Strategic Restraint Policy followed by India for decades. India did not wish to trigger a nuclear war since Pakistan has repeatedly asserted that it has nuclear strike capability. This restraint was perceived by the enemy country to be a sign of India's weakness. And that perception gained currency since India chose not to retaliate despite repeated attacks by Pakistan-trained terrorists on its soil, the most outrageous one being the one at Mumbai in November 26, 2008.

The recent surgical strike was a tactical move to show Pakistan that India is capable of hitting back. Ironically, discordant voices from the political class on the authenticity of the strike and their demand to make the video clips of the strike public, only casts aspersions on the claims of our armed forces. Even on issues of national interest, political parties are incapable of transcending their narrow political interests. If Pakistan has cast aspersions on the genuineness of the surgical strikes, we can toss the statement aside for that is natural coming from an enemy country. But when the discordant notes come from within, then it is time for the people of this country to carefully reflect on the ideologies of the parties they vote to power. Congress Vice President, Rahul Gandhi, known to be somewhat of a loose cannon has accused Prime Minister Modi of making political capital out of the recent surgical strikes. The Gandhi scion used the pejorative Hindi word "Dalali" meaning trader or merchant to define Modi. This, despite the Prime Minister's call to his cabinet colleagues to refrain from chest-thumping over the surgical strikes! Clearly, there is in this country today a tendency to play politics even with as serious an issue as national security. This has dimmed the unanimous applause given to the armed forces for avenging the 18 deaths at Uri and before that at Pathankot. Alas! No one in the Congress has the courage of conviction to rein in their crown prince!

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

A legal issue in the current affairs of NEHU

The north Eastern Hill University may get a regular Vice-Chancellor any day now; but there is a legal question which needs to be attended to by the visitors otherwise the centre will be making NEHU a laughing stock for the thinkers.

That Dr. Rajendra Kumar Mishra was to handover charge on the 26th February this year was not unknown to the Ministry of Human Resource Development. New Delhi must know everything because it has means to collect information. For example, the SIB, SSB and the State Intelligence services are here to keep it abreast of the development. Besides the visitors in his capacity as President of India has both the military and air force intelligence services at his disposal only the will to act prudently seems to be lacking. In fact, with the exception of a questionable telegraphic message of March 2, nothing tangible has come from the centre. The Telegram becomes questionable because it was addressed to the Vice-Chancellor of NEHU when the university did not have one since March 1 and has been functioning as such till the time of writing this. It was a known fact that NEHU had two pro vice chancellors one for the Aizawl and another for the Kohima campuses; but both ceased to hold the position because their term is co-terminous with that of the VC's who recommended or appointed them. Statute 3.2 speaks clearly thus: "the term of office Pro vice-

Chancellor shall be such as may be decided by the Executive Council but it shall not in any case exceed five years until the expiration of the term of office of the Vice-Chancellor whichever is earlier and he shall be legible for reappointment".

Dr. Mishra handed over charge on the 28th February (26th and 27th being holidays). Thus both the teaching and non teaching staff associations viewed the office of Vice Chancellor as vacant Dr. Mehrotra claimed that he was appointed or authorized by the Executive Council to serve as Acting Vice Chancellor. The Executive Council has power to appoint all other officers of the NEHU, but the vice chancellor which powers to appoint vests in the President of India in his capacity as visitors. It might be an encroachment on the powers of the Visitor had it acted on the contrary of the powers vested in it. It is a matter for the EC to find out if the Registrar who is a custodian of all records of the University by virtue of statute 4 (6) (a) has the minutes of the last executive has the minutes of the last executive council meeting if not, chance of those being decorated by unauthorized persons can not be ruled out. The provision does not override statute 3 (2) since it does not speak of the expiration of the VC's term of office either by completing the period of five years or on his attaining the age of 65.

Actions after "Surgical Strike"

By KC Reddy

A well planned and carefully calibrated "surgical strike" by Indian special forces, have not only taken Pak authorities by surprise but also have a profound effect on Pakistan's policy of encouraging terrorism on their soil. Leave aside the political controversies whipped up on the authenticity of surgical strikes but they sent a clear and strong message to Pakistan authorities that cross border terrorism will not be tolerated any longer. Prime Minister Modi cautioned to avoid "chest thumping" over army strikes across the LoC (Line of Control) and allow the matter to be dealt by the designated professionals who are already dealing with the issue in a professional manner. It is essential to recognize the commendable work done by armed forces, but at the same time more focus is needed to address various aspects that are likely to be exploited by Pak authorities, if unattended, to achieve their objectives.

Some jingoistic populists even favored a more stringent retaliation to Uri incident in the form of full scale military campaign. Such advocacy may earn popularity among some sections of the masses but it lacks merit. Neither India nor Pakistan can ill-afford to go for war on account of death, destruction and colossal amount of costs involved - a moderate war will cost approximately 15-20 cores a day. According to some estimates the Kargil war costed us 12 crores per day. Moreover, the recent World economic forum's Global Competitiveness index for 2016-17 indicated a significant change in India's rank in the last two years. India's position from 71 in 2014 has changed to 39 in the Global competitive index list. In order to keep its global image as an economic power, India has to keep the pace of change without getting entangled into wars.

Similarly some other emotionally charged populists advocated abrogation of the Indus water Treaty. There is no need to abrogate the Indus Water Treaty- As per the Indus Water Treaty, which was brokered by the World Bank in 1960, India can use 20% share of water from western rivers namely Indus, Chenab, Jhelum for storage, Irrigation and for generation of electricity.

This option can be exercised by India without abrogating the Indus

Water Treaty and hence Pakistan will have no case to resort to international judicial forums. Once India start using its own share of Indus water, it will mount significant internal pressure on Pakistan as there is already a problem on sharing of waters between Sind and Punjab provinces in Pakistan.

Encouraged by the success of surgical strikes, some of the jingoistic populists even advocated overt support to Baluch insurgents in Pakistan with least realizing the fact that India will lose its leverage of exposing Pakistan in aiding and abetting terrorist activities in Kashmir.

It is often argued that Pakistan is our neighbor and hence we, somehow, have to maintain good neighborly relations with them - after all they were part of the same family historically. This is not a sensible argument. How can there be a good or friendly relations in an environment of suspicion and hatred? Probably India may be better off with an openly declared hostile relations rather than maintaining a façade of hypocritical friendly relations.

The peculiar behavior of Pakistan in fomenting trouble in Jammu and Kashmir, using terrorism is an instrument of their foreign policy is often explained with the excuse that the real control of their state is in the hands of some military and mullah elements. Till Pakistan comes out of the control of these elements, India should not make efforts to have friendly relations with Pakistan.

Considering these pros and cons of various options, diplomatic isolation of Pakistan is the most prudent and workable option at this point of time, to elicit support from world powers and mount pressure on Pakistan so that it will desist from encouraging terrorism across the Line of Control (LoC) in future.

The postponement of 19th SAARC summit which was scheduled to be held in November, due to India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Afghanistan pulling out, is a feather in India's "diplomatic success cap" over Pakistan.

India's successful pulling out of the SAARC summit in Islamabad, followed by similar actions by Bangladesh, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka made Pakistan to realize the fact that regional sentiment is against terrorism. So long India maintains in the regional and international forums that their fight is not against Pakistani people,

rather their fight is only against terrorists and their supporters in Pakistani government agencies and their financiers, India is bound to garner more support from other countries in isolating Pakistan. India's diplomatic efforts should be more focused to elicit similar response from the UN security council members like US, UK, Russia and France. Mere statements from these countries will not have impact on Pakistan unless followed by concrete actions like cutting the financial aid and imposing international sanctions on the Pak government authorities who are patronizing terrorism and supporting cross border terrorism.

In the aftermath of surgical strikes, it became a common concern - What steps have to be taken by India both internally and externally to thwart attempts by Pakistani authorities in the coming months.

So far as the actions that are to be taken internally are concerned, like the security forces have to maintain strict vigil not only along the border but also inside the country, intelligence agencies have to work overtime to monitor the activities of the suspected militants and their supporters, security force's preparedness to thwart any attempts of hijacking, hostage taking and bold attacks etc on targets of infrastructure and transport systems, assume importance.

However the crux of the problem lies in how fast the normalcy can be restored in Jammu and Kashmir as Pakistan continue to exploit the Kashmiri youth as long as the situation in Kashmir valley remains volatile.

In the context of actions that are to be taken externally, the security and safety of NRIs (Non resident Indians) working and living outside India, assumes paramount importance due to their vulnerability.

Apart from the sustained diplomatic campaign, the security and safety measures for Indians working and staying outside India, have to reviewed and comprehensive mechanism in terms of information dissemination, calling tree mechanism, security advisories from time to time, have to be devised for their safety and security against threats like kidnapping, hostage taking, mass killings etc.

The encouraging sign is that the efforts to isolate Pakistan diplomatically seem to have started paying dividends finally. Latest media reports indicate that the civilian government in

Pakistan have realized the growing international isolation of Pakistan and expressed their concern to Pakistani military leadership in the All Parties Conference chaired by Nawaz Sharif on 3rd October. The principal demands of India namely - completion of the Pathankot investigation and visible action against Jaish-I-Mohammad and demand of United States on the action be taken against Haqqani net work, also prominently figured in the discussions. ISI Director General, Gen Akhtar and National Security Adviser Janjua have been tasked to visit all four provinces and convey that military-led intelligence agencies are not to interfere if law enforcement agencies act against the banned militant groups. This only confirms the earlier reports that ISI indeed, was interfering whenever the local law enforcement agencies in Pakistan wanted to take action against the banned militant groups. It was further reported that Nawaz Sharif directed speedy completion of Pathankot investigation and restart the Mumbai blast trials pending in Rawalpindi anti terrorism court.

Undoubtedly, these are refreshing decisions in the right direction but time will only tell how far these decisions will be translated into action on the ground and how much sincerity is attached to these discussions by Pak authorities.

The efforts to enhance diplomatic isolation of Pakistan should be continued probably with more vigor, however, caution need to be exercised not to lose the good will and sympathy gained from other countries during this period as any haphazard or hasty action is bound to reverse the recent diplomatic gains by India. It should be borne in mind that India's retaliatory actions may not be directed against the general public of Pakistan; rather they should be focused more against those who are aiding and abetting terrorism.

Prime Minister Modi's election commitment of "minimum government, maximum governance" rightly has a wide spread appeal and acceptance. Similarly it may be considered to adopt a policy of "minimum talk and maximum work" in dealing with Pakistan.

(KC Reddy, I.P.S. (retd) is Former Chief Security Adviser, United Nations)

calculating the total scores of the competitors from all the 8 court rooms and chose the 16 teams to proceed to the next round on the basis of the total marks. This has deprived the right of the winners of some court rooms to be selected though they qualified. Hence this has deprived those from competent institutions from coming forward. Such irresponsible conduct by the organizers sends a ooor signal about our state and NEHU.

This also shows up the poor administration on the part of the Law Department. Perhaps, there exists a clear spirit of favouritism and nepotism among the organizers themselves. If this is not so then how can the organizers justify and deprive the winners of other court rooms to proceed to the next round and send them home with an insulting message 'though you are winners but we cannot consider you because we have our own criteria to calculate the marks/points beside what is done or given

by the judge'. This is bizarre, arbitrary, unprofessional and with no transparency from the side of the organizers of the respective department.

Yours etc.,
Peter Aiborlang Dohkrut
(also a participant in the said National Moot Court 2016)
Shillong - 17

Power Crisis in Meghalaya

Editor,
It is learnt from news reports that the Meghalaya Electrical Power Corporation is facing serious trouble. This important power project has been providing power for domestic, commercial and industrial activities. Everybody needs electricity to run their businesses. But with time the power generation capacity of the State has deteriorated because the executives have failed miserably. They are

corruptible, incompetent and even lack the vision for power production in Meghalaya. And where are those technocrats/qualified technical experts to rectify the problem that arises from time to time. It is understood that the Corporation is on the verge of bankruptcy, considering that the MeECL is unable to clear the NEEPCo loan in time, including other outstanding bills. If so, where is the future of MeECL?. During monsoon, the Umiam Reservoir is flooded with garbage floating from its catchment and the adjoining areas of Shillong which results in loss of water storage capacity and almost every year, the water level has not reached the FRL but the technical people don't seem to have any idea to deal with the problem (i.e. renovation of the dam and its surroundings).

In view of the above observation and to free itself from further shame, it is advisable that MeECL is handed over to any competent private power producing company for the

Mismanagement of the NEHU College Semester System

By Wanjop Laloo

The flaws in management of the College Semester System by the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) are indeed a matter of serious concern for the teachers and students for the system is not at all systematically administered. It might be benefiting the university monetarily but there are lots of difficulties that the students and teachers have to face in this system. The points I want to highlight are as follows.

First, the options of subjects' combinations available to the students needs a serious revamp in the light of UGC curriculum as well as that of other universities of higher ranks. Otherwise, it may prevent a student from performing well in the subject that he takes which is already circumscribed. This may accumulate to a point when a student may not be able to clear the subjects during the specified duration. Why not let the students choose their own subject combinations which was allowed in the previous annual system conducted by NEHU?

Second, the syllabus that is framed for the semester system is somewhat not in sync with the aspirations of young college students. It seems as if they are doing their post graduation rather than their graduation for everything is covered at the college level, thereby taking the education system from bad to worse.

Third, a student is allowed to offer honours even though his aggregate does not match the criteria compared to the earlier annual system. Why not the university conduct a 4 semester programme for general course and, after the completion of 4th semester, allow only qualified students to take up honours with an additional 5th and 6th semester in their Honours papers, and finally declare those students, who do not qualify for Honours in the first four semesters, as passed in the general category.

Fourth, every semester exam is conducted at the end of that semester which comprises a six-month course. The inherent defect is that under the given schedule, hardly four months time is available in a semester. For instance classes started this year 2016 in the middle of June; semester exams fall in the last week of September and first week of October so it is virtually impossible to

complete the course with all the assignments and the internal tests in such a short period, and ultimately students are the losers in the hotchpotch management of things in insufficient time. Why not have a complete six months course rather than making things complex?

Fifth, the university system of weighing marks is not suitable to the current scientific system of education. This just makes the system rigid and difficult. Many students failed in the past 2 semester exams that were conducted by the university. In fact many students are rendered as drop-outs because they find themselves too difficult to cope with such a messy system. How shall we refer to this system: to increase literacy rate or to reduce it?

Sixth, students who opt to reappear their first semester's failed paper in the third semester, have to sit for their exam both in the morning as well as in the afternoon. This is very rigorous. When we are all trying to scientifically simplify education for better results, why are we complicating simple things rather than focusing on mechanisms for enhancing human resource? Why not frame the routine/academic calendar in such a way to make adjustments and make it convenient both for the repeaters and the regulars.

All the parents and the teachers are puzzled by the current semester system run by the North Eastern Hill University. I personally have a fear that after the sixth semester we may have maximum drop outs and minimum pass out students. It's an earnest appeal to the university to kindly look into the matter and try to rectify the loopholes in the system.

To conclude, one is reminded of the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "By education I mean an all-round drawing out the best in child and man, body and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning". Education certainly is a means to all-round progress of a person. It is a pathway to human development and a basis of achieving one's dream and purpose; let's not destroy this dream of our students by turning the education system into a curse; lets nurture and bring out the best out in the learners and help them achieve their purpose and destination.

TO THE EDITOR

National Moot Court Competition

Editor,
The National Moot Court Competition is being organized by NEHU Law Department from Oct 5-7. A Moot Court may be rightly called a "mock court" but the manner in which NEHU Law Department conducts the first National Moot Court Competition 2016 in this region, makes a mockery of the very purpose of holding a national moot court competition.

The Law Department, NEHU receives Rs 15 lakh for the programme from the University which is not commensurate to the programme. There are 32 teams from the leading Law Schools and Institutions across the country including a renowned Law College from the city that are participating in this programme. The manner in

which the NEHU Law Department conducted the moot court left much to be desired. There is no transparency in the marking system; teams which did not appear at the exact time to compete were given a second chance instead of a walk over. The method of elimination is completely bizarre and unjust.

For the preliminary rounds there are 8 different moot court rooms assigned with different judges for 32 teams. Four teams are being sent to one court room to compete with each other and be judged by two judges (appointed by the department). From these 32 teams 16 teams are to be selected for the next round which logically applied to be selected on the basis of their competency from each different moot court rooms. But what is astonishing here is that the organizers instead of taking the winners from each court room to compete with the winners of other court rooms in the next round did otherwise. They judged the winners by

calculating the total scores of the competitors from all the 8 court rooms and chose the 16 teams to proceed to the next round on the basis of the total marks. This has deprived the right of the winners of some court rooms to be selected though they qualified. Hence this has deprived those from competent institutions from coming forward. Such irresponsible conduct by the organizers sends a ooor signal about our state and NEHU.

This also shows up the poor administration on the part of the Law Department. Perhaps, there exists a clear spirit of favouritism and nepotism among the organizers themselves. If this is not so then how can the organizers justify and deprive the winners of other court rooms to proceed to the next round and send them home with an insulting message 'though you are winners but we cannot consider you because we have our own criteria to calculate the marks/points beside what is done or given

by the judge'. This is bizarre, arbitrary, unprofessional and with no transparency from the side of the organizers of the respective department.

Yours etc.,
Peter Aiborlang Dohkrut
(also a participant in the said National Moot Court 2016)
Shillong - 17

smooth running of the power projects and to bring an end to the power crisis in the State.

Yours etc.,
B Tariang,
Sohra

Quality of text book in MBOSE

Editor
With reference to the outdated syllabus and book prescribed by MBOSE in Computer Science of Class XI, one must point out that both the syllabus and text book is horribly outdated. This poses a serious challenge on the knowledge and intellect of the students. As a guardian, I was shocked to see the outdated contents of the textbook of Class XI. The MBOSE authorities should scrutinize the syllabus and quality of text books periodically for the improvement of quality of education in the state.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request.

This Work's No Child's Play

By Saadia Azim

Keshav Sagar, 13, lives in Siwal village, located at the periphery of Meerut in Uttar Pradesh. His everyday routine revolves around football.

But unlike many of his counterparts in the big towns, this teenager stitches them — to earn a small living. He proudly declares: “My brother and I help our mother and we stitch the best footballs in the area. I think stitching them is far tougher than scoring a goal.”

Young Saira Bano, who lives in Miya Mohammed Nagar near Keshav's village, takes out time after school and household chores to bind books to add to her family's income. She gets bone tired by the end of the day but there is no way out of this.

Keshav and Saira are among the hundreds of thousands of children who are going through childhood juggling multiple roles — they try to strike a balance between schooling and work, leaving little time to have fun and live carefree, which is the right of every child. When one talks of home-based workers, images of poor, exploited women come to mind.

However, child labour adds a whole new dimension to this narrative, especially now that the newly amended Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act allows children of up to 14 years to work in their ‘family trade’ after school.

Meerut is a well-known centre for quality sporting goods, including football as well as cricket bats, balls and stumps.

But this fame comes with the infamy of widespread child labour. In most homes in the hamlets dotting the area, there are youngsters like Keshav and his brothers who painstakingly contribute to the manufacturing line of the very goods that most of them don't even have time to play with themselves. Added to that is the risk of injury and other health issues later in life.

Keshav says, “There are many times when my hands bleed because the needle pierces through my skin. It

A village in Meerut where children stay away from playground to stitch footballs & skip school to bind books to earn extra money is a microcosm of Bharat

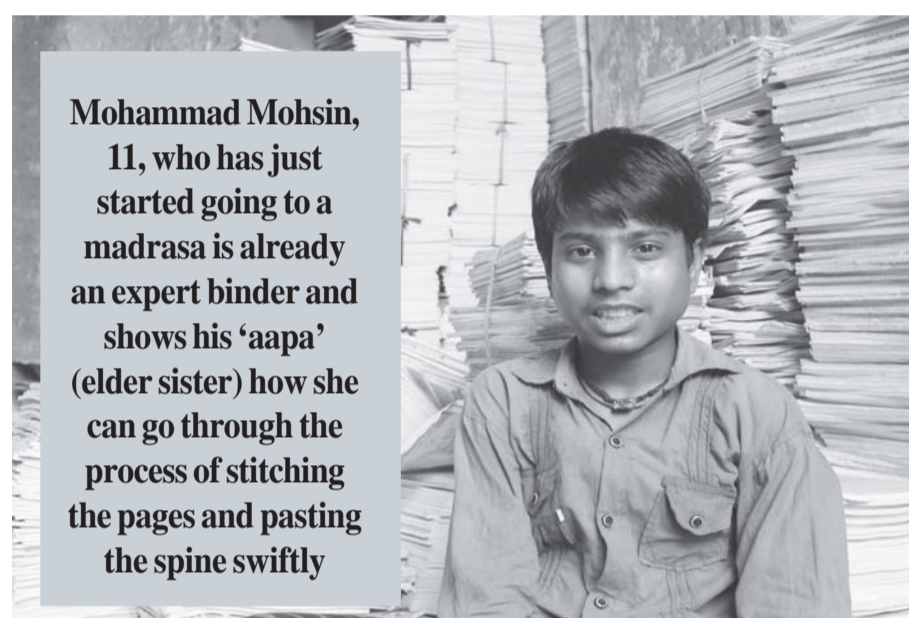


CHILDHOOD LOST: (Top left) Keshav Sagar with his brother and his family that manages to make Rs 120 per day by stitching eight footballs

usually happens when I am in a hurry. But then that's one way in which we can stitch more and earn more.” So how much do they make on an average? Good quality work fetches anywhere between Rs 10 to Rs 15 per football depending on the finish and uniformity of the stitch. It takes a day or two to finish stitching a football and between them the family can make eight balls, which translate into Rs 120 per day. That's less than the Rs 210 they would make if they sought work under MGNREGA.

Does Keshav not get tempted to kick around a ball or two? Not really, as he already has a packed day. The contractors make two trips a week to pick up the balls and their deadlines are strict.

“Earlier, due to our difficult circumstances, I had dropped out of school but I have rejoined recently because I realise that though I may not be getting great quality education, which will enable me to excel at something else later in life, I do need to learn to read and write properly. However, that leaves me with virtually no time for fun



Mohammad Mohsin, 11, who has just started going to a madrasa is already an expert binder and shows his 'aapa' (elder sister) how she can go through the process of stitching the pages and pasting the spine swiftly

and games. Once I'm back I know I have to get to my other 'work', which is very important for all of us, especially my mother who has many chores to do besides this,” he elaborates, with wisdom and understanding that belies his young age.

Of course, the truth is that Keshav may never have gone back to school had it not been for the intervention of the activists of World Vision India, an international humanitarian agency,

which is implementing a child labour programme focused on ensuring every child's right to education. “There's no denying the reality that economic compulsions force children like Keshav to earn a living. But it has been our endeavour to motivate them and their parents to send them back to school. This way, at least they get to study.”

Apart from awareness building, the organisation has set up child care and tuition centres which help

dropouts to catch up with their studies. “But it's tough to keep them there for a length of time because they want to go home and assist their mothers,” he adds.

Child rights activists and advocates are not too happy with the changes made to the Child Labour Act. “Whereas the amendment prohibits children below 14 years from seeking work because it is in violation of their fundamental right to education. At the same time it has introduced a provision that allows them to work

after school hours to help the family in their fields or do home-based work or go into the forest to collect produce.

“While this may not be formally termed as child labour it essentially does permit them to do it as long as their parents fulfil the obligation of sending them to school. What is of concern here is that such an arrangement makes sure that these children are never really able to progress from being employed in the unorganised sector. They never have enough time to pick up any new skills nor do they get any recreation,” explains Joseph Wesley, a child protection advocate.

Article 32 of the United Nations Child Rights Convention, of which India is a signatory, specifies that “children's work should not jeopardise any of their other rights, including the right to education, or the right to relaxation and play”.

Yet Keshav and others have no option but to bear this double load. And since their labour is no longer considered ‘work’, for the longest time they are

doomed to be toiling as unpaid paid labourers with little say in their employability or the marketing of the products they produce.

For girls like Saira Bano the work load is only tripled. Every day before she leaves for school she does the home chores, like cooking and filling water. Thereafter, she's off for her classes. After a long day with the textbooks she gets back to give food to her younger siblings and then heads over to a ‘relative's’ home where she works till nightfall binding books.

Her younger brother, Mohammad Mohsin, 11, who has just started going to a madrasa is already an expert binder and shows his ‘aapa’ (elder sister) how she can go through the process of stitching the pages and pasting the spine swiftly.

Previously, they used to carry heavy loads of hard-bound books from the binding unit to the shops or the contractor's offices. Only now they have been involved in the binding process.

The duo works as daily wagers and makes a measly Rs 20 per day — but their father remains ill and it's up to them to help their mother

make ends meet. There are times when they have to miss school. “If the work is not done on time the contractor might refuse to pick up the books and then all our labour might be in vain; what good will that do,” reasons Saira.

In the past, contractors used to be wary of police raids and inspections but that's not the case anymore. Children, on their part, are convinced that this is their best choice, so they find ways to derive joy from what they do. For instance, Mohsin says shyly, “I like binding the books with my sister, more so nowadays, as I can read a few lines from them. I like the company of books.”

It is certainly a complex issue. If poverty forces them to pick between destitution and back-breaking work, it also ensures that school or no school, they cannot overcome their adverse conditions because interrupted, half-hearted education means little in the long run. In the absence of child rights or labour rights, they don't have much to look forward to. (WFS)

(Photo credit: Mahima Sasank)

By Elayne Clift

Does anyone still remember, as I do, a time when people were courteous and respectful toward one another? When they bothered to respond to phone messages and personal or professional letters or to render thanks for gifts and good deeds? When sexual innuendo was off limits and when behavioral boundaries prevailed no matter what someone really thought? Where has that kind of civility gone, I wonder?

Nothing reveals how seriously eroded civility has become more than Donald Trump's atrocious tweets, his vicious slurs and childish insults, his mockery, and even his lies (it's hard to be untruthful to people you respect). His followers are no better. Just take a look at the hateful comments spewed on social media, where it's possible to behave despicably without having to show your face, or take responsibility for your words.

I've had my own experiences with online viciousness. Recently, I stopped posting to one blogsite because of the comments I was receiving, which ranged from the mild rebuke “get over it!” to the more specific suggestion that I “need to get laid”. It's not that I can't take the heat as a writer when people disagree with me. There's nothing I enjoy more than invigorating discourse and a good argument grounded in facts and logic. I just ask that it be offered in an adult fashion, which is to say respectfully.

The Demise of Civility



Donald Trump, whose atrocious tweets have irked many in America and worldwide, greets supporters during the presidential election campaign

Even Hillary Clinton once said when someone was unkind to her during a debate, “that hurts my feelings.”

And as I told the editor of the blog I was leaving, no one pays me to suffer fools gladly. Public opinion polls repeatedly show that Americans are concerned about the deepening erosion of civility whether in government, business, education or media. Many have withdrawn from engaging in the political process, so central to

democracy, because of it. (Ironically, even Mike Pence, the GOP nominee for Vice President, noted once that “we cannot do democracy without a heavy dose of civility.”) Others have left jobs, stopped patronising certain businesses, or pulled their kids out of schools.

One culprit in the demise of civility is information technology. As Albert Einstein once noted in another context, “It has become appallingly

obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.” That notion becomes credible with the rapid rise of cyber-bullying and the disturbing messages posted by white supremacist and anti-Semitic groups during this election. In a 2012 post to Psychology Today, Ray Williams, a concerned professional, revealed that the Johns Hopkins Civility Initiative had found an “onslaught of rude, bullying and uncivil behavior, intensified by the 24/7 reach

of the Internet and social networking sites, adding to the stress people are already feeling.” Williams also cited Donald Trump's TV show, *The Apprentice*, “where people eagerly await Trump's now famous edict, ‘You're fired!’ as some kind of pleasure.”

In a similar post the same year, psychologist Marilyn Price-Mitchell also referred to Trump's TV show which, along with others like *The Survivor*, “highlight back-stabbing behavior as admirable and winning qualities. Children,” she added, “are exposed to rudeness, vulgarity, and violence that would be unthinkable in previous generations.”

Civility isn't complex or difficult. The dictionary defines it as “politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech.” It's associated with good manners, graciousness and consideration.

It is also, as Price-Mitchell wrote, “an obligation to act in ways that honor that [definition]. It requires us to treat others with decency, regardless of our differences. It demands restraint and an ability to put the interests of the common good above self-interests.”

That doesn't seem like too much to ask. And the rewards of civility are obvious and beneficial at both the individual and societal level.

Why have we been so willing to give it up? (WFS)

Karma ensures poetic justice doesn't just happen in stories

Uh-oh. My son, after spending his whole life in Mario world picking up rows of spinning gold coins, is about to step into the real world. I'm worried the shock may traumatise him. (“Dad, where's all the money? All the gold coins that are supposed to be lying around?” “Er, the Pokemon took it.”)

Most adults fail to teach youngsters enough about reality. I make my kids watch old movies and explain to them that there were no special effects and we had to actually shoot, stab and run over bad guys all the time. “In the original 1977 *Star Wars* they had to blow up a planet, which is why old books list nine planets but new ones have eight.”

One good thing about kids' appetite for movies and games is that they learn that bad guys always end up suffering poetic justice, something that those of us in the news business know happens remarkably often in real life, too.

In the newspaper recently was a report about a man in Pennsylvania who was annoyed that his neighbour's big old tree dripped sap on his car. The angry man used a chainsaw to chop the tree down — and it fell right on

top of his house, wrecking it. The formal scientific term for this kind of thing is “Karma strikes again”.

Karma also seems to have been present in the case of a US prisoner who made a deathbed confession. Dying of a heart attack, James Washington of Tennessee told a police officer that he had “to get something off my conscience” and revealed

Jolie stole her husband 11 years ago and waited patiently to arrange an implosion in her family. It does seem to be true that cosmic justice can operate rather slowly; so my advice is to keep a list of hoped-for victims in case reminders are needed.

The interesting thing is that karma often uses human hands to do its work. An internet viral video shows the view from a motorcyclist's helmet. Every time she sees a motorist throw garbage out of a car window, she picks it up, zooms along the road to catch up with the driver, and throws it back in — in one case, a bag containing the remnants of a fast food meal explodes satisfyingly over the driver's lap.

But the people who suffer most from karma are those who attempt to educate others. We are instantly punished for making any ill-judged remark. Me: “There's no such thing as a stupid question.” Student: “Did snakes evolve from ropes?” Student 2: “Did Shakespeare write anything in English?” Student 3: “Is there gravity in Australia?” Me: “Okay I'm wrong.”

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

THE FUNNY SIDE
Nury Vittachi

Start early to crack it | NOT EXACTLY AN ANT-ITHESIS

By Ranjan K Baruah

We have mentioned about the basic requirements to appear in the Civil Services Examination like qualification, age and number of attempts, amongst others. In this edition, we shall publish about the plan and pattern of the examination. As there might be some changes so we request our readers to follow the official website of the Union Public Service Commission for updates and details.

CSAT (Prelims) Pattern: The Preliminary Examination consists of two papers of Objective type (multiple choice questions) and carry maximum of 400 marks. The UPSC prelims exam is meant to serve as a screening test only; the marks obtained in the preliminary exam forms the basis to be declared qualified to write the Mains Exam but will not be counted for determining their final order of merit.

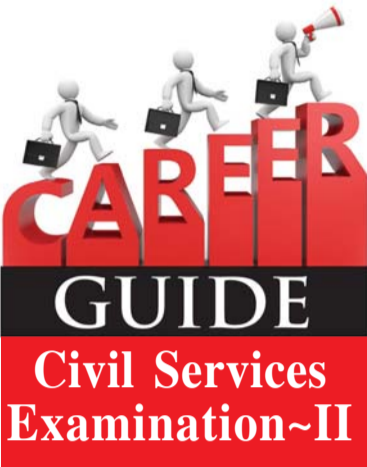
Paper I: (200 marks; Two hours): General Studies - This paper will be counted for qualifying to write the Civil Services Mains exam.

Paper II (CSAT): (200 marks; Two hours): Aptitude test (CSAT) - This paper is of qualifying nature, but candidate must score at least 33% marks in this paper. However, marks of this paper are not counted for writing the Mains examination.

The syllabus for General Studies includes many topics and subjects. It includes current events of national and international importance, history of India and Indian National Movement, Indian and world geography — physical, social, economic geography of India and the world, Indian Polity and

governance — constitution, political system, panchayati raj, public policy, rights issues, sustainable development, poverty, inclusion, demographics, social sector initiatives, among others, general issues on environmental ecology, biodiversity and climate change, and general science, among others.

The syllabus for the Preliminary Exams for Paper-II: Comprehension, interpersonal skills, including communication skills;



logical reasoning and analytical ability, decision-making and problem solving, general mental ability, basic numeracy (numbers and their relations, orders of magnitude, etc) (Class X level), Data interpretation (charts, graphs, tables, data sufficiency etc — Class X level)

The questions in both Paper-I (current affairs) and Paper-II (aptitude test) will be of multiple choice, objective type for 200 marks each and the time allotted for each paper is two hours.

The CSAT aptitude test or Paper-II will be a qualifying paper only with a minimum of 33% to be secured to qualify for the Mains exam. It is mandatory for the candidate to appear in both the papers of Civil Services (Prelim) examination.

The candidate will be disqualified in case he or she appears in only one paper of the (Prelims) exam. So appearing in both the papers is mandatory for the evaluation of the (Prelims) exam.

There is negative marking for wrong answers. If the answer is not marked and left blank then there is no negative marking. If any aspirant marks two answers for the same question then it is considered to be wrong and negative marking is applicable against the question.

One may start preparing at an early age for the civil services examination. Reading newspapers and various magazines helps one to improve general knowledge and latest current affairs.

Prelims is objective type and so it is important to learn more and one does not need any writing skills here as it is just objective. Writing skill is needed in the mains as one needs to write essays and others.

One of the best ways is to collect previous years' question papers and start cracking them. Mock tests always enhances confidence and knowledge.

Aspirants may also try to take admission in coaching centre but there is no guarantee from any coaching centre that someone may surely crack civil services.

Many students ask me about coaching centres and their importance. Well, taking admission in a coaching centre is helpful but it depends on the student.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a social activist and career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)

By Maneka Sanjay Gandhi

When I started writing about animals, I thought I wrote to educate people so that they would become kinder and more scientific. Now I realise that I write as dancers and singers do, for myself. My admiration for the universe and all its creatures unfolds itself week by week. I write because I cannot help myself.

Imagine a world of tiny beings that is almost identical to ours. Where the dominant species mirrors every action of the human being — with far greater elegance, intelligence and success. Such a world exists — the world of ants.

I have written about them several times. They build tunnels and houses with engineering skills to monitor the weather, have castes and classes, go to war, pick up slaves that service them forever, keep guards outside their colonies, run farms and grow food for the colony in well-organised and fertilised fields, run kitchens and messes where ants gather to eat, have bedrooms and cleaning services, make boats to cross rivers, train soldiers and workers and housemaids.

They have classes with teachers. I can't think of anything they don't do that is like us — except better. I am sure if we had a machine to monitor their language we would find it as complex as our own with different languages in different colonies.

I am sure we will discover what they do for amusement as well —

An ant colony has similarities with human society but is more disciplined

ANTSTORY

■ Ants build tunnels and houses with engineering skills to monitor the weather, have castes and classes, go to war and pick up slaves

■ Ants even keep guards outside their colonies, run farms and grow food for the colony in well-organised and fertilised fields, run kitchens and messes where ants gather to eat

■ When an Indian Jumping Ant colony's queen dies the colony is thrown into disarray for some time. It has the same murderous tense quality that our elections have. As the dust settles, the new hierarchies form



■ The new colony order is like ours, new layers of dominance form and, in this complex social arrangement, hierarchies form that are also seen in humans, dolphins and apes

■ During the fighting, which is just like the debates of the American candidates, the ants indulge in biting, policing and duelling with their antennae

imagine tiny projectors showing films!

Now a study, done by Clint Penick, a postdoctoral researcher at North Carolina State University and co-lead author with researchers at Oxford and Arizona Universities of 'A simple behavioural model predicts the emergence of complex animal hierarchies' published in *The American Naturalist* shows the electoral process of ants and how different levels of society are formed.

When an Indian Jumping Ant colony's queen dies the colony is thrown into disarray for some time while the process for making the new queen and the new Darbar, the new hierarchy of Important Ants, goes on. It has the same murderous tense quality that our elections have. As the dust settles, the new hierarchies

form. When a queen dies, her smell that pervades the ants' colony stops. Workers who are at the bottom of the hierarchy and cannot have children (though they have reproductive systems), quickly gather at the centre of the colony and form a circle around the larvae and pupae.

This is how it goes: "A single ant starts beating another ant's head with its antennae, and in no time half the ants in the colony are engaged in antennal fencing duels.

Slaps escalate to head biting, and 'police' ultimately intervene and restore order."

The ants are beating each other up for only one reason: the top of the pecking order is the one who lays eggs and this fighting is to determine who

gets to lay eggs and who doesn't. And after months of conflict (where no one dies!) 10 to 15 top candidates emerge and they transform into gamergates; their brains shrink, their abdomens fill with ovaries and their expected life spans grow from a maximum of six months, to up to five years.

The group will equally share egg-laying power and pick up the late queen's sceptre.

The new colony order is like ours, new layers of dominance form and, in this complex social arrangement, hierarchies form that are also seen in humans, dolphins and apes.

During the fighting, which is in the form of organised tournaments just like the debates of the American candidates, the ants indulge in three

behaviours — biting, policing and duelling with their antennae.

When the ants bite, they lock their jaws around the head of another ant and the winner establishes its dominance.

Dopamine levels change as a result of winning or losing, with winners getting a hormone boost that will give them an edge in the next confrontation, called the winner effect.

It also activates their reproductive system, while, on the other hand, losers' reproductive capabilities shut down.

As more ants drop out of the tournament, subordinate ants start "policing" less dominant ants that refuse to give up. Groups of five ants will restrain challengers for up to two days — enough time to bring the hormone down and remove the individual from the competition.

These gangs of subordinate ants have decided whom they want as their leader — the way party goondas do in villages.

Look at the difference — and predictability of the results of the "election". When ants only bite each other, a hierarchy emerged that was more democratic and shared power — a bureaucratic structure of dominant individuals with a CEO at the top and power filtering by rank down to the intern worker queens or gamergates.

When biting and strong policing were used, a dictatorship emerged — a single ant on top, with all other ants sharing the same rank of lowly workers and the goonda ants formed the honour bodyguard. Does this sound familiar?

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

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, October 9, 2016

Moon square Sun on your solar return chart and this indicates a mixed year as delays and obstacles mark your efforts. Avoid confrontation. Utilize your analytical abilities to cut through and get to the heart of the matter. It is a time to face the world boldly. It would be best to reign in impulsive purchases. Presentations, outstation meetings and conferences will generate gratifying results. Energy levels would be high so channel it in constructive work. You would get support from seniors so use it to your advantage. Travel for you will prove to be excellent and result oriented. A romantic union is on the cards and will bring joy in its wake.

'This week for you'



Aries: (March 21 - April 20): Authority figures, elders, parents, or influential people in your life tend to support and respect you. Your general well-being and emotional health depends on sound and meaningful relationships—both social and romantic. Financial prosperity or social success may come through your spouse at this time. Special attention to and from a partner is in focus. You keep an open mind and are receptive to new ideas and professional opportunities, which could lead to a new job while some of you, will be in for a promotion, perks recognition and prestige. Communications from overseas are hopeful and exciting.



Taurus: (April 21 - May 21): Smoothing out your close personal relationships is what makes you happy during this cycle. You would maintain good relations and try to give to others exactly what you would like to receive just now. It's not about you right now—it's about someone else and the sweeter your attentions, the more delicious your rewards will be. You have a greater need than usual for contact and exchange. In general, you are adaptable when it comes to your work. The more willing you are to take on additional or different type of work, the more positive the rewards.



Gemini: (May 22 - June 21): This can be a time of achievement, career advancement and success in business. Work-related travel or the reaching of a wider network is possible at this time. Your work status may change for the better. Friends are more willing to help you on your road to success. 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 relationships. Integrity and honesty are the key to attaining your desires now. You need to keep your eyes open for opportunities.



Cancer: (June 22 - July 22): This phase is favorable for investments, family, status and happiness. Money matters come into focus for you. You would adopt a serious approach to business because you are in the spotlight. Career and vocational issues may benefit from the increased clarity you possess. A lot of your energy will be applied to vocational achievement, professional success, and leadership. Your love life is more attractive and charming. You may be involved in activities connected with your children.



Leo: (July 23 - August 23): A financial boost is possible, or you may gain financially through your partner. A deep and intimate connection made now could be revitalizing and even healing. You are more inclined to want to smooth over differences in a partnership concerning the sharing of power, intimacy matters, finances, and other emotionally-charged topics. Intimate relationships are intensified now. You find yourself more accountable than ever when it comes to your work and output. You may have to draw some boundaries with friends and the demands of others.



Virgo: (August 24 - September 22): There is likely to be more activity, movement, contact, and communications with co-workers. You are inclined to want to learn new work skills, or to improve your proficiency and output. It would be better to look at long term investments and speculations for financial gains. Your approach to work at this time is pleasant, happy, and logical for the most part, unless you allow worry or scattered energy to enter the picture. You might also enjoy deciding on a different health or nutrition program.



Libra: (September 23 - October 23): This week highlights friendship, romance and love in your life. You tend to take more interest in organizing your working environment—and this is an excellent time to do so. You are especially objective and intelligent when it comes to getting a handle on your daily affairs and all the little things that contribute to a feeling of efficiency and competency. This is an especially introspective period during which you have the chance to truly uncover your personal strengths and talents. There would be some changes in your social circle, and you meet new people.



Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22): Business partnerships may suffer from ego conflicts, or adversaries may be challenging. Use this energy to work cooperatively on interpersonal issues. You may even find that you seem to need someone's assistance in order to do what you want to achieve. When a difference arises, you are quick to settle it, and have little patience for sweeping matters under the rug. You are more willing than usual to explore life's secrets. Business projects and associations are opening up and widening your horizons so you need to think expansively.



Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21): It would be wiser to face difficult people and tough situations rather than take the easy way out for victory and success in professional ventures. Don't take the one you love for granted but show your love and appreciation. Some associations would be competitive in business but you shine and work well in your field of activity. You may have to face difficult people and exercise special care in handling them. Your idealistic nature is stimulated, and you are likely to yearn for a connection to more spiritual or idealistic pursuits.



Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20): Personal relationships gain a romantic and exciting quality. You've been busy with all sorts of everyday activities, deeply involved in your work and routine. It's time to balance your life with some down time - to help you balance your lifestyle and gain time to rejuvenate. Issues come to light that originate from deep within. It's an excellent time to get in touch with what's been brewing beneath the surface. A secret may be revealed. Communications from overseas are hopeful and exciting as business opportunities are extended to you.



Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18): During this phase you feel attracted to people with whom you can communicate well and exchange ideas. You know how to relate to others and you do it in a natural and warm manner. You will seek chatty and enthusiastic friends who stimulate your mental abilities. Your approach to work is pleasant and happy for the most part, unless you allow worry or low energy to get the better of you. You are inclined to want to learn new work skills, or to improve your skills and output in terms of work. There is likely to be more activity, movement, contact, and communications with co-workers now.



Pisces: (February 19 - March 20): This is a phase that brings excellent results for competition, written examinations, and legal matters. You're at your best when you are showing the world your practical, competent, and responsible side. Put off making important decisions with regard to family and domestic matters just now, and take care when it comes to communicating with family members. Extra care should be exercised when it comes to matters surrounding romance, children, and creativity. Be as non-judgmental as you can with romantic partners and your children. Spending time in solitude among natural surroundings is therapeutic and healing.

Glimpse of Creativity Amid Crisis

When we were forced to leave our country, I never thought that a community in Lebanon would accept and treat me as an active member, the way I have been at the Kfeir Women's Working Group," says Hiba Kamal, an 18-year-old refugee from Syria, who travelled to Lebanon with her family five years ago fleeing instability in her own country.

Kamal is among more than 1.5 million refugees from Syria and its neighbouring countries, who are now living in Lebanon. In fact, the massive influx of refugees now accounts for 25 per cent of the total population in the country and puts unprecedented pressure on the Lebanese economy. There is an ever-increasing demand for public services and a stiff competition for the limited resources as well as employment.

Consequently, the protracted refugee and migrant crisis has led to increased tensions between local and refugee populations, especially in the poorest areas, where there is a large presence of refugees. There is, unfortunately, a lot of insecurity apart from a greater risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

Women, both Lebanese and refugees, often suffer more discrimination due to the prevalence of prejudiced laws and cultural stereotypes.

Despite the financial crisis in their family, they are either restricted to their homes, or forced to find low and unstable income work available within the informal sector, in which they don't have any rights or social protection.

To improve women's access to employment and markets, Amel Association, a Lebanese non-governmental organisation, imple-



SURVIVING ON ART: Refugee and rural women in Lebanon have learnt to create, brand and retail high-quality handicrafts

mented a three-year livelihood project from 2012-15 in the south of Lebanon and the suburbs of Beirut with the support of UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality.

The project has impacted over 1,000 rural and refugee women, who have learnt how to create, brand and retail high-quality handicrafts, such as embroidery and accessories, in addition to organic and agro-food products, following the highest quality and sanitation standards.

By combining traditional techniques, materials and designs, the women working as part of the MENNA (which means 'from us' in Arabic) project create unique and marketable products under the MENNA brand.

Through their interactive sessions, where refugee and Lebanese women learnt the crafts and worked together, the programme also created spaces for dialogue and co-existence among the two groups with an idea to build social stability.

together their own local techniques, materials and designs, the women link their cultural heritage and history with the products, making them unique and highly marketable.

"We started seeing real results of our work when some of the women started creating their own products and exhibiting them. They grew stronger, more confident and set inspiring examples for other women in the area," reveals Safaa Al Ali, Programme Manager at the Amel Association.

The organisation has also facilitated an alliance with 13 other civil society organizations and cooperatives that are doing similar work to create the first economic network for women in Lebanon. Indeed, nowadays, more than 300 refugee and rural Lebanese women sell soaps, candles, accessories and handicrafts directly to the people from their MENNA shop in Beirut.

"I came to Lebanon as the crisis began in Syria five years ago...it was hard to find a suitable job as a refugee and I could not access the formal business sector," shares Mona Hamid, a 51-year-old Syrian refugee living in the suburbs of Lebanon's capital. "By joining the MENNA network at

Amel, I gained skills to sell and promote my items at local businesses and also showed them at exhibitions."

The success of the initiative prompted Amel to set up a MENNA catering service in February 2016, opening up more income-generating opportunities for the women associated with their network.

Today, the MENNA brand has brought together Lebanese and refugee women in a way that has benefited both communities. "The importance of this project is that it respects the culture and skills of refugee women and assists them in integrating into the host community. It is a model that works, not only to make women agents of their own economic empowerment in a fragile context, but also as a way that brings them together to work for a common goal, thus building social stability and sustainable peace," notes Rana El-Houjeiri, Programme Specialist for UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality in Lebanon. The Fund is now building upon the success of this initiative by supporting similar initiatives in Lebanon and other countries in the Arab States region. (WFS)

"There is only one thing a philosopher can be relied upon to do, and that is to contradict other philosophers."

--- William James

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 61

SHILLONG, MONDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2016

Centre's Appeal

THE controversy has been going on for decades about Muslim personal law. While an enlightened section of the Muslim community has been advocating the merger of Muslim personal law in the uniform civil code, the Union government has been fighting shy of bringing it about. The reason seems to be the apprehension of the ruling parties that it will antagonise the Muslim vote bank. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi went to the extent of setting aside the Supreme Court award on the Shah Bano case to placate orthodox Muslims. It is good that that the Centre has now told the Supreme Court to abolish triple Talaq and polygamy among Muslims. These are considered to be unconstitutional customs threatening gender equality and women's dignity. The Centre however has not demanded a uniform civil code. The union legislative department says that there can be no compromise on these matters. Triple talaq means that a Muslim husband, according to the Shariah, can say Talaq (divorce) three times and put away his wife. What is most objectionable is that while Muslim men have the right to triple talaq and polygamy Muslim women do not have the same rights.

The Centre has pointed out that several Islamic countries-Bangladesh, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, Indonesia, Egypt and Iran have reformed their laws to give women equal rights in matrimony. But India still has not done so. The Centre has also said their reforms in Islamic countries prove that these fundamentalist practices are not an integral part of Islam. The apex court has taken a progressive stand on many issues and may cause a breakthrough on the subject in question. But Parliament may have difficulty in passing legislation to ensure such gender equality.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Parliament boycott serves a purpose

Every dark and threatening cloud has a silver lining. The unprecedented boycott of Parliament by the Opposition last week has served a timely purpose. It has brought the ruling Congress I down to earth and made it concede that the Government and the Opposition are an integral part of the system - like the two wheels of a chariot. Acknowledgement of this basic truth was reflected in the Prime Minister's decision to clarify matters and make amends: "If anything I have said has hurt members of the Opposition I am sorry for that" Equally significant was the appeal the following day by the veteran Congress-I MP, Prof N G Ranga: "Sir in a democracy like ours we should have the Opposition as well as the ruling party in the House. Something constructive has got to be done." This plea was promptly supported by Mr A Charles, who said: "Sir, we all share the feelings of Prof Ranga. Kindly intervene..." As the Speaker graciously responded: "You are my masters... I am at your disposal." Mr B RBhagat, a former Speaker, chipped in. "Why don't you call a meeting of both sides and settle the issue."

Fortunately, the Opposition showed good sense and ended the boycott without waiting for medication by the Speaker. As an Opposition leader explained. "It would have suited us tactically to end the boycott only after an intention and appeal by the Speaker, as we were not satisfied by the Prime Minister's grudging regret. But we felt we should return in the larger public interest and voice the people's grievances" happily. Their

decision evoked the right response from the Congress I benches and their friends even a normally said Mr Sulaman Sait, leader of the Muslim League, broke into verse said he: "Jo hum hi na hongay to kay runge mehfil, kise dekh kar app shar mayengay. (What fun will the party be if I am not there, who will you then look at and blush!) The irrepressible and popular Mr Balkavi Bairangi, who regales the House time and again with delightful poetry appropriate to each occasion, soon followed" Wo udhar udas, hum idhar udas; uvasian tootin Mubarak ho apko." They were sad on their side, we were sad on ours. The sadness has ended. Congratulations!

That Parliament's worst ever crisis has blown over is undoubtedly a matter of considerable satisfaction. (The sight of empty Opposition benches in free India's Parliament for the first time when the General Budget was presented was, indeed, most disturbing and distressing). That the ruling party has been brought down to terra firma and made to realize that the Opposition cannot be wished away is equally gratifying. But there is need for members of both Houses to recognize one other basic truth about the Westminster system which the founding fathers of our Constitution willfully adopted. Parliamentary democracy is essentially a civilised form of Government.

It provides not only for a Government by discussion, debate and consensus, but also for a peaceful struggle for power.

Community Cleaning Drive: Getting beyond tokenism

By H H Mohrmen

travel or walk that road again.

My wise friend finally concluded by saying that there is no point of organising those symbolic cleaning drives unless there is a proper system in place to maintain cleanliness. And when I asked him to elaborate what he meant, he first suggested that we need to install garbage bins at close distances so that after the streets are cleaned, people who wish to drop their garbage in a proper place can do so to keep the place clean. Otherwise if there is no waste bin nearby then it will be back to square one and people will start littering the roads immediately after the area was cleaned. He also added that just having the garbage bins around will not help; we also need to educate the residents of the area and inculcate in them the habit of disposing waste in a proper place and then only we can maintain cleanliness in the area.

I think he has a point and Jowai my hometown is a classic case because the town centre is one place which remains clean only for few hours in a year. The people of Jowai normally clean Iawmusiang the downtown of the Jowai at least three times a year; that is before the Christmas and New Year, before the Behdienkham festival in the month of July and on Gandhi jayanti, yet the streets are littered the very next day after it was cleaned. The reason is because of the absent of proper bin to collect the waste and the lack of civic sense amongst the citizens of the town.

One hopes that this will change because the office of the Deputy Commissioner West Jaintia hills has installed proper garbage bins in almost every nook and corner of the town and toward the bins is one step toward achieving the goal of having a clean town. Now the challenge for the people of the town is to make the best use of the facility provided and maintain cleanliness in the town. When the D.C. Jowai posted on his office's facebook page that in order to increase tourist flow to the district;

the district administration plan to have a Hollywood or Pattaya type of signage to welcome visitor to the town, some rightly questioned the wisdom of having such fancy sign to welcome people to the town which is literally covered with filth. It is true Jowai is not at its best and the town still have a long way to go to achieve the glory of the cities from which it copied the idea, but is there any harm in raising the bar and trying to improve on one's image.

It is also true that having the bins in place and making the public use the bin is another. In other words merely having the bin in place is not the answer to making our town clean; but is that an impossible task to achieve? The government has recently been able to tackle the hawkers' problem in the town without any hassle and nobody raised any hue and cry. We can replicate the same idea that was used by the district administration to clear the hawkers from footpaths in the market area. The technique the district administration used is a novel idea that can be used to inculcate the habit of making use of garbage bins in the town. The district administration in collaboration with Jowai Traffic Police embarked on a unique idea to help the pedestrians particularly the students to reclaim the footpath by making them use the footpath on a regular basis and also by insisting that the kids walk on it to prevent any accidents from happening. The idea worked wonders and the footpaths in Jowai town are now free for pedestrians while the vendors were provided with space to continue doing their business. The outcome of this effort was that at the end of the day it was a win-win situation for everybody.

But having clean streets and clean towns and cities is just the beginning. We need to move one step further and start segregation of waste at source which is again only a step towards proper waste management. Recently a SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity and threat) analysis was conducted at Shnongpdeng

areas of the city and the state? If Shillong wants to be plastic free, necessary law has to be enacted and then only the question of punishment arises. It is unfortunate that we target only Police Bazar of all the areas for use of plastic bags.

an upcoming tourist spot which attracts a lot of visitors, to study the tourism prospects of area. After due deliberations the community saw waste as major threat to the future of the village. The observation made by the community members who took part in the exercise is that certain wastes like bottles (both plastics and glass) are being collected and can be exchanged for money, but the problem is with plastics and chips or biscuit bags made of silver foils which finds no takers. Now to make the village clean the community has no other option but to burn the waste in the open which again is not environment friendly and causes air pollution. Besides burning of garbage is a violation of Supreme Court orders.

To ensure that cleaning drive does not remain a symbolic gesture, the public need (to as much as possible) minimise the use of plastics. We can start by using pla-iew or munajun (in Pnar). Meat or fish sellers should start reusing banana or sla-lamet leaves to pack pork, beef, mutton or fish. If people selling putharo, pumaloi, jashullia, japnah are still using plant leaves to pack their products why can't the meat and fish traders do the same? Besides, if we encourage the traders to start reusing plant leaves which are biodegradable farmers will start planting banana or sla-lamet leaves again and that will become another livelihood activity. Surely, plant leaves will not be able to replace plastics, but at least they will minimise the use of plastics. Using leaves for packing is not a new practice; it is something that has been used by the community earlier.

Therefore when we plan any cleaning drive again it is time that we look beyond mere tokenism. It is time that we become pragmatic and look at practicable and viable alternatives to keep our localities clean in order to maintain cleanliness in the area for good. Cleanliness is not a one day affair it is lifelong activity; let us therefore go beyond tokenism and sustain the effort to make our villages and towns clean.

Yours etc.,
S L Singhania,
Shillong- 1

On Shillong Traffic

Editor,
The roads are getting smaller day by day due to increase of vehicles. The STP are trying heart and soul to ease this congestion and one smart move highly appreciated is the one way system during the morning rush hours along Laitumkhrah and St Edmund's road. It's very heartening to see traffic personnel performing their duty non-stop from 7:30 morning till 8 at night, inhaling polluted air day in and day out. There are two identified roads that cause heavy traffic jam all throughout the city. One is the road leading all the way from Upper Shillong to Umshyri junction and the other is the Madanryting-Nongthymmai-Jingkieng-Fire Brigade highway. The roads all the way to Upper Shillong belong to the government and we all

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Why target Police Bazar?

Editor,
I would like to ask the Hon'ble Urban Affairs Minister, Ronnie Lyngdoh if only shopkeepers in Police Bazar are using plastic bags and should therefore be punished? What about other

TO THE EDITOR

Loss of indigenous culture?

Editor,
The letter by PK Dwivedi (Oct 4, 2016) sounds like a rabid attack on Christianity adopted by the Khasi and Jaintia highlanders, not "tribesmen" as the writer wrote, for this word cunningly casts a shadow of savagery. The writer wrote about "the nefarious activities of the Welsh Mission" responsible for bringing in a "foreign religion". Why worry? It should be noted that Christianity originated from the navel of the globe; neither East nor West, strengthened by customs and traditions, therefore universal. On the probe into the loss of indigenous culture due to religion, one must take a global perspective, not a local one in a frogs' pond.

If the citizens of Scandinavian countries welcome Christianity, although they are known to have their native Nordic religion with gods like Woden and Thor, are they forgetting their own customs and traditions? Are the Irish unfaithful to their customs and traditions by accepting Christianity in place of their old, native Celtic

religion? No, they are not turncoats. So the same is with the Khasis and Jaintias. If they have accepted Christianity, Presbyterian or Catholic as their religion - SO BE IT. Nobody can take away a person's spiritual right to Freedom of Religion. A word of advice - do not step into the sensitive circle of religion. You may unknowingly step into a hornet's nest! Luckily, the attack is on the Christian religion.

Therefore, to reach maturity, one should not meddle in other people's affairs. It is far better to mind one's own business and one's own community without trying to split and confuse others.

Yours etc.,
Cassandra Syiemlieh
Shillong- 17

On liquor ban!

Editor,
Generally, three arguments have been raised against liquor ban. First, people are to be blamed for social evils not the commodity. Second, such a ban is against liberty and third, government loses a good sum of tax revenues. However, these arguments do not hold water in the prevalent scenario. First, 'culprits-people-not-commodities' theory can help a drug mafia to get away with this logic. It can even

BJP getting advantage of political impact of surgical strikes

By Harihar Swarup

The successful surgical operation in terrorists' camps across the borders in Pakistan has suddenly boosted the plummeting stock of the BJP. The general perception among people is that this is, perhaps, for the first time, that Indian forces went inside an enemy country, destroyed the militants shelters and training camps. Initially, the Congress Vice-President Rahul Gandhi praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the government's bold step. The Congress, however, claimed that such strikes had taken place when Manmohan Singh was the Prime Minister, and the only difference was that it was not publicized at that time and kept a secret.

Pakistan has denied that any surgical strike had taken place. Some opposition parties, out of fear, that the BJP has been gaining the lost grounds fast and may sweep the coming elections in Uttar Pradesh, have also begun doubting the veracity of the surgical strikes. However, there is no way of verifying these strikes and we have to take on the face value the government's version. There is no way of checking how

squabbles, the Party is not able to launch the poll campaign with all its full strength.

BSP's suprema Mayawati, is generally perceived to be a better leader and a chief minister in terms law and order in the state. As such she and other opponents miss no opportunity to attack Akhilesh Yadav on this front. The Samajwadi Party leadership should remember that the party lost the elections in 2007 on the issue of law and order, though in terms of development and social justice, the government was doing well.

As a tactical mistake then, the SP launched its campaign with Amitabh Bachchan's advertisement claiming 'crime in UP is less', thereby, keeping the focus on law and order—its weak point—and not development, its strength. Over and above this, the irresponsible statement about Nithihari case by Shivpal Yadav the then cabinet minister in the Mulayam Singh government, worked as last nail in the SP's coffin.

Besides, law and order

The Congress is trying to revive itself in UP by consolidating Brahmins as the main building block around which other groups can gravitate for a reasonably strong foothold in the state. The strategy may do some good to the party, but the general perception continues to be that the Congress is not in any consideration for power this time and hence may get at best, third or fourth position in the elections.

many terrorists camps were destroyed and how many of them were killed in the surgical operation.

Doubtless, at the moment, the stock of the BJP is high. If elections are held now it is bound to do well in the polls. But one doesn't know if the favourable atmosphere will continue till the run up of the UP assembly elections.

The BJP has now turned out to be a serious contender for power in UP. The party had won 73 Lok Sabha seats out of a total of 80 in 2014. Lok Sabha poll The BJP's stakes are high in these elections. To continue to hold nationally, the BJP must win UP as it will impact 2019 general elections. The party President, Amit Shah and other BJP leaders have started spending considerable time in the state to strategize in the election. The USP is development—sabka vikas, sabka saath—and the strategy seems to be to highlight of the administrative and law and order failures of the Akhilesh government and politicize every incident of violence as communal, thereby, dividing the electorate on communal lines.

The media is generally supportive, and social media in particular, are often supportive of the BJP in such cases. The SP government and party workers have to walk an extra mile to combat the communal force from whichever quarter it comes. The SP is having a tough time as due to family

wonder why till date it's never been widened to solve the ever growing traffic flowing from that end. Secondly, the government should start doing an early survey on the already existing road from Cleve colony penetrating to Laitkor which will bypass the M a d a n r y t i n g - Nongthymmai-Jingkieng-Fire Brigade highway. In this case all vehicles plying from Laitkor highway will easily bypass all sorts of endless junctions seen from Madanryting onwards. The

and social equality on the basis of equity, caste and religion, development is likely to be the major issue. In UP polls, Akhilesh is likely to fare better than Shivpal Yadav. Mulayam Singh should realize it sooner than later that it is vital to give his son a free hand in the campaign and resolve family feud, which may lead to heavy loss in the electoral battle in the state.

The Congress is trying to revive itself in UP by consolidating Brahmins as the main building block around which other groups can gravitate for a reasonably strong foothold in the state. The strategy may do some good to the party, but the general perception continues to be that the Congress is not in any consideration for power this time and hence may get at best, third or fourth position in the elections.

What may help Congress is coming in poll campaign of Priyanka Gandhi. She has decided to join hands with her brother Rahul Gandhi to electorate in entire UP. Her charismatic image looks somewhat identical to her grandmother Indira Gandhi. People see in her the image of the late Prime Minister. Her active campaign may help Congress to gain more seats compared to the present but that will not be adequate to meet the challenge of three other major parties, BJP, SP and BSP. (IPA Service)

Yours etc.,
D. Warshong,
Via email

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

"It's hard to get that real good feeling about festivals sometimes."

--- Meg White

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 62 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2016

Pak for US support

WHILE India has put Pakistan in diplomatic isolation, Pakistani envoys in Washington are all out to enlist US support on the Kashmir issue. They are trying to counter accusations against Pakistan's support for terror groups, provocative nuclear postures and is fairly or generally as a nation state. It has threatened to form an axis with China, Russia and Iran should the US refuse to intervene on the Kashmir issue. It has made peace with Afghanistan and indicated that it can undermine US and Indian efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan though that has been a victim of Pakistani depredations. Pakistan has pointed out that peace in Kabul hinges on stability in Kashmir and cannot be delinked from Pakistan having its say in Srinagar. Pakistan's envoys take a dim view of the US allowing Kashmir to burn. They have also argued that Kashmir is the core issue in India-Pakistan relations and there can be no peace between the two countries without a settlement of the problem. Even the nuclear dimension cannot be divorced from the issue as both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers.

So far Pakistani blackmail has had little success in Washington. The US says it is hard for it even to intervene in Syria and there is no reason why it should butt in on Kashmir. The situation in Kashmir is much better than in the conflict-zones of the world, especially Syria. Pakistan is fulminating against human rights violations in Kashmir. In reply, US experts emphasise that the human rights record in Gilgit-Baluchistan, Pak occupied Kashmir and even in Sindh are simply appalling. So Pakistan has little moral authority to bellyache about human rights violations in Kashmir. It is advantage India.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Splinter Janata party to retain identity

The national executive of the truncated Janata Party today decided to maintain its identity and elected Mr. Nubhai Patel as its president. A meeting of the national executive resolved to maintain the identity of the party at all costs and take steps to strengthen the organization. "The president was authorized to oppose the Janata Dal application for transfer of the party symbol and take necessary

steps to occupy the office. Taking to newsmen here. Besides Mr. Patel, other members who attended the meeting were former Karnataka Power Minister Mr. Deva Gowda, Syed Shahabuddin, Dr. Subramaniam Swamy and Dr. Sorajini Mahaisi. Mr. Patel said the Janata Dal had forcibly occupied the office of the Janata Party and steps would be taken to remove them from that premises.

Infrastructure of Khasi tradition and culture

By Fabian Lyngdoh

Many scholars and authors have written about the Khasi culture, but few really understand the fundamentals or the infrastructure of the Khasi culture. Among the Khasis, marriage between the matrilineal clan members is prohibited for perpetuity, and the Khasi society is built on the basis of the marital relationships between 'ki kur' (matrilineal clans) which is commonly called 'ka longkur-longkha'. The presence of at least three clans is necessary for establishing a basic Khasi society so that through triangular marital relationships between them, each clan can acquire the three statuses of: ki kur, ki kha and ki khunkha. The traditional Khasi society was a web of social relationships between the clans, not between individuals or any other group of individuals other than the clan. All other socio-cultural superstructures like politics, community religions and festivals in any political community of the 'raid' or 'hima' have to be interwoven within the ambit of the general web of relationships between the clans. This is so because each clan was a basic or fundamental member of society under whose identity all clan members could have social recognition; it was a religious institution strictly binding on all its members; it was an independent and self-sufficient economy in which all members were socially and economically secured; and it was a primary political institution, through which every clan member could have political relations in the society. No Khasi socio-political and religious culture can exist in its true traditional form apart from this fundamental structure.

In the true Khasi traditional context, the kur today is no longer the basic and fundamental member of society, no longer a religious institution, no longer an independent and self-sufficient economy, and no longer a primary political institution. The primary and most sacred aspect of the Khasi tradition which lies in the matrilineal clan system with avuncular leadership together with the 'niam-im' (religious rites for the living) and 'niam-iaip' (religious rites for the dead) had undergone

drastic changes. The only traditional ground on which the Khasi society stands today is the matrilineal lineage and intra-clan incest taboo. Hence, we must humbly admit that the Khasi culture we practise today is not the original, but in its modified forms to suit the emerging circumstances of the time. This is the result of a natural evolutionary process when the Khasi society is brought out of isolation into the modern society of a wider world. It is true as R. Wallang said, religious beliefs have little to contribute to this evolution and change (ST, October 10th, 2016). We cannot say that this change is disadvantageous or hazardous to the Khasi society, and we cannot blame this or that religious belief for any imaginary hazardous consequence.

P.K. Dwivedi must have made the mistake of concluding from the opinions of a narrow circle of Khasi acquaintances, or from some academic circle, that the Welsh Mission had robbed the Khasis of their culture, tradition, beliefs, practices and all that is associated with their lifestyle amidst nature, and in return inflicted a foreign religion and culture alien to their existence that spelt the doom for this region. Dwivedi believes that the Khasi society is pushed into a setup that has its repercussions as we get to see today. What kind of repercussion is that? Just forty five years ago, in the rural area where I reside, there were only about twenty households living in two-room thatched houses to make a village. Today, in the same locality there are more than a hundred and twenty households living in RCC buildings and well constructed houses with tin roofing. Forty five years ago, many children died of malaria because there were no modern medical facilities; many died of measles and small pox because people refused modern medicine as they believed both sicknesses signified the visit of the gods on that family. Today, there are hundreds of healthy smiling little children playing merrily around the locality like beautiful lilies in the valley. We can go on and on counting the blessings of the present and forgetting the miseries of the past.

Before the advent of the British rule there had been enculturation of Hinduism

in the community religions of many 'raids' and 'himas' of the Khasis. There had been worships to Viswakarma (Biskorom), Mahesh (Mahet), Lakshmi (Lukhmi), Shiva (Bari Bhai-Sari Bhai), Laxman (Lakhon), Kali, Chandi, Durga, Ram, Bisori, Ramshandi, etc. There had also been human sacrifices practiced in the community religions in Raid Iapngar, Raid Thiang, Raid Bhoilasa, and Raid Nongkrah, in Ri Bhoi District. The Kacharis in Assam, who belong to the Ramsa clan, worship Bathau or Bura Gosain (Siva) and Buri Gosani (Kali or Chandika). There are traditions of human sacrifice in various places in Assam, for instance, at Kamakhya, Beltola, and Sadiya. People in Raid Iapngar and Raid Bhoilasa also talk of the goddess of violence called ka Ramchandi who demanded human sacrifice, or eats up members of the clans if they fail to provide the sacrificial victim. It is also said that before going to war the people of some raids offered animal sacrifices to ka Ramchandi so that their weapons would shong-tyrut (become blood thirsty).

In Raid Iapngar it is said that human sacrifice was offered to a god called, 'Bari Bhai-Sari Bhai'. What the people of Raid Iapngar speak of u Baribhai Saribhai is similar to what the Dimasa Kachari talk of Shiva by the name of 'Brai Sibrai'. One of the various names of Shiva is Bhairava which is similar to Brai Sibrai among the Dimasas and Baribhai Saribhai in Raid Iapngar. So it seems that the human sacrifice practiced in Hima Jaintia and in some of the raids in Ri Bhoi was connected with Shiva, the destructive form of the Almighty, and his spouse Kali. It is said that the thlen of the menshohnoh eats only the Khasis, but does not eat the 'dkhar' (plains men). But the god Baribhai Saribhai in Raid Iapngar eats only the 'dkhar' but not the Khasis. That condition might be the same in all the raids and himas where human sacrifice was practised. So, every time the sacrifice was performed, a 'dkhar' must be sought as the victim, or a certain 'dkhar' would voluntarily wander into the Raid to offer himself as the sacrificial victim. If such religious practices were still in vogue today in the raids and himas, then every year a number of 'dkhar' would have to be captured as sacrificial victims. But

fortunately, all these evil practices were abolished by the British Government, and there is no reason at all to regret or lament the loss of such a regressive culture. It is a universal malady of every human society to compare the present not with the immediate past, but with the imaginary golden age of time immemorial, and to lament the deficiency of the present in comparison with the glory that had never existed.

According to the Khasi traditional belief, the clans can adopt any religion of their choice, and they may worship any god or goddess, but it was deemed improper and harmful for them to have no belief and faith in God, and to be without the spiritual protection of any religion at all. When the kur has lost its institutional character in the process of evolution, some Khasi leaders had endeavoured to reform the indigenous faith according to the need of the time to supervise the moral life of their members, as well as to assist in performing the transition rites of the spirits of their dead members in their journey to the spiritual abode. Many traditional rites and rituals have been modified and even discarded and new forms of religious rites relevant to needs of the time and the prevailing circumstances are formulated. Community religions meant to sustain the traditional social order, have long been abandoned in most of the raids and himas. Majority of the Khasis have adopted the Christian faith in various church denominations. These church denominations have largely replaced the role of the kurs as religious institutions for guiding the moral life of the believers, and for proper burial of the bodies of the deceased members, and for performing religious rites for the transition of their souls to the spiritual realm. The Christian faith had also on the whole, replaced the role of traditional community religions for determining and supervising social morality among the inhabitants of the villages, and in keeping the society alive in a new emerging socio-cultural identity. The Khasi society has to march ahead into the future with whatever socio-cultural resources at hand, and it has a dynamic tradition for survival.

Draft National Education Policy 2016

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

The draft National Education Policy 2016 was released in the public domain for discussion in June this year. Addressing a number of issues it sought to see education through a much more inclusive approach. Stress is laid on learning outcomes, skill integration, higher education and new resolve into areas like ending gender discrimination by having zero tolerance for it.

Pre-school education is given priority in the draft policy. A new framework is intended to be developed in coordination with the Ministry of Women and Child Development to effectively tackle the question of pre-school education. Focus on Anganwadi teachers and cadres of pre primary teachers are sought to be exclusively trained with focus towards pre primary education.

Towards protection of Rights of the Child and Adolescent Education the focus has to shift from the traditional paradigm of punishment and detentions into a sustained focus on rights of the child. This also has to extend to the rights of adolescent children as well as an effective mechanism to tackle problems of adolescent children. The draft Bill focuses on developing online programs to tutor children, teachers, and school administrators on the rights of the child. The draft Bill also seeks to train counselors who can deal with problems of adolescent children.

Learning outcomes is a major issue in school education today. As India moves towards hundred percent enrollments there is a push towards learning outcomes. As the Pratham and other surveys have repeatedly pointed out learning outcomes remain a major source of concern for policymakers. Thus the draft Bill rightly stresses on learning outcomes. Alongwith strengthening of RTE norms, infrastructure mechanism must be developed to evolve uniform learning outcomes and apply them equally to both private and government schools. The structure of RTE is sought to be made more flexible by nudging the states to design and plan the infrastructure suited to local conditions. The "No Detention" policy is sought to be restricted to Class V and the system of detention is sought to be reintroduced in the upper stages.

The enrollment numbers in all levels of schooling is sought to be increased through a number of innovative measures including each step drawing out a school map which would identify schools which have low enrollment and poor infrastructure. If possible such schools would be clubbed together to form composite schools which could counter the problems of low enrollment as well as poor infrastructure. The Bill seeks to achieve the target of one class one teacher in the foreseeable future. Open schooling facilities for dropouts are sought to be increased. There is also focus on increasing Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, Kendriya Vidyalayas and also to increase the number of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas which would focus on education of the girl-child. The Bill also seeks to help students prepare for a clear academic goal by advocating academic aptitude tests from time to time to help the child prepare for a career. Career counseling is seen as an important component of education and the Draft Bill seeks to do the same.

While focusing on a uniform course curriculum the draft Bill also advocates the need for a common curriculum in case of Mathematics, Sciences and English while states are allowed to design their own courses for social sciences. Digital literacy is sought to be imparted across the states

at a uniform level Class V onwards. For teaching of science subjects practical knowledge is to be imparted from class VI onwards. Textbooks will also seek to establish harmony and address disparity across spectrums. The Bill will divide class X examinations into higher and lower levels. Owing to high rates of failure in Class X is in Science and Mathematics a breaking down of Class X examinations will help the students and teachers focus towards better directed and focused results. Procedural reforms are to be initiated towards removal of migration certificates and other requirements which impede the transfer of students from one institution to another, seamlessly.

Issues of gender, social, cultural and regional disparities, with an emphasis on diversity are sought to be properly addressed in the draft Bill in the curriculum and its transaction. Curriculum will cover the issues of social justice and harmony and legal measures in order to avoid social discrimination. Tribal education remains the prime focus of the draft Bill.

With the objective of encouraging merit and promoting equity, a National Fellowship Fund, has been advocated in the draft Bill. It is primarily designed to support tuition fees, learning materials and living expenses for about 10 lakh students. The scholarships from this fund will be made available to students belonging to the economically weaker sections. A separate national talent scholarship scheme, covering all subject areas, for meritorious students of all categories selected through a national level examination after class 10 will be introduced. The Bill also nudges Pre-vocational oriented activities to be infused in the curriculum from early stages to develop positive attitude towards dignity of labour and develop skills in children.

The draft Bill pitches for special interventions to be undertaken to meet the educational needs of differently-abled children and children with learning disabilities who face multiple problems of social neglect, absence of support systems in the home, inadequate and lack of appropriate facilities and assistive devices, particularly in schools located in smaller towns and villages. The ongoing centrally sponsored schemes for children with special needs will continue and their coverage and funding will be augmented. The Bill aims to develop a suitable mechanism at the State and district levels for oversight of the implementation of various schemes as well as identifying and providing for children with special needs. At the local level, a part-time sub-committee of experts comprising of child and clinical psychologists will be constituted so that any school or District Education Officer could refer cases where a third-party assessment or advice is needed. This sub-committee can also advise on special training/ orientation of teachers for sensitive and appropriate handling of children with special needs.

The draft Bill flags a number of ideas to address the emerging challenges of education. The focus is shifting form enrollment numbers to new ideas like plugging disparity gap and addressing better outcomes. The draft Bill also focuses on aligning education with employment and accepting education as an important vertical towards gaining meaningful employment. The draft Bill is a welcome step to address emerging challenges in the education sector.

(The views expressed by the author are personal)

TO THE EDITOR

Fight the mindless enemies within

Editor,

It is shocking that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal should scream in chorus with Pakistan that Indian Government needs to give proof of the recent surgical strikes? Taking the fullest advantage of this, nearly all media in Pakistan showered praises on the Delhi CM as he hit the headlines the next day. Further, top leaders of the Congress willfully added fuel to Pakistan's sinister ambition. Sanjay Nirupam literally rubbished the surgical strikes calling them fake. I daresay, if one can doubt the country that nourishes him then he can doubt his own mother who gave birth to him. How do we describe such leaders who can humiliate the country before the eyes of the world? Could we still crown such leaders with our precious votes to rule the country?

This aside, we also have Bollywood stars who have enthralled us for ages but lethally wounded our hearts now. Their comments have sent shudders down the spine of the nation. Well, these

artists who soulfully expressed sympathies for the hapless Lahore victims, which all did, remained conspicuously silent when our army personnel were gunned down in Uri while asleep. Now some stars are even mustering courage to question the integrity of the army and their sacrifices but stand up in defense of the artists from Pakistan. Anyway, I salute those Pakistani artists for their love and loyalty towards their country but they too once they reached the land of their birth began bad-mouthing India. Will this fact not hammer the right message to our Bollywood stars and citizens? We Indians are so large-hearted that we would rather choose to relish 'Ae Dil Hai Mushkil' when it will be released after a couple of weeks.

Yours etc.,
Salil Gwari,
Shillong-2

Of moot courts and mockery thereof

Editor,

NEHU is again in the news for something unwarranted. And this time it is the seemingly invincible Law Department, which adopted an irrational method

of eliminating the participating teams of the National Moot Court Competition as pointed out by Peter Dohkrut in his letter, "National Moot Court Competition" (ST Oct 9, 2016). It is shocking that a law institution/department that is supposed to teach its budding lawyers and jurists the principles and values of fairness, reasonableness and non-arbitrariness, itself practices just the opposite. Unless the organizers had prejudged and prejudiced a particular team/s with the objective of eliminating them by any means, sheer commonsense and a sense of justice and fairness would dictate that winners of one moot court room would be allowed to compete with winners of other moot court rooms in the next round of the competition. Or how else can the organizers justify such elimination?

Yet again, sheer commonsense on the part of the organizers would indicate that it is normal that judges of different moot court rooms while assessing the most competent teams of their own respective rooms to have different ranges of marking the competing teams; and that while they (judges) know the best team in their own respective room,

they do not know the best team in other rooms, which are assessed by other judges. Hence, no matter how many marks the judges may give to the winning team of a particular room, the fact remains that it is the best team from that room, which is qualified for the next round and which has the right to compete with the winning team of another room. The organizers failed to see this fact and, as a result, they eliminated even the winning teams of some rooms as their marks are lower than the winning teams - even the losing teams - from the other rooms. By this method, a high possibility is that the losing team of one room is qualified for the next round whereas the winning team of another room is disqualified as its mark is lower than that of the losing team. This is indeed a bizarre and absolutely an irrational and unfair selection process, which can be further illustrated below:

Suppose there are four competing teams (A, B, C, D) in the competition. Two teams (A, B) are sent to room I to be assessed by Judge X. the other two teams (C, D) are sent to

room 2 to be assessed by another Judge Y. Judge X in room 1 gives a total of 90 marks to the winner team (A) and 80 marks to the loser team (B). Judge Y in room 2 gives 50 marks to the winner (C) and 40 marks to the loser team (D). The result in the first round is:

In room No.1
(as assessed by Judge X):
Team A: 90/100 marks (winner)
Team B: 80/100 marks (loser)

In room No. 2
(as assessed by Judge Y):
Team C: 50/100 marks (winner)
Team D: 40/100 marks (loser)

Now, applying the faulty method of elimination adopted by the organizers, it is team A and team B (both from room No. 1) that are selected for the final round of the competition since they obtain the highest marks; whereas team C the winner in room No. 2 is eliminated since it obtains lesser marks than teams A and B. Any reasonable person would understand that it makes little sense for team A and team B to fight again in the final!

The letter By Peter Dohkrut, a participant is obviously an expression of exasperation, disillusionment,

disappointment and bitterness towards a trusted institution that ultimately turns out to be a betrayer in the end. This has a demoralizing effect on the participating students who are on the other hand sincere, earnest, well-prepared, competent and qualified but unjustly deprived of the next round of the competition. One can understand a situation when a student loses faith in the very institution that is entrusted to groom him/her. Readers of this letter may have the impression that I am over-reacting, but this response comes from a deep concern for quality law education, professional ethics and overall training of future lawyers vis-à-vis the significance for a law student of such a national level Moot Court Competition, the mockery and [mis]management of which ultimately speaks volumes about the blatant error, incompetence and unprofessional conduct of the NEHU law department in particular, which leaves a blot on the University as a whole.

Yours etc.,
Lynda Suantak
Shillong -14

"When everyone is against you, it means that you are absolutely wrong-- or absolutely right."

--- Albert Guinon

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 63

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2016

Number One

INDIA excels in cricket as it did in hockey in the last century. The Indian team beat New Zealand by 321 runs in the final match of three Tests. That elevated it to the position of numero uno in global cricket. Virat Kohli, the captain radiates confidence. Both Indian batsmen and bowlers are capable of great doings. Kohli's team has won four series in succession. Mahendra Singh Dhoni who has featured in a biopic retired from test cricket in December 2014. Kohli has proved himself an admirable successor. But the challenge before him is pretty tough. The top four test teams nudge each other- India has 115 points, Pakistan 111, Australia 108 and England 108. India had difficulty in winning the series against the Kiwis. Top batsmen showed inconsistency. India's pacemen are not up to the mark.

T-20 and ODIs are now popular events in cricket. But those who are genuine cricket fans still think that the ultimate challenge in the game lies in success in test matches. It is in test matches that cricketing talent is best tested. Playing at home is of course easier than playing away. The remaining ten tests will be played on India's home stretch which gives Kohli's team an obvious advantage. But Kohli and his boys will have to cover themselves in glory even on foreign pitches. That will give India's cricketing team its crowning glory.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

Budget ignores pressing problems

Considering the financial position of the Government, the Finance Minister could do very little to make everyone happy in this election year. However, it does not imply that the budgetary proposals are imaginative and would make any dent in the financial crises being faced by the country. According to Government's spokesman the budget proposals are employment oriented, maintained the continuity of quest for modernization as well as endeavour to curb the conspicuous consumption of the rich. But one does not find any attempt on the part of the Finance Minister to take heed on the problem of mounting internal and external debt, inflation, and the deteriorating balance of payments situation. Even though sops offered to the average citizens do not amount to much.

Since the adoption of the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission the real incomes of the salaried people has been severely eroded because of the ensuing run-away inflation. Measured in real terms the salaried employees are worse of now than what they were earning before the adoption of the Fourth Pay Commission recommendations. These people were expecting that the exemption limit would be raised to provide them some relief.

However, what they have got is only a five per cent relief which in absolute terms implies a relief of only Rs. 350. This sum is not enough to take into account the runaway inflation. In real terms this is no relief at all. On the top of it with the railway freight and the prices of a number of items like steel and aluminum going up the average consumer would be worse off not withstanding the fact that there has been no increase in the taxes on times of mass consumption.

The pre-budget economic surveys that the rate of real savings had gone down in the current financial year. The Savings scheme which the Finance Minister proposes to introduce are not

likely to boost the rate of domestic savings. He has not revealed the details of the quality saving scheme. One of the largest items of nonproductive expenditure has been the payment of interest and principal on the loans raised earlier by the Government. By introducing a new savings scheme which will carry a rate of interest of 12 per cent the Finance Minister has complicated further the problems of re-payments of domestic loans.

It is very difficult to say what will be the impact of new rural employment generation scheme named after Jawaharhar Nehru. It is well known that the earlier rural employment schemes like NREP and RLEGP had very little impact on the generation of employment in rural areas. A number of economic studies which have evaluated that impact of NREGP have suggested that in order to have effective employment generation programme it essential to integrate these schemes with the production processes. As one economist has pointed out the Seventh Plan promised to provide 9.5 million jobs every year. The organized sector could provide only half a million job. The budget has made no provision for the other nine millions.

On of the main policies of the Government had been to make the Indian industry competitive in the international market. With this in view the Government had liberalized the import policy to enable the industrial units to take to modernization. It was argued that with modernization the industry, especially the engineering. For the first time since the Indo China war the Government has actually reduced defence budget in nominal terms. The defence budget for 1989-90 has been reduced by Rs. 200 crores in relations to the revised estimates of Rs. 13,200 crores for the previous year's defence expenditure. However, in real terms the cut amounts to Rs. 1,000 crores.

MUA-2: How does it fare on the performance scale?

By Patricia Mukhim

Governments are not formed so that a few people get to experience VIP status in every aspect of their lives, so much so they hardly know what's happening on the ground. Governments are elected to meet targets and deliverables on key areas such as Health, Education, Water Supply and Sanitation, Roads, Airports, Bridges, Telecommunications and Power Supply and of course creating livelihoods amongst others. How has Meghalaya performed on these key areas on a scale of one to ten is something we need to be able to measure. In the absence of such measurements we will be entering yet another election like blind people who get carried away by the sound and fury of electoral decibels and personal diatribes that obfuscate the real issues at stake. Actually people should be elected on the basis of their performance and their ability to envision where and how Meghalaya needs to position itself 25 years hence and what are the goals that need to be set for this state to arrive at that destination.

The sad reality is that the MUA-2 is a one-man army. The other ministers are hardly audible and they don't take a stand on issues. The Chief Minister is therefore over-exposed and takes all the flak when things go wrong as they usually do, and there is very little credit that he can take especially since what is visible is mostly what is going wrong. Since its inception in March 2013, the Government has not produced a broad policy framework to define its mission and the desired outcomes from its 5-year term (should it remain for the full five year term). Hence delivery is haphazard and far from measurable.

We are often led to believe that politicians hold the key to implementation of various programmes and projects and if that is not happening then they should be held solely responsible. We forget that while there are only 12 ministers in the Government what actually drives governance are the 80,000 plus government employees who draw monthly salaries and enjoy other perks as well, the higher up the hierarchy

they climb. The mechanisms to measure the output, outcomes, effect and impact of their daily work are largely subjective and lack coherence. The marking system is clichéd and cloistered and is not inventive or innovative to take into account the failures of the officer to deliver on certain programmes/projects. The every fact that the same officer has been holding one department for five or ten years without any outcomes is in itself a huge failure of the system to detect that failure. We know some officers are much more blue-eyed than others and are sitting in their respective chairs not because of any innovative thinking but because they toe the political line. Other colleagues see this favouritism and are disheartened and discouraged from performing their best. In a Government system where the main purpose is to deliver public goods, it is pointless trying to please the ministers when the people are left high and dry. But who cares when the goal is not the public but private profit!

Meghalaya Government is yet to use the 360 degree assessment method where seniors, peers and juniors get to assess the officer/employee anonymously and offer feedback on the personal strengths, blind spots, hidden talents and opportunities for growth that have been left dormant in the officer/employee. As a result even non-performers get 9/10 marks on their score sheets so one wonders how much an officer who really performs actually scores. Those of us who have watched this state being ruled run on auto-pilot for so long, know the officers who deliver and also those who have been warming their chairs but pretend to sweat like those who work until they are stressed out. Some officers are just not cut out to be administrators and I refer particularly to the state civil service officers, many of whom have got in through the backdoor (apologies who got in through the straight and narrow without pulling political strings or paying money). The dismal performance of the former is written all over the Secretariat. They don't take hard decisions; dare not dissent with politicians while on the call of duty and continue to pursue a

scheme that is already dead from start, merely because they need to show targets.

Performance measurement which also includes performance budgeting and result based budgeting can only be achieved when India comes up with radical administrative reforms which will reinvent the way Government does business. This will perhaps stop the crude rent seeking that originates from within the Government system itself, from politicians and bureaucrats who make money on every project including even those that are directly related to the welfare of women and children or to health (indenting medicines that are about to expire shortly, in collusion with drug distributors). One example of overt rent seeking is the toll gate at Umling. Why should the state government not stop the NHAI from charging toll fees when the road is not even fully completed? Why the Umsning stretch is treacherous and state government should have pushed the NHAI to repair the present thoroughfare until the new one is in place because it is the role of the Government to protect the interests of citizens! Alas here Government is always ready to tango with shady businessmen.

And in that hell of a toll gate you have all kinds of shady characters hanging around who are from this or that pressure group. The cops too are not to be left behind. If the administrative system is on its toes no one should be able to extort the people running the toll gate. So does the present marking system capture corruption, inefficiency, lack of ideas or plain and simple incompetence? It does not. It's an outdated system that should be thrown out of the Secretariat. In fact a Government that delivers is one that looks for outcomes, rewards performers and throws out into limbo the non-performers and shirkers. The fact that the Secretariat here does not begin to function until after 11 am is one huge indication of the failure of the Government to discipline its own workers. But for that to happen the Chief Minister must be punctual and so too the Chief Secretary. There is such a thing as a peak working time. Staying late in office when half the secretariat is fatigued doing

nothing and wanting to escape their bosses' eyes so they can go home is not going to make Meghalaya achieve its goal.

What is most visible in today's Meghalaya including its capital city of Shillong is the failure of the Public Works Department. Every road in this city is not just potholed but have developed huge craters that have become dangerous for driving especially by those using two wheelers. There is not a single road that one can cite as an example of model road-making. What does this tell us? That the PWD Minister who held the post for all of three years has failed miserably. He has been too busy looking after his personal business. This man comes from Jaintia Hills. So it means the people of Jaintia Hills saw some merit in him. What could that merit be? Is it not a fact this his only qualification is that he rode on the wave of his money power? So we have to blame both the voters and the Congress Party for weeding out aspirants who might have the potential to serve the people as their representative and recommending the names of money-bags only. I wonder if the BJP which is thinking of stepping into the electoral roller coaster in 2018 will be any different. And whether the regional parties can be better than the national parties since they are expected to be more concerned about the welfare of their own people and not depend on a High Command to turn the keys on and off.

So whether we look at Health, (except for MHIS), Education, Water Supply & Sanitation, Roads airports and Telecommunication networks the MUA-2 is a dismal failure. We are still drinking polluted water, driving swanky cars on bad roads, health care is beyond the reach of many and the Umroi airport is also yet to take off. The State Assembly building has not taken shape and the Shillong Centre for Performing Arts seems like it has run into rough waters with the architect complaining about change in drawing etc.. What then, are the achievements of the Mukul Sangma Government? Will the Chief Minister please answer?

Earthquakes - Are we Ready?

By AH Scott Lyngdoh

What remains embedded in my boyhood memory is of a cyclist while on his way in Quetta, being swallowed up as the earth opened. Such disasters some on a gigantic scale appear every now and then causing destruction irrespective of ranks, class or community. The NEIST (North East Institute of Science & Technology) during Sept, 2016 gave some bone-chilling predictions that if an earthquake were to occur, nearly 35,454 people living in 5,950 houses in East Garo Hills and West Khasi Hills would be rendered homeless. Some 81,343 people living in 15,968 houses in the East Khasi Hills, South Garo Hills (Meghalaya) and Kamrup rural (Assam) will be seriously injured and traumatized abandoning houses and property. Whether such ghastliness has any resemblance of accuracy is not the point - it is the readiness to face the consequences.

India has 5 earthquake prone zones - regions that are extremely susceptible to seismic activity. The northern and the North-

though it is likely that many more lives were lost and the faulty communication failure prevented proper recordkeeping. Injuries and damage to property and livestock was immense.

The next major earthquake occurred in 1934 affecting areas in Nepal-Bihar causing about 10,000 deaths. Nearer home was the 15th August, 1950 earthquake ripping through the heart of Assam killing 3000 people, destroying property and livestock as well. One of the more important effects was the landslide it caused in Assam near Dulungmukh blocking the Subansiri, an important tributary of the Brahmaputra. Unaware of this blockage, the villagers downstream ventured out into the fast drying riverbed and paid no heed to warnings issued by the govt. Three days later as the blockade collapsed, the rush of water downstream flooded and drowned most villages. Over 800 people died or went missing in these floods.

The earthquake on 18th Sept, 2011 rocked Sikkim and most of north-east India. Its impact was felt

The north-eastern part of the country is not only located at the centre of one of the most active earthquake prone regions of the country but is also exposed to very high damage given the nature of the terrain. Relief operations in the area become slow due to the great landslides triggered by the earthquake. Much of this region is also covered by thick forests adding on to the woes of rescue units. The recent Manipur earthquake of Jan, 2016 has brought the region's vulnerability into the spotlight. Let us take a look at some of the worst earthquakes to have affected north-eastern India.

eastern regions being mountainous, Himalayan regions are more prone to being affected by frequent earthquakes. The north-eastern part of the country is not only located at the centre of one of the most active earthquake prone regions of the country but is also exposed to very high damage given the nature of the terrain. Relief operations in the area become slow due to the great landslides triggered by the earthquake. Much of this region is also covered by thick forests adding on to the woes of rescue units. The recent Manipur earthquake of Jan, 2016 has brought the region's vulnerability into the spotlight. Let us take a look at some of the worst earthquakes to have affected north-eastern India.

Not only was the Assam earthquake of 1897 one of the earliest recorded in the region, it was also one of the most devastating. The earthquake with a magnitude of 8.3 Mw measured 7.1 on the Richter scale. Assam and the north-east were not much developed at the time and since the quake destroyed all means of communication, very little was reported. What is known, though, is that the impact was felt far throughout the region even as far as Calcutta and Dacca. Most of Assam was gravely affected and the towns of Guwahati, Shillong, Goalpara and Dhubri lost many lives and dwellings. Tura, Nagaon, Barpeta and Nalbari also recorded much damage. About 1542 people were officially recorded as having died at that time,

across Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and parts of Tibet. The epicentre was plotted at a distance of about 68 km from the capital of Sikkim, Gangtok. Its occurrence at a highly populated area maximized damage and made rescue efforts very tough. About 111 people died, some 60 of them from Sikkim. Billions worth of property was reported damaged while causing yet another earthquake trauma to the people of north-eastern India. In recent times, earthquakes struck Nepal in April - May 2015, Dibrugarh in June 2015, Manipur in January 2016 and Myanmar August 2016.

Sadly, earthquakes are not predictable, but preparedness is to be a certainty. Experts suggest putting in place Emergency Operation Centres (EOC) under which all agencies come together to coordinate, response and recovery action. Considering isolation as a distinct possibility, temporary/emergency, helipads as recommended by the Indian Air Force must be part of the plan, and coordinates of these helipads made available to the govt depts./agencies. Most important are the relief and rescue operations combining sufficient stock of non-perishables, emergency healthcare/water, communication and earthmoving equipment. In fact the EOC should be so framed as to be capable of handling any unforeseen situation. Over to the NEIST for a suitable response through the Shillong Times.

(The writer is former Finance Minister, Govt of Meghalaya)

TO THE EDITOR

Benami transactions in MUDA

Editor,

The world over tribal culture is synonymous with truth and honesty and yet we have amidst our community people willing to barter their names for filthy lucre. It is time that our dorbar shnong, seng bhalang and our churches counsel our people on the evils of such activities. When we resort to selling of names we must realise that in the process we are teaching our children that it is perfectly fine to cheat. (Ngi tip ba ngi dei ka jait bynriew 'Tip briew tip blei' bad kaba 'Kamai ia ka hok' te balei kein mynta pat?) ... Introspect please.

As a case in point I can cite the rampant illegal transactions at MUDA shopping complex at Khyndailad. Here one can see garment shops, mobile shops, watch shops, barber shops, spectacle shops, teer shops, computer shops, book shops, bag shops, shoe shops, etc., involved in benami business all the year round while hundreds of our tribal boys and girls

are hunting for places to do an honest days' work. It is noticed that some stalls have even been sold/ sublet many times over and with every change of hands the allottees make a quick buck and new businesses emerge in those stalls. The few tribal and non tribal stall owners who are doing genuine business are aware of the large scale benami businesses going on here and also are aware of all the Stall Numbers indulging in benami businesses but choose to remain silent as they have been reduced to a minority and are loath to complain as they genuinely doubt MUDA's sincerity and ability to weed out the benami perpetrators.

MUDA's apathy to act is allowing the benami stall holders to carry on their activities with impunity. Some benami traders have even rented out counters to third parties inside the stalls. In connivance with the tribal stall holders the benami dealers have armed themselves with documents proclaiming their status as partners, managers etc. Invariably one will find that all the so-called managers are non-tribals. Do we smell something fishy in that? Also it is hilarious to note

that while the big showrooms in the rest of Police Bazar are self managed by the owners themselves, the small pigeon-hole stalls of MUDA shopping Complex are being run by non-tribal managers appointed by the Tribal allottees. Real highfliers these tribal allottees but who is bluffing whom!

It goes without saying that the MUDA authorities have not seriously attempted to identify the allottees who have either sold their stalls to non tribals and/or are indulging in promoting benami transactions. By corollary MUDA is in itself involved in promoting benami business. MUDA has to take foolproof steps to weed out this rot. MUDA can effectively take the help of the High Court to erect the CBI to identify the erring allottees and resume the stalls for allotment to more deserving and needy local tribals wanting to eke out some honest earnings. As already stated the stall numbers sold/sublet is an open secret and, notwithstanding the dangers of whistle blowing, one can produce the list of offenders' to this paper for future publication in public interest and for redressal but that would be denying the

MUDA authorities from doing their own job. Also before things come to such a pass I would request the tribal stallholders who have sublet/leased/sold their stalls to please self operate their stalls or hand them back to the MUDA authorities for re-allotment. On their part MUDA also must issue such directions to the allottees practicing/promoting benami businesses. Eradication of Benami Businesses/ Transactions is now a matter of policy of the Government of India and MUDA's long standing apathy towards it is only raising eyebrows and fermenting speculations.

It was heartening to hear the present youthful and dynamic Urban and Municipal Affairs minister proclaiming to clean Shillong. The citizens of Shillong would like to see him clean up the dirty benami businesses from his headquarters at MUDA situated at Khyndailad which is the HEART of Shillong. Mr. Minister, if we fail to act now the MUDA Market at Khyndailad is guaranteed to go the IEWDUH way. Yours Etc., Jonathan Lyngdoh, Shillong -3

“You can discover what your enemy fears most by observing the means he uses to frighten you.”

--- Eric Hoffer

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 64 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2016

Bob Dylan

IT was a surprise choice though highly appreciated. Bob Dylan, symbol of rebellion who overwhelmed generations with his songs has been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Barack Obama, the President of the US himself a Nobel Laureate congratulated Dylan on his well-deserved recognition. Dylan was the voice of the US anti-war and civil rights movements of the 1960s and ushered in the folk-rock movement. His 1965 'Like a Rolling Stone' was adjudged by many as the greatest song of all time. He was a musical accompaniment to Martin Luther King jr's dream. Dylan was a breaker of all conventions and introduced the Beatles to marijuana which was not held against him when he was awarded the Nobel. The iconic Woodstock Festival began as a tribute to him- a rebel like James Dean who also had a serious motorcycle accident but unlike Dean survived it. When he visited England, he simply rocked Britain with his songs and lyrics.

Bob Dylan had been mentioned in the Nobel speculation for years. But many experts had eliminated him from the list thinking that the Swedish academy would not extend the award to the world of music. The academy ruled out such reservations. It was said that Dylan performed his poetry in the form of songs which was no different from the ancient Greek bardic tradition. Obama said he was one of his favourite poets. Swedish academy member, Per Wastburg called him the greatest living poet. It may however be pointed out that Bob Dylan was not the first song writer and singer to win the Nobel. Back in 1913, Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the highest literary tribute for his Geetanjali which was a bouquet of ennobling devotional songs in the form of poems.

LOOKING BACK

March 8, 1989

An indecisive contest

Of the three District Council elections, two are just over and one is impending. Liking this to a 3-test cricket series, the Chief Minister has claimed that the first of the series - the Council elections in Garo Hills has been won by the Congress (I) and the second one in Jaintia Hills is "drawn". What he means probably is that none of the contesting parties has a majority in the Jaintia Council on its own and hence none could be said to have won a victory. Garo Hills and Jaintia Hills have through the last Assembly election and the recent Council elections presented an interesting study in contrast. In the Assembly elections it was the Hill Peoples Union which overwhelmingly defeated the Congress(I) in Garo Hills to emerge as the obvious regional challenger to the national ruling party. This assumption was effectively repudiated by the smaller Meghalayan units of Jaintia Hills which bagged all the seven Assembly seats for the Congress(I) leaving the regional parties absolutely hollow.

The table turned for both the hills in the recent Council elections, Congress(I) regained its lost ground in Garo Hills which now humbled the regional parties as unmistakably as the latter did the national party to face the reverse in Jaintia Hills which gave a lead to a regional party, the Hill Peoples Union, over the Congress(I). In this view of the matter it is a defeat for the national party and a gain for the regional party assuming the top position in the fray.

Nevertheless, there is no prospect for a smooth sailing on the part of any coalition taking over the executive charge of the Council

through the entire course of its allotted term. Simple arithmetic, however, suggests that it is easier for the HPU to manoeuvre it. It is true that as many as six of the newly-elected HPU members belonged to the Congress(I) but were refused party nominations on the eve of the elections. It would still be hoping extravagantly that all or most of them be willing or be persuaded to return to the Congress (I) fold.

For a HPU-led coalition, the disturbing factor is and would be that neither of the two major regional parties are in ideally good terms at the district level despite a fair measure of understanding between the leadership of both at the State level. Their parties fought each other even in constituencies where the Congress(I) was not in the contest and this indeed speaks poorly of the electoral strategy of the regional parties. There is, therefore, not much for even the leading among them to gloat over. The Jaintia Hills Council poll verdict for all practical purposes has not given a clear mandate for any party to guide its affairs for a full term singly or in coalition. It is a barren one, not just a drawn contest.

Pre-Budget Session adjourned Sine Die

The pre-budget session of the Meghalaya legislative assembly was adjourned sine die here on Tuesday.

Earlier the house passed the Rs 17-11 crore appropriation bill for supplementary demands for the current financial year the house also ratified the 62nd Amendment to the Constitution lowering the voting age to 18.

Plummeting standards of political discourse in the country can surprisingly be largely attributed to its "Grand Old Party", the Indian National Congress. We saw it when Narendra Modi was Chief Minister of Gujarat and we see it now when he is the country's Prime Minister. Nothing seems to have changed. It's just gotten worse. Some years ago, Congress President Sonia Gandhi, called Modi, then Gujarat Chief Minister "maut ka saudagar" (merchant of death), hinting at his alleged role in the Gujarat communal riots of 2002. She, as the head of her supposedly secular party only had in mind the violence of Hindu "communists" forgetting that they were reacting to the Godhra carnage that preceded and provoked it.

If innocent Muslims were killed by the rioting mobs, the killings in the railway coaches were premeditated, had been preceded by elaborate preparations and were perpetrated on equally innocent travellers. When Gujarat riots are mentioned the killings in Godhra are hardly ever mentioned. In my opinion, these two tragic and unsavoury events should be mentioned in the same breath otherwise it wouldn't be secular enough.

All that, however, is beside the point. What we came out to discuss was the plummeting standards of political discourse. Looks like, Sonia threw the first stone, so to say. Now, years later, her son and Vice President Rahul Gandhi has made a similar goofy statement abusing the Prime Minister in very crude terms. Winding up his political campaign in UP, he said in Delhi that Modi, was hiding behind the blood of "jawans" (soldiers who were killed in the Uri attack). He went on to accuse Modi of indulging in "khoon ki

dalali" (blood brokerage) of army men, whatever that meant.

Apparently, he could not, as usual, express properly whatever he had in mind. Predictably, all hell broke loose and soon thereafter a series of press briefings had to be conducted by his Party to clarify the matter and justify whatever utterances he made. Presumably, in order to make the briefings more effective Kapil Sibal, a senior member and a highly acclaimed lawyer to boot, was asked to meet the Press.

The briefings were just to put across what Rahul had intended to convey, which he apparently failed to do giving rise to a barrage of barbs. Numerous statements were issued on his statements which were generally construed as insult of the Forces in an effort to politically attack the PM. His statements were somewhat surprising in the background of his appreciative remarks earlier when he said that the surgical strike was the first PM-like action of Modi.

Nonetheless, the statements came in for adverse comments by political parties, which condemned it as an effort to insult the "Army's valour". All round denunciation of his remarks came not only from BJP President Amit Shah but even Arvind Kejriwal, no admirer of Modi. Also the NCP President and a former Congressman Sharad Pawar too disapproved of Rahul's remarks. Even Sonia's greatest sycophant and RJD President Lalu Prasad Yadav strongly criticised and said Rahul failed to put across his views in a proper manner.

However, much Sibal may have tried to justify Rahul's outburst, his arguments did not convince anybody. He as well as the Congress knew it. Rahul had indulged in some shooting of the mouth out of his visceral hatred for Modi and that was clear. He hardly has any control over his thought

Modi Bashing

Rahul's only forte

By Proloy Bagchi

process and much less on his expression. With his hatred for Modi and BJP he gets carried away when he occupies a pulpit and wants to hit both of them hard even if that happens to be uncivil and crude.

Attacking Modi seems to be a pastime with him. Modi, perhaps, presents a larger than life presence to him in front of which he finds himself far too diminutive - which, in fact, he seems to be. He is a reluctant politician and seems to have no mettle for it. His inferiority complex, regardless of the boost given to him by his mother and her sycophants, apparently, doesn't allow him to climb up to the political stature that his status in his Party demands. All said and done, he is unequal to the job that has been chosen for him by his mother and the Party over which she presides.

Ever since Modi formed the Government on his own steam, Rahul has been trying to nibble at him. With the kind of majority that Modi mustered at the hustings in 2014, he never had any worries and has largely ignored Rahul's jibes. Having no issues, Rahul started with the bogey of Modi's suit worth Rs 10 lakhs (Rs one million) that was a gift from one of his admirers. Modi wore it perhaps only once when Obama was in India and then had it auctioned where it fetched Rs. 4 crore (Rs. 40 million).

Then he started a campaign to run down Modi's government calling it "suit boot ki sarkar" (a government of suited and booted gentlemen) and went to town telling people that such a Government would do nothing for the poor. In the process, he would claim that he and his party men work only for the poor whereas this Government worked merely for the rich.

He clean forgot his grandmother's slogan of "garibi hatao" (eliminate

poverty) adopted over 40 years ago which was a fraud played on the people. Poverty prevailed as her government promoted nothing but corruption. Her daughter in-law had to initiate a poverty alleviation programme in 2004 through the newly installed UPA government, which enacted Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

Rahul had also been criticising Modi's foreign trips telling people that while the PM goes visiting foreign countries, farmers continue to commit suicide at home. He made it appear as if the farmers' suicides could be attributed to the PM's absences abroad. This was another way of running down Modi.

One doesn't know whether he found a corner to hide when the reports in the press indicated that messages were received promptly after the Uri attack from the heads of most of the governments of the countries that Modi visited. During his trips abroad he developed personal relations with the heads of States/ governments particularly of the West. No Prime Minister earlier was ever able to forge such close personal relationships with the leaders of the First World as also those of the Third World.

Despite his illustrious lineage Rahul has never been able to attain the heights of his elders in the family. His grandfather, Feroze Gandhi, was a remarkable parliamentarian and he had such guts that he could take on even his own father in-law Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister. He could do all that because of his political acumen, innate ability, tenacity and integrity. Somehow, Rahul lacks all that and yet he is being made to strut around in the country's political firmament as a political leader. His is not politics; his forte appears to be in slinging mud at those who happen to be in power. --- INFA

Adverse impact of Chinese Lallo Dam on lower riparian areas

By Ratan Bhattacharjee

China's construction of the Lallo dam, a project operationalised in October 2015 is to block the Xiabuqu river a tributary of the Brahmaputra which is locally called Yarlung Zangbo justifying it as a livelihood project to address food security and flood safety in Tibet. During the visit of Prime Minister of India to China in May 2015 it was promised that the two sides would further strengthen cooperation through the expert-level mechanisms on the provision of flood season hydrological data and emergency management and exchange views on other issues of mutual interest. But these assurances are audaciously flouted by China when it took up the project of Lallo dam construction without taking note of India's concerns.

In reply to the concern expressed by Indian Government, the Chinese Foreign Ministry argues that the project is to address food security and flood safety in Tibet. The second argument for justifying the dam is still more audacious. According to the Chinese spokesperson, the tributary river is located completely within the Chinese side. Thirdly, they argue that the dam will not have an adverse impact downstream. The blockade of the Xiabuqu river in Tibet for the construction of the \$740 million Lallo project was announced recently on October 1 defying the principles of good cooperation on trans-border rivers existing between the two countries. This kind of cooperation has been there between Bangladesh and India for a longer time. The project should be seen from humanitarian angle and from the larger picture of China - India friendship.

Union Minister of State for Water Resources Sanwar Lal Jat informed that the construction is causing a drop in water level in Brahmaputra in Assam. In 2006 the India-China Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) on trans-border rivers signed a memorandum of understanding on strengthening cooperation on trans-border rivers. Hydrological data and emergency management have to be considered for accepting the dam project of China. Brahmaputra is rich in water and a major hydrological resource for Tibet, but enough thinking is required for the adverse effects on the downstream areas of India in the North East. Brahmaputra flows from Tibet into Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and later into Bangladesh. So a vast area in India and Bangladesh will be affected by the construction of the dam and India Government does not show much seriousness about it although officially the assurance is given that it will take up the issue with China. Till date nothing substantial is done to allay the apprehensions in the minds of the people of India.

The expert opinion is that the Tibet construction is not more than 40 per cent. The river's mean discharge is 25.8 cubic meters per second (cumecs) less than 0.15 per cent of the Brahmaputra's mean discharge when it enters India. If the waters are diverted then projects on the Brahmaputra particularly the Upper Siang and Lower Subansri projects in Arunachal Pradesh may get affected. The dam may impact the flow of silt as well which is essential to build up North Eastern Plains. Even it the Lallo project does not reduce water flow to India in the far future, it may add up to desertification of Tibet and Xigaze region itself. It is important for both India and China to be equally desirous of attaining the complete and satisfactory utilisation of the waters as reflected earlier in the Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan, to recognise the need of fixing and delimiting in a spirit of goodwill and friendship, the rights and obligations of each in relation to the other concerning the use of waters. The cooperative spirit cannot be forgotten. Care should be taken of 'non-consumptive use' of water such as for navigation, floating of timber, or other property, flood protection, or flood control, fishing or fish culture, wild life or such like beneficial purposes. It is very clear that China has purposely started the Dam project.

Even as India mulls scrapping of Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan, China blocks the tributary of Brahmaputra in Tibet to build a dam. It is not clear yet what impact the blockade will have on India and Bangladesh although China has tried constantly to dismiss apprehensions of restricting the flow of water. Ismail Serageldin, World Bank Vice President recently said in a different context: "The next world war will be over water". At least on the Lallo Dam project the Indo-Chinese relation will once more be strained and it is already much strained after the Chinese claims on Arunachal Pradesh.

It is not new that China is adding insult to India's injury. Whenever there is a tension between India and Pakistan over water sharing, China takes the chance of adding up pressure. The outline of the 12th Five year Plan for the People's Republic of China indicates that three more hydropower projects on the mainstream of Brahmaputra river in Tibet Autonomous Region have been approved for implementation. Lallo Dam is one such project which is increasing India's concern. (The author is Associate Professor and Head, Post Graduate Dept of English, Dum Dum Motijheel College and may be contacted at profatanbhattacharjee@gmail.com)

TO THE EDITOR

Religion, Tradition and custom

Editor,

175 yrs ago Thomas Jones and Christian missionaries came to the Khasi hills and taught the Khasis to read and write, educated them and then pursued their agenda of conversion. Since then, majority of the Khasis have abandoned their indigenous faith " Niam Khasi" and adopted Christianity. That the Christian missionaries came to these hills not only to teach but also to preach is an inescapable fact of history. For the past few weeks writers have expressed their view on the affects of Christianity on the traditions, customs and beliefs of the Khasis. Mr P.K Dwivedi sees the activities of the Welsh Christian missionaries as one which "has robbed the Khasis of their culture, tradition and beliefs". Mr R.Wallang counters Mr Dwivedi by saying, "Christianity prides itself as a faith that upholds and nurtures local culture".

There is no denying that the Christian missionaries have contributed tremendously towards the upliftment of the Khasis. But what if they had just taught the Khasis to read and write, educated them, encouraged them to discard off superstitious beliefs? What if they had not spread falsehood about the Niam Khasi - a religion whose basic

belief is in one God "U Blei", a religion that teaches the Khasis the values of righteousness, respect for your own kit and kin and respect for all human beings and GOD. What if they had not exploited the Khasis backwardness then? No. They could not have done just these because they had a mission and the mission is to convert the Khasis to Christianity. So they came, did what they had to do and succeeded.

I agree with Cassandra Syiemlieh when she says, "nobody can take away a person's spiritual right to Religious Freedom". But I disagree with her when she says that many countries have welcomed Christianity but have not forgotten their custom and traditions. There can be no denying that when a person embraces a new Religion it is inevitable that a part or whole of the traditions, customs, and beliefs that persons profess, will be lost as they may be in conflict with the new religion that he/she has adopted. How many Khasi families who have embraced Christianity still practice the Khasi naming ceremony of a new born "Ka Jer khun"? Or the Khasi traditional marriage ceremonies? Or perform the funeral rites as practiced by the Khasis? To say that Christianity has in no way affected the Khasi way of life, traditions, customs and beliefs would only be self denial. How the future generation of Khasis will stand up and face the world, when all of their traditions, customs and beliefs are lost

and find that they have embraced only what is foreign, only time will tell.

Let me end by saying that religion can divide a race. It has happened in Ireland, is happening in the Middle East and in other parts of the World. Let this not happen to the Khasis. We pray to "U Blei, Nongthaw Nongbuh" that religious intolerance such as the recent incident which happened at Myllem, where a section of the people there had desecrated the religious ground and destroyed the foundation of the funeral pyre of the Seng Khasi, should not be repeated. Units of the Seng Khasi have condemned these acts. But there has been none from others.

Yours etc.,
P.D.Nongrum
Shillong -2

Gratitude for peaceful conduct of Durga Puja

Editor,

I express heartfelt gratitude to the Government Departments of Meghalaya, the District Administration, East Khasi Hills the Police Department, the Central Puja Committee and over and above the people of Shillong for a very peaceful, well disciplined celebration of Durga Puja in the city. The devotees could move freely and safely till late in the night visiting puja pandals. Hearty co-operation of the public in religious performances is the best sign of co-existence, which deserves applause. I do offer special thanks to the Secretary and Managing

Committee, Ramakrishna Mission Shillong, for the gracious arrangements they made to facilitate the old and disabled devotees to reach the temple and enjoy Puja. The volunteers did their best to help the physically disabled. It is the best service to the humanity, 'To serve man is to serve God' as Swami Vivekananda said, which is the essence of religion

Your etc,
Uma Purkayastha
Shillong - 4

"False allegation against NEHU law dept"

Editor,

Apropos the two brazen and derogatory letters written by Peter Aiborlang Dohkrut (ST Oct 9, 2016) and Lynda Suantak (ST Oct 13, 2016) regarding the NEHU National Moot Court Competition, respecting the freedom of speech, we understand that every single one of us has the constitutional right to address any grievances. However, such baseless and defamatory attacks on the University in general and the Department of Law in particular, cannot be tolerated. The two students have out rightly insulted not only the students and the teachers of the Department, but also all the stakeholders of the competition, ranging from the Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court and

eminent advocates and judicial officials of the state judiciary, who were judges for the various sessions throughout the competition.

Before addressing the issues raised by the two students, we'd like to state that the team in question called up various members of the Organising Committee two days prior to the competition, enquiring as to how the court proceedings would be conducted, when the detailed rules of the competition had been posted on various prominent law websites as well as the official NEHU website three months prior to the event. The team in question was also not present at the draw of lots

prior to the preliminary rounds, so much so that one of our students had to register for the competition on their behalf. Such enquiries at the last moment only goes to show how "well-prepared" and "sincere" they were for the competition as they have so persuasively stated.

https://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/images/cleardot.gif

Yours etc.,
Kynjaimon Amse,
Via email

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

No country for old men & women

By Nabamita Mitra

The UN has earmarked October 1 as the International Day for Older Persons. On that day, educational institutes and social organisations hold special functions where the younger generation is intimated about the problems of old age and remedies are listed. This year too, the day was observed in almost all parts of the country.

But for 65-year-old Molina Das, who lives in a slum on the outskirts of Kolkata, October 1 was a day of toiling as usual. Like every day, she left her home at 5am to catch the early train to the city where she works in two households as maid. It was the same for septuagenarian Janaki Devi who sells betelnut in an obscure corner of Shillong. And it was no different for Anjali Devi in her lonely room in an old-age home in Kolkata.

The story is similar and equally heart-wrenching in every corner of India, a country of over 100 billion, where basic human rights mean little to the hoi polloi leave apart the rights for the elderly.

In India, considered as one of the young nations and an emerging country in race with the giants of the world, old age is an affliction thanks to the changing societal contours and the myopic policies of successive governments.

Be it a middle class family or a lower middle class, right to better life for the elderly is non-existent in most cases. Mathew Cherian of HelpAge India (Delhi) says rights of the elderly are flouted everywhere in the country. "Older persons in India are not secure and the reasons are manifold," he says.

Enumerating the reasons for the lack of well-being of the elderly, Cherian says there is neither financial nor health security for them. The government has a pension scheme under which senior citizens from the low income group get a paltry sum of Rs 200. "This amount is nothing considering the present market prices. Also, this scheme reaches only 11 percent of the beneficiaries. This puts the elderly in the low security zone and makes

Low government pension scheme, poor healthcare facilities and dwindling system of joint family are taking a toll on the elderly in India



SUNSET YEARS: The Centre's pension scheme provides a paltry sum of Rs 200 that translates to nothing in the age of inflation. Healthcare is equally appalling.



sustenance difficult for them," says Cherian.

This was not a glaring problem when the system of joint family was in place and children lived with their parents and considered a natural support system at old age. But with the breaking down of the family system the problem has gradually been inflated.

Cherian explains that as children are moving out after a certain age for career and other reasons, old parents, especially in economically weaker families, are finding it difficult to survive as "low income security translates to no money".

To add to the woes is the country's appalling healthcare system that does not ensure protection of the elderly. In rural areas, the scenario is worse as there is complete lack of healthcare. There is also no family healthcare system in both rural and urban areas. "It is the same in the northeastern states like Assam and Meghalaya. The basic fundamental rights of the elderly are flouted," says



Kholindro Nomosujyo, 91, lives in Guwahati. He has five sons and a daughter who is married. He is dependent on his sons, one of whom stays in Agartala with his family. Nomosujyo, who was a fisherman, gets no government incentives. There is no government hospital near his house. He is a beneficiary of HelpAge India's mobile medical unit services for the past eight years.



Promila Sarkar, 55, lives in Guwahati's Panikhaity. She stays with her son and daughter-in-law. There is only one government health centre in her village that is meant for children and pregnant women. So she has to take help from HelpAge India's mobile units.

Cherian.

Nilondra Tanya of HelpAge India Guwahati says the breakdown of the joint family has led to a gradual degradation in filial duty. "Migration of the younger generation is uncontrollable but this has taken its toll on the elderly. In a nuclear family system, a result of the western influence, an old person has no place. Where do the elderly fit in the present family setup," he says.

The trend of sending parents to old-age homes was earlier common in metro cities but it has caught up with small cities and towns too, says

Tanya. "Even in cities like Guwahati and Shillong we find the trend now. Educated young people send their parents to homes. The surprising factor is that these people are ready to spend money on old-age homes but find it difficult to take care of their parents. The elderly are now considered as liability," he adds.

Tanya says the situation is marginally better in villages where the family system is still intact to some extent. But it does not mean that the rural populace is safe from the social decadence.

The Constitution, however, has provisions to safeguard the rights of the elderly. Article 41 of the

Constitution says, "The State shall, within the limits of economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want."

On January 13, 1999, the Government of India ratified the National Policy for Older Persons to accelerate welfare measures and empower the elderly in ways beneficial for them. This policy included the following major steps: setting up of a pension fund for ensuring security for those persons who have been serving in the

unorganised sector; construction of old-age homes and daycare centres for every 3-4 districts; establishment of resource centres and re-employment bureaus for people above 60 years; concessional rail/air fares for travel within and between cities; and enacting legislation for ensuring compulsory geriatric care in all the public hospitals.

All these are to make life for the elderly comfortable but little has changed so far. Sangeeta Mondal, who works with older persons and runs an old-age home on the outskirts of Kolkata, says there are several cases of

negligence in the declining years of one's life where children refuse to take in parents. Anjali Devi (name changed) is a widow. "The daughter married against her parents' will and since then there is no contact between them. She did not even come when her father died," says Mondal. In fact, the daughter, whose house is only a stone's throw away from the old-age home where Anjali Devi stays, hardly comes to meet her. "Once she even refused to recognise her mother," says Mondal.

With some of the irreversible social factors, like the breaking down of joint family setup, at work, the government needs to do more to safeguard the rights

of old people. Cherian says HelpAge India is already lobbying for a better and enhanced pension scheme and quality life. The organisation also runs mobile medical units in rural areas and has helplines in metro cities where old people in distress can call up and seek help.

The organisation is also conducting awareness programmes in schools since 1978, says Tanya.

A key programme that the organisation runs is for livelihood of the elderly. "Financial independence is an important thing and so we are helping them providing livelihoods. Our self-help groups have around 50,000 members across the country," says Cherian.

However, at the end it is the prerogative of the younger generation, which will age in another 30 years, to be aware of the problems of the sunset age and should be compassionate towards the needs of the elderly. It is only possible by spending more time with ageing parents at home and giving them strength to overcome their loneliness and helplessness.

Paradoxes of motherhood in India

By Surekha Kadapa-Bose

Recently, actor Kareena Kapoor Khan created quite a splash when she walked the ramp at the Lakme Fashion Week dressed in a resplendent Sabyasachi Mukherjee outfit. Nothing really novel about that, is there? After all, it's customary for designers to rope in film stars as showstoppers to grab the eyeballs. But this outing by the actor was indeed novel — she sashayed down the ramp proudly showing off the exquisite ethnic outfit and her distinct baby bump.

Kapoor-Khan is five months pregnant and not self-conscious about her pregnancy or the weight gain; if anything, rather uncharacteristically, she is openly talking about her impending motherhood. "I must say it's not one but two of us who walked the ramp today!" declared the 34-year-old, who has, in the past, courted controversy around her size-zero appearance.

That is the distinctive change that is apparent in the lifestyle of the present day divas. They talk freely, even about the sensitive issues (recall Deepika Padukone and her sensational tell-all on her battle with depression). They unabashedly pose for the shutterbugs, and are not afraid to publically own up to their mistakes as much as their successes. Of late, this "bold attitude" is most visible in pregnant actresses,



MIRROR HAS TWO FACES: For most women, motherhood brings up issues of health, survival and reproductive rights; (right) Kareena flaunting her baby bump

who not only work till the last trimester but also remain in the public eye till the time they are ready to deliver.

One may ask what's so great about working till the very end? Why the hue and cry over photo shoots and ramp walks? After all, don't most expectant women in India, especially those in the hinterland, continue to toil at home and in the fields till the very end? However, in a profession where the perfect physical form is everything, flaunting a baby bump and the accompanying weight gain is a uniqueness of the current global world.

In fact, Indian celebrities have been late in catching up with this trend. Abroad,

the first celebrity to happily pose with her huge belly was Demi Moore way back in 1991. She posed nude, seven months pregnant, on the cover of Vanity Fair magazine. Of course, at the time she had come in for a lot of flak.

Supermodel Cindy Crawford posed nude with her precious bump on the cover of W magazine in 1999. Thereafter, it has become customary for celebrities in the West to do exclusive photo shoots and later, auction off their babies' first pictures to the highest bidder. And there is a lot of hype and excitement generated around the whole thing.

By comparison, female celebs in the subcontinent

are taking baby steps (no pun intended) towards sharing news and drawing attention to their motherhood. Notably, in the last season of the Lakme Fashion Week, a heavily pregnant, former supermodel Carol Gracias had walked the ramp. Her sari, draped low-waist, didn't hide her baby belly. If at all, it had been so draped that her bump was visible.

She walked with another expectant television actor and model Shweta Salve, who was in her third trimester. They both delivered babies in July and August, respectively.

Incidentally, for that particular show, designer Gaurang Shah had managed to rope in another 10 women

in different stages of pregnancy, making a definite statement on the changing perceptions of pregnancy in the country. Indeed, Salve and actor Konkana Sen Sharma also went ahead and posed semi-nude during their pregnancy.

In a largely conservative milieu, where women are hesitant to reveal their pregnancy, let alone show it off, all this may certainly appear as trendsetting and unique. But, at the same time, it brings to the fore another telling reality — that whereas for some motherhood is a "blessing", which comes with heartfelt Twitter and Facebook posts, glamorous photo shoots and exotic baby-moons, for most it brings up issues of health, medical care, survival and perhaps the violation of their reproductive rights. In fact, of the many paradoxes that mark everyday life in India, this may be one of the starkest.

Admittedly, when movie stars or models walk the runway or continue to work till the last trimester it does celebrate a more positive body image among the urbanites, encourages families and employers to support pregnant women in the workplace and perhaps even motivates men to step up to lend a hand. Yet, even as a handful of the female celebs try to influence change, there's no overlooking the fact that token gestures won't help transform the larger, more

dismal realities.

Articulating this drawback, post her ramp appearance, Gracias wrote in an article: "Good if us walking the ramp focuses on the real beauty of pregnancy and the joy of carrying a child. But millions of women do it every day in some manual job. We have all seen seven to eight months pregnant women carrying stones on their head just to feed their family. This is the common life of Indian women and that is what needs changing!"

This is particularly true for the hundreds of thousands of women who are working in the unorganised sector. Poor, they are unable to access proper nutrition or quality healthcare. Added to this is the fact that their work rights are not protected by the standard laws that lay down the terms of employment, including maternity benefits like paid leave.

One of the most obvious signs of this inconsistency is the dismal maternal health indicators. As per data released by the Registrar General of India, the maternal mortality rate is 167 per 100,000 live births (2011-13). A leading cause for this high number is the poor health infrastructure and accessibility — women are either unable to get to a hospital in time or succumb due to under-nutrition. The central and state



governments routinely introduce schemes and services that endeavour to make pregnancy a safe and happy experience for women. The newest scheme is the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan launched in June 2016, which, combined with the existing Janani Suraksha Yojana, offers free health check-ups on the ninth of every month at a government facility apart from free delivery at government hospitals or accredited private facilities. Besides adequate healthcare avenues, a societal transformation is necessary.

Women are still expected to put their family's needs before their own, especially when it comes to food and rest. It's a given that they will take care of the household chores and contribute to the family income as well.

Urban or rural, few men step up to lend their wives, even those expecting, a helping hand. But lasting change doesn't come overnight and certainly not riding on a celebrity's token gesture. Nonetheless, each effort that chips away at regressive mindsets is certainly valuable. (WFS)

Work hard for main hurdle

By Ranjan K Baruah

We have published the details of the Civil Services Examination prelims. Aspirants who qualify in the prelims will appear for the main exam, which is held once in a year. After qualifying in the mains, aspirants are called for the interview, which is the last stage of the Civil Services Examination. The main exam is one of the toughest as it selects some of the best individuals for the interview.

The main examination is intended to assess the overall intellectual traits and depth of understanding of candidates rather than merely the range of their information and memory. In the main exam, there are nine (7 + 2) papers. All of them are of descriptive type. There are two qualifying papers — any modern Indian language of 300 marks and English of 300 marks.

The marks of these two papers will not be counted in the merit list of the main examination. The candidate is allowed to pick any one language from the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution or English as the medium for writing the main examination.

There is only 'ONE' optional subject to choose from the list of subjects. It comprises of two papers each of 300 marks. So the optional paper has 600 marks.

A candidate is allowed to take up literature as an optional subject "without the condition of having the same at the graduation level". The scope of the syllabus of optional paper is higher than the bachelor's degree but lower than the master's level. In-

terview/Personality Test is of 275 Marks. The total mark of the written examination is 1750 marks.

Following are the papers in the mains exam:

Paper A — Language (300 Marks): Candidates can take any modern Indian language but this paper is of qualifying nature

Paper B — English (300 Marks): This paper is of qualifying nature

Paper I — Essay (250 Marks): Can be written in the medium or language of the candidate's choice

Paper II — General Studies-I (250 Marks): Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society

Paper III — General Studies-II (250 Marks): Governance, Constitution,



Marks) Candidates are allowed to take up literature as an optional subject "without the condition of having it at the graduation level". A candidate is allowed to use any one language from the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution or English as the medium of writing the examination.

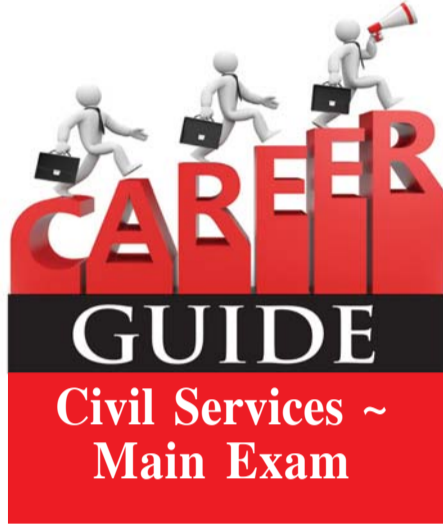
Syllabus of the Papers are as follows: **Paper A:** Modern Indian language (300 Marks) includes (i) Comprehension of given passages, (ii) Precis Writing, (iii) Usage and Vocabulary, (iv) Short Essay, (v) Translation from English to the Indian language and vice-versa.

Paper B: English (300 marks) — This paper is qualifying in nature and marks are not counted but passing is mandatory. The pattern of questions would be broadly as follows: (i) Comprehension of given passages, (ii) Precis Writing, (iii) Usage and Vocabulary and (iv) Short Essay.

The optional subjects in the mains are as follows:

- i) Agriculture
- ii) Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Science
- iii) Anthropology
- iv) Botany
- v) Chemistry
- vi) Civil Engineering
- vii) Commerce and Accountancy
- viii) Economics
- ix) Electrical Engineering
- x) Geography
- xi) Geology
- xii) History
- xiii) Law
- xiv) Management
- xv) Mathematics
- xvi) Mechanical Engineering
- xvii) Medical Science
- xviii) Philosophy
- xix) Physics
- xx) Political Science and International Relations
- xxi) Psychology
- xxii) Public Administration
- xxiii) Sociology
- xxiv) Statistics
- xxv) Zoology
- xxvi) Literature of any one of the following languages: Assamese, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu and English. Aspirants may visit the website of the Union Public Service Commission for further details. One may start preparing for the civil services examination since school or early college days. Aspirants may collect previous question papers for some idea related to the question pattern.

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



Civil Services ~ Main Exam

Polity, Social Justice and International relations

Paper IV — General Studies-III (250 Marks): Technology, Economic Development, Bio-diversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management

Paper V — General Studies-IV (250 Marks): Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

Marks carried by General Studies papers are 4X 250=1000

Paper VI — Optional Subject Paper I (250 Marks)

Paper VII — Optional Subject Paper II (250

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambani

Sunday, October 16, 2016

'Birthday Forecast'

Full Moon on your solar return chart indicates enhanced creativity. Those in the creative fields will be able to showcase their talents. Innovation when applied to your field of work will give you an upper hand. Be careful not to go overboard and create illusions. Financially this is a good period though you will be drawn to luxury spending. The need or desire to talk about and bring a change in relationship dynamics would be powerful. Travel will be on the increase. Be ready to tap the opportunities that present themselves. This is a good time to bring greater harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships and increase the comfort levels.

'This week for you'

Aries: (March 21 - April 20) You would be fun loving, energetic and willing to explore new ideas. You may feel frustrated in relationships as there is a lack of communication and it is hard for you to verbalize your true feelings and express them. Stress may crop up at unexpected turns and this would require you to look at some lifestyle changes and even incorporate some techniques like exercise and meditation. Health needs to be replenished with a planned diet and physical fitness schedules.

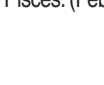
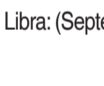
Taurus: (April 21 - May 21) You might particularly enjoy discussions about your early life, or the past. In fact, it's a great time to open up conversations with loved ones, as you are more rational when it comes to personal matters now. Your mind often wanders to domestic concerns, and issues surrounding your home, family, and personal past. Domestic relationships and the home environment tend to be harmonious and peaceful. It's a fabulous time for joining a gym or stepping up exercise and health routines.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21) This phase brings harmonious relations with friends, colleagues and loved ones. There would be love, grace, beauty, happiness and pleasure in personal relations success and good fortune at work bring new opportunities for further progress. You will be able to make best use of your talents, work experience and would insert your creativity into your work and projects in hand. You would be more determined and hard-working at this time.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22) You would have to restructure and reorganize activities at work and analyze the situations at home. Your daily routines and business dealings need to be restructured for better gains and productivity. You tend to be a perfectionist while completing business projects and campaigns. It is best to accept challenges that life offers you and keep going through ups and downs taking it all in your stride. There will be a fluctuation in energy levels before a balance is achieved.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23) You would be compassionate and generous with family, friends and relatives and gain respect from them. You are ambitious and ready to achieve professional goals and targets at any cost. You would maintain balance, strength and completion in personal and business partnership. Restructuring business schedules and dealings would be productive. If health is affected, fevers or minor infections are more likely.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22) News and visitors from far off places are likely to arrive. You are loving and caring in personal relationships. You look at the world in terms of value and worth now, and what you have is foremost on your



mind. Money issues pop up now—the discovery of a way to increase your income, an unexpected gift or reward, or a brief and tiny financial crisis that motivates you to find new ways to make money are possible. You are blessed with good mood and health.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23) Your personal charm and attractiveness would have a positive effect on your relationships. People see you as a loving and lovable person, and as someone who is aware of their needs and feelings, which can benefit you at this time. Others are willing to help and cooperate with your goals and ambitions. It would be better to make long term investments and speculations for financial gains. Group activities can be a therapeutic pastime.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22) You encounter people who are very considerate and understanding. You would also form relationships with people based on a deep level of mutual appreciation and understanding for each other. A sudden job opportunity, or some form of assistance with regards to career, home, or property matters, could be part of the picture. This can also produce an event that requires you to take charge and show your responsible side. Health needs to be addressed with a diet plan as well as some physical exercise.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21) Personal relations are precious and need to be treated with tender love and care. You feel fresh and re-energized. A blast of personal energy comes your way, and showing your leadership skills works for you now. You are at your most convincing, as others accept you at face value. Now you need a little attention, and career matters come to a head. This is also a strong period for finances and close partnerships. A pleasant surprise may be in store.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20) Efforts at self-promotion might be made now. This is the time when you're noticed for what you've done or haven't done. Do your best to be in top form, make career adjustments if needed, and don't be afraid to show others exactly what you are made of. Perhaps this is not a time to make a presentation or to come on too strong to the world. You are feeling reflective rather than expressive. At this time, you instinctively know how to place yourself in the best light in order to make a good impression on others.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18) You will be creative, adventurous and unconventional at work and this brings appreciation from senior colleagues. Your partnerships are highlighted right now, and it's time to compromise. 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 for the limelight. Concentrate on truly listening to those close to you, and on playing a supportive role. Keep stress at bay.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20) You're at your best when you are showing the world your practical, competent, and responsible side. A wonderful professional opportunity takes you towards success at this time. A personal meeting will lead to romance, love and long lasting relationship. There are chances of new associations and beginnings as changes may occur. Your efforts to reach out to new people will be accepted and welcomed as you get success in foreign matters too. Physical energy and good health enable you cooperate with busy schedule and work commitments.

THE CHOICE TO BE

Long-distance marriages are more common these days in urban India. But those choosing family over career also face criticism. Surangama Guha look at both sides of the coin

We all know relationships are tough, that they can get complicated before you say Jack Robinson, and however much you may bang your head and try to pick up the pieces, you come up against a wall more times than you care to admit.

So what happens when relationships, as a metaphor for travel, chug off or fly off into a space that is separated by miles, often by seas and sometimes by entire time zones? That sounds daunting? For whoever said absence makes the heart grow fonder was clearly not in touch with reality.

Not just relationships, but long-distance marriages are getting more common these days among the urban middle classes. As far as women are concerned, while many of them opt for long-distance marriages, a handful of them do not. For those who choose family and give up their jobs, does their decision make them anti-feminist? Does it make them any less independent?

First, the ones in long-distance marriages. Why do they choose it?

Sreyoshi Samaddar, faculty in the Neuroscience Department at Central University, New York, had been in a long-distance marriage for the first two-and-a-half years of her marriage. She did question her decision at times, yet did not give up. "My husband was my biggest source of inspiration," she admits. She also feels that since women tend to be more educated and independent these days, they often choose not to give up their professional commitments for their personal lives.

Pramiti Chatterjee, lecturer of history in a college in West Bengal, is not convinced, but she has been in a long-distance marriage over the past year and a half anyway. Having worked for some time now, she is wary of not receiving the salary packet at the end of the month.

Amrita Mukherjee, PhD scholar at IIT-Mumbai, is very clear about her objectives in life. Neither she nor her husband could compromise on their projects and leave her research project. So moving in with her husband was never really an option.

Neha Bhagtani in



AWAY FROM HOME

■ Sreyoshi Samaddar, faculty in the Neuroscience Department at Central University, NY, had been in a long-distance marriage for the first 2.5 years of her marriage

■ Having worked for some time now, Pramiti Chatterjee, lecturer of history in a college in West Bengal, is wary of not receiving the salary packet at the end of the month

TOGETHER WE STAY

■ Shukti Basu chose to give up her well-paid job to move out of the country to Egypt with her diplomat husband

■ Ritu Singh from UP quit her job in a private company and joined her husband in the US where she is currently studying

■ Dipika De gave up her job in a movie production house in Mumbai to be with her husband who serves in the Indian army

Mumbai has opted for long-distance marriage because both she and her spouse are in niche professions and are well-settled in their respective careers.

It is implied that education, ambition and preference for economic independence make these women opt for long-distance marriages.

Now, what about those highly educated women who chose love and marriage but also did not sacrifice their careers? Shukti Basu's husband is a diplomat, which makes it difficult for him to settle down in India.

Shukti had a well-paid job in a bank in Bangalore that she chose to give up, and is currently enjoying the first year of her married life in exotic Egypt. She, however, is not ready to sit at home idling, and is now getting ready to join her new teaching job.

Ritu Singh from Uttar Pradesh quit her job in a private company and joined her husband in the US where she is currently studying. Dipika De too gave up her job in a high-profile movie production house in Mumbai to be with

her husband who serves in the Indian army. Delhi's Kavya Taneja (name changed) willingly quit her corporate job to be with her new born child.

Shita Basu joined her husband in England after resigning from her position in a school in Kolkata.

She started working again after a brief break, and considers it wrong to believe that choosing family over career is foolish, because, she says confidently, being independent is not about having a job. It is about having the freedom to choose!

Does the decision to stay at home, or quit a job, contradict ideas of feminism, with its implied independence and individualism for women? Says Gayatri Bhattacharya, professor of Sociology, University of Calcutta, "It depends on how you define feminism."

These women might be financially secure and they prove they have a freedom to express their views.

Well-known writer-academician Nabaneeta Devsen too says, "You should do whatever you think is good for you. Your

life is yours." Finding her voice and doing what makes her happy is what truly empowers the modern urban woman, she feels.

But do they always have this choice?

Like Dipika who feels her friends and colleagues looked down upon her when she decided to call it quits, though eventually she knew she did not have to please anyone but herself.

Dipshikha Sengupta (name changed) too decided to call it quits at a reputed firm to be with her husband in Pune, although she had been advised against it.

In their case, even though they want to choose family or forego their careers they seem to face social pressure. It leads one to wonder whether feminism (a highly ambiguous, endlessly debated term anyway) has become self-contradictory, whether the fight for women's rights is actually taking away their right to choose. Reminds one of Charlotte in *Sex and the City* — "The woman's movement is supposed to be about choice... I chose my choice!" (TWF)

All you hipster foodies need to kiss their chickens less

Doctors investigating a mystery rise in virus victims discovered that hipster foodies wanting fresh eggs are keeping chickens at home — and cuddling them. Medical authorities in the US have issued an urgent plea for owners to show less affection to chickens, warning of the "high risk" of "close contact, such as holding, snuggling, or kissing poultry". I am not making this up.

The CNN news item was forwarded to me by reader Wan Yan-ting, who said: "There has to be a joke somewhere about hen parties." The Twitter community (slogan: "Outraged About Everything") reacted angrily to the medical warning. "You can't tell me who to love," wrote Derk Peblegate.

I mentioned this in the office and a helpful colleague forwarded me a list of 'Ways to Show Affection Without Touching'. This included "writing little notes" and "phoning every day to say

I love you". I hope this information helps Mr. Peblegate's chickens feel cherished.

Personally, I've never found chickens attractive, and that whole irrational screeching at 4.30 am thing is a total turn-off. I know human babies do the same thing, but at least they grow out of it by their mid-20s, I hope.

Anyway, what to do? People are illogical. My kids won't share a glass with dad but will kiss the dog on the lips.

I think if you are worried about diseases, choose fish. They can't wander around town picking up germs, except in Pixar movies, and even if they did, your children can't pet their heads or kiss them, although mine have tried. If your kids are fish-kissers, do not buy Indian glassy fish (*Parambasis ranga*, found

in waters around India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia) as it is small and transparent; so disaster is likely.

In some pet shops, transparent fish are injected with neon colours. Dyeing animals is hot right now. Last month in India, news media reported that people are using luminous paint to give their cattle glowing horns to stop them being run over at night. In the UK last week, a farmer said he had painted his 800 sheep glowing in the dark for security.

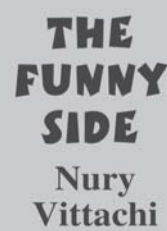
Soon, you won't need paint, as you can change animals' genes. This columnist did a rigorous research study ('a Google search') and discovered that in each country, scientists make different animals glow in the dark: in South Korea, it's dogs, in Japan monkeys, in Taiwan pigs, in France rabbits, in the UK sheep

and in the US cats. It is clear that the \$1-trillion-plus spent globally on science every year almost all goes on answering burning questions such as: "Can I make my kid's hamster luminous?" I suppose that's better than spending it on unimportant issues such as world hunger, the climate apocalypse, the coming zombie war, et al.

The articles say they could inject humans with the same fluorescent protein but you'd never be able to go to the cinema again. Apparently this is not an issue for dogs, monkeys, fish and the like, presumably because they are too cultured to waste their evenings watching blockbuster movies, preferring classical music concerts or fine dining. Whatever.

Now please excuse me while I write a billet-doux to my neighbour's chicken.

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



“Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil, and you're a thousand miles from the corn field.”

--- Dwight D. Eisenhower

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 66

SHILLONG, MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2016

Montreal Protocol- Hope for planet earth

THE Montreal Protocol has arrived at a consensus to phase down, “super greenhouse gases” known as hydro-fluorocarbons (HFCs). This is a critical step towards limiting warming and the single biggest climate action of the year, just weeks before leaders meet in Morocco for international climate talks. The amendment establishes three different timetables for all developed and developing countries to freeze and then reduce their production and use of HFCs. Developed countries have agreed to make their first HFC cuts by 2019. Developed nations have committed to provide additional funds through the Montreal Protocol’s Multilateral Fund. China, Brazil, South Africa, Argentina, and more than 100 other developing countries have committed to freeze their HFC production and use by 2024, and make further reductions thereafter. India, Gulf States, and Pakistan have agreed to make HFC reductions on a slower track.

It is crucial that in the coming years countries work towards transitioning to energy efficient and environment friendly alternatives. The agreed technology review will help with rapid maturity of alternatives and enable countries to strengthen their actions. The decision to reduce HFCs as well as the recent outcome on aviation emissions shows that governments are taking the objective of the Paris Agreement seriously. This is imperative to give a fighting chance for the world to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 C. Civil societies the world over have hailed this attempt to curb climate-wrecking super-pollutant HFCs and call it the biggest step after the Paris agreement against the widening threats from climate change. And bringing HFCs under the Montreal Protocol sends a clear signal to the global marketplace to start replacing these dangerous chemicals with a new generation of climate-friendly and energy-efficient alternatives. To enable the switchover to newer and safer natural refrigerants, sufficient funding will be required through the Montreal Protocol’s Multilateral Fund to enable poorer countries to invest in the new technology. It is vital that developed countries also share their progress on technological breakthroughs.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

Data Bank a must for quake prone N.E.

Prof B G Deshpande, an eminent Geologist and Honorary Professor of Geology of the Maharashtra Association for cultivation of Science has highlighted the need of developing a Data Bank on various aspects of prediction of earthquakes especially in the North Eastern Region of the country. Prof. Deshpande who delivered a lecture organized under the auspices of North Eastern Council yesterday at the NEC Secretariat covered various aspects of occurrence of earthquakes.

Prof. Deshpande said that while the seismologically sensitive zones are being located in the various parts of the North Eastern Region of India is found to be a very vulnerable one from this point of view. He said that countries like China, Japan and America have started concerted action to build up Data Bank covering different geo-physical factors which are responsible for occurrence of earthquakes. Prof. Deshpande said that abnormal behavior of the animals is also an indication of the imminence of an earthquake. He said that now designs should be developed for building in earthquake prone zones.

Dr R K Mishra former Vice-Chancellor, NEHU presided over the programme. Dr B K Paul, Director of Science and Technology of NEC gave an account of the measures and steps as taken by the North

Eastern Council regarding seismological observations especially in the North Eastern Region.

Assam Rifles' boxers shine in Junior Nationals

In the recently concluded 21st National Junior Boxing Championship held at Shillong, Assam Rifles put up a commendable show, winning a gold, a silver, and two bronze medals as well as the runner-up position. Assam Rifles was affiliated to the Apex body of the Indian Amateur Boxing Federation in 1988, and within a year have established themselves as a force to be reckoned with the Assam Rifles can boast of having three National Champions in the Senior Division and two in the Junior Division.

Deputy Commandant A. Gangopadhyay has been elected as the Honorary General Secretary of the IABF earlier this month. The junior boxers Lance Naik Pan Singh who won the gold by knocking out his opponent in the first round in the light featherweight class, Rfn S. Gurung who won silver, and U Chand and Jaichandra Singh who won bronze medals, as well as the winner of the bronze for Nagaland, Tek Bahadur Thapa, also an Assam Rifles boy, were given cash award by Director General Assam Rifles.

Two roads one journey

By H. H. Mohrmen

The Congress-led government in Meghalaya is in a dilemma to say the least. The MUA-II government is like a rudderless ship in the middle of the ocean with a captain who is unsure of himself. The worst part of the predicament is that the captain has only about fourteen months to take the ship to shore and get it anchored there before beginning another journey. Throughout the less than four-year journey the captain had to continuously keep the ship afloat in spite of internal wrangling among crew members. Add to that the state of the economy is like a dark cloud that looms large and threatens to open the sky and bring down a rain and storm.

One was hoping that Dr Sangma like an able captain would be able to provide a road map and show us where he plans to take the state if his party is elected to power again post the 2018 election. Unfortunately from the reports in the press one could only see a confused government which wants to do everything and ends up not being able to do anything at all. One sees a government that tries to please everybody and is ultimately not able to please anyone not even itself.

On one hand one sees a government under pressure from the State Coordination Committee of Coal Owners, Miners and Dealers Forum and the Jaintia Cement Manufacturing Association both of which are insistent that the NGT should lift the ban on coal mining in the state. And the government is committing itself to come up with a mining plan to convince the NGT to lift the ban on rat-hole mining in the state. One also see a government which is trying to please the mining lobby by demanding that the State of Meghalaya is exempted from the purview of the Coal Mine (Nationalisation) Act, 1973 by taking an extreme step of even invoking Paragraph 12A (b) of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to enable the state to have a free for all mining in the state yet again.

It is also true that the

government has not taken the other stakeholders (other than those involved in mining) into confidence while drafting the mining plan because none of them was involved in the process. The other question that begs the answer is how is the government going to assure us that the mining plan and all the efforts that the government has taken to get the ban lifted, is not going to be detrimental to the environment and repeat what has happened earlier? How can the government assure us that the mining plan is going to be a balanced and environment friendly one when the view of the mine owners and cement companies only is taken into consideration?

Then on the other hand one sees a Chief Minister who goes gung-ho on his plan to convert Meghalaya to an organic state and also waxed eloquent about his dream of making Meghalaya a tourist destination par excellence. The question, Dr Sangma is: Will the twin ever meet? Can Meghalaya be both, a mining state as well as an organic state and a tourist hotspot? This is a million dollar question. Obviously, Dr Sangma's heart is in the right place; he wishes to promote organic farming and tourism industry in the state but he is also trying to please the mining lobby. So where will this take our state? Let's not forget the fable that one who tries to please everybody will end up not pleasing anyone and suffering the consequences of procrastination.

The other story that made the headlines is that of the Chief Minister of Sikkim receiving the award for sustainable development initiatives in the state. Pawan Chamling the Chief Minister of the small Himalayan state was conferred with the prestigious 'Sustainable Development Leadership Award, 2016' by Pranab Mukherjee, the President of India. The award was conferred during World Sustainable Development Summit organised by Energy and Resources Institute TERI held recently at Vigyan Bhawan New Delhi. The award was presented in recognition of his leadership in environment and

sustainable development which began in 1998 when Sikkim became the first state in the country to ban plastic and non-degradable materials and prohibited even tourists from carrying plastics bags to the state. In 2001 it became the first state to ban collection of medicinal plants and non-timber products for commercial use and framed rules for mandatory planting of ten saplings in lieu of one tree felled even in private land. On February 24, 2003, the state Legislative Assembly adopted a resolution for transforming the state into a Total Organic State and from 2004 onward the government stopped procuring chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides for the farmers in the state. In January 2016 the state attained the official status of a fully organic state in which around 75,000 hectares of land has been converted into certified organic farms.

Total organic state is a recent achievement of Sikkim but before that the hill state also got the distinction of being one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country. The state attracts hundreds and thousands of domestic and foreign tourists and its population gained employment from tourism related activities. Now with the state being recognised as total organic state, both plastic-less tourism and organic farming becomes primary livelihood activities of the people which complement each other. And they are environment friendly too! The leaders of this state have vision and commitment and indeed deserve the award.

Chamling received the award because he is a visionary leader who knows where he wants to take the state and he also has the entire population of the state with him. The leader of the state has a clear vision that is also why the entire six lakh population of the state rally behinds its government to achieve the important milestone. Above all, the two economic activities that the people of the state engage in are sustainable activities and unlike mining – the exploitation of non-renewable resources it will not die out but continue

forever. This is a futuristic move for the government of Sikkim and is going to be a blessing for the future generation of the state.

Dr Sangma on the other hand is like a rider of a chariot drawn by two horses with each horse taking the chariot in two different directions. The consequence of such ambivalence is not good for anyone. Or he is like a traveller embarking on a journey and on reaching a junction decides to travel on both the roads at the same time. Is that possible? Can a person travel on two roads simultaneously? Hence no award for Dr Sangma this time around because his Government lacks vision and commitment and does not have any sense of direction. Better luck next time Dr Sangma! Perhaps you can try after 2018, that is if your party is re-elected.

The term begun in 2013 is almost over and Dr Sangma can do nothing to change what has happened in the remaining fourteen months or so of the Assembly's term. The economy of the state will continue to go downhill and it is in situations like this that people of Meghalaya need an able leader who can take the state to a better future. When the state is shipwrecked in the middle of the ocean without a sail and with a storm looming large, we need a captain with his head about his shoulders who knows what he is doing and where he wants to go. Alas! We do not see this in Dr Sangma.

The only option for Dr Sangma is to make amends and lay a strong foundation for an economically strong and prosperous Meghalaya. Hopefully he will make the best use of the little more than one year to do just that. He needs to come up with a road map indicating where he wants Meghalaya to in the next five years. That is not going to be easy task because he is torn between two opposite interests. He is caught between extractive mining and sustainable economic activity. The test is whether Dr Sangma will have the courage of conviction to take the road which will lead us to a brighter future.

Achche Din or Aching Days?

By Barnes Mawrie

It is highly symbolic that last Tuesday, PM Narendra Modi while he was on a podium at Lucknow for the Dussehra celebration, he was given a bow and an arrow. He tried to shoot the arrow but it fell short of the target, nay it fell right out of his bow. Is this not symbolic of what his government is? They claim to have good targets but so far their shots have fallen short of expectations.

The slogan “achche din” has become a monotonous cliché of the BJP government. It is being broadcasted, televised and announced in the media ad nauseam. But in reality the citizens are experiencing “aching” din (days) as the situation is not improving but worsening year after year. Take for example, the swaach bharat project of the Prime Minister, has remained merely a promise but never a reality. His tall promise of improving the condition of the farmers in the country has been conveniently forgotten and poor farmers continue to commit suicide to the shame of our nation. Where are those promises of cleaning the Ganges and other rivers? Most rivers, lakes and places in India remain dirty as ever.

In the meantime taxes are levied for these projects and the money will probably end up in some individuals'

only millionaires and crorepatris will reap the benefits of this government. The poor and have-nots will have to content with price rise and deprivation.

The BJP is a make-believe government, one that thrives on media propaganda. Modi is always projected as the best prime minister and the media is trying to fool us by saying that even in 2019 election, Modi would still be the best PM candidate. But as the saying goes “the test of the pudding is in the eating”, so in my opinion the litmus test of the BJP Government lies in its performance at the grass root level, I mean the vast population of poor people. Has the condition of the poor improved since the coming of the BJP? This is the question that every responsible Indian citizen should ask today. The answer as of today is negative. When Mr. Modi is wearing a suit that costs lakhs of rupees, there are poor people who cannot afford to buy a shirt to cover themselves. How many poor rubber workers in Kerala are almost jobless because rubber plantation is no more economically viable all because the BJP Government is importing rubber from outside with the intention of killing that industry.

The failure of the tall promise of swaach bharat itself should be reason enough to prove that the BJP government has fallen short of our expectations. Through TDS the government is amassing wealth meant for the implementation of such civil projects, but till today these projects remain as unfulfilled dreams.

pockets. What “achche din” can we have if the prices of essential commodities keep on rising? When international price of crude oil has come down drastically, the prices of petrol, diesel and kerosene keep on rising in India. Keep in mind that the price hike in fuel causes a collateral impact on the economy. Prices of luxury goods may come down and government salaries are doubling, but what will the poor daily wagers gain from all these? India is still a poor country and most of our countrymen still live below poverty line. How many of them have government jobs to benefit from the salary increment of the 7th pay commission? Most of the poor people are not government employees but are either farmers or they do menial jobs where they are often exploited and denied just wages. Now with the little they get how can they cope up with the rising prices of commodities? As far as I recall, it was easier during the Congress Government for poor people to procure LPG and ration cards, but today this has become a very annoying experience for people. It is evident that the BJP Government is pro-rich and it is hand in glove with the corporate world. As such,

The failure of the tall promise of swaach bharat itself should be reason enough to prove that the BJP government has fallen short of our expectations. Through TDS the government is amassing wealth meant for the implementation of such civil projects, but till today these projects remain as unfulfilled dreams. TDS has become an official way of stealing the citizens' earnings. No one would resent taxes levied if the public sees that they are being well utilized for public development, but the present government is collecting money not for improving the citizens' life but perhaps for the next general election campaign. Unfortunately, we live in a country where the mob is easily duped by the media and its subtle propaganda, where idolization of politicians and showbiz persons is a common phenomenon. Mass illiteracy and ignorance has become fuel for crafty politicians who play on the sentiments of people and then cheat them wholesale. I hope the enlightened citizens will soon realize that we are being blackmailed by a government that glorifies itself and its leaders through banal means.

informed that the lots had been drawn in the morning. Someone from the organizers had drawn the lots for us. There too we raised no objections. Therefore, it is baseless and ridiculous to blame us for not being present during the draw of lots when the organizers are themselves unable to fix the proper timing for it. So just stop the justification!

Kynjaimon Amse should not pass the blame to others and mislead the public with half baked facts and also not try to cover up (as best expressed in Khasi words i.e. “tap eit miaw”) the organizational failures. And for the writer to conclude that our last minute enquiries amount to lack of sincerity and preparedness is

shameful, objectionable and irrational. If the writer wishes to be convinced by the facts about whether we are really 'prepared or whether we are insincere, he can arrange a public debate between us in the presence of the media. I am sure this will suffice to prove to the world who is ignorant and who is competent; who is speaking the truth and who is lying.

Yours etc.,
Peter Aiborlang
Dohkrut
Shillong - 17

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

Who besmirched the indigenous tribals?

Editor

I cannot disagree more with PD Nongrum's letter “Religion, Tradition and Custom” (ST, Oct 15, 2016). The writing on the wall is clear as Mr. Nongrum puts it, “To say that Christianity has in no way affected the Khasi way of life, traditions, customs and beliefs would only be self denial.” Frankly, the besmirching of Khasi society or in greater parlance the tribal society of Meghalaya, which is no frog's pond, could have been prevented had they been left alone to practice their own customs, traditions, faith, practices and all that on which their indigenous livelihood sustained. The doomsday started when, as I have said in my Oct 4 letter, the British Raj set its foot in these hills to preach, although their contribution towards education is not contested. This nefarious design of the Christian Missionaries of the British Raj is an inescapable fact as Mr. Nongrum sees it clearly how the Missionary opportunists robbed Khasi religion, tradition and practices by spreading falsehood and

lies to lay the foundation of their own religion. Something which is built on the foundation of fallacy is bound to have repercussion and this is what we are seeing today in Meghalaya.

I have never tried to attack Christianity as Cassandra Syiemlieh in her letter “Loss of indigenous culture?” (ST, Oct 10, 2016) has presumed; rather mine was a pointer to the ulterior religious motives of the British Raj and their missionaries, which readers like Mr Nongrum have deciphered correctly. Had these missionaries been led, say, by an Islamic Raj, Buddhist Raj and what have you, if not the British Raj, my take on them would not have been discounted even by an inch to that of my current one. Even if we are to see the universal religion of Christianity, which according to Syiemlieh, “originated from the navel of the globe; neither East nor West...”, it is a fact today that Europe and Americas have the maximum number of people going away from it in search of their fathomable abode. It is perhaps not that hard to see the biting reality here.

Yours etc,
PK Dwivedi
Shillong - 1

Cover up job by NEHU Law Dept

Editor,

The letter by Kynjaimon Amse (ST Oct 15, 2016) captioned, “False allegations against NEHU law dept” is shocking because the writer is clearly trying to cover up the faulty methods adopted by the organizers of the Moot Court, Law Department, NEHU which has been conducted most unprofessionally.

Unfortunately, the writer cleverly drags the Hon'ble Chair of the Chief Justice, Judicial Officials and other eminent and learned Advocates in the picture, thereby trying to camouflage the wrongdoings of the organizers. In fact, the letters dated 8 & 13 October 2016 have in no way expressed the inefficiency and dissatisfaction of the participants on the performance of the judges. We respect the judges and their decisions, and they are the most capable to be the judges for such competitions. The two letters had emphasized the faulty method adopted by the organizers during the elimination round. I wonder how the writer can claim without having full knowledge of the facts that the letters are ‘baseless’ and ‘defamatory’ in nature when all they have done is point to the truth which is known to all participants. And to proclaim that the published letters are ‘false allegations’ is repugnant, ridiculous and contradicts the facts.

The fact is that as a

participant of the competition, I had sought information prior to the scheduled date of the competition to clarify doubts about some procedures pertaining to the competition other than those prescribed in the official rules and regulations. This privilege is granted by the organizers themselves under clause ‘H’ of the Official Rules And Regulations for the NEHU National Moot Court Competition, 2016, posted on their website, which I believe Mr. Amse should have read before commenting on the points pertaining to the enquiries. With regards to the draw of lots, the organizers had already done so and I am grateful for that but that also was not due to our fault. The organizers did not declare the timing for drawing of lots. They have done it to suit to their own interests and we did not object to that. Before this I visited NEHU on October 4, 2016 around 2.00 pm to enquire about the exact timing for drawing of lots. They told me that I should come at 9.30 am on October 5, 2016 the day of competition. I complied with the instruction and my team and I reached the place at 9.20 am i.e. 10 minutes before the scheduled time communicated to us the day before by one of the organizers. However, to our surprise, when we reached the campus we were

“The world is full of fools; and he who would not wish to see one, must not only shut himself up alone, but must also break his looking-glass.”

--- Boileau

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 67

SHILLONG, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2016

Not Secular

THE Citizenship Act 1965 is being looked at by the Union government for necessary amendments. It relates to grant of citizenship to religious minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. A joint committee of parliamentarians are scanning the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2006. That concerned grant of citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists migrating from neighbouring countries and having resided in India for at least 6 years. The problem is that the basic idea behind the Bill seems violative of constitutional principles of secularism since the categories have religious denominations. True, the basis of also an identification of minorities and neighbouring countries with a record of religious persecution. India is prepared to offer asylum to people of all religions except Muslims otherwise, Rohingyas Muslims from Bangladesh and Myanmar would have been added to the list. The question also arises as to how the Indian government can decide on the issue of religious persecution in neighbouring countries. It is also difficult to distinguish between victims of genuine religious persecution and refugees coming to India for economic reasons claiming to be victims of religious persecution. Can India in such circumstances rightfully react to Pakistan conferring citizenship on Muslims who pretend to be victims of religious discrimination in India and seek refuge in that country?

The proposed amendments betray a distorted view of Indian identity. India should not discriminate between various religious denominations. The citizenship programme for refugees should be just and fair and carried out on a case to case basis. There should be no bias towards or against any religious community.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

Bodo extremists ambush Kokrajhar DC, SP

Bodo extremists ambushed the Kokrajhar District Commissioner and Superintendent of Police, attacked security force and torched bridges as the 175 hour Assam bandh, called by ABSU, continued for the seventh day today.

Inspector General of Police Mr S K Deb told newsmen that Deputy Commissioner Mr Mukesh Chowla and Police Superintendent Mr Awati Ao escaped unhurt when the extremists attacked them near Saleskati last night.

The police escorting them opened fire and later recovered from the place one bazooka, some bombs and arrows. This was the second attempt on the life of the two officers in the past one month. The extremists attacked the Nagarbali Police camp under Sidli police station last night. Police returned the fire. No casualty was reported. There was an encounter between a CRPF patrol and extremists at Kano Dang under Gossaigaon Police Station but no one was injured. The extremists also fired at the Additional Circle Inspector of Sidli while he was proceeding to Runikbata. Police returned the fire, he said.

Mr Deb said the extremists also set on fire five thatched houses at Kashiram Nagar under udalguri police station in Darrang district last night. A wooden bridge at Majjir Gaon was also set on fire but police extinguished it.

A police party which have gone to Pakribari and other villages to conduct raids was attacked by the extremists. Police returned the fire. Some extremists were injured but they were carried away by other members. A bomb exploded in front of a shop at Ramhari Chowk no one was injured but one person was attested in this connection.

Police arrested one person

while he was planting a bomb at Jungging bridge under Jonai Police Station in North Lakhimpur. Three others who were helping him escaped throwing a bomb at the police party. The extremists also set on fire some hats of a weekly bazaar in Jonai.

In Bikanpur Simaluguri area of Sonitpur district, some bows and arrows and documents relating to ABSU volunteers force were recovered from the residence of one Ghanakanta Basumatary and one Mohan Mushahari.

Two vacant houses of the forest department were burnt down at Balijan in Sonitpur district. A CRPF jawan and a Bodo extremist were injured today in separate incidents of violence in Assam's Kokrajhar district. The ABSU called the bandh demanding a Bodo land.

Laitkor Durbar threatens stir against proposed jail

The combined Durbar of Laitkor and neighbouring villagers have strongly protested the Government decision to establish a Jail Complex at Laitkor. In a resolution passed during a joint meeting of the villages, the Durbar resolved that they would launch an agitational programme if the State Government continued to remain indifferent to representations against the proposal. Viewing with grave concern the apparent indifference of the Government, the Durbar resolved to allow the government time till March 20 to reply to the representations of the Joint Action Committee. If this deadline is not met, the Joint Action Committee would initiate agitational action the resolution said.

Smart City, Green City & Eco-Friendly City

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

The only information that people have about smart cities when they read that Shillong is not on the list and has missed the bus again and again and this is the last thing people ought to know. No one is content about such outcomes because it conveys to the people that this region is less significant. But to some it may be different because a great deal of business transactions are not viable. In contrast, however, Mawlynnong village has earned the reputation as one of Bharat's pride as the cleanest village (History channel, TV 18). What makes the community of poor villagers to draw the attention of the world is indeed a matter that those sitting at the helm of affairs in the state should learn a great lesson from. If a village like Mawlynnong without funds and infrastructure in comparison to the state government could project itself as a destination for people's aspiration and perhaps future investment, then why not our city or state?

It is interesting to know how West Bengal Government under Mamata Banerjee has rejected Smart City project of the Centre but instead decided to develop its own Green City project on the suburbs of Kolkata like Rajarhat that had once qualified for Smart City Challenge Competition. If such determination is there in people to recreate and bring changes in any manner, I should also suggest that Mawlynnong village and its adjoining areas should be planned and developed into an Eco-Friendly Town of inclusive biodiversities. Projects such as these are very much viable in places like Mawlynnong primarily because the attitude and mindset of the people are no longer a cause of concern.

The attempt by the state government to secure its place in this multi-crore project has resulted into various interpretations and speculations. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that triggered the reshuffling of

the state cabinet. Fielding a fresher minister (scam free) to head the Urban Affairs Department is another strategy to project the clean image of the government. But to put blame on the Centre and the Prime Minister for the failure to qualify is a neither wise nor mature because in this competitive age to run the government and country is not like handling a village or panchayat or of managing a family and providing for the dependant's demands. In the present progressive society, democracy is not orchestrated by a number or relationships (meaning same party at centre and state) but should be calculative and objectives oriented. Democratic actions should measure justifiably all relevant components inclusively and avoid wastage of time and resources.

According to Wikipedia (internet encyclopedia), Smart city is an urban development that integrates multiple information and communication technology (ICT) and Internet of Things (IoT) solutions in a secure fashion to manage the city's assets which include but are not limited to local departments information system, schools, libraries, transportation systems, hospitals, power plants, water supply networks, waste management, law enforcement and other community services. The goal of building a smart city is to improve quality of life by using urban informatics and technology to improve the efficiency of services. According to Forbes, top five smart cities of the world are Barcelona, New York city, London, Nice & Singapore.

A green city is designed with consideration of environmental impacts, and inhabited by people dedicated to minimization of required inputs of energy, water and food, and waste output of heat, air pollution, methane and water pollution. According to Eco-watch, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Stockholm & Vancouver top the list. Eco-friendly city on the other hand, is a city built from the principles of living

within environment means. The aim of eco-friendly city is to eliminate carbon waste or to turn it into a zero-carbon city; to produce energy entirely through renewable resources and merging the city harmoniously with the natural environment. However, eco-cities also have the intention to stimulate economic growth, poverty alleviation, using higher population densities and therefore obtaining higher efficiency and improving health care. Existing eco-cities are Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Berlin, Portland & San Francisco. Be it Green city or Eco-city, dissemination and execution of information is very essential and indispensable because in the present era, in the advancement of Information Technology (IT) or digital age, we cannot exclude smart concept from being part and element of any strategic plan as a support for efficiency of delivery.

It is high time therefore for the government to clear the hurdles that keep funding and investment under apprehension and doubt. This should also include comprehensive policies and legislations that facilitate a favorable environment from reducing crimes, good connectivity roads and accessibility of essential services making people participatory in every project and programme. But what we saw in these five years is confrontations and conflict of interests. We cannot deny the fact that numerous developments are taking place daily in and around us in every area of life and one thing we should ask ourselves is, 'what on earth are we doing here?' As a point of discussion, is Meghalaya worse than Jammu & Kashmir or any Middle East country to have a Residents Safety Act burdening the police stations and outposts with unnecessary records? I am afraid this may divert the function of our police department from their primary role. Is not an

electoral officer sufficient to handle registration matters? If this is the level of our law makers then we cannot expect that concepts like smart cities and others will ever take place in the present situation.

People in Delhi are not fools and ignorant about what happens in every state. Prime Minister Modi is also an intelligent salesman. He perfectly knows what happens in every state government including the background and credentials of every MP & MLA. Who knows the frequent trips by senior bureaucrats from the centre to the state they have once served, has a specific confidential mission at PMO's behest. Meghalaya has a known history of diverting central funds and allocation according to the convenience of those at the seat of power. So what do we expect from another centrally sponsored project? Instead of rushing with a begging bowl to secure such projects, the government should in fact align the existing infrastructures, policies and legislations suitable and conducive for such development to take place. Pulling up the municipality for more proactive action to make Shillong clean and green should be the primary focus and ongoing efforts that in due course of time upgradation may take place.

As of now no one knows or could visualize what type of city Shillong will become in the near future. Even the most expected New Shillong Township will emerge unplanned and without notice. Looking at the trend and pace of growth of new structures and subways, it exactly points to the fact that by the time the project starts, issues of dismantling and reconstructing new plans will erupt and create a u n n e c e s s a r y confrontation. It is up to our elected representatives now who are on the ruling side how to make Shillong the city for everyone's dreams and expectation.

BRICS fails to bring India and China together Beijing wants to rule the world through aid and trade

By Nantoo Banerjee

Getting closer to China and also maintaining its independent voice and choice in international relations are posing to be a growing challenge before India's external affairs ministry and PMO as China would like to befriend India only on its own terms. That is: India must follow the China camp and support its foreign policies and actions on world platforms. China is pouring money under the guise of various types of aids and project investments across the world, especially in emerging economies, to buy up friends and also expand its economic influence. In the last five years, especially after China displaced Japan as the world's second largest economy, China's growing economic and strategic presence in Asia, Africa and South America is leading debates in a number of countries and regions, though not all well informed. Much of China's project investments and FDI are also to boost exports after their decline to developed economies. India, sharing long borders with China and also having China as its single largest trade partner, is rather confused about what China really wants from India although the latter may not admit it. India's trade with China is largely a one way traffic concerning India's massive imports from the communist country. It has left a large annual trade deficit with China in recent years. Virtually, there exists no possibility of a balanced bi-lateral trade between the two countries.

China considers India's growing import dependence on the country, benefiting Chinese industry, big and small, and helping its massive labour force, as China's strength as also India's big economic weakness. Such an unequal economic and trade relation with India has naturally had little impact on China's diplomatic and strategic ties with India. China considers India as an ally of the West — led by the United States and some of its strategic partners in the Pacific region, especially Japan. India's powerful communist neighbour is naturally suspicious of India. This may explain why Chinese President Xi Jinping is unwilling to appreciate Prime Minister Narendra Modi's point of view on Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar and its host Pakistan's continuous support to terrorist attacks on India originating from their soil. And, also China continues to refuse support to India's bid for Nuclear Suppliers Group membership and India's presence in the contested Gilgit-Baltistan to facilitate China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. China provides the biggest economic and strategic support to Pakistan, nearly replacing the United States.

China, which has ruthlessly suppressed the secessionist movement in the majority-Muslim Xinjiang province bordering Central Asia, is surprisingly unconcerned about Pakistan's terrorist nurseries and reliability of the Pakistan government, which had thrived on the economic and military support of the US for almost six decades and even provided shelter to master terrorist Osama bin-Laden before he was spotted and killed by the US army in a secret mission to his protected hideout in military garrison at Abbottabad. China's support to nuclear

Pakistan is essentially to deliver a message to India and, in a way, to the US. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, both bordering India, China has committed a total of over \$50 billion in aid and project investments. President Xi chose to visit India-friendly Bangladesh to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on his way to the BRICS summit in Goa. He was the first Chinese head of state to visit Bangladesh in last three decades. China and Bangladesh inked over two dozen investment and development agreements which should please Bangladesh. India wasn't unhappy. But, what concerned India was a distasteful lie ahead of President Xi's Bangladesh visit in officially controlled Chinese media that India is blocking the flow of the Brahmaputra river before it enters Bangladesh.

China is prepared to pump in large funds in aid and project investments in the east Asia, south-east and southern Asia regions, including SAARC countries, of which India is the biggest member. This itself should not concern India as long as India and China, the two large neighbours and home of some 45 per cent of the world population, live as good friends with mutual trust. However, going by China's international strategy, using aid and investment as a key instrument of driving friendship across nations, it appears that China is principally looking forward to build its strategic supremacy in the world by weakening the influence of the First World in most of these countries. Fortunately for China, few countries can match its economic might today despite its recent growth slow-down mainly due to falling exports to the West. China is offering big aid and investments to mineral rich African and South American countries. For example, China has provided aid to nearly 1,000 projects in Africa. The bulk of Chinese financing in Africa falls under the category of development finance. Chinese investment in Africa grew from \$210 million in 2000 to close to \$10 billion in 2015.

BRICS is important to China to peddle its global influence across four continents, outside North America. However, China clearly seeks its supremacy in BRICS as it maintains in ASEAN and other regional forums. China is proceeding fast to achieve the goal. Few Chinese aid receiving countries see China with suspicion. Interestingly, China is acceptable to both Shia and Sunni majority countries in Asia such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, both sworn enemies of each other. The growing distrust for the US among some of its old allies, including Pakistan and the Philippines, is driving many of them to hold China's hands. Will other potentially fast emerging BRICS partners like Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa whole heartedly accept China as their leader in the global platform? Unlikely. Both Russia and India, old friends and strategic partners, have their own global ambition. Brazil, the richest South American nation, too is unlikely to surrender to China despite the large Chinese aid lately promised to former Portuguese colonies. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

A democratic farce.

Editor,
Most of us are avid watchers of the American Presidency Elections as they daily unfold on our TV screens. As the days passed one couldn't help wondering if what we are witnessing are really election scenes from the "Land of the Free and the Brave" or from some unknown banana republic somewhere in the wilds of Africa. Hard to differentiate but the poor banana state would probably walk away with all the prizes for common decency, honour and truth. I mean is this really the way democracy is supposed to be conducted in the most democratically advanced country of the world? Look at the quality of their presidential debates. The subject matter; the carriage of the debaters; the message it conveys. Its so personalised; so localised; so trivial so inconsequential that sometimes one has to pinch oneself to realise we are watching momentous moments in the history of the most powerful nation on earth! It's ridiculous and the idiot box is really living up to its name.

Some of us are interested in these elections because of the realisation that like it or not, the outcome relating to the most powerful office in the world, is bound to

impact and influence issues on all four corners of the world. Many watchers however are increasingly drawn to this epic American contest because of its pornographic entertainment value. It's out of this world; it's shocking. Say what you may, the Indian electorate and its politicians still revere democracy with the respect it demands. The Americans, the ardent champions of freedom and Human Rights, on the other hand have allowed the concept of democratic freedom to be measured by the extent to which a man can put his hand up a woman's skirt! What a bloody farce!

Yours etc.,
Toki Blah,
Via email

An erroneous statement

Editor,
I would like to refer to the letter of R. Wallang titled "Khasi Culture", (ST Oct 4, 2016). Wallang had written that Babu Jibon Roy, "was also a product of the education system established by the Welsh Missionaries". This is factually incorrect. In the growing up years of the young Jeebon Roy, i.e. in the 1830's, there were no established educational institutions in this part of the sub continent. As was the case with most young boys belonging to families of the landed aristocracy, Jeebon Roy was tutored at home along with his other

male siblings. Secondly, Mr Wallang had stated that thanks to the foresightedness of the Welsh Missionaries, "Our society has been able to preserve and uphold the basics of our culture". To counter the statement, I would like to bring out certain facts of history. The Seng Khasi movement was conceived by Babu Jeebon Roy along with 16 likeminded members of the Khasi gentry, including Hajom Kissor Singh, to be a socio-cultural organization, primarily for the purpose of preserving Khasi culture and traditions, as they felt that the intrusion of the Welsh Missionaries into our hills had destroyed the basic fabric of our society.

A personal experience on what I have said above would amply confirm the apprehensions that were felt by the seventeen Khasi stalwarts around the year 1899. In the mid 60's, a foursome of Jiriang Singh Phanbuh, (L) Khlor Nongkyrrieh, my cousin (L) Marphrang Roy and I formed a group of regular participants at the annual Shad Suk Mynsiem dances (the Annual Thanks Giving Dances), not only at the Weiking grounds at Shillong but also at some of the remote rural areas of Khasi Hills where the dances were held. I vividly recall an instance when we were scheduled to attend the annual dance at Mairang. Like all youngsters, we were inclined to gather as many

of our young friends and relatives to accompany us and accordingly we did invite a distant relative to partake in our merry making which included a bumpy bus ride to Mairang. The young man was surprisingly reluctant as he was fearful of being subjected to "Shah ot Balang" — in literal terms meaning banishment from the congregation- if he was found to have accompanied us to the traditional Thanks Giving Dance.

In the light of what I have personally experienced, are we to believe that there was no threat to the Khasi culture and its traditions from the doctrine propounded by the Missionaries who came from afar? For heaven's sake let us not be misled by erroneous s t a t e m e n t s ! Incidentally, I was born at the Roberts' Hospital in Shillong- brought into this world by the renowned Doctor Hughes and I am grateful to the Welshman for the humanitarian service that he had rendered to our people.

Yours etc
B K Dey Sawian,
Shillong-2

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

"The length of a film should be directly related to the endurance of the human bladder."

--- Alfred Hitchcock

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 68 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2016

IIM Shillong- mandate for policy guidance

ON October 15, last IIM Shillong, the Ministry of DoNER and the North Eastern Council (NEC) signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding for setting up the APJ Abdul Kalam Centre for Policy Research and Analysis in the IIM-Shillong. This Centre gives IIM Shillong a new mandate to engage in policy research and analysis to help address the gaps in policy making within state governments in the region and within the NEC and DoNER and help build a more robust link between the three. NEC has the mandate to establish centres of excellence in the region to look at development from a more nuanced perspective and to address the specific needs of the eight north eastern states and thereby get out of the trap of following the stereotyped national guidelines in project implementation. The north eastern region requires different interventions and timelines for project completion considering the heavy monsoon showers which prevent road construction works for nearly six months in a year. The Chief Minister of Meghalaya pointed out that the NEC has failed to capture the specific challenges of the eight states while enunciating policies. Perhaps the newly established Centre for Policy Research will be able to give a new direction in policy planning both for the NEC and DoNER and would also critique the policies of each state and test them against the norms of participatory governance.

It bears mention that the people of the north eastern region are gifted with unique skill sets such as weaving, handicrafts, hospitality and other soft skills. The region is a horticultural hub and a paradise for medicinal plants. The scenic beauty here is equal to some of the best locales abroad. These natural gifts need to be used in a manner that they do not become extractive. Weaving skills must be leveraged within their natural habitats without uprooting those who practice this skill from their hearths and homes. Weaving which is a women-centric activity is usually a home-based livelihood. Hence any attempt to upscale such livelihoods should take into account the fact that women are also home makers and attempts to institutionalise or centralize the activities could result in loss of livelihoods for them. Understanding these cultural constraints is what is important in any development activity. Unfortunately this nuanced policy making has been missing mainly due to the insensitivity of policy planners and implementers. The IIM-Shillong Centre for Policy Research and Analysis will have to come up with radical policy suggestions based on well-grounded field research. This will perhaps help to answer the much flogged question – 'What has IIM Shillong done for the region?'

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

Educational Needs

Inaugurating the fifteenth annual conference of the Meghalaya College Teachers' Association here last month, Chief Minister Purno Sangma took the opportunity to tell some home truths which needed consideration with due deliberation. He lamented that despite Shillong being one of the best educational centres in the region, Meghalayas literacy percentage happened to be lower than most of the north-eastern States. It surprised him that it should be so, since most of the successful persons of the region, he said, had their education in Shillong (including, let us add, his own August self). The fact is that literacy percentage is determined more by the quantum of education at the primary levels in which Meghalaya compares unfavourably with most other States. Shillong's eminence in the field of education has, in fact, dwarfed educational progress in the rest of the State, accounting for a lesser figure of literacy for the State

as a whole respite abundance of institutions in the capital city. This imbalance has to be corrected in the first instance. The Deputy Chief Minister Mr D.D. Lapang, speaking at the inauguration of the Shatagni English School at Nongkseh in Upper Shillong, caught the bull by the horns when he pointed to the growth of "mushroom schools" in Shillong which he rightly felt needed to be checked. He said government would encourage establishment of English schools in suburban areas, and this hopefully might go to reduce the number of such mushroom schools, a survey on which by us a few years ago brought out the extent of exploitation by these mercenary units of the average parent's understandable urge for putting their young hopefuls on the English media at the primary level itself to take full advantage of Shillong's renowned institutions at the secondary and higher levels.

Nobel for a Song Writer who Redefined Poetry

By Ratan Bhattacharjee

"Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness."

Maya Angelou in 'Gather Together in My Name' Poetry is unthinkable without musical cadence and rhythm. Bob Dylan the poet was born with music and all the mistakes and misconception seemed to have occurred there and many still are unable to regard him as a poet unless they expand and redefine literary boundaries. Since 1901, the Nobel Prize Committee never saluted any musician and song writer as a Laureate for this honour. Bob's songs inspired the Nobel Committee members to expand the horizon of poetry and accommodate a space for songs. A 'better late than never' decision is finally taken by the Committee in spite of the protest and dissent from a few members such as the French writer Pierre Assolline who finds it funny to see Bob's name as a Nobel Laureate. Bob Dylan's name appeared much below Haruki Murakami or Philip Roth but he finally emerged as the winner to get 18 carat gold and a cash certificate for \$925000.

"My range is limited," wrote Bob Dylan the mind-blowing rock singer of America since the turbulent sixties. He was born not with a silver spoon in his mouth but with songs and a poetic mind to mould the music. He is now the Nobel Laureate 2016 in Literature. It is a ground-breaking choice of a poetic mind that became the icon of music for the marginalised and his songs were almost like anthems for the Civil Rights and Anti-War Movements. He has been writing his own songs for over five decades and has also succeeded as a performing artist.

In my college days I was a fan of Sachin Dev Barman's folk songs and when I joined a college in the North East I would listen with rapt attention to the folk songs of Goalpara. Tagore was a fan of Lalan Fakir's folk

songs and Baul lyrics. He used them so skilfully in his devotional songs of Gitanjali which won him the prestigious Nobel Prize in 1913. The metamorphosis of songs into literature requires a great poetic mind that is sensitive to rhyme and rhythm which the likes of Tagore and Sachin Dev Barman and Bhupen Hazarika possessed. Today when newspaper headlines announce that Bob Dylan got the Nobel Prize 2016 for his songs I felt that the Nobel Committee is finally able to accept the redefining of literature as crafted by Bob Dylan and to do justice to a great man of folk literature who has all his life sung for peace. The recognition that comes for Dylan is also an acknowledgement that he is no less a poet. He was not prepared for the bang after so many whimpers about his poems which are performed by him as songs.

Finally the barrier between the two worlds of Music and Poetry has dissolved and the contours of poetry are redefined. In 1993 Toni Morrison got the Nobel Prize and America was waiting for another writer or poet to get it again. But this year America got the recognition for its most popular icon of rock at par with great Nobel Laureates like WB Yeats, Tagore Samuel Beckett or Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Only George Bernard Shaw got both the Oscar and the Nobel Prize. Bob Dylan got the Oscar and Nobel along with the prestigious Grammy Award. His basic inspiration was from the folk songs. Swedish Academy considered Bob Dylan as the creator of new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition and in fact for the first time redefined the boundaries of literature in a healthy way. But in a musical career spanning half a century, Bob Dylan did not have a smooth sailing. He had his critics who went to the extent of saying that he has no voice. Bob wrote with a note of frustration, "Some of the music critics say I can't sing; I croak. ...sound like a frog. They say my voice is shot; That I have no voice."

Dylan is called a plagiarist for using quotes from Jack London in 'Chronicles', from one Japanese poet in 'Love and Theft' and from Ovid in 'Modern Times'. But these are not new things. The icon of British literature, Shakespeare is also criticised as a crow with the feathers of a peacock. Many, still after four hundred years of his death are busy finding fault with his borrowing this and that line from some unworthy people of his time trying to prove him to be a plagiarist. His 38 Studio Albums have sold 125 million copies around the world and can be called a living legend. But Bob Dylan too learnt in the same humble way from the past tradition. With the sensitivity of the past in his backbone, he continued writing. He who is the 'brilliant inheritor of the bardic tradition, himself said: "It all came out of traditional music, traditional folk music, traditional rock and roll and traditional big band swing orchestra music... I learned lyrics and how to write them from listening to folk songs." Dylan's caravan too goes while the nasty low minded critics bark constantly at him. Even in the Nobel Committee his name is vehemently opposed by some poets and writers of the stature of Irvine Welsh saying that honouring him (Dylan) with the Nobel Prize is 'ill conceived nostalgia award made for senile gibbering hippies.'

As the son of a shop owner in a poverty stricken family, he saw suffering and sadness from close quarters. Sara Danius, the permanent Secretary of Swedish Academy rightly observes about this great son of Duluth Minnesota, that his writings cover 'from high to low, from black to white.' Times they are a changin' and the recognition for a song writer like Bob Dylan was the need of the hour to have a breakthrough in a real sense for the bold voice for the marginalised. Those who try to prove that his nomination for the Nobel was a funny thing, might not have heard his songs in the Album,

'Tangled up in Blues' and songs like 'Blowin' in the Wind' or 'The Times They are a changin' and his Album 'Bringing it All Back Home'.

Describing herself as a 'Lover of Bob Dylan' the spokesperson of Nobel Committee Sara Danius rightly justified his songs as comparable to that of the Greek writers Sappho which were also written for performance. Still we recall the golden days of the Album release of Blonde and Blonde of 1966. It is not for nothing that he left behind many a writer like Philip Roth or Hakuni Marakumi. Since 2013 Bob Dylan's name has come before the Nobel Committee but they too required courage for this ground-breaking decision. Salman Rushdie is overwhelmed by the decision of the Committee. He says, "Dylan towers over everyone." Dylan himself knew that this recognition is problematic for the intellectual elites who did not readily agree that he is a poet. Now the whole world recognises him as a poet who ranks at par with Yeats, Tagore and Tony Morrison.

Elvis freed our body through his songs. Bob Dylan frees our mind. He said about his song, "I am speaking for all of us. I'm the spokesman for a generation." He succeeded long ago when his poetry made him a singer. But the recognition finally came in his life time and he becomes a living legend now that his songs have made him a poet.

(Ratan Bhattacharjee is Associate Professor and Head Post Graduate Dept of English, Dum Dum Motijheel College and can be reached at profpratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com)

About the Writer :Ratan Bhattacharjee is the Associate Professor and Head, Post Graduate Dept of English, Dum Dum Motijheel College and may be contacted at profpratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com

Mobile 08961688870. Residence : 988 Jessore Road , Rupalaya Apt. Satgachi, Kolkata - 700074 . West Bengal.

TO THE EDITOR

Sourpuss syndrome

Editor,

Apropos the News item, "Can't get IIM with 3 sungs, Lanong ridicules Mukul (ST Oct 18, 2016), BM Lanong is known for his insipid wisecracks but this time he seems to have been infected by the sourpuss syndrome. To give credit where due is the mark of a gentleman but Lanong has never been able to rise above petty politics. Those privy to the conversation between the then HRD Minister, Arjun Singh, the late Maharaja Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya and Mukul Sangma at the Tripura Castle (not the hotel) to celebrate the wedding anniversary of Arjun Singh and wife Saroj Devi, in 2005 will vouch for the veracity of Mukul's statement. It was during that informal evening that the young Education Minister, Mukul Sangma prevailed upon the HRD Minister to finalise the setting up of the IIM at Shillong. The fact that he sang a few songs to win the hearts of the elderly couple is just Mukul's way of networking, which he publicly confesses to have learnt from his late mother.

A person with a sourpuss syndrome has a grouchy disposition peppered with jealousy

about other peoples' achievements. To suggest that GG Swell, PA Sangma and PR Kyndiah pushed for the IIM here is a hyperbole and is aimed at denying Mukul Sangma the credit due to him. None of the three stalwarts mentioned by Lanong might have had an idea of what an IIM actually is, although they might have asked for other central institutions to be located here. Politics is bad enough but to drag the IIM-Shillong into petty politics is certainly in bad taste as much as it exposes the revolting mindset of the person who initiates this dirty debate.

Yours etc.,
NL Lyngdoh,
Via email

MUDA Affairs

Editor,

While agreeing to the concern raised by one Jonathan Lyngdoh, "Benami Transactions in MUDA" (ST, 14 Oct, 2016) about selling tribal names and the need to foster tribal interests in case of MUDA Shopping Complex in Police Bazar, one cannot just dismiss this matter without looking at the other side of the coin. Why are the tribal traders letting off or even selling their shops to mostly non-tribal traders? Well as the trade flows, one can see that the tribal can't resist the temptation of "luring lakhs" to part with their shops to

others. Such is the craze that they even indulge in benami transactions, right under the nose of MUDA. Is it not ridiculous that MUDA which is unable to keep its own floors clean will prevent skyscrapers in this highly seismic town and other civic issues that we confront in our daily lives? This lure is equally supported by an acute and inherent level of lethargy in the bodily structure of our tribal traders, for whom therefore to run the show is best through hired manpower. They naturally, therefore, prefer non-tribal managers and staff because some tribal traders from Iewduh and other markets in town told me that any sane tribal businessmen will prefer non-tribal managers/staff because they know well what is in offing from their tribal counterparts. According to them, a tribal manager/staff will never open the shop in time, will go back home early, will bunk shop during shop hours while putting lame excuses from time to time and even stink of alcohol while on duty. These traders while experiencing years of such demeanor have now sub-let their shops to non-tribals and are enjoying returns. This is basically the trend everywhere, said this trader which is also contributing to the denigration of tribal hold businesses/shops in the town and elsewhere. Such is the scenario that a Shillongite, who is currently

working in a company in the national capital, is now looking to get a shop in MUDA complex as he said that it is easy to get one there. This is akin to getting a shop in the heart of a metropolitan city. So one may blame MUDA for all the benami acts but who is going to check on those issues that are forcing tribal traders to let off/sublet or even sell their trades to others. The solution to this issue actually lies there. But that does not make MUDA the holy cow here.

Yours etc.
PK Dwivedi
Shillong - 1

On Bob Dylan!

Editor,

It is gratifying to see the positive response of Shillong music lovers on the award of Nobel Prize to Bob Dylan (ST Oct14,2016), but I would like to remind these friends that the greatness of Dylan goes even deeper if one knows that he is a "profoundly spiritual poet-shaped by the Christian Bible" according to many scholars. Just to give two examples: The song 'Blowin' in the wind' was hailed as the 60's protest song. The song points to the 'ruach', the Bible's Hebrew name for the spirit of God, which means wind, breath, spirit. Genesis describes how "the earth

Where have all the Awards gone?

By Ananya S Guha

There seems to be some debate about the legendary Bob Dylan receiving the Nobel award. The purists feel that a musician should not be awarded an honour for literature. One starts thinking of Pearl Buck, Hemingway, Steinbeck, Neruda and so many I suppose - poets, novelists, short story writers. Of course there are pure and simple literary genres, and creative writing must fit in to any one of them for literary consumption. Bob Dylan thus does not belong to this grand design, or does he, however inadvertently. So if we are spellbound by his lyrics, and moved by his 'poetry' we are being unctuous towards a world power, which manipulated this award several times, they say. A song writer is a song writer, at best a singer of pop music. Nothing more, nothing less.

I have problems with such contentions. By awarding the Nobel Prize to him, the Nobel Committee has formally paid a tribute and recognition to the co-existence of art forms, in this case poetry and music. Secondly as, in the words of the Committee he gave 'new poetic expression' to the great tradition of the song. This interconnection between poetry and song is a new challenge to the twentieth and twenty first centuries, where art and literature has shaped into protest movements. The Nobel Citation has neatly subverted traditional norms of literary genres, by refusing to straight jacket them. Last year's awardee also got the Nobel not because of writing poetry or fiction, but for conducting painstaking research in war torn areas.

Secondly memories are short. Bertrand Russell the logical mathematician was awarded the Nobel for literature, Winston Churchill for literature for his famed autobiography. So the decision is not new. The novelty lies in the proclamation of genre subversion, and also in the assumption that poetry and the song have likeness and are close allies since a long time.

However if disclaimers say that the so called poetry in his lyrics is not strong, evocative or good enough then we are entering areas of subjectivity and personal likes or dislikes. The fact that Dylan does not belong to any ideology or ism does not seem to help for searching, anatomising critics, who would like to leave him as an eccentric dilettante. Poetry they feel must be hard hitting remonstrances of the heretic. Wasn't or isn't Dylan one? But rock, blues etc have no place for poetry. In the realm of aesthetics the world is changing. Poetry is represented with photographs and paintings. The ghazal has been rediscovered as a new mode of poetic expression. Collaborative poems are also being written today. Bob Dylan's experiments lie in raising poetry from the mundane to vigorously searching for the truth in a rapidly changing world:

"Where have all the young men gone/ where have all the soldiers gone/ where have all the young girls/ flowers gone?" are not meant to be rhetorical questions, they follow one after another like hysterical soul-searching in the face of universal cataclysm. There is no sign of moral edification but taking by storm acts of purposeful retrogression.

The intrepid action of the Nobel Committee of redefining literary artefacts or canons must not only come as a surprise, but must be well appreciated for foregoing genres, which strictly speaking have become cliched. The parallel for the arts must be a roving and cinematic eye, the inner perception of extra sensory ability. Bob Dylan was and is not a myth creator, but a myth bashing artist arraigning citadels of hypocrisy and untruth.

Poetry, music and song are points of perpetuating reality. Rabindranath Tagore composed songs, poems and short stories with felicity, with an embedded pursuit of truth, creativity, the uniqueness of universe upheld by God's manifestation - Hopkins like his songs were a testament to mysteries of the universe, relationships, their intricacies, god-man/woman relationships, and the powerful attributes of the natural world. The Nobel Prize Committee should have recognised this in the first place in the early twentieth century.

There is no need for any brouhaha. Bertrand Russell and Winston Churchill have already received this coveted award for non-literary genres. Dylan's contribution is his imagination, and world of the fable, or allegory. His allegorical designs impinge on his poetry-music with a power which sometimes drain the senses. Poetry is innate in the arts, in painting, films as well as in music. The musicality of the written word is celebration of the senses. A new poetic expression created by a music composer is a new idiom of poetry. We have to accept it. Whether we like the compositions or not is a ruthlessly subjective matter. For that matter every award can be debated, especially the ones in our country!

The impact of the Beatles on Indian writers in the sixties and seventies is well known. Leonard Cohen and Spike Milligan are known musicians are poets as well. Poetry and music have been wedded in the past. The Nobel Committee's assertion is a formal launching of new poetic movements, whether we as purists like it or not. The oddities of art are not at stake, but expansive and exploratory. Since the sixties to the present day the world has seen the resurgence and revival in the arts, science and technology. Nuclear capabilities have threatened to destroy the world. Racism, bigotry and religious intolerance have reached a new high. Only craftsmanship supersedes all that and all forms of the much vaunted human intelligence.

was formless and empty... darkness was over the surface...and the ruach of God was hovering over the waters". Jesus said the spirit of God is like the wind which blows where it wills".

More explicitly Biblical is his song, "All along the watchtower" which is a take of prophecy from chapter 21 of the Book of Isaiah. Robert Zimmerman or Bob Dylan is a Jew who was converted to Christianity. He called his John Wesley Harding album, "The first Biblical rock album." He once said, "I've always said there is a superior power....and that there is a world to come." At the same time he has disdain

for organised religion and dogma.

My point is that to celebrate Bob Dylan merely as a popular singer or poet without going into the values that are the fundamentals of his artistry is incomplete, especially in a city like Shillong with many 'Christian Univerisities. Many Indian universities produce M.Phil theses on Amitabh Bachhan. What a waste if we cannot even have seminars on the Biblical worldview of Bob Dylan. That is a big part of Christian culture.

Yours etc.,
Rasputin Bismarck
Kolkata.

“Happiness is an inside job. Don't assign anyone else that much power over your life”

--- Mandy Hale

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 69 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2016

From Ram to Business

WITH the UP elections drawing close, there seems to be a race for making capital out of holy Ayodhya. Culture Minister, Mahesh Sharma whose notions of culture remain stagnant with the samhita wishes to oversee preparations for a modern Ramayana museum which is designed to be an elaborate cultural project costing Rs 225 crore. In 1992 when the Babri mosque was demolished, the Congress government committed itself to restoring it. But with the rise of Hindutva the commitment turned into a demand for restoration of the Ram temple. Pragmatism has prompted the BJP to remove the demand from its agenda for the present, though Uma Bharti and Vinay Katiyar have not given up yet. Now the proposal is to build a museum and a Ramayana, Krishna and Buddhist tourist circuit. What is interesting is that UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav has also swung into action selecting a 25 crore plot for the museum. Son of Mulayam Singh Yadav who once shot down Kar Sevaks for their vandalism on top of the Babri mosque, appears to be overly interested in the Ram mythology. The competition is geared to a laudable objective, turning Ayodhya into a tourist hub. Tourism earnings have doubtless dwindled because of the trumpeting of Hindutva.

The Samajwadi party government in Lucknow has invested lots of money in the restoration of existing monuments such as the international Ramlila Centre for instance. The Ram Katha Museum is also being done up. Ayodhya attracts over 1 crore domestic pilgrims. What is lacking is adequate tourist infrastructure. A thriving tourism in Ayodhya will of course benefit the local population. The focus should be on development and employment. One only wishes the song and dance of Ramlila was kept out of it.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

Mizos in Tripura Press for Autonomous Council

The Mizos inhabiting the Jampui Hills of Tripura have intensified their agitation demanding fulfillment of pre-poll assurances of the state and Central Congress (I) leaders to set up Autonomous Regional Councils for them.

Though the movement was an ongoing one it has not so far received sufficient attention by the government but now with the direct involvement of two erstwhile underground leaders Bijay Hrankhawl of TNV and Laldengs of MNF in the agitation it has now assumed another dimension. Mr. Hrankhawl personally attended a meeting of the Mizo Convention which has been spearheading the movement on February 2 and 3 last to advise and encourage them to carry on the agitation till the objective is achieved. Laldenga, who is now comparatively free after being thrown out of power in Mizoram, has already extended his support to his cause of his Mizo brethren in Tripura. He is now expected to pay a visit to the Mizo villages to give a boost to the movement. What is more significant is that both Mr. Hrankhawl and Mr. Laldenga have a number of followers in the Jampui Hills who have now come forward in an organized manner to join the movement. The Mizo Conventions forming f a Volunteers Force under the leadership of former TNV underground activist Z. D. Mawaia in last November has ominous potentiality. Incidentally, the workers of the Mizo Unification Movement are till now keeping a low profile.

The present phase of agitation included a car rally on February 17 last followed by a long march from Vaisam to Phuldungai and cycle rally to cover at the villages in the Jampui Hills. This phase

would end by observing a 48 hour total bandh in the Jampui Hills on March 9 and 10. The Mizo Convention representing six thousand Mizos in Jampui Hills was formed in 1979. The demand for regional autonomy was raised first in 1981 but the Left Front Government was reluctant to concede. The Mizo convention could make a break through only when they secured a written assurance from the Tripura Pradesh Congress (I) Present Sudhir Ranjan Majumdar at the instance of Union Minister of State Santosh Mohan Dev that the demand would be met along with according recognition to Mizo language if Congress (I) TUJS formed the government. Mr. Majumdar confirmed this to this correspondent that he could not fulfil this pre-poll pledge because of the opposition from his partner in the government TUJS though they were also on record supporting this demand when they were in the opposition.

Meanwhile, the Mizo Convention President Lal Nova has written to the Prime Minister along with a photocopy of the written assurance given to them by his party managers on the eve of the election.

Tibetan Protest Chinese Occupation
Tibetan business establishments will remain closed on Friday throughout the state and in the North East on account of the 30th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising Day in protest against the Chinese invasion and illegal occupation of the Tibet according to information received from the office of the Tibetan Freedom Movement.

China determined to dominate Bangladesh economy

India failing to meet Beijing challenge

By Ashis Biswas

Not unexpectedly, Indian media analysts have applauded Delhi's apparent success in consolidating international support against Pakistani terrorism during the recent BRICS summit in Goa. However, going forward from Goa and taking note of other developments in its immediate neighbourhood, short term prospects for India still remain somewhat mixed and more complex than before.

Announcing a massive US \$24 billion aid package for Bangladesh before joining the BRICS proceedings, Chinese premier Xi Jinping served notice that India may no longer enjoy its eminence as the lead player within the BIMSTEC grouping. In Myanmar and Bangladesh, China is poised to set the pace for economic development. This is bound to encourage China's all weather ally Pakistan, which is totally blindsided on its East.

Within the BIMSTEC, current Chinese moves strengthen the bargaining position of Bangladesh and Myanmar. Both countries will now be able to play India off against China or vice versa, while promoting their national interests. Pakistan, having a support base within a section of the political establishment in Bangladesh, may also try to exploit this.

Clearly, Beijing would lay more stress on specifically developing and strengthening those areas of the road and railway infrastructure in Bangladesh which are integral to its own massive 'One belt one road' (OBOR) initiative. The emphasis here would be on building strong linkages between certain areas of Bangladesh and its ports, with Chinese border regions.

The stage is set for an absorbing tussle between India and China for infrastructure building and economic development of the BIMSTEC region. China will go all out to implement its proposed economic corridor concept BCIM (comprising Bangladesh, China, India and

Myanmar), seeking to complete the work before the Delhi-sponsored BBIN agreement takes full effect.

In the BBIN vs BCIM race, India got off the starting blocks earlier, as preliminary work on the India sponsored Bangladesh Bhutan India and Nepal Transport agreement (BBIN) has been completed. The proposed arrangement ensuring a seamless travel and movement of peoples and goods in the four countries is partially operative already.

Bangladesh has sent its goods to Delhi and Kathmandu through Indian territory. And the distance by road from Tripura to Kolkata through Bangladesh has been reduced by 600 kilometres, cutting travel time and generating fuel savings. Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi had taken personal interest in quick-launching the project.

The fact is that India is less than enthusiastic about the BCIM corridor project than either Bangladesh, Myanmar or China. It was going slow in improving and widening its roads and highways especially in the North Bengal, despite repeated prodding from Beijing and Dhaka.

Economic concerns prompted India's reluctance. India fears that Chinese goods will flood the markets of its populous East and Northeast regions. It feels the major gainer of the BCIM corridor would be China. Just as the ambitious OBOR initiative, India feels, it would only bring a vast region stretching from China to Central Asia and beyond, under a strategic Chinese dominance. However, Bangladesh has responded enthusiastically to the idea.

Naturally, in the context of the highly negative balance of trade between India and China, Indian Industry and Business circles are apprehensive about the BCIM Corridor. It is no different with smaller countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar which have even greater trade deficits vis-à-vis China than India.

A further disincentive for India is the possible loss of its exports to Bangladesh, Nepal or Myanmar, in the

face of Chinese competition.

Indian experts tracking the shifting currents of India-China bilateral economic trends say that Delhi's apparent reluctance in going ahead full steam on the BCIM project had resulted in a corresponding unofficial go-slow on part of China, which had promised investments of around \$22 million in certain projects about a year ago, mainly in Gujarat.

Some East India-based economists and exporters feel India's worries about Chinese goods swamping local products, from electric bulbs to computer parts, in the NE states or elsewhere are exaggerated. A leading leather exporter says, 'By now Indian buyers of Chinese goods understand very well the comparatively poorer quality of the cheaper Chinese products. Our home grown goods are costlier, but they last longer.' He feels the challenge from China should make Indian goods even better quality-wise in the long run.

'China has invested nearly \$50 billion in energy, mining and other sectors in Myanmar in the past decades. Yet, the Chinese find it difficult to compete with other major powers in post-democracy Myanmar, because of their rough and ready ways. They destroyed the environment in many parts of Myanmar, did not share any technology with locals, trained nobody, and appointed mostly workers brought over from China. They helped only the army junta to survive. No wonder they are not popular among common people, who recall and resent their exploitation by Beijing. Unless they change their ways drastically, they will face the same problems in Bangladesh or elsewhere, where they are contemplating investments', says one economist.

In other words, China can count on short term gains and success in South Asia if it relies on muscling into the smaller economies through the sheer weight of heavy capital investments. India should not feel unduly alarmed over being left out in the race, it must stay the course. This can be done best by going in for specific

time-bound projects in Bangladesh or Myanmar, according to an Indian foreign ministry official.

Unfortunately for India, its record in implementing projects in Myanmar has not been encouraging. All its major road building and other projects, are running years behind schedule. At one point during a project, the timeline became meaningless as local people objected to the work on environmental grounds. In some cases even preliminary surveys were done poorly. Indian agencies complain that land for the projects was often handed over late.

In comparison to China's recent investments in Myanmar to the tune of over \$3 billion, Indian projects involved a mere \$230 million or so. With such a major gap in terms of financial investments, timely implementation of projects and effective delivery of benefits was of the utmost importance. India did not exactly shine in this department.

What is more, the Chinese President came armed with a fully prepared agenda before he visited Bangladesh, prior to the BRICS summit. Anticipating the familiar fears of most smaller countries of running huge trade deficits vis-à-vis bilateral trade with China, he offered them the sop of accepting massive Chinese investments in priority sectors of infrastructure development, where recipient countries were unable to meet the total cost.

In Bangladesh, Chinese companies would partner local industrialists and entrepreneurs in at least 13 schemes, it was learnt. Discussions were held to build power plants, sea ports and upgrade the Railways. The objective is to begin work in as many sectors as possible. As developing countries, it would be difficult for either Bangladesh or Myanmar to reject such offers.

Any positive fallout from such moves would certainly be favourable for China. India's eminence within the BIMSTEC or in South Asia as a whole would be reduced. The smaller countries would now have two big brothers

Michellean Moves

By Anna Mirza

The ongoing presidential polls in the US can be among the most forgettable democratic exercises in recent history. If ever we needed to tell our future generations what democracy or campaigning is not about, then this has to be it. We have in Hillary and Trump, two candidates who have so many controversies surrounding them that voters have almost lost count of their scandals. But even this shrill, personal and expletive ridden campaign has thrown up an unlikely victor: Incumbent first lady - Michelle Obama.

Be it her speech at Democratic National Convention, her recent stand on Trump tapes or her videos of mingling with voters or her carpool karaoke, she has been one personality that has trumped all. While, so far for last eight years of Barack Obama's presidency and campaigning years before that she has happily let the spotlight be on her husband, Michelle has well and truly emerged as her own over last few months.

Hillary will owe a lot to Michelle on becoming 45th President of the United States as all her star campaigners including Bill and Barack seemed to be fading in front of Trump. But one lady who not only outshined all and swung the polls well and truly in Hillary's favour has been Michelle.

Michelle is not just your average first lady. This Princeton University and Harvard Law School graduate is true role model, a fashion icon and vouches for various noble and social causes. While so far her role was limited to espousing causes and occasional jigs with underprivileged, the Domestic National Convention speech at Philadelphia catapulted her as a social personality to watch out for. Her speech against Trump tapes that were being defended as mere 'Locker room boys' talk' well and truly derailed Trump's bid.

She has many firsts to her credit as the first lady. From donning the covers of leading fashion and lifestyle

magazines to giving away an Oscar for best film to appearing on chat shows that almost never considered politician's wives as guests. Michelle was purely seen as fashion icon during Obama's first term as president and many of her social activities did not get as popular a coverage as her ball room dance moves with the Prez.

After Obama's re-election as president, Michelle has been more vocal about pertinent social issues. Her support for education of girl child across the globe, her concern for war veterans, her push for organic eating and open support for LGBT rights made her a darling of a whole new constituency. From being written about merely for which designer she wore at a charity ball, Michelle was in the news for not covering her head in Saudi Arabia when she visited after the death of King Abdullah.

What really works in her favour is that she as a first lady does not have any baggage that Hillary seems to be bogged down by. Barack is not Bill and she is definitely not Hillary. Michelle has not been ambiguous about her preferences. She has spoken loud and clear about causes that personally concern her. She has been absolutely clear about her social, political and sartorial choices and has been unapologetic about it.

In a campaign where both the candidates have been bashing each other for being pretentious, Michelle has been refreshingly herself. Probably that explains why she has emerged as the true victor of this forgettable campaign. The nation loved her as first lady and already looks optimistically to her as the next president. Will Michelle take the bait is what time will tell. But first woman African American president who personifies 'American Dream' is exactly the president not just the US but the world needs.

(The writer is Assistant Professor Political Studies, University of Delhi)

to address their needs instead of one and here China, with more financial clout than India, will dominate.

Even if Pakistan has been effectively sidelined by India on its West by working in tandem with Afghanistan and Iran, China -- Pakistan's all weather ally -- may emerge as the top regional

power on India's East. This is bound to gladden many hearts in Pakistan. With China's help, Pakistan can better exploit its enduring support base among followers of Jamat-e-Islami and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), making things difficult for India and Bangladesh.

(IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Dictatorial Principal

Editor,
As per the news reports (ST Oct 18, 2016) the parents of a student studying in Class II in Shillong Public School have sought apology within three days from the Principal and two teachers who had inflicted corporal punishment on the child. As concern parents I would like to add that the specific definition of a Principal is a person in charge of a school. But in this school it clearly implies that the principal is indulging in dictatorial acts.

Parents send their children to school so that they get quality education and learn social skills as well. But clearly this is not happening in our schools today. I doubt if there is even a subject called "Moral Science" for the students to teach them ethics and manners. From the looks of this case it appears that the teachers and Principal are more in need of moral science lessons. What a shame for the institution that a Principal should be inflicting violence on a small kid of Class II.

Obviously a Class II student would make mistakes, but hitting the kid brings the Principal down to the same level - that of a kid. Another thing I wish to make is that in India it seems Moral Education is no longer part of the curriculum. And yet inculcating values of honesty, truthfulness, kindness etc can go a long way in curbing various ills of society especially in this particular case.

I strongly urge upon the Commissioner and Secretary Education to treat the matter with the seriousness it deserves and take appropriate action.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

NEHU trying to escape scrutiny

Editor,
The Moot Court incident still rankles. My cry for justice since October 8, 2016 is still not answered by the concerned organizers. They only replied through this esteemed paper (letter to the editor) and that by someone who is only a third party to the issue. I expected a reply directly from the conveners about the unjust, unfair and unprofessional action taken, not by the third party

but by the organizers, during such a prestigious competition which at the end of the day has turned to be a mockery. I believe the conveners have the full authority to organize such a programme but they are also responsible for every action taken during the competition. So why the silence now? Is this an acceptance of wrongdoing and then walking away as if nothing had happened? In fact this is a wrong done not only to my team but to the larger public. The programme is being organized out of the Government funds given to NEHU which implies that it is public money. Therefore, the society needs an explanation not only from me because the issue is not only of individual interest but of public interest at large.

However, the silence of the concerned organizers has convinced me that they had deliberately committed the said act for personal interests. And it also makes me further presume that the convener or organizers had manipulated the whole thing and then feared that if the cat is out of the bag then the things would blow up on their faces. I wonder there is corruption in this whole game? Do the NEHU authorities take this issue

seriously? Will they demands accountability? The society needs answers! And I am part of the society aggrieved by such unjust action.

Also let me declare upfront that write this letter for the sake of justice, because we should all realize that if there is lack of accountability and transparency in a temple of learning then the society is assured of destruction since the products of NEHU will become the pests that corrupt the whole humanity. So, respected conveners/organizers we expect a reply from you and not from any third party.

Yours etc.,
Peter Aiborlang
Dohkrut
Shillong- 17

Polygamy in Islam

Editor
Please refer to the editorial comments on Polygamy and Talaq (Divorce) (ST Oct 10, 2016), that Muslim men have the right to triple talaq and polygamy and women do not have the same right.

In this connection it is important to know what

the Holy Quran says on polygamy. As a rule, Islam recognises only the union of one man and one woman as a valid form of marriage. Under exceptional circumstances, it allows man to have more than one wife. It is important to know what is that exceptional circumstance which allow polygamy. In the Chapter IV (Sura IV), Verse 3 (Ayat 3) of the Holy Quran, "AL-NISA" (The Women) revealed in Medinah stated as follows-- "And if you fear that you will not be able to do justice to the orphans (or widows) then marry who seems good to you from amongst women (two at a time) or three (or up to) four. But if you are afraid that (even then) you will not be able to keep equality towards orphans, then marry only one." The above verse deals chiefly with the circumstances arising out of the battle of Uhud which was fought during the year 624-625 A.D. where a large number of Muslims were killed by the enemy and the decimation had largely decreased the number of males. Hence many orphans were left in the charge of widows who found it very difficult to procure the necessary means of support. The above verse (which was revealed immediately after the end of the battle of Uhud)

is where permission to have more than one wife was given under the particular circumstances of the Muslim society then existing. It must be understood clearly that polygamy was allowed at that time for the welfare of orphans and not for the needs of the individual. The verse also clearly mentions that if you fear that you will not be able to do justice to the orphans, marry women (the mother of the orphans) up to four but only on the condition that you are just to all of them. And if you cannot give equal justice to them, then marry only one.

This is the only passage in the Holy Quran that speaks of polygamy and it will be seen that it does not enjoin polygamy, it only permits it, and that too conditionally. Following what has been stated above, if any man thinks that a blanket permission was allowed in the Holy Quran to have more than one wife, then he is completely wrong and against the teachings of the Holy Quran teaching. So in today's generation, to say that Muslim men have the right to polygamy is false.

Yours etc.,
Kamal Khongrymmai
Shillong-6

“I learned early that sometimes you have to dig through garbage to get anywhere.”

--- Michael Hainey

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 70 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2016

Corporal punishment

REPORTS of corporal punishment being inflicted on a student of Class II of a particular institution reeks of sadism. How can any sane person get physical with a child aged not more than seven or eight years old, no matter how naughty the child is? That the person who inflicted the punishment is none other than the principal of the school is even more serious since the person is expected to be more circumspect about his actions and behavior. Corporal punishment includes hitting of a person with a hand or an object such as a cane or belt. It is also kicking, slapping, shaking or throwing of a person with the intention of inflicting pain on them. While the physical damage done to the body can be treated, the emotional and psychological scars can affect the victim especially young kids very deeply. But many schools including those run by missionaries which are supposed to be more humane continue to have in their rolls teachers who inflict corporal punishment to the point that children come home bleeding from their mouths. Yet parents don't dare squeak because of the fear of their child being further victimized. In fact, there are many different ways in which students are being negatively disciplined in some schools even today.

Studies have shown that schools which use corporal punishment tend to have poorer academic achievement, more vandalism, truancy, pupil violence and dropout than schools that don't use corporal punishment. Also teachers who use corporal punishment tend to spend more time "disciplining" and less time teaching than teachers who don't use corporal punishment. All acknowledged leaders in the fields of education and child development consider the use of corporal punishment, whether by teachers or parents, counterproductive and unprofessional. What is worse about corporal punishment is that it causes loss of self esteem in the child and plants the seeds of future self-destructive and antisocial behaviors such as lying, stealing, fighting, bullying, delinquency, chemical dependency and reckless driving. Ironically, corporal punishment is often used to punish some of the very behaviors it causes. While there is an unwritten law in this country which makes corporal punishment unacceptable, many teachers, particularly male teachers continue to use the rod, to discipline the child. It is time to end this sadism and those in charge of education should see that this practice is eradicated.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

AGP Govt repudiates PM's remark

The attention of the Government of Assam has been drawn to newspaper reports about the Prime Minister's remark made in the Rajya Sabha alleging lack of will on the part of the state Government in tackling the flood problem by refusing to undertake maintenance works relating to the Brahmaputra Flood Control schemes. Refuting the allegation, the Revenue Minister of Assam Mr Chandra Arandhara said that the Prime Minister's intervention in the debate was not absolutely based on facts. Elaborating the position he said that the Prime Minister during his belated visit to study the flood problem in Assam in September 1988 did as a question whether the State Government would fully finance the maintenance costs of Brahmaputra flood protection works. It was explained to the Prime Minister that whatever the Central Government was giving for the original Brahmaputra protection works was firstly meager as compared to the actual requirements; secondly it was given only in the form of 100 per cent loan thereby increasing the state

government's unbearable debt burden. It was also clarified that the maintenance costs of the Brahmaputra. Protection works were presently required to be met by the state Government from its non plan budget in accordance with the awards of the Finance Commission. In this context Mr Aranchara mentioned that despite several financial constraints the State Government had been providing more funds for such maintenance works than even those recommended by the Finance Commission for the period 1984-85 to 1988-89. The 8th Finance Commission had recommended a total amount of Rs. 61.26 crores for this purpose while the State Government actually provided Rs. 87.90 crores. Even this enhanced amount was short of requirement due to steep escalation in costs. He said the prime Minister was definitely aware of the financial difficulties of flood ravaged and backward state like Assam and its inability to provide from its own resources adequate funds for the purpose. Moreover, as is well known, the Brahmaputra is a mighty international river which can be controlled only through a national efforts.

No Ram-Rahim Poll Cut- Outs Is the constitution supreme?

By Poonam I Kaushish

Till yesterday Ishrat Jahan a young mother of four whose husband divorced her on the phone was a nobody. Today, she is hogging media TRP ratings thanks to moving the Supreme Court on the grounds that divorce through spoken words violates her Fundamental Rights and she wants abolition of the draconian triple talaq.

The NDA Government stand is clear. It opposes triple talaq as it is against gender justice, equality and dignity of women. It cites the case of 22 Islamic countries, including Syria, Iran, Tunisia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan which have banned this, codified and reformed the Muslim Personal Law to check its abuse.

The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board accuses the Government of waging a "war" against the community and has told the Supreme Court that it "cannot decide nor interfere in religious freedom and rewrite personal laws in the name of social reform. Triple talaq is permissible in Islam as the husband is in a better position to take a decision".

Can a victim be victimized by her husband for no fault of hers? Is there no appeal against this monstrous and arbitrary dissolution of marriage? Can a fatwa overturn marriage sanctity? Does it not tantamount to violation of human rights? What about Ishrat's feelings? Should she be denied her marital rights?

Can the Shariat law annul her marriage and the clergy trample on individual rights? Importantly does the Muslim Personal Law take precedence over the Constitution? Is it not time we have a common law for all citizens --- a Common Civil Code?

Tragically, even as the Supreme Court grapples with the legal issues, trust our polity to use Ishrat's case to play vote-bank politics and score petty points against rivals. Instead of addressing the

larger issue of whether we should retain and allow minorities to abide by their personal laws or adopt a uniform civil code.

While the BJP crows over Ishrat's case to underscore its persistent demand for a common civil code, the Congress walks a tight rope. "The Constitution and the law of the land are capable of taking care of all such issues", it espouses. The Left uses Ishrat as a symbol of human rights violation and 'Mian' Mulayam concurs with the wisdom of his constituents and defends thefatwa as a "well thought out decision." True, the ongoing petition couldn't have come at a more opportune time as since Modi's ascendancy to India's Raj gaddi the BJP has been busy chanting SarvaDharam Sambhava. Whereby Ram, Allah and Jesus need to take a back seat and priests, mullahs and cardinals should help knit India's diverse social fabric into one nation.

The Congress is caught in a cleft stick. Aware of the fallout of its 'Shah Bano politics,' is keen to avoid falling between two stools. While many oppose triple talaq and state every religion, should be open to reforms they are conscious of the religious and political dimensions attached given that UP and four States go to polls early next year. This makes it tricky for the Party to take an explicit stand on the matter. Consequently, it has to be sensitive to the Muslim community's reflexes on the issue. While some leaders make a distinction between clergy-dictated views and feelings of ordinary Muslims, especially women, others want the Party to reinforce its projection as the 'premier liberal, democratic national Party.' As the Constitution was framed by its leaders to keep the country's secular fabric intact.

What next? All eyes are affixed on the Apex Court. Will it lead by example and unshackle the 21 Century Muslim woman trapped in archaic medieval Personal Laws? Will it again suggest implementation of the

Common Civil Code? And emphasise Babasaheb Ambedkar's advocacy of an optional common civil code? Recall, the Supreme Court has unsuccessfully tried three times earlier to unshackle Muslim women from this draconian talaq edict. In 1985, a five-member Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court had overruled the Muslim Personal Law in the famous Shah Bano case. The Court allowed the divorced Muslim woman maintenance from her husband.

Rueing the fact that "Article 44 has remained a dead letter, the Court went on to argue in their decision that "a common civil code will help the cause of national integration by removing disparate loyalties in laws which have conflicting ideologies." The Article provides: "the State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India". Predictably, the Muslim clergy opposed the judgment. The then Congress Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi decided to curry favour with the Muslims and got Parliament to pass a new legislation, the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act. This reinforced denial by the Muslim Personal Law of any maintenance to divorced women.

The Supreme Court again resurrected the campaign for a Common Civil Code in 2003. Regretting the State's inaction and faulting those opposing the demand in the name of religious freedom, a three-judge Bench of the Apex court lamented that "Parliament is still to step in" for framing a uniform civil code. Significantly, one fails to understand why the Common Civil Code is viewed by some as anti-minority? Article 44 was given to us by Nehru, Maulana Azad and Sardar Patel, not by Modi, Shah and the RSS. Does this make them communal, even Hindu fundamentalists? Even educated and liberal Muslims have surprisingly chosen to remain silent on the subject.

Clearly, the minorities need to realize that there is no connection between religious and personal law. By deliberately distorting religion to suit their narrow personal and political ends the country is vitiated thereby threatening its unity, integrity and solidarity. The AIMPLB needs to recognize that the Constitution is supreme and only comes into the picture when someone moves court seeking justice. The law of the land only applies when a victim complains of victimization and seeks redress under the Indian Penal Code.

Where do we go from here? It all depends on whether our Muslim brethren are willing to acknowledge that there is no mysticism in the secular character of the State. The State is neither anti-God nor pro-God. It does not differentiate by sex. And is expected to treat all religions and men and women alike, be it the devout, agnostic and the atheist. It only ensures that no one is discriminated against on religious grounds. It remains to be seen whether the Court will be successful this time in getting rid of its excess baggage of isms. India and its secularism deserve a voluntary common civil code for gradual acceptance without further delay. The Ishrat issue is a test case.

Simultaneously, our minorities need to decide whether to be liberal and progressive or remain obscurantist and backward. Ultimately, no one community should be allowed the veto or block progressive legislation. Or decide, dictate or ruin an individual's life.

From successfully granting Shah Bano her alimony in 1985 to now deciding whether to heed Ishrat's pleas all eyes are affixed on the Court. It can take the example of Goa which has had a common civil code for long. Will it unshackle minority women and lay the foundations for a truly secular India where the Constitution is supreme? --- INFA

Modi sarkar resurrects Ram, now as museum Brace for BJP's Hindutva package tour in UP

By Kalyani Shankar

What is the politics behind the Union government's proposal to construct a multi-crore futuristic Ramayana museum in Ayodhya? With Uttar Pradesh going to polls early next year, the mythological Ram is back in the political discourse fighting the BJP's battle with the political parties. BJP of course denies that it is a political agenda but is this for vote catching or is it for promotion of tourism as claimed or is it to satisfy the BJP's core voters?

UP is known for its caste and communal politics and it is only expected that Ayodhya would occupy the centre stage even after 25 years of the demolition of the Babri masjid. BJP knows that it difficult now to attract votes in the name of yet to be constructed Ram Temple but still invoking Lord Ram is essential which is why now the Ramayana Museum is coming up.

As soon as the Centre announced its Ramayana museum plan, the ruling Samajwadi Party too has begun vying for a share of the Ayodhya. Chief minister Akilesh Yadav had recently announced a "world class" theme park in Ayodhya's

Ramayana circuit is Rs 225 crores of which the allocation for Ayodhya museum Rs 151 crore. The other two spots on the Ramayana circuit are at Chitrakoot (Rs 43 crores) and Shringuverpur in Phulpur (Rs 23 crores.) The land for the proposed museum has been provided by the Uttar Pradesh government. The Ramayana circuits in all the three places are expected to energise the hard core Hindus in the state. Ayodhya attracts over a crore of tourists in the domestic circuit. This time it will be Hindutva by package tour.

As expected, the museum proposal has revived the demand within the BJP for construction of Ram temple at the disputed Ramjanmabhoomi / Babri masjid site with hardline BJP leaders like Vinay Katiyar and Water Resources Development minister Uma Bharti pitching for it. Justifying the demand for temple Uma Bharti has noted that "what is under challenge is the dispute over land between the Wakf Board and Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas, not whether Ram was born there

The ensuing Assembly polls are important for the Congress, which is trying to revive in the state where it had its last chief minister in 1989. The BSP too is still to recover from its humiliation in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls when it did not get a single seat. With the anti incumbency staring in the face of the UP chief minister Akilesh Yadav and the family feuds hurting the party, the BSP and the BJP are both poised to bid for power.

proposed Ram Lila Centre. In August, he had okayed the construction of an amphitheatre. The SP has also shown interest in renovating Hindu shrines in Ayodhya, Mathura and Varanasi in order to boost tourism.

The ensuing Assembly polls are important for the Congress, which is trying to revive in the state where it had its last chief minister in 1989. The BSP too is still to recover from its humiliation in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls when it did not get a single seat. With the anti incumbency staring in the face of the UP chief minister Akilesh Yadav and the family feuds hurting the party, the BSP and the BJP are both poised to bid for power.

Though the BJP has been insisting that Ram temple will not be an electoral plank in the UP polls, the proposed Ramayana museum is being seen as an attempt to keep pro-Hindutva elements in good humour. The hint that the BJP's campaign would include Ram was given during Dussehra when Prime Minister Narendra Modi ended his speech at the Ramlila function with "Jai Shree Ram" in Lucknow. What better way than to invoke Lord Rama, who is very secure in the hearts and minds and prayers of millions of Indians, whether he was a historical or mythological figure or not!

While the opposition may accuse the BJP of a political gameplan, the saffron party has cleverly camouflaged it by making it appear as tourist promotion rather than a political move. The government also proposes to hold an international Ramayana conference with the participation of 12 countries.

To make it broad based, the culture ministry has identified the Buddhist circuit, the Ramayana circuit and the Krishna circuit. The budget allocation for the

or not." So it was not surprising that the Congress and the BSP didn't waste a single moment to hit out at the Centre and UP government accusing them of politicising the matter ahead of elections. Smelling a political conspiracy, the BSP supremo Mayawati has said, "Developing tourism in Ayodhya is good but, how come the Narendra Modi government thought of developing the Ramayana Sangrahalay (museum) and the state government of Ramleela theme park just before the Assembly polls".

Far away in the south, the DMK chief M. Karunanidhi, who had earlier triggered a row with critical remarks about Lord Ram at the height of Ramsethu, has now questioned the motive of the BJP in building the Ramayana museum. The DMK is an atheist party.

The Congress, which has been trying to woo the Hindus with the Congress Vice president Rahul Gandhi visiting the Hindu temples before the polls, cannot openly oppose the Ramayana museum but at the same time also want to expose the ulterior motive of the BJP in going for this measure. The party's chief ministerial candidate Sheila Dixit noted, "Why is it happening at a time like this when elections are a few months away. We are not against it, everybody worships Lord Ram but the timing is crucial. It gives it a communal touch. The venue is Ayodhya. It will impact UP."

Whether the opposition parties like it or not, Ram has entered the poll scene. How much he can help the saffron party is yet to be seen but the BJP proposes to use the Hindutva card directly or indirectly to consolidate its Hindu votebank to bid for power. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

On Bob Dylan and the Nobel Prize

Editor,
There has been continuous debate over Bob Dylan getting the Nobel Prize. Well, if we look back at the history of literature, evidently there have been many schools of poets/poetry who have immensely borrowed artistic and stylistic elements from music and vice versa. The Beat Writers Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs and Gregory Corso had a strict philosophy of writing "spontaneous prose/poetry" influenced by the diverse rhythms and seamlessly fluid improvisational chord structures of Jazz music through listening to saxophonists like Charlie Parker, Paul Desmond and trumpeters like Miles Davis. Then there were the Jazz Poets like Vachel Lindsay, Langston Hughes, Kenneth Patchen, Kenneth Rexroth, Amiri Baraka etc. The Underground Poets like Alexander Trocchi, Adrian Mitchell, Jeff Nuttall, Heathcote Williams, Tom Pickard etc and the Liverpool Poets like Adrian Henri, Roger Mc Groug, and Brian Patten who found their

influence and inspiration from music the same way like the Beat Writers.

Bob Dylan is being perceived as a "rock star" and "singer-songwriter", and not a poet. There is a "musical quality" that every avid reader feels when reading good poetry or prose. Bob Dylan used the "musical quality" of Vintage American Folk Rock Traditions to write thought-provoking lyrics on various issues and subjects concerning life and society.

Musical qualities are the "beating heart" of literature, and are related to all great poets' and novelists' art. If the Beat writers, the Jazz Poets, the Underground Poets and the Liverpool Poets whose writings were hugely inspired and influenced solely by music (Most of these poets recited their poems in pubs and cafes to the accompaniment of live Jazz music playing), then why can't Bob Dylan who fused the best of artistic, thematic and stylistic elements of both literature and music together be considered a poet?

Yours etc,
Willie Gordon Suting,
Shillong 1

No Entry hassles

Sir,
This is to bring to the Notice of the Authority concerned the plight of the residents of Umpling,

Nongrah and Mawlynrei, during the Durga Puja Celebration due to the 'No Entry Sign' put up by the Police Dept. for more than a week. If it is only for one or two days we understand and are ready to co-operate. Further, even the Taxi Stand to Umpling was shifted. This has put the commuters in great difficulty especially the elderly and children.

Kindly take necessary steps in future to solve this problem by shifting the pandal to a bigger open space.

Yours etc.,
N.R.Lyngdoh
Shillong -6

Supporting the suspended!

Editor,
Through your esteemed paper, I would like to air my views on the state of affairs in the KHADC. The grand old party (Congress) seems to be swimming in desperation and all efforts to save itself is but dashed away, by waves that have exposed their degree of confusion, to the extent that their sense of ethics and morals is all but drowned. The five Congress MDCs who were instrumental in engineering the suspension drama of P N Syiem, which was done in contradiction to laid down procedures of the Party, are still clinging on to their respective chairs

without fear nor shame. Their Deputy CEM even had the audacity to declare that their support to the PDF is temporary. Alas! where have their moral obligations disappeared? Or is this the culture of the Congress Party? They suspend a member who stood against the unjustifiable (amended) law, which will now cost the public more than Rs 2 crore of rupees, an amount that could have warmed the hearths of many poor homes, and yet support his continuance as the leader in KHADC. This is bundle of contradictions. It is because of such acts that the politics for no fault of itself, is often referred to as a dirty game. The current stand of the five Congress MDCs is shameful, degrading and only exhibits their true qualities of being opportunistic, selfish and oblivious to the moral obligation that their position as public representatives holds. This is a benchmark of sorts and one hopes that we the voting public learn from such exhibits and let this enable us to vote wisely in future.

Yours etc.,
Junita Suchiang,
Via email

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

“My way of joking is to tell the truth. It is the funniest joke in the world.”

--- George Bernard Shaw

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 71

SHILLONG, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2016

The disgraceful Donald Trump

NOVEMBER 8 will be a fateful day for the US as the race for Presidency between Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump climaxes. Hillary Clinton looks to be on a better wicket. She has years of experience in administration and has always pursued a stable policy. Donald Trump on the other hand is simply unpredictable. He has come up with one controversial idea after another like building a border with Mexico to keep Mexican immigrants away. Add to this his temporary ban on all Muslims coming to the US. He is committed to demolish the ISIS in Iraq and he wants Syria to be at the mercy of the Bashar-al-Assad regime backed by Moscow. He has called upon US allies to pay more to get US support. He is heedless of consequences, the fact that the US position in the world will slide down and global political and economic instability will be pushed up.

Admittedly Trump mirrors the frustrations of a section of the US electorate which is frustrated by the low economic growth and job insecurities. However, he has done great disservice to the image of the grand old party (Republican) and injected viciousness into US politics which has no parallel in the past. And now Trump says that he is not committed to accept election results if he is defeated. Democracy has been thrown to the winds. Trump seems to be a menace to the world democratic order.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

Jamir's appeal to NSCN Group to unite

Nagaland Chief Minister Mr S C Jamir today called upon the various underground groups to unite for facilitating a dialogue with the centre for a solution of the Naga problem.

He, however reiterated that any solution would have to be made within the submit of the constitution. Addressing a press conference here, the first since he took over on January 25 last, the Chief Minister stated that the role of the state government would be confined to the extent of bridging the communication gap between the underground Nagas and the Centre. By playing its limited role "honestly and sincerely", the state government could contribute a lot towards bringing the two confronting parties closer as a prelude to a permanent solution, he said.

Referring to a recent report of an attempt to negotiate with some leaders of a particular underground group, Mr Jamir said that any such piecemeal effort would fail to yield the desired result since lasting peace in Nagaland would remain a far cry till the problem of the underground Nagas was solved once and for all.

He claimed that substantial progress was made during his earlier tenure as the Chief Minister of Nagaland in respect of creating a congenial atmosphere for negotiations between the underground and the centre. But his successor in the office failed to pursue the matter properly, he deplored.

He parried a question whether he had taken any fresh initiative on the issue and said that "let them unite first and spell out their term."

Central Official to study NEHU tangle

Mr J D Gupta, Union Joint Secretary to the Ministry of Human Resources Development is arriving in Shillong on Sunday for an on the spot assessment of the situation in the North Eastern Hill University arising out of the controversial appointment of the Acting Vice Chancellor.

Sources said that Mr

Gupta has been specially deputed to examine the validity of the Executive Council's decision to appoint Pro Vice Chancellor Prof R R Mehrotra as the Acting VC. He is likely to meet a wide spectrum of people of the university and discuss the pros and cons of the matter.

Mr Gupta is expected to submit his report to the Ministry for further action.

Prof. Mehrotra whom this reporter met on Thursday afternoon at the Horse Shoe building is optimistic that the Central verdict would go in the favour. He expressed hope that the "present misunderstanding" would blow over.

It may be recalled that the NEHU Teacher's Association opposed the appointment of Prof Mehrotra saying that the Pro Vice Chancellor's tenure of office is co-terminus with that of the VC. Later, giving the situation a new turn the Deans in Council decided to run parallel administration.

City host to National Conf. on Nehru & tribals

The Gujrat Chief Minister Mr Amar Singh Chowdhury will deliver the keynote address at a conference on "Nehru and Tribal Wealth" to be held in Shillong on 16-17 March. Meghalaya Chief Minister Mr Purno A Sangma will preside over the inaugural function. The conference, which is being organized under the auspices of the Union Welfare Ministry in collaboration with the North Eastern Council and the Meghalaya Government will be inaugurated by the Union Minister of State for Welfare Mrs Rajendra Kumari Bajpai. Various aspects of Nehru's contribution towards the welfare of the tribal people with special reference to the North Eastern region will be discussed at the conference which will be attended by 250 delegates including a number of personalities of national and international repute.

Religious Trends

No longer unifying force

By Oishee Mukherjee

This type of dangerous trend has been manifest during the last two decades, specially in the Third World countries.

Marx had stated long back that religion is the opium of the masses. At that time, the observation was disputed by conservatives who found disrespect of the communist philosopher towards religion. According to them, religion was a belief that could guide them to a communitarian approach to living and establishment of a peaceful society.

Recent trends, however, in many parts of the world show that religion instead of ensuring bondage and societal peace has become the cause of hatred and jealousy. The inter-religious animosity and disrespect for each other's beliefs and values have resulted in violence and riots in different parts of the world. Very little spiritualism and respect for the supreme – which all religions aim at – is manifest nowadays.

On the other hand, fundamentalist religious leaders propagate ideas that are not in consonance to peaceful coexistence and instigate their supporters to ensure that the beliefs of other religions are not allowed to be followed. Narrow ideas of a selfish nature are manifest in the activities of these leaders, who cannot be considered to be preaching true religion and spiritualist attitude to life and society.

There is also a tendency of political leaders having vested interests in promoting religious heads so that the votes of the community are ensured in elections. This happens specially with the minority religious communities or backward castes who are enticed through their religious leaders to vote for a particular political party for reported gains to that particular religion.

Religion that is traditionally based on spiritualism and intrinsic moral and ethical values of life and living has shaped its complexion in the modern world. The leaders of some religious sects and/or organizations exert tremendous power and have close connections with political leaders to achieve narrow selfish ambitions. However, this is not to undermine all religious sects and organizations most of whom have been in the forefront of imparting values and working for the poor and the impoverished. This group does not have power and do not exert much influence in society.

In the case of South Asia and particularly India, though the government calls it secular, it has a pro-Hindu bias. In Pakistan, the government is nakedly pro-Muslim with the avowed objective of promoting religion not only in the country but also in the surrounding nations, if necessary, through force. Their religion calls for forceful conversion in other countries and religious terrorists are quite active in India. Apart from Pakistan, even in Bangladesh religion has taken a nasty trend with its leader's hand-in-glove with some of their political counterparts.

A section of philosophers and thinkers are of the opinion that all persons born in India may be called 'Hindus' by birth though they may have other religious beliefs. In the Persian language, people who were living near the bank of Indus were 'Sindhu' or later 'Hindus'. Hinduism has been said to be a way of life and not a dogmatic religious belief. As in Islam,

Christianity, Sikhism, there is no particular religious leader in Hinduism. The latter is an open book and anybody and everybody can become its adherent.

It is indeed tragic that Hinduism, which has taught the world universal tolerance, equality had and acceptance has not been able to adhere to keep these principles aloft. Vivekananda accepted all religions which he found to be true and geared to the welfare of the human race. As he stated: "I do not believe in a god or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth".

Social scientists including the renowned scholar, Prof. Samuel P. Huntington, had long observed that the ultimate war in the world would be fought between Christians and Muslims. The prophecy has become quite relevant today as the western powers led by the US are up in arms against the Islamic countries in the Middle East and Pakistan is under fire for abetting terrorism. One needs to wonder whether Islam or the way Islam is propagated is not conducive to a healthy and peaceful society.

Religion doesn't give the dignity to women that they deserve, and their status and position is always below of the men. Moreover, most of religious directives are very rigid. There is significant difference between Hinduism and Islam, one being quite open and the latter extremely strict to its followers.

The present trends the world over clearly manifest that religion has not become a unifying force. Most of the young generation in India and other neighbouring countries have not felt the impact of spiritual values on their life, mainly due to the negative role of religious teachers. The irony is that

some have become religious fanatics. It is difficult to perceive where the present form of religion will take us in the coming years.

The need of the human race to ensure peace and harmony in society through bondage and a communitarian approach to life and living is missing in today's world. Religion has not been able to play its due role though materialistic tendencies and the lust for power and money are equally to blame for such a critical situation. The word 'society' which was synonymous with a cooperative approach and the bondage of love and fellow feeling is no longer manifest today.

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the few political leaders who invoked religion in politics to make the latter transparent, clean and wedded to the truth. He like Vivekananda accepted all religions and tried to unify the masses based on spiritual principles. As he Gandhi himself stated: "My religion is for God; therefore it is for humanity". And, "anything done in his name, any work dedicated to him is sacred if done with the spirit of welfare of mankind, the uplift of the creature as a whole".

At such a juncture of human history, it is imperative to uphold the spiritual values and ethics in various religions and thereby attempt to unify the human race. For this, a transformation in our social behaviour is necessary, that is, change from materialistic attitude to life and living and love and fellow feeling for the community. A humane approach to life is the need of the day. Only then can the religious values impact our lives and bring harmony and peace in society. ---INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Dance of democracy

Editor,

I fully endorse the observations of Bah Toki Blah regarding the farce that is being played out in the US Presidential Elections. The election of an American President, arguably the most powerful man in the world, is of concern to all right thinking people of the world. The consequences of having the wrong guy actually impacts the world's overall well-being. Witness the last Republican President George W Bush and his trigger happy policies in Iraq and its result that still keeps the Middle East in a state of grievous turmoil. It is agreed that an electoral process where people directly elect their President is true democracy (also the process of nominating the candidates through a series of party primaries as against the nomination by a 'high command' is laudable). But in this present instance, one is left aghast at the question – are these the two best persons the US could find to for selection of a President? More than the Democrats, it is the Republican Party Leadership that appears to have abdicated, by an almost criminal negligence, their responsibility to the people of America by permitting a loose cannon (putting it mildly) within reach of the White House

Arguably, US elections have not always been a fluid graceful waltz or a seamless tango. There have been cases of assassination of a prospective candidate, as in the case of Bob Kennedy, criminal wire-tap and break-in as in Watergate and many such equal or lesser misdemeanours. But in this instance it has all the making of a Tandav or worse still, the meaningless jumping around that passes for dancing in today's times. This is because things had never come to such a pass as this where two mediocrities, one super rich and the other 'highly experienced' slug it out at every juncture in manner what in India we call Tu Tu Main Main fashion. No issues of importance are raised, no positions on burning issues affecting the world in general and their country in particular. What spoken is on personal matters, character assassination and gutter level abuses. And the language aagh ... the less said the better!

Bah Toki Blah lauds the Indian politician's reverence for the democratic process. I would agree with him, except to say that this may not perhaps be for any innate love for democracy on their part, but rather because of a highly empowered Election Commission and a watchful Judiciary.

Yours etc.,
Lt Col (Retd)
Anjan Datta,
Via email

Wrong to prejudge a situation

Editor,

A section of the media has gone overboard in tarnishing the reputation of the Principal and teachers of Shillong Public School on the issue of corporal punishment in which a class-II student of the school was alleged to have been beaten by the Principal and two teachers. Not many of your readers may have realized that the matter has been taken up by the State Commission on Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) and that both the parents as well as the teachers were given a fair hearing. At the hearing itself a counsellor from the SCPCR was present and her findings will hopefully shed some light in view of these wild accusations. Silence does not necessarily mean that the school is guilty as charged although adverse reports on the media and social media have led people to believe that the charges are true. Until the SCPCR delivers the final verdict I feel it prudent not to pass any judgement or make any comments.

Yours etc.,
Aaron Warjri,
Principal,
Shillong Public School

MPSC delays holding of exams and publication of results

Editor,
Through your esteemed daily we want to ask the Meghalaya Public Service Commission (MPSC) the reason for delaying the

results of various exams being conducted which are still pending. Also various examinations advertised since 2013 have not yet been held. We strongly condemn the tardy functioning of the MPSC. It is ironic that the new Chairman of MPSC on assuming office in August 29, 2016 had promised to bring change in the functioning of MPSC but it appeared to be all lies, because he perhaps would not dare to dissent with the diktat of politicians or higher authorities. This is to remind the Chairperson to revisit what he said and ask whether this was an honest commitment, "My duty will be to make MPSC a vibrant and active body, besides ensuring transparency so that people will have more faith in the body". This is all lies and false promises. Do you think the people are so ignorant not to see the reality of what is happening in the MPSC? People are no longer naive, and such false promises would not be tolerated by conscious minds. Why are exams not held for posts advertised since 2013? And why are results of exams held three months ago not been announced? For instance, results of exams conducted for the post of Lower Division Assistant and Assistant Inspector of Excise conducted on 30-July-2016 are not yet announced. So where is that active and vibrant process in the MPSC as promised by the Chairman?

The essence of conscientiousness

By Jennieffer Dkhar

Life is a bundle of beautiful contradictions. After all where there is laughter there are tears, where there is happiness there is sorrow, where there is peace there is war. None, on earth can ever claim to be perpetually happy or forever sad. What makes life beautiful is the fact that human beings have the capacity to strive and evolve amidst the various phases in life. Just as the state of happiness is part and parcel of life likewise trials and tribulations are inevitable. Sadly, what seem to linger in our memories are usually those aspects of life that hit us hard. Thereby, mankind is constantly at war; be it at the individual personal level or within the family or at the societal level or even at a more nationalistic level. There is this constant battle that gnaws at our hearts and minds. As long as we are alive and breathing we work hard towards winning against all odds. It is this effort that makes life worth living.

While some may simply give up and let go, others will not sit back and sulk. Regardless of who we are, what are our familial, cultural and national background, the truth is we are all governed by the same law of nature, which is we are born only to die. What matters is the period between life and death. What is ushered into our lives is important but what is more important is what we make of our lives amidst the bundle of contradictions.

At the end of life there is absolute nothingness! No one has returned from the dead to give us an account of what death is all about and what lies ahead. Yet we live, striving to achieve the best in our lifetimes. Do we ever wonder as to why do we do it? Do we ever ask ourselves what is it that makes us work towards achieving and receiving the best? Or simply put, who are we doing it for? Is it with this hope that we may have a better life after death? Is it with this hope that on Judgement Day, God would be pleased with us and reward us kindly? Is it simply that we wish to lead a happy, prosperous, comfortable and secure life every single day as long as we are alive? Whether we agree or we do not agree, the truth is we work hard to be happy in this very life and as long as we are still breathing. Our reward and punishment comes to us in this life in one form or the other. Therefore the road that we take, the choices that we make and the path that we follow depends entirely on us. The question of right or wrong is highly subjective. Who decides on what is right and what is wrong? The law and legal system is certainly there to help dissect right from wrong, legal and illegal but again the law is there to bind or restrain us physically from committing any crime/illegal activities. The law cannot penetrate into man's thought processes and conscience.

While the law is there to curtail our actions in the society a greater part of our sense of right and wrong lies solely on every individual soul. This is where conscience comes in. Our conscience or the inner voice is the entity that will help us segregate right from the wrong and allow us to choose what is right and discard what is wrong. It is for this very reason that schools have a Moral Science period assigned and dedicated towards teaching, cultivating, nurturing and building the children's consciousness right from the start so that they grow up to become conscientious adults. This is important so that our children grow up to be responsible and honourable human beings in spirit and essence. Alas! Today a great number of us sideline our inner voice and instead pave a way for impiety, immorality, dishonesty. This choice and style of living is none other than a road to decadence and sinfulness. When man is blessed with rationality and conscience then why do we fail to pay heed to our inner voice? Why do we fail to segregate the right from the wrong?

An argument with a friend on the issue of right and wrong led to this contemplation of who is to decipher between what is right and what is wrong? What is right for one may not be right for the other. In this thought lies the reality of man. Can it then be said that man is then left in a dilemma or can we simply say that it is purely subjective? This then leads to a pertinent question. If right and wrong is a dilemma then living would be problematic for then we will never have the sanity to judge and judge well. If we then perceive right and wrong only on the basis of perspectives, now that varies and differs from one to another; then again living and life itself would be chaotic. However there are situations and occasions where there is just one certain and assured right or wrong. As an example, a good and noble heart and humility itself is and can never be wrong. In fact parents, teachers and elders teach their loved ones the need to have goodness, compassion and piety amongst mankind. On the other hand, let us look at corruption. We are all aware of the evils of corruption that prevails in almost all aspects in our lives. Can we be in a dilemma about the evils of corruption? Can there be a right perspective about corruption? I wonder if there could be but I sincerely hope there isn't and there never will be.

What makes one so sure is the inner voice that speaks out through one's consciousness. Our conscience is an asset that must be treasured and must be used to the fullest. Don't throw it away! Let us make absolute use of our conscience to live a meaningful life.

curtail our actions in the society a greater part of our sense of right and wrong lies solely on every individual soul. This is where conscience comes in. Our conscience or the inner voice is the entity that will help us segregate right from the wrong and allow us to choose what is right and discard what is wrong. It is for this very reason that schools have a Moral Science period assigned and dedicated towards teaching, cultivating, nurturing and building the children's consciousness right from the start so that they grow up to become conscientious adults. This is important so that our children grow up to be responsible and honourable human beings in spirit and essence. Alas! Today a great number of us sideline our inner voice and instead pave a way for impiety, immorality, dishonesty. This choice and style of living is none other than a road to decadence and sinfulness. When man is blessed with rationality and conscience then why do we fail to pay heed to our inner voice? Why do we fail to segregate the right from the wrong?

An argument with a friend on the issue of right and wrong led to this contemplation of who is to decipher between what is right and what is wrong? What is right for one may not be right for the other. In this thought lies the reality of man. Can it then be said that man is then left in a dilemma or can we simply say that it is purely subjective? This then leads to a pertinent question. If right and wrong is a dilemma then living would be problematic for then we will never have the sanity to judge and judge well. If we then perceive right and wrong only on the basis of perspectives, now that varies and differs from one to another; then again living and life itself would be chaotic. However there are situations and occasions where there is just one certain and assured right or wrong. As an example, a good and noble heart and humility itself is and can never be wrong. In fact parents, teachers and elders teach their loved ones the need to have goodness, compassion and piety amongst mankind. On the other hand, let us look at corruption. We are all aware of the evils of corruption that prevails in almost all aspects in our lives. Can we be in a dilemma about the evils of corruption? Can there be a right perspective about corruption? I wonder if there could be but I sincerely hope there isn't and there never will be.

What makes one so sure is the inner voice that speaks out through one's consciousness. Our conscience is an asset that must be treasured and must be used to the fullest. Don't throw it away! Let us make absolute use of our conscience to live a meaningful life.

While the law is there to curtail our actions in the society a greater part of our sense of right and wrong lies solely on every individual soul. This is where conscience comes in. Our conscience or the inner voice is the entity that will help us segregate right from the wrong and allow us to choose what is right and discard what is wrong. It is for this very reason that schools have a Moral Science period assigned and dedicated towards teaching, cultivating, nurturing and building the children's consciousness right from the start so that they grow up to become conscientious adults. This is important so that our children grow up to be responsible and honourable human beings in spirit and essence. Alas! Today a great number of us sideline our inner voice and instead pave a way for impiety, immorality, dishonesty. This choice and style of living is none other than a road to decadence and sinfulness. When man is blessed with rationality and conscience then why do we fail to pay heed to our inner voice? Why do we fail to segregate the right from the wrong?

An argument with a friend on the issue of right and wrong led to this contemplation of who is to decipher between what is right and what is wrong? What is right for one may not be right for the other. In this thought lies the reality of man. Can it then be said that man is then left in a dilemma or can we simply say that it is purely subjective? This then leads to a pertinent question. If right and wrong is a dilemma then living would be problematic for then we will never have the sanity to judge and judge well. If we then perceive right and wrong only on the basis of perspectives, now that varies and differs from one to another; then again living and life itself would be chaotic. However there are situations and occasions where there is just one certain and assured right or wrong. As an example, a good and noble heart and humility itself is and can never be wrong. In fact parents, teachers and elders teach their loved ones the need to have goodness, compassion and piety amongst mankind. On the other hand, let us look at corruption. We are all aware of the evils of corruption that prevails in almost all aspects in our lives. Can we be in a dilemma about the evils of corruption? Can there be a right perspective about corruption? I wonder if there could be but I sincerely hope there isn't and there never will be.

What makes one so sure is the inner voice that speaks out through one's consciousness. Our conscience is an asset that must be treasured and must be used to the fullest. Don't throw it away! Let us make absolute use of our conscience to live a meaningful life.

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.

Almeida's case spotlights Karachi Goans

By Mahendra Ved

With Dawn journalist Cyril Almeida in the news for his reporting on the internal dynamics of the Pakistani establishment that offended the powers that be and made them put restrictions on his travel, the spotlight fell unwittingly on the small but once influential community of people who came here from Goa and contributed in various ways to Pakistani society.

Never more than 12,000 to 15,000 in number, this community from India's west coast produced soldiers and sportspersons, writers and musicians, judges, educators and artists.

Old records of Pakistan's Foreign Office reveal that the only Christian community overseas that recorded Pakistan as their country of origin when settled in parts of Africa were Karachi Goans.

Migrating from the then Portuguese colony, the Goans of all religious denominations spread out to other parts of British India and abroad and made lives of those places richer with their unique presence.

They arrived in dhows, anchoring at the threshold of the city's two gates — Kharadar (Salty Door) and Mithadar (Sweet Door), even as British general Charles Napier conquered Sindh and made Karachi (Kurrachee) his home.

Besides building Roman Catholic churches, the Goans became known for two major schools, St Joseph's and St Patrick's, where Karachi's elite sent their wards.

They mostly inhabited this port town where the first recorded migration took place in 1824, as per a very well recorded history available on www.goansofpakistan.org.

"If it was the philanthropy of the Parsis which gave Karachi its glorious landmarks, it was the Goans' panache for excellence and success, cultural way of life and abundance of talent that won a special place for them in the history of the Pakistan," says the web site's editor, Menin Rodrigues, a businessman

With Dawn journalist Cyril Almeida in the news for his reporting on the internal dynamics of the Pakistani establishment that offended the powers that be, the spotlight fell unwittingly on the small but once influential community of people who came here from Goa and contributed in various ways to Pakistani society



COLONIAL HISTORY: St. Patrick's Cathedral in Karachi. Besides building Roman Catholic churches, the Goans became known for two major schools, St Joseph's and St Patrick's, where Karachi's elite sent their wards

and a social worker who began life as a journalist.

That "special place," he laments on the web site, "regrettably, is all but forgotten."

Goan cooks were favorites at British and Parsi homes, and at foreign missions. Many have drifted away from Pakistan, but "they will always have a little Pakistan in their hearts," Rodrigues records.

Pakistan's Goans consider the 1960s their best period when they were part of a vibrant and liberal city that has since become the hotbed of sectarian and

ethnic violence. Its many landmarks, now vandalised or vanished, and almost forgotten, are testimony of the city's eminence and the role the Goans played. Rodrigues says the Goans are now 'marginalised' and overtaken by the advent of many cultures.

Although the musical score of the country's national anthem is officially attributed to Ahmad G. Chagla, a classical/eastern music genius, the community says it has enough evidence to claim that it was Tollerintine Fonseca, born 1880, a

master Karachi music composer of high distinction and of Goan origin, who composed it.

On moving away from the Portuguese colony that India liberated in 1962, the Goans have enriched lives wherever they lived, including on both sides of the India-Pakistan divide. On partition, Karachi's first elected mayor in 1947 was a Goan, Manuel Misquita.

Major General Eustace D'souza of the Indian Army was Karachi born and a student of the city's St. Patrick's High School.

Of the soldiers who

served the Pakistan military with aplomb were Brigadier Mervyn Cardoza, decorated with the Tamgha-e-Khidmat in one of the India-Pakistan conflicts; his brother Colonel Eric Cardoza, Lt. Col David DeSouza, Major Joseph Lobo, Major Kenneth Cardoza, Brigadier Dr Hilary Zuzarte of the Medical Corps (seconded to the Pakistan Air Force as an Air Commodore) and Brigadier F.G. Pinto, Director, Pakistan Signals.

Cdr. Stanislaus DeSouza, Cdr. Arthur Cardoza, Lt. Cdr. Phillip Menezes served the Pakistan Navy; and Air

Commodore Charles Zuzarte, Flt. Lt. Reginald Nazareth and Flt. Lt. Rudy D'Souza (who was in charge of the combined Armed Forces Band) were proud members of the Pakistan Air Force. Both the Zuzarte brothers, (Hilary and Charles) were decorated with the Sitara-e-Basalat (S.Bt.).

Goans distinguished themselves in sports, particularly in hockey. They included Lawrie Fernandes, Pat Mendes, Julius Tellis, Marceline D'Costa and P.P. Fernandes (an Olympian). Nazareth



"AT the request of the overseers of these pages, I have been asked to write about myself today — my past week or so, really.

A request categorically not because there is any restriction on writing about the week's events, but because there may be some interest in a personal perspective.

I found myself unable to decline.

When the story landed that Thursday morning, there was already never any question about any part of it being retracted by the paper or I....

Yes, the heart races a bit faster when you do something out of the ordinary. Yes, there is always some concern for the self — you'd be stupid not to be concerned in a place like this.

But if you can just somehow remember that they will be gone and you'll still be around, courage may see you through.

The current editor has drummed in a reporter's message, one that he himself is an exemplar of: you're only as good as your sources.

In a place like this, that is a two-way street: in return for not exposing your sources, you get a fair reading of the land."

(Cyril Almeida wrote for the Dawn newspaper on October 16, two days after his story made ripples. The full article, 'A Week To Remember', is available on the website of Dawn)

Castellino was a goalkeeper, while another prominent name was of Jack Gonsalves.

The community counts among its most prodigious journalists Anthony Mascarenhas whose expose of what the Pakistan Army did in the then East Pakistan in 1971 helped change the global discourse on the conflict that eventually led to the emergence of Bangladesh.

Mascarenhas subsequently shifted to the UK where he wrote for major papers. The Karachi Goan Association (KGA) club celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2012.

The ancestors of Cyril

Almeida, currently in the eye of the storm, moved to Karachi in the British era when it was part of the Bombay Presidency. After the Partition, 30 years later, the family decided to stay on as part of a thriving Goan community in Karachi.

Almeida has been attending the Goa Arts and Literary Festival (GALF) for the last three years. His family paid their first visit to Goa just last year. Almeida speaks impeccable English and Urdu and while he doesn't know Konkani, the language of the Goans, he is familiar with it.

(The Indian Diaspora)

Just call me Big Onions

Whenever my children express a low opinion of their parents, I remind them that author Dallas Clayton named his son Audio Science, actor Jason Lee called his child Pilot Inspektor, singer Frank Zappa called his son Moon Unit — and that I have the legal right to change their names at any time (probably not true).

Worst of all, the singer Sting named his daughter Fuchsia. No, I don't know what he calls her for short. Yes, I can guess what the other children at school call her for short.

A reader sent me a news report about names. After a mayoral election in Romania had been won for years by a man named Vasile Cepoi, a rival political faction fielded a



All three of Michael Jackson's children are called Michael

That incident reminded me of the boxer George

Foreman, who has five sons, all called George. (His daughter's name is Georgetta.) Important Note: I am NOT implying that Foreman has a ludicrously over-sized ego, because I would never say such a thing about a man who can crush a metal garbage can with one hand, even though it's clearly true.

On a practical basis, it must be hard for George to get the kids to do anything. George: George, I told you to stop that! George: I thought you meant George. George: I'm not doing anything. George: It wasn't me, it was George. George: Did someone call me? And so on. That, in turn, reminded me that the planet

Uranus was originally called George. The guy who discovered it named it Georgium Sidius which is Latin for "George the Star". (I am not making this up.) I wish they'd kept the name, which is easier to grasp than the usual names for things in space, such as Corona Borealis, Epsilon, Tau Seti, Majoris, Twinkle and the like.

But going back to massive egos, did you know that all three of Michael Jackson's children are called Michael, including the girl? It sounds like a made-up story, and there is a wonderful piece of literature with the same plot: Too Many Daves by Dr Seuss. Worse than giving all your children the same name is giving your child the same name twice. In a column, I mentioned a real person named Ho Ho, commenting that she had one of the happiest real names ever. Reader Angela Sias responded: "Not if she is a girl!"

I know there's a famous politician in Afghanistan called Abdullah Abdullah. What if his middle name is also Abdullah?

Years ago, I met a guy in Hong Kong named So So-so. I was tempted to ask him how he was feeling, purely so that I could have the following conversation. Me: "How are you feeling today, So So-so?" So So-so: "So-so."

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

Tarabari is a sleepy little village in the middle part of Assam. The village reflects the spiritual co-existence — Hindus and Muslims live in peace and harmony. The village has a mosque close to the mandir. Tolerance and understanding are cherished values in here. They sing together, dance together and stand together like a solid rock.

However, an untoward incident shattered the age-old communal harmony in the village. One night, Teapuram Vora's sleep was disturbed by a deep sound. Armed with a dao, he came out and went to his betelnut orchard on the backyard of his house. A horrifying scene was waiting for him. The scene sent shivers down his spine. A man lying prostrate at the foot of a betelnut tree! And he was dead.

Vora rushed to the house of Vikram Hazarika, a retired revenue official of the Government of Assam and narrated the incident as neatly as possible. Hazarika could anticipate the complications lying ahead. They decided to wait till morning. The morning was cold, sharp and fresh. Isuf Husain visited the spot along with Hazarika. Husain could recognise the dead body. He was Kalimuddin.

Isuf Husain was a rich cultivator. He owned several acres of cultivable land in and around the village. The villagers respected him for his

The suitable donor

Short story by Sarat C. Neog



honesty and simplicity.

Husain surveyed the spot carefully. The man Kalimuddin might have slipped down from the betelnut tree. Kalimuddin was a thief who was once caught red-handed for committing theft in the farmhouse of Husain. Husain made necessary arrangement for cremation with the help of his family members. Vora heaved a sigh of relief.

The vast grazing reserve close to the village was illegally occupied by some people coming from Bangladesh. Attention of the district authority was drawn several times but to no effect. The deceased man belonged to this group of people. A crowd gathered in the house of Kalimuddin. The wife and the children prepared the body for cremation. Suddenly, Sum-suddin, Kalimuddin's brother, appeared and created a rumpus that his brother was a victim of conspiracy. He demanded that Teapuram Vora be punished for killing his brother.

"Badla (revenge)," shouted someone from the

crowd. But the sober wife of the deceased pacified the crowd. Cremation took place peacefully.

Electricity was yet to reach the village and the villagers took their meal by the light of kerosene lamps. They took meal as early as possible to save kerosene oil. It was at half past eight and the night was dark. The village was quiet and peaceful, except a stray dog barking at a distance. Then suddenly, to the west of the village, a great light flared up.

Isuf Husain was just getting into bed when he saw the flare. He rushed to the spot when he heard hurrying footsteps down the narrow village lane. The unused cowshed of Teapuram Vora was burnt to ashes. Isuf Husain, Vikram Hazarika and some elderly villagers decided to form a peace committee to maintain peace and tranquility in the village. But the Hindu youths under the leadership of Bimal, the estranged son of Hazarika, decided otherwise.

Allauddin's grocery shop was close to the village mosque. There was another shop in the village owned by a dishonest person Gangadhar. His son Rajkumar was once arrested for molesting a girl who visited his shop to buy salt. Allauddin was known for his honesty. The villagers, Hindus or Muslims, preferred his shop.

Bimal and Rajkumar led the procession shouting vulgar slogans with the sole aim to destroy Allauddin's grocery shop.

The shop was set on fire. It was Bimal who took the lead. Allauddin was standing by the side of the mosque with tears rolling down his cheeks. He was not at all worried about the pecuniary loss. The loss could be compensated. But he was shocked, terribly shocked, to witness the death of humanity.

Bimal was seriously injured when a burning wooden plank hit his head. He was immediately shifted to the town hospital for treatment. At the hospital, his condition was found critical.

Immediate transfusion of blood was the need of the hour. But who would donate blood?

After the most unfortunate incident, two Muslim youths volunteered to donate blood if required. But Rajkumar protested, "We don't want Muslim blood. There would be hundreds of Hindus to donate blood. Get lost!"

Vikram Hazarika looked around in despair. There was no sign of Rajkumar. He wept like a child. Tears rolled down his cheeks. For the first time in his life he could realise that he was all alone in this world.

"Uncle, problem is solved. A suitable donor has agreed to donate blood. I guess you would like to see him. He is a boy from your village," said the hospital nurse. Vikram Hazarika was delighted to hear this unexpected good news. The boy must be Rajkumar or any other from his group. These Hindu boys are so sincere! He thought.

Hazarika rushed to the room at the far end of the hospital to see the boy donating blood. He saw him lying on the bed. He was not Rajkumar, nor any other Hindu boy.

Nazim. Yes, he was Nazim, son of Allauddin — the victim of conspiracy whose grocery shop was burnt to ashes by his irresponsible son Bimal. Drop by drop, the red liquid trickled down through a thin tube attached to Nazim's hand and collected in a bottle partly covered with a piece of white cloth and tied to the bed. It was Nazim's blood. The blood of a Muslim. Muslim blood is also RED.

THE FUNNY SIDE
Nury Vittachi

Sexual predators in animal world

By Maneka Sanjay Gandhi

In male humans, rape is hardly ever about sexual attraction. It is usually about finding someone physically weaker and more vulnerable and venting one's anger against the world on them.

That is why husbands mistreat their wives, teenage boys rape children, a Nirbhaya and a Jisha lose their lives horrifically, a girl is raped in Brazil by 33 men after being drugged. It might explain the tragic fact that no country — however egalitarian, aware and wealthy — has been able to eliminate rape and violence against women. Sweden has more rapes than India. How can one explain that? The elimination of rape may only lie ultimately in the elimination of violence itself.

Male animals of some species do it too. But in this case it is not for the sake of violence. The purpose of life, in every species, is to beget life. Animals don't have a shred of malice. So violence on the female is because either she is in heat and he is so overcome by the pheromone smell that he cannot help himself or he is in a race with other males of his species to see that he continues his genetic legacy.

Female animals are discriminating. The male has to be good looking (the redder the Mandrill's face, the likelier he is to get a mate), he has to be a good provider — birds have to woo their mates by building and decorating nests, getting food for the females, even dancing to show how virile they are — and he has to be a good



Sea otters need a lot of food every day, approximately 25 per cent of their body weight. When food is short, the male will sometimes snatch a random baby and hold it to ransom till the mother pays in food to the male. They also rape baby seals

Male sea lions fight for a beach filled with females, but this leaves many males on the sidelines. With no females, they become frustrated because they had to travel far to that beach for a chance at sex. They will often take it out on youngsters that stray from the group, beating them up and then raping them



defender and protector. Some females spread their bets by allowing themselves to be mated several times so that the offspring have different fathers.

But in some species the female is not allowed the luxury of choice. Either by sheer force or by cunning, she is physically violated. One foul villain is the water strider. These insects walk on water. The female has a genital shield to protect herself from a marauding male. To get around that, the male forcibly mounts the female. If she protests and refuses to cooperate by removing her shield, he threatens her by striking the water with his legs. She knows this will immediately attract fish and other predators. She is underneath so she will get eaten while he will escape. Once she agrees to let him in, he will stop creating vibrations in the water. So for her it is a choice of two evils and she gives in to the first to save her life.

Sea otters need a lot of food every day, approximately 25 per cent of their body weight. When food is short, the male will

sometimes snatch a random baby and hold it to ransom till the mother pays in food to the male. They also rape baby seals. Male otters will find a juvenile harbour seal and mount it, as if he were mating with a female otter, which means holding the female's head under water for a long time. This kills some female otters and certainly all the seal pups. Some abandon the pup when it dies. Others return to the corpse later and continue to violate it.

Male sea lions fight for a beach filled with females, but then this leaves many males on the sidelines and with no females, they become extremely frustrated because they had to travel far to that beach for a chance at sex. They will often take it out on youngsters that stray from the group, beating them up and then raping them, usually killing them.

Bottlenose dolphin males form gangs, corner a female and then take turns mating with her. If there are no females around, they take a young male instead. Competing groups of dolphins may raid rival territories for their females. Studies in the University of Massachusetts,

Dartmouth, on bottlenose dolphins in Western Australia showed that male dolphins formed alliances to guard the females of their group against rape — perhaps not so much chivalry and gallantry as restricting sexual access to their own "possessions". Professor Barbara Smuts of the University of Michigan and a long-time observer of social relations in primates such as hamadryas baboons, chimpanzees and orangutans describes, in *Discover* magazine, the masculine coercion of the female.

"...Sometimes, as I saw in Gombe (a wildlife reserve in Tanzania), a male chimpanzee even attacks an oestrous female days before he tries to mate with her. Goodall (Jane, a pioneering ethologist) thinks that a male uses such aggression to train a female to fear him so that she will be more likely to surrender to his subsequent sexual advances.

Similarly, male hamadryas baboons, who form small harems by kidnapping child brides, maintain a tight rein over their females through

threats and intimidation. If, when another male is nearby, a hamadryas female strays even a few feet from her mate, he shoots her a threatening stare and raises his brows. She usually responds by rushing to his side; if not, he bites the back of her neck. The neck bite is ritualized — the male does not actually sink his razor-sharp canines into her flesh — but the threat of injury is clear. By repeating this behaviour hundreds of times, the male lays claim to a particular female months even years before mating with them. When a female comes into oestrus, she solicits sex only from her harem master, and other males rarely challenge his sexual rights to her."

Would this be called rape — child marriage is definitely non-consensual sex. In some groups, when females form defensive alliances of their own, there is a marked drop in male violence.

Male scorpion flies prefer to provide their potential mates with food gifts of dead insects. But if there are absolutely none, the male rapes the female. Male scorpion flies have a so-called notal organ, a clamp that serves to keep unwilling females in a mating position.

The males which resort to rape are usually smaller and less symmetric than males who woo the females with gifts. However, experiments reveal that all males will rape in an environment in which nuptial gifts are scarce, which means that scorpion flies possess the brain to choose both gifts and rape as mating tactics.

Rape yields very little reproductive success and the females fight so vigorously, twisting their bodies in order to avoid contact so it's basically making the best of a bad job.

(To be concluded)

NSD alumni tell Manto's Afsana



REMEMBERING MANTO: Actors Vinnay Vishwa and Chitra Jetly stage *Main Afsana Kyukar Likhita Hoon* in Shillong

Saadat Hasan Manto, on how he writes his stories, once told the audience, "Honorable ladies and gentlemen! I've been asked to explain how I write stories. This 'how' is problematic. What can I tell you about how I write stories? It is a very convoluted matter. With this 'how' before me I could say I sit on the sofa in my room, take out paper and pen, utter bismillah, and start writing, while all three of my daughters keep making a lot of noise around me... Stories don't reside in my mind; they reside in my pocket, totally unbeknownst to me."

These were also the opening lines of Vinnay Vishwa's *Main Afsana Kyukar Likhita Hoon*, a play based on Manto's two stories — *Badshahat ka Khatma* and *Barish*. Vishwa, whose four-member Vinchi Group Charitable Trust was in Shillong recently to stage

the play, says these lines, delivered as soliloquy, take the audience into Manto's world where there is no presence or camouflage.

Main Afsana starts with the narration and goes on to depict the story of a young unemployed man and a girl whom he never meets, and a love story that begins and ends in the rainy season.

In the first play, the young man falls in love with a girl after talking to her on the phone. They never meet but the man develops a deep feeling for her and starts building his castle in the air and starts dwelling in his own empire. The play ends with heartbreak and death.

In the second play, a young man falls in love with a random girl on a rainy day, but later finds out that she is a prostitute.

The minimalist stage set-up changes with the sequences of the two plays.

The play, staged on the campus of the English and

Foreign Languages University in Shillong recently, had only two actors — Vishwa and Chitra Jetly.

Explaining the form, the National School of Drama graduate says the two-actor play is common and is taught in the drama school.

"The two actors play the narrators and more importance is given to acting," he says. But he adds that the other reason for a small group is low budget and lack of infrastructure.

The group was formed in 2012 with an aim to promote art, culture and theatre and "to quench our creative thirst both as actors and directors".

The Bangalore-based group shuttles between Mumbai and Bangalore staging plays, mostly by Manto.

The theatre group is on a tour of the northeastern states as part of a festival that started on October 18. Vinchi Group Charitable Trust will also perform in Assam's Tangla village.

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, October 23, 2016

Efforts will yield favourable results as Moon trine Venus on your solar return chart. Career prospects will brighten up. If planning to venture into an independent career then the time is favorable. New contacts made during these sojourns will prove extremely useful in time to come. You could also further your skills and this will help you gain professionally. Make efforts to maintain a good rapport with your colleagues and associates. You may decide to marry and for some an affair will get a new place their lives. Family life will be fantastic and you can look forward to a lot happening on the domestic front. Travel will bear fruit.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

There would be a lot of traveling, communications and conversation to keep you busy. Arguments with a lover may be blown out of proportion far too easily. Both you and your lover should avoid harping on the words used and try to get to the meaning behind the words instead. Professionally it might seem like stagnation, but it's actually a period of review and rest. Speculation and gambling are not advised right now. It would be wise to be especially clear when it comes to communicating with romantic partners, and children; or take this time to re-examine issues rather than communicating prematurely.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

Your work status will change for the better. There could be a promotion or new job opportunity that enables you to come into the limelight in a positive way. Authority figures, elders, parents in your life tend to support and respect you. They are more willing to help you move ahead on your road to success. 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 dealing with the assignment at hand. You need to keep your eyes open for opportunities.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You would admire and adapt new styles, unconventional ideas, and unfamiliar situations. It is a good time to expand your circle of influence. You take an interest in organizing your working environment — and this is an excellent time to do so. You are especially objective and intelligent when it comes to getting a handle on your daily affairs and all of the little things that contribute to a feeling of efficiency and competency. Laying down a strategy would keep you on track. Some travel is imminent and will be beneficial.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

This can be a time of achievement, career advancement, and success in business. Work-related travel or the reaching of a wider audience is possible during this period. This is a time when you renew your energy and consider your priorities. Re-thinking the suitability of your romantic relationships is possible now, but you should avoid jumping to any premature decisions. There may be the need to revisit old issues with your children or lover else there could be some communication problems with them.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

Communication becomes especially important to you. Smoothing out your close personal relationships is what makes you happy. You are adaptable when it comes to your affections — very willing to compromise, negotiate, and make peace. A new set-up in existing jobs or a new job altogether may be formed in the coming months. There will be a sense of renewal and reinvigoration with regard to your daily activities, health routines, and attention to practical matters. This is a phase when you have an increased awareness of your health.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

Your professional skills, wisdom and craft is appreciated and fresh opportunities for expansion are made available to you. Personal relationships gain an exciting quality. Tackle sensi-



tive subjects and difficult people and get your point across. You can trust your intuition about people and situations when called upon to mediate in conflicts and collaborations. Surprises surrounding the compassionate care and attention you give others, as well as the work and service you render, may be in store. This could manifest into finding a balance between practical concerns and spiritual or non-material matters.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

It's easier for you to approach sensitive, intimate, and personal matters with rationality and logic in this period. As such, this is a great time to open up conversations about topics that normally might cause waves, such as those revolving around the sharing of power, intimacy, and finances. You know how to relate to others and you do so with warmth and affection. You will seek out the company of close friends who stimulate your thoughts and ideas. You may attract a younger person into your life.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

Essentially, you are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy for higher studies, travel, or simply new subjects during this period. Negative potentials include being excessively opinionated or getting easily fired up over differences in points of view, or legal fights. You may be drawn into some form of service that will bring deep personal satisfaction. You seek perfection and distinction in your work and this quality brings you a more responsible position.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

People see you as a responsible, sincere, loving and lovable person, and as someone who is aware of their needs and feelings, which can benefit you at this time. Others are willing to help and cooperate with you in working towards your goals and ambitions. It would be better to go for long term investments and speculations for financial gains. It would be wisest to face turbulent matters and issues in professional ventures rather than seeping them under the carpet. Don't take the one you love for granted but show your love and appreciation.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

A new work opportunity can change the way you work and relate with people professionally. You are bold and adventurous and you cannot tolerate delays that could hold up your work. You succeed by adopting a new approach and exhibiting a willingness to take risks. You would achieve a lot in business and professional aspects by combining creativity and practicality. Your maturity and objectivity places you in the role of the dependable and someone your family and friends can turn to for advice and guidance. You will be considerably more productive, healthy, and focused.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

Financial transactions and professional projects go ahead smoothly with goodwill and they would be profitable. This is a good time to belong with a friend or a group who shares your own ideas and thoughts. You would attach yourself to more spiritual friends. Communications from overseas are hopeful and exciting as business opportunities come your way. This is an excellent period for starting new regimens to better your health and well being, such as a structured exercise program and more structured and productive use of your time.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

This is an excellent time in which you do some financial planning and strategizing. A financial boost is possible, or you may gain financially through your business partner. Research uncovers new material that allows you to develop a better overall picture of the period's events. This is a phase when you have an increased awareness of the need for someone significant to rely on. You would find a balance between autonomy and dependence in personal relationships. You can expect superiors to support you and stand up for you in tough situations at work.

Know the environment & more

By Ranjan K Baruah

Ecology is not synonymous with environment, environmentalism, natural history or environmental science. It is closely related to evolutionary biology, genetics and ethology. An important focus for ecologists is to improve the understanding of how biodiversity affects ecological function. Ecologists seek to explain life processes, interactions and adaptations; the movement of materials and energy through living communities; the abundance and distribution of organisms and biodiversity in the context of the environment.

It is the scientific analysis and study of interactions among organisms and their environment. It is an interdisciplinary field that includes biology, geography and earth science, among others.

Ecology includes the study of interactions organisms have with each other, other organisms and with abiotic components of their environment.

Topics of interest to ecologists include the diversity, distribution, amount (biomass) and number (population) of particular organisms, as well as cooperation and competition between organisms, both within and among ecosystems.

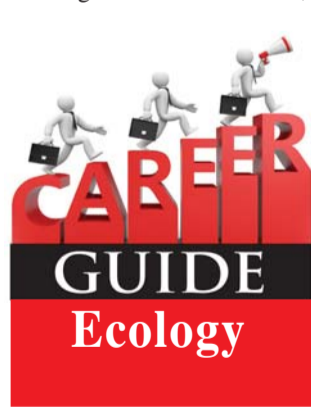
Ecosystems are composed of dynamically interacting parts, including organisms, the communities they make up and the non-living components of their environment.

Ecosystem processes, such as primary production, nutrient cycling and various niche construction activities, regulate the flux of energy and matter

through an environment. These processes are sustained by organisms with specific life history traits and the variety of organisms is called biodiversity.

Biodiversity, which refers to the varieties of species, genes and ecosystems, enhances certain ecosystem services. Students who take this subject are called ecologists. Ecologists have a lot of task to do.

Some of them are to conduct research outdoors and in the laboratory; teach students and the general public — at universities or colleges as well as at high schools, museums; apply ecological knowledge to solve environmental problems by investigating ecological issues,



interacting with affected communities, writing environmental impact statements and designing sustainable policies; help manage natural resources; communicate with co-workers, students and the public by writing articles and research papers, giving lectures and presentations, participating in discussions and conducting outreach in their local communities. Simply put, their role is from research to outreach campaign or programmes.

It depends on what the students would like to choose out of different roles



and responsibilities.

One needs to have personnel qualities to be successful as ecologists. They must have the skills to be successful and some of the skills include observational skills, adaptability to a range of different working conditions, creativity and problem solving skill, expert in data collection, proper analysis, writing and speaking skills like effective communication skills; expert in digital devices and knowledge of computers and internet, among others.

We are aware that a number of ecological disasters escalating every year which brings opportunities for ecologists. Ecologists can work as researcher/ecology scientist, natural resources manager, wildlife manager, environmental consultant, restoration ecologist etc. They may get job in government sector as well in private sectors and more importantly in various nongovernmental organisations.

Updates:

SSG Admission: The entrance exam for admission in Sainik School Goalpara (SSG) will be held on January 15. Students may apply for admission in Class VI and Class IX. The medium of entrance for Class IX will be English while entrance for Class VI will be in English, Hindi or Assamese. Aspirants must

pass the written test and clear medical test and interview. Selected students are eligible to get scholarships from the government irrespective of parental income. There are some reservation for students belonging to Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste and seats are more reserved for the students of Assam, Meghalaya and Sikkim. Prospectus can be collected before November 18 and the last date for submitting forms is November 30.

Indian Navy: Indian Navy invites unmarried men and women to join the Navy as permanent commission officer in education branch and short service commission officers in logistics cadre for course commencing from June 2017. Last date for submission of applications is October 24.

IA: Indian Institute of Astrophysics conducts the following two graduate programmes leading to PhD degrees: PhD, jointly with Pondicherry Central University, and Integrated M.Tech. PhD, jointly with University of Calcutta. Last date to apply online is October 28.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor/skill trainer and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career/employment related queries)

"My way of joking is to tell the truth. It is the funniest joke in the world."

--- George Bernard Shaw

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 73

SHILLONG, MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2016

Dynastic politics alive and kicking

MITHUVEL Karunanidhi who is 92 and 76 year old Mulayam Singh Yadav represent two large states in southern and northern India. The DMK chief has said that he has no intention of retiring from active politics and allowing his son, M K Stalin to take over. Mulayam Singh Yadav has however handed over the chief ministership of Uttar Pradesh to his son, Akhilesh Yadav. He can run the Samajwadi party and the government with unfettered freedom. There are however dissensions in both the DMK and the SP. First families hold power bases in both states. Ideology has taken a back seat. Power play headed by the two patriarchs dominate and family rule has been firmly established. There is no systemic approach in the two parties. Ideas have got buried and those out of the two dynasties are not allowed to raise their heads in the clashes. Dynastic leadership is challenged only by members of the dynasty. Politics has in both states become a matter of family intrigue as in Mughal times.

As a result, both the DMK and the SP have undergone a steady decline. Links have been severed by the DMK with the Dravidian movement and by the SP with the Congress Socialist Party. The original commitment to social justice and socialism as well as the projection of people's politics have ducked their heads. Differences with the Congress, the Left and the Hindutva parties have shrunk. Advocacy of job and educational quotas, stress on political representation for backward classes and castes to widen democracy has retreated. The job has been forgotten before it is done.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

Santosh trophy Assam, Services, Nagaland in quarter-final

Hosts Assam, Services and Nagaland today entered the quarter finals of the 45th national football championship for Santosh Trophy played in three different centres in Assam. In a cluster five match Assam defeated Orissa 3-1 in a well contested and exciting match at Jorhat.

Assam won all the three cluster matches they had played and secured six points while Orissa managed four points. In the cluster three match, Services defeated Tamil Nadu by a solitary second half goal. The all important goal was scored by left out Chankradhar, getting a fine pass from the right back K S Munda. In the cluster two match at Silchar, Nagaland held Andhra Pradesh to 1-1 draw and secured five points to be top in the group.

Karbi Youth Festival

The 15th Karbi Youth Festival was celebrated recently at Khoroni in West Karbi Anglong. As many as 46 clubs from all over Assam took part at the festival which was presided over by the President of the Karbi Cultural Society, Mr B Rongpi. The festival was also attended by the Assam Minister of State for Agriculture, Mr Hiloram Terang the Chief Executive Members of the Karbi Anglong District Council. Dr J Rongpi and other eminent people of the state.

Karbi Anglong Founder Remembered

The 41st death anniversary of the founder of Karbi Anglong District Semson Singh Ingti, was observed last week with due solemnity at a function organized by the Karbi Cultural Society. An all religion prayer meeting a procession and also a seminar which dwelt on the life and works of Semson Ingti

were organized on occasion. Many eminent people including the CEM of Karbi Anglong District Council Dr J. Rongpi Patriciated.

Inclusion of Sikkim in Sixth Schedule

President of the Sikkim Pradesh Congress (I) Mr. Soloman Saring has asked the North Eastern Coordination Congress Committee (I) to recommend that the "tribal areas of Sikkim" he brought under the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India. He has alleged that the "Small ethnic people of Bhutia-Lepcha origin" being exploited by "outsiders" who have migrated to Sikkim and are now the majority community.

City host to National Conf. on Nehru & tribals

The Gujrat Chief Minister Mr Amar Singh Chowdhury will deliver the keynote address at a conference on "Nehru and Tribal Wealth" to be held in Shillong on 16 17 March Meghalaya Chief Minister Mr Purno A Sangma will preside over the inaugural function.

The conference, which is being organized under the auspices of the Union Welfare Ministry in collaboration with the North Eastern Council and the Meghalaya Government will be inaugurated by the Union Minister of State for Welfare Mrs Rajendra Kumari Bajpai. Various aspects of Nehru's contribution towards the welfare of the tribal people with special reference to the North Eastern region will be discussed at the conference which will be attended by 250 delegates including a number of personalities of national and international repute.

Internal wrangling in the Congress: More than what meets the eye

By H H Mohrmen

India's own Grand Old Party (GOP) the Congress in the state of Meghalaya is a house in turmoil. The cracks in the party have come to the fore when the lone MP of the party came out openly in protest against the suspension of the Chief Executive Member of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) from the membership of the party. Although it is anticipated that this juncture would arrive and people were waiting only for the time when the axe would fall, but the outcome of the suspension was rather unexpected.

The decision of the five Congress MDCs in the KHADC to rally behind their fallen hero has caught the leadership in the GOP by surprise. But the shock which was like a bolt from the blue for the party was the stand taken by the party's MP from Shillong parliamentary constituency to openly question the decision of the MPCC to ban the legislator cum councilor from the membership of the party. The suspension of P N Syiem was not a surprise and everybody knows the duo share a close relationship and Pala sympathises with Syiem, but his decision to air his views in the press is something that could be a spot of bother for the Congress in the state.

The question is how could an MP of a party which claims to be a disciplined party (where all its members follow the party line especially when the decision has the backing of the All India Congress Committee) challenge the decision of the High Command? This is the something that the Congress needs to worry about because apart from those who now had come openly against the decision of the MPCC which includes the MP, the KHADC CEM and his five Congress colleagues, it is an open secret that there are many more Congress legislators who are against Dr Sangma's style of leadership.

Even if the twice returned MP has only been a Congressman for less than two decades, yet any ordinary person knows that there is much more than what meets the eye in this entire

imbroglio. Although Vincent Pala had only joined the party before contesting the last Lok Sabha elections, he has been close to the Party even while he was in the government service. Pala was initially only a liaison between the Congress party and the coal mine owners in the Jaintia hills and the Congress should give him due credit for bringing the coal mine owners close to the Congress. Few years later, we even had a coal baron and an industrialist from the now East Jaintia hills district as the treasurer of the party state unit.

It was D D Lapang who was responsible for the rise of Vincent H. Pala from a mere engineer in the PWD with a clout over the coal mine owners in Jaintia hills to a Member of Parliament (MP). The event which had changed the fate of a government engineer to a politician was the Umroi by-election. After the unfortunate demise of late E.K. Mawlong who was the MLA from the Umroi Constituency, it was Pala with the help of the mining lobby from Jaintia hills which helped clinch the crucial seat for the Congress then. The victory help the Congress to wrest power from the then regional party led- MPA Government. It cannot be denied that Pala was solely responsible for winning the coveted seat for the Congress.

The Umroi by-election had also created another opportunity for another business tycoon from Jaintia Hills District. Do we still remember the person was caught carrying some money during that same election, and who is representing the constituency in the Meghalaya Assembly now? The Umroi bye-election has really become a turning point for these two businessmen turned politicians. No doubt Congress is a grateful party and Pala was rewarded with the opportunity to contest the Lok Sabha election from the party. It also cannot be denied that Vincent Pala was then Lapang's blue eyed boy, but he also has his own ambitions and we wouldn't be surprised because as the saying goes - politics is all about power.

Then the relation was one of bonhomie till the elections to the Meghalaya

State Legislative Assembly in 2013 in which there were allegations that the MP in some cases supported candidates who were fielded against the official party candidates. The allegation by the Congress candidate from the Sutnga constituency against the MP was substantiated when only 13 voters from Vincent Pala's own village voted for the official Congress candidate in the last election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly. And like rubbing salt to the wounds, the independent candidate won.

Then fast forward to the last Lok Sabha election where there was counter allegation that the Chief Minister on the pretext of being busy campaigning for the party candidates from the Tura parliamentary constituency, did not once campaign for the party candidate from the Shillong parliamentary constituency. Though Pala won the election but the cracks in the relationship had started to appear which then led to the present hullabaloo which could have a major impact on the party.

It was the PN Syiem episode which refuses to die down that has hurt the party most and it appears that this imbroglio could also divide the party. The Village Administration bill and the act prohibiting a person from holding two public offices were the bone of contention between the Chief Minister and the CEM KHADC. Syiem has continuously claimed the mess was of government's own making, but everybody knows that, that is far from true. The VAB issue was of the Autonomous District Council's own making when even after many decades of existence, the councils have not been able to come up with the an Act to define the role and function of the village durbar till the High Court stepped in. The ruling has compelled the ADCs to come up with their own VAB and one got through while the other is still hanging fire in some central ministry. So can we blame the government for this? Or maybe the KHADC bill is full of loopholes and lacunae which contravenes the existing rules and laws that act as stumbling block for the bill to be enacted.

PN Syiem and his ilk

argue that the Act which prohibits a person from holding two public offices is welcome except for the timing. They even suggested the timing when the bill was enacted was like the referee changing the rule while the game is in progress. But the government's argument is that change has to happen and the timing is irrelevant especially when majority of those affected by the Bill have gracefully resigned except one. Now that Syiem is suspended from party membership in the congress party it remains to be seen if the axe will fall on his membership to the Meghalaya Assembly also.

This column has earlier questioned if the Congress in Meghalaya will go the Assam way in which a section of the party will sever its ties from the Congress and join the BJP. The column had also asked if that is going to be a reality then who is going to be the Himanta Biswas Sarma of the Meghalaya Congress or who is going to engineer that split.

If one is to put oneself in Vincent Pala's shoes and try to analyse and explore one's future course of action, one would see a Congress which goes downhill in the entire country. One would then ask oneself if it is worth hitching one's wagon to a falling star. What is the point of being a Congress MP which will remain in the opposition even post 2019 election? Then if one decides to come to state politics and join the fray in 2018, what is the chance of being a leader of the party in the next state assembly if one remains a Congressman? Or the most important question is, how will the Congress fare in the 2018 elections in the state?

Pala might be wondering what the future holds for him and for the Congress Party in Meghalaya? And if he decides to come to state politics what is the prospect of the party winning the 2018 election? A shrewd politician like Pala would weigh all those pros and cons and then decide his future course of action. So isn't it true that the latest development in the party's internal squabbling is more than what meets the eye. Is the current bickering going to split the party... only time will tell.

The BRICS Wall of China China shielding Pakistan from external pressure to act against terrorist groups targeting India

By Kanwal Sibal

India's performance at the Goa BRICS summit, which it chaired, has to be evaluated in the light of the realities of the grouping. BRICS, which began as a geo-political project, has failed to become more coherent internally. To achieve its objectives, especially the promotion of multipolarity, BRICS should have actively cultivated more internal solidarity at a time when the US had not recovered from its financial woes and domestic sentiment against further military entanglements abroad was growing, the Eurozone was in trouble and the EU itself was in some disarray after Brexit and the refugee crisis. On the contrary, divergences within BRICS have grown in critical areas, loosening further the mortar binding it together.

China has begun to openly oppose India in several sensitive areas, such as India's NSG membership and the issue of terrorism. China's position that India's non-NPT status makes it ineligible for NSG membership is intended to expose the limits of US

increase in terrorist activities in Afghanistan", but pointedly omits any reference to terrorism directed specifically at a BRICS member. Worse, it condemns "the recent several attacks, against some BRICS countries, including that in India", without labeling them as "terrorist" attacks. India's failure as host to get a better formulation points to China's sturdy opposition to recognising India as a victim of terrorism to prevent any finger-pointing at Pakistan.

The geopolitical differences within BRICS are illustrated by the absence in the Goa Declaration of any reference to OBOR-President Xi's flagship project that Russia supports-or the South China Sea issues on which, again, Russia is lending support to China's opposition to the Hague ruling. For India, clearly, both OBOR and South China Sea tensions are aspects of China's political, military and economic muscle-flexing that raise

China is shielding Pakistan from external pressure to act against terrorist groups targeting India. It is treating the terrorism issue between India and Pakistan as a bilateral one and not an international problem. Despite pressure by us, China did not feel diplomatically obliged to soften its obstructive stand on the issue in the UN Security Council. It could have taken cover under UN resolutions and the growing international consensus to combat terrorism collectively by agreeing to a formulation that could have given some satisfaction to India, but it chose not to do so.

accommodation of India on nuclear issues, besides keeping a strategic rein on India. China is also underlining that building Pakistan against India and denying India any diplomatic advantage over Pakistan in any forum is in China's national interest. Despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi raising the issue of our NSG membership with President Xi Jinping more than once, the Goa summit saw no change in China's position.

China is shielding Pakistan from external pressure to act against terrorist groups targeting India. It is treating the terrorism issue between India and Pakistan as a bilateral one and not an international problem. Despite pressure by us, China did not feel diplomatically obliged to soften its obstructive stand on the issue in the UN Security Council. It could have taken cover under UN resolutions and the growing international consensus to combat terrorism collectively by agreeing to a formulation that could have given some satisfaction to India, but it chose not to do so. It obviously assumes that it can deal with political differences and economic ties on separate tracks, believing that India needs access to China's financial resources to fuel its growth.

The Goa Declaration is expansive on terrorism in other parts of the world or generically. Ironically, it speaks of "the relentless pursuit against terrorist groups so designated by the UN Security Council?" and mentions the "significant

geopolitical concerns. India's greatly improving ties with the US at a time when US-Russia relations have plummeted and China confronting the US in the western Pacific add to the geopolitical confusion within BRICS. Russia's military overtures to Pakistan add to the muddle. The Goa Declaration once again avoids giving support to India's (and Brazil's) candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Once again, it is China's hand at work.

Prime Minister Modi was right in his unprecedented philippic against Pakistan (without naming it) at the BRICS summit-and at the BIMSTEC gathering-on its international misdeeds. This message was addressed as much to China and Russia as to Pakistan that for India, terrorism is a core issue. The decision to invite BIMSTEC leaders to the BRICS summit was a diplomatic masterstroke to isolate Pakistan under China's nose and stimulate our Act East policy. The BIMSTEC outcome document is much more supportive of India's concerns on terrorism. The Goa Declaration has 109 paras compared with less than 75 at Fortaleza and Ufa. India organised 112 events as part of BRICS activities and took 24 key initiatives, many more than in the case of Brazil and Russia. If BRICS is to be judged by activities and not results, the grouping can claim success. That we organised a BRICS Wellness Forum says it all. (Courtesy India Today)

(The author is India's former foreign secretary)

TO THE EDITOR

Police station with a difference

Editor,

The general picture that we have of the police, and more particularly of police stations, is remarkably similar all over the country. Police personnel are often seen as lacking in common courtesy and their stations a social and public health ordeal. More often than not, police and police stations are entities we would rather avoid, if not otherwise fatefully challenged to confront. The Sadar Police Station (Shillong) could force a change in this conventional perception. During a recent visit to this station I was honestly surprised by its earnest welcoming appearance, ably complemented by the friendly and caring conduct of its officers. This was in stark contrast to the brassiness I had encountered a few years back in the same police station. The transformation is said to have been brought about by Insp D.K. Prasad and his smart and sharp officers. While through

this letter I wish to commend the Officer-in-Charge of Sadar Police station and his officers, I would also like to urge that other stations and their officers model themselves on the example set forth by the Sadar Police station. This transformation, even if considered symbolic and superficial by some, is important, as it could help develop the much needed public legitimacy of police and state power. Rather than being seen simply as the coercive arm of the state, such makeovers can set the template for a more social and citizen-friendly police force.

Yours etc.,
Rajesh Dev,
University of Delhi
Camp: Shillong

School bus service – A worthwhile bargain

Editor,

A load of worries the parents of Shillong city carry is debilitating. First, the concern is about how lucky they will be each morning to catch hold of a local taxi in time to drop their children to the school. It's hard to get a taxi easily in the early hours. Second, once the cab is

boarded another worry overwhelms --- whether the taxi will reach on time or not. The long jam is a daily ordeal and a disquieting phenomenon. It takes a heavy toll on each guardian. Sometimes a mere 10-minute delay to reach the school might spoil the whole day. Let's dissect the situation to see what is contributing to the long road jams. For a discerning person answers and solutions are at his fingertips. A sage Mr J. Mawthoh claims that if the commuting private vehicles carrying just one or two wards are stopped the traffic snarls will ease up. He also says that the majority of students of these posh schools come individually in their posh vehicles which is one of the main causes of the early hour jams.

Yes, the stressful commuting to schools and back to home every day has prompted many to suggest the compulsory switching over to the school buses instead of individual private cars. The bus service will automatically reduce the number of small vehicles on the streets. The lesser the number of vehicles on the road, the lesser the traffic jam! Car-pooling is another good option. Isn't it a lucrative opportunity which some entrepreneurial agencies can grab at?

My suggestion is that schools located in Laitumkhras should consider starting the school bus service. In larger public interest the government should make it mandatory for Shillong city now. The majority of schools in the metros like Delhi, Mumbai et al have an impeccable bus service for ferrying the school students. School buses are plying with zero security issue there. So, could we not replicate the same in the Shillong town? Initially, it could be started in a phased manner. Yes, security of the students is the most important. For this the responsible attendants should be roped in who will act as guardians to the children. The only sad thing is that the elite will have to compromise on their luxury. But, have not the stresses on the road virtually taken over the luxury? For now we can only heave a sigh of relief if the traffic movement is assured through school bus service. This is a worthwhile bargain.

Yours etc.,
Saili Gewali,
Shillong -2

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

"If you want creative workers, give them enough time to play."

--- John Cleese

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 74 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2016

Manipur CM attacked

MANIPUR Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh on Monday escaped unhurt after shots were fired at him and his entourage as he was getting out of his helicopter at the Ukhrul helipad. Ibobi Singh was supposed to inaugurate a 100-bedded hospital at Hunphung amongst other activities. The Chief Minister had to cancel his programme and fly back to Imphal. The hospital proposed to be inaugurated was apparently incomplete and the people of the area had warned that pending completion, no inauguration would be allowed. On Sunday evening, a day before the inauguration some people had also detonated a bomb near the newly constructed hospital, thereby destroying completely the space where the public meeting was to be held.

The chief minister's team could not move out of the helipad as protesters had blocked the road to the project inauguration site about 1 km away. The perception among the Tangkhul Naga tribes is that Ibobi, a Meitei, is anti-Naga and the inauguration of a half-done hospital was only aimed at garnering votes for the forthcoming assembly elections. Those who have visited Ukhrul would testify that this is one of the least developed districts of Manipur although a former CM - Rishang Keishing hailed from there. Conflict ridden Ukhrul is home to the NSCN(IM) supremo Thuingaleng Muivah but the road to his hamlet in Somdal village is almost non-existent. People are poverty stricken and practice subsistence agriculture although of late due to the intervention of the IFAD - NEC project some livelihoods have been created. The Tangkhuls are enterprising people and a good number have moved out of their villages to seek livelihoods elsewhere. The much trumpeted Naga Peace Framework means nothing for the people of this area if their lives are not going to get better. Their only aspiration is for their children to be educated in good schools, colleges and universities which are not available to them. The Government of Manipur has been accused, and rightly so, for giving a step-motherly treatment to the Naga inhabited hills of the State. Ibobi Singh's attempts to make amends political amends did not go down too well with the people of Ukhrul who feel a deep sense of alienation. The firing was only an intimidatory tactic. Much worse could have happened had the sharp-shooters been serious.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

MNF to join national front

Mizo National Front would join the National Front to become a partner in the mainstream of democratic and secular opposition in the country. Former Chief Minister and chairman of Mizo National Front Laldenga confided this on Sunday during this two day visit to the city. Laldenga said that the MNF had felt the necessity of identifying with the National Opposition following its experience in the last election when the top hierarchy of the governors administration was made to function as a party wing.

Describing the election which brought the CONgress(I) to power in Mizoram as "rigged" the MNF chief wondered whether computer was employed to to chalk out accurate and sophisticate methods of tampering with the poll process. Laldenga squarely blamed the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for alleged malpractices and violation of norms and rules during election.

He said that both the governor Mr Hiteswar Saikia and Minister of State for Home Mr Santosh Mohan Dev have only carried out the orders. Laldenga dismissed the campaign launched against him and his party as intending to resort to violence as "motivated" and baseless and said that they were sure to stage a comeback democratically in a tree and fair election.

He feared that election

would never be free under the present regime. Laldenga admitted that after the Mizo Accord he had developed a soft corner for Rajiv Gandhi and though he was forewarned by well wishers AsSam Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta he never he believed that Rajiv Gandhi would ask his partymen to adopt all sorts of unfair means to win elections.

Laldenga went to the extent of describing Rajiv Gandhi as "a threat democracy and India" and said that they were now joining the mainstream of National Opposition to play their bumble role in saving the country and democracy. Laldenga revealed that he had detailed discussions with V P Singh and Ramakrishna Hedge about modalities of MNF joining the National Front. Laldenga said that it was now just a formality to get the decision endorsed in party forums.

The MNF chief said he had also met the West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu with whom he exchanged views on current political situation in the country. Laldenga parried the question about the role of church in Mizoram election. He denied that the church as a whole opposed MNF and said that some individual church leaders participation in Congress campaign could not indicate total involvement of church.

Aberrations in our Celebrations

By Paramjit Bakhshi

About a century and a quarter ago Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, "God is dead", adding a few sentences later, "What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent?" Having witnessed the Durga Puja celebrations in the city, one is sure that God could not be dead, and even if there are but few festivals of atonement, many a sacred game still gets played with boundless zest. It is only some mere mortals who die during these festivals—some even because of them. Coming back from Cherrapunjee on the evening of the tenth instant, in the middle of the Durga Puja celebrations, one witnessed an ambulance removing a patient from Umtyngar. As one reached upper Shillong, a massive traffic jam awaited us. It took us three and a half hours to reach the Civil Hospital from there. One wondered what happened to the ambulance and the patient it carried. Of course the death of twenty or so people at the Varanasi stampede recently made national headlines.

It is indeed ridiculous that religious fervour is allowed to spill onto the streets and bring the city, and all movement on its roads and highways, to a grinding halt for hours and days on end. If bandhs have been banned by the courts because they bring everyone's daily life to a complete stop it is time that the judiciary had a look at the way festivals are celebrated everywhere. My festival cannot become an excuse to make your life miserable. Religion should be a private affair, a personal tete tete with the Almighty, confined either to the home or a place of worship. There is no valid reason for it to become a public nuisance and appropriate every public space. Yet one routinely sees religious processions winding leisurely down the city streets. Stadiums and even the golf course have been used to hold religious rallies. The mullah does not consider it inconsiderate, when he uses a loudspeaker to wake up, not just his flock but folks of all persuasions, early in the

morning and neither do priests and pundits when they expound their doctrine or sing their bhajans at deafening decibels at all hours of the day, evening and night. Even though we might rave and rant about middlemen in business and commerce, we all confer special privileges on our intermediaries to God, even when it becomes evident that their words are often what divide men from other men. Some of them of course, cross all boundaries and exhort people to hate and kill rather than be voices of compassion and love. As Jonathan Swift put it, "We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another."

The freedom of religion envisaged in our constitution surely did not mean that we lose all sense of civic responsibility. Sometimes one gets the feeling that all major religious celebrations are little more than shows of strength. Just as politicians round up people for their rallies, the organisers of religious events also like to have as high a head count at their shows, even if that dilutes the sobriety of the occasion. The trouble is that though political rallies take place once in a four or five years, religious gatherings are regular annual events. Such occasions do little to take us closer to heaven or to moksha or jannat but surely do prevent us from carrying out our earthly obligations. Every year at some pilgrimage or other there is a stampede that kills scores of people. In their overzealousness to deliver people to heaven in the afterlife, the religious authorities often do not care about people dying as a result of unregulated religious assemblies or inter religious strife and condemn many families to a living hell in having to cope with the loss of loved ones. To quote the Punjabi Sufi poet, Bulleh Shah, "Going to Mecca is not the Ultimate (solution), even if hundreds of prayers are offered, Going to river Ganges is not the Ultimate, even if hundreds of cleansing baths are taken. Going to Gaya is not the Ultimate, even if hundreds of verses are chanted, Bulleh Shah the Ultimate is. When the 'I' is removed from the heart."

It should be the primary

duty of the organisers of these religious extravaganzas, to ensure that their faithful, do not jeopardise the freedom of movement of other people. But one has rarely, if ever, seen our religious leaders preach public decorum, in the masses they seek to lead. In many parts of the country highways are blocked every Friday, because the faithful gather to say their prayers on them, and even in a rented house at Laitumkrah our gate was routinely blocked by people, parking their cars to attend service every Sunday. "Religion is the opiate of the people", wrote Karl Marx more than a century and a half ago, and judging from most people's behaviour, it still continues to be so.

Since the organisers of the religious fanfare wash their hands off being responsible for their followers' behaviour, it is incumbent upon the executive to impose appropriate strictures while granting permission for such events. As things stand though, that idea is mere wishful thinking, because the executive in the state has been in a condition of perpetual slumber. As children we used to wonder how Rip Van Winkle could sleep for thirty years, but as grown-ups we seem to have taken the four decade long somnolence of our government with a total lack of incredulity. Rather than doing their duty, our elected representatives were themselves busy, visiting the pandals. Thankfully for us, all but one unelected VVIP, confined their visits to the day light hours, when traffic was manageable. This gentleman however chose to go around in the evening, thereby adding to the traffic snarl and to the woes of the perplexed traffic cops, who sweated to bring some order in the chaos. Surely if he had eyes to appreciate the idols, he would have also seen the discomfort of the lesser mortals as his cavalcade passed. Seneca voiced an eternal truth when he said, "Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false and by the rulers as useful."

Religion is a sensitive topic for most of us so perhaps one can stop at this point. It is not one's aim to denigrate religion, but to make people aware that what is one man's meat could be another person's poison.

For a few days Shillong turned from being a Compromise City into a Completely Clogged city. This being in reference to my last piece titled, "Compromise City", to which a number of people responded. One responder suggested quite aptly that our hometown be called Cab City. After all it is the cabbies that rule the roost on our roads and nothing is more ubiquitous in Shillong than the bee coloured cars. Digressing, perhaps not too subtly, from the main theme of the piece, here are some more suggestions on what the present day Shillong could be called. Sticking to the alphabet 'c', one has already touched upon—compromise, confrontation and cab. Another one which comes to mind is, Coal city. After all the character and the look of the city altered completely when cash from the black diamond started flowing in. Assam type cottages with neat lawns and flowers gave way to concrete monstrosities. Coal also brought more trucks, cars and cabs on the narrow streets of Shillong and introduced us to traffic jams. Also in the reckoning would be Corruption city or Crumbling city with the first being the cause and the second the result. Since another opiate has recently become very popular, amongst our young, and not so young, the tag Cannabis city could also be considered. With Diwali around the corner there is also a possibility that for a while we might become Claustrophobic City. Religion will become some peoples excuse to add to the noise and air pollution. The other 'c' which is in the race to be prefixed is Cafe City. Cafes are a welcome addition to the cityscape and provide the right space for the young to mix and mingle minus alcohol. Some of them offer live music and some like The Grub also serve awesome food at very reasonable prices. Sadly these are largely confined to the kilometre or so stretch along Laitumkrah. Hopefully these will contribute quietly to what one would like Shillong to truly become— a Colourful City.

The writer can be contacted at bakhshi03@rediffmail.com.

Dam on Xiabuqu, concerns for India

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

On September 30, China announced that it has blocked the Xiabuqu river as part of a major hydroelectric project, the Lalho hydroelectric project at Shigatse. Xiabuqu River is a major tributary of Yarlung Tsangpo, the upper stream of Brahmaputra river flowing from Tibet. The Lalho project has an investment of 4.95 billion and the construction is scheduled to be completed by 2019. It is designed to store upto 295 million cubic metres of water and would help irrigate 30,000 hectares of farmland. The strategic value of the Lalho project lies also in the fact that Shigatse is only a few hours driving distance from the junction of Bhutan and Sikkim, and the city from which the Chinese plan to extend their railroads to Nepal.

The project however has raised concerns in the lower riparian states of Brahmaputra -India and Nepal. While insisting that the project is a run of the river project, the Chinese official agency Xinhua clarified that the construction of the project will not impact water levels in lower Brahmaputra. Yet in the absence of a comprehensive water treaty between China and India, the construction of this dam has undoubtedly raised new concerns. Since 2013 China and India have been sharing water details through an Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) which coordinates on trans border rivers. The construction of this dam however raises new issues into the efficiency of the Expert Level Mechanism.

The concerns of India are in essence threefold. The first is the traditional question of water itself. When rivers are trans boundary in nature, lower riparian states are always at a disadvantage. This is because upper riparian states can restrict the flow of the water and effectively curtail the water rights of the lower riparian states. In this particular case, however, the issue is not limited to the Lalho project alone. This project is only a pointer of the years to come and how it might affect the Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra river system. Both India and China have embarked on a massive hydropower energy generation path, yet in the quest for lower carbon footprint, such a race might completely destroy the ecosystem of the rivers. The Chinese plan to construct over 40 dams on the Yarlung Tsangpo. If China achieves this, the character of the river would be permanently altered. These dams could alter the geographical character as well. These dams would be built on slopes with a gradient of as much as 60 degrees and on the meeting point of three of the youngest mountain systems of the world. In essence, the case of an earthquake would be a calamity waiting to happen. If a major earthquake were to hit the mountains, millions of people would lose their lives.

The Kedarnath disaster of 2013 in India would be a grim reminder of the dangers in trying to tame the Himalayan river systems.

The second concern is the character of the Brahmaputra river itself. The rivers of the Himalayan ecosystem are younger in nature and by character adventurous. In the last 250 years, the Brahmaputra has changed its course a number of times. The char areas in Assam are fascinating examples of this phenomenon. Every few years new islands appear in the Brahmaputra while old ones disappear. The inhabitants of the old islands are often unsure of the country they belong to. This often gives rise to political unrest in North Eastern states. Any move to control or shift the Brahmaputra course might accentuate the political problems in the North East India.

The third concern is the larger role that the river plays in the life of people in the North Eastern region of India. A number of tribes along the rivers have built livelihoods around the course of the river. They centre their lives around fishing and other activities. For example, lumberjacks from Arunachal Pradesh cut logs in the mountains and transport them through the Gai, Ronganodi and Subanshiri rivers (all tributaries of Brahmaputra) via rafts. It makes for a fascinating sight when people sail on rafts for days till they reach the plains with logs tied to the bottom of their rafts. The influence of these rivers in the lives of the people would thus be immense.

The way forward then is to engage in a comprehensive dialogue. While the 2013 Expert Level Mechanism was a much warranted step, much more needs to be done. Both India and China have set up aggressive goals for themselves in combating climate change. Shifting from non renewable energy sources to renewable ones like hydroelectricity is an important step in this direction. However, as global evidence would have shown us, large dams are not the solution to energy sources. Constructing continuous run of the river dams would damage the ecology of the river too. A river is not only the water but the flora and fauna, the complete ecology in totality. Dams in large number damage this ecology of the river. And all stakeholders have to realise this. China has to take India into confidence because rivers shouldn't be used to further political or geostrategic agendas. There is the ecological and environmental question which should be approached through consensus. Rivers are in truth common heritage of the world to be nurtured by all.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

blamed a section of media for going overboard in tarnishing his reputation and that of his teachers, it was stated that the State Commission on Protection of Child Rights would deliver the final verdict and it is not right to pass any judgment on the matter. However, your paper also reported that the parents have accepted the apology of the principal. That the parents of the child who faced corporal punishment at Shillong Public School have accepted the apology of the principal and appreciated such move, now raises the question that if the school and its principal were not guilty then why

apologize? The matter is very confusing and we the general public are eager to know what exactly has taken place because the incident pertains to corporal punishment meted out to children and every parent is very concerned about their child's welfare in the school.

Yours etc.,
Kamal Khongrymmai
Shillong-6

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

TO THE EDITOR

Religion a private affair

Editor,

Normally I am not given to carping unnecessarily but as a resident of Umpling I have been subjected to arbitrary diversion of traffic from the RR Colony, at timings chosen by the residents because of their non-stop celebrations. I wish to ask under what law is the use of public roads allowed for religious activities and who gives the right to one religious group to block roads for days on account of their religious ceremonies? This is exactly what the saying, "Give them an inch and they take a mile," means. People try and make adjustments during Durga Puja out of respect for religious sentiments. That does not mean that dismantling the set up should take another week with some more celebrations in tow which are not exactly religious. On Sunday night the sound system that beat all decibels including that stipulated by the Supreme Court was violated and Bollywood songs were belted out from the place

where just days ago the goddess Durga had been revered. Surprisingly there are no policemen in the area to check this violation of public order. Will the OC of Rynjah Police Station pay a visit to places under his jurisdiction or will he only spend his time doing paper work inside his office?

Yours etc.,
NR Pyngrope,
Via email

Plight of rag-pickers

Editor,
Millions of our brothers and sisters are engaged in rag picking. They are doing great service to the cause of India's garbage disposal and world's environment, risking their own lives. They dispose of the garbage in the most scientific way by taking the recyclable materials from the garbage to where it can be recycled. Without their service, those materials would have been burnt contributing air pollution and temperature to our environment. Given they collect recyclable garbage all around, their service also help stop at least a part of the scattered garbage from going into our drains, water bodies and

soil. Ironically, those rag-pickers in their unclean appearances and facing the threat of allergy, skin rashes, tuberculosis and several other infections are trying their best to make India clean. Indeed, they prick our conscience. They should be rewarded for their service. Instead of the prevalent practice of costly celebrity-photo-session of cleaning some "clean garbage", adult rag-pickers should be employed to help Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) to have more teeth. The need of the hour is to entrust local self governments to register all adult rag-pickers in their respective areas and make them engage in garbage recycling, compost creation and management. Corporations, municipalities and panchayats are to provide each adult rag-picker under their jurisdiction with an identity card, a uniform, a sack and a stick (to shoo away street dogs and to rummage through a garbage). They should also be given some money, food, soap, hand-gloves and pollution-masks every week. These will give them recognition, prestige and protection which they really deserve and need very badly. It will cause more

recycling, more compost creation and less burning. Not only does it help to scientifically manage our garbage but also check air pollution and global warming into the bargain. Moreover, better look rag-pickers with clean uniform and sack will makeover to some extent the appearance of our country. There is no question of disturbing the exclusive job of the cleaning staff to dispose of the non-recyclable garbage. As for child rag-pickers, a government is not supposed to turn a blind eye to such colossal wastage of human potential. Child rag-pickers must be attracted to school with food package and other incentives apart from midday meal.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Only a wrongdoer apologizes

Editor
Apropos the letter to the editor by the principal, Shillong Public School, (ST Oct 22, 2016) who defended his school and

“A talent for drama is not a talent for writing, but is an ability to articulate human relationships.”

--- Anthony Burgess

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 75 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2016

Extortion and patriotism

THE Maharashtra Nava Nirman Sena (MNS) has imposed a set of unprecedented conditions on Karan Johar's film, Aae Dil Hai Mushkil, to allow it to be released because there is a Pakistani actor in the film. The Union Home Minister, Rajnath Singh had earlier okayed Karan Johar's film for distribution. The chief minister of Maharashtra who is from the BJP has a coalition government in the state with the Shiv Sena. The MNS has demanded that Karan Johar and other producers should deposit rupees 5 crore in the army welfare fund to enable the film's release. That will apparently, in its opinion, atone for the inclusion of a Pakistani actor in the cast of the film. The film fraternity has meekly surrendered to the extortion. But army veterans are in high dudgeon. The MNS has a long record of violence. Migrant communities from other countries and other states have been subjected to great persecution by the organization. This attitude shows the extent of malignant identity politics and even betrays the base lumpenness of elected governments.

Artists are not to be equated with terrorists. That applies to Pakistan which is now having sharp differences with India. If the MNS prevails in its high-handedness, even trade with Pakistan will be jeopardized. The MNS has asked for severance of commercial ties between India and Pakistan. A line should be drawn between artists and terrorists. That awareness should help contain terrorism. Jingoism can be overdone. Prime Minister Narendra Modi still wants a dialogue with Pakistan if it can be possible to avoid military action. The attitude of the MNS can only make it difficult.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

AGP govt repudiates PM's remark

The attention of the Government of Assam has been drawn to newspaper reports about the Prime Minister's remark made in the Rajya Sabha alleging lack of will on the part of the State Government in tackling the flood problem by refusing to undertake maintenance works relating to the Brahmaputra Flood Control schemes. Refuting the allegation, the Revenue Minister of Assam Mr Chandra Arandhara said that the Prime Minister's intervention in the debate was not absolutely based on facts. Elaborating the position he said that the Prime Minister during his belated visit to study the flood problem in Assam in September 1988 did ask a question whether the State Government would fully finance the maintenance costs of Brahmaputra flood protection works if the Central Government were to give adequate funds for construction works if the Central Government was giving for the original Brahmaputra protection works was firstly meager as compared to the actual requirement; secondly, it was given only in the form of 100 per cent loan thereby increasing the State Government's unbearable debt burden. It was also clarified that the maintenance costs of the Brahmaputra. Protection works were presently required to be met by the State Government from its non plan budget in accordance with the awards of the Finance Commission. In this context Mr Arandhr mentioned that despite several financial constraints the State Government had been providing more funds for such maintenance works than even those recommended by the Finance Commission for the period 1984-85 to 1988-89. The 8th Finance Commission had recommended a total amount

of Rs. 61.26 crores for this purpose while the State Government actually provided Rs. 87.90 crores. Even this enhanced amount was short of requirement due to steep escalation in costs. He said the Prime was definitely aware of the financial difficulties of a flood ravaged and backward state like Assam and its inability to provide from its own resources adequate funds for the purpose. Moreover, as its well known, the Brahmaputra is a mighty international river which can be controlled only through a national effort. The State Government therefore has been requesting the Central Government firstly to provide adequate funds for its original flood protection works as grant and not as loan, secondly, it was requested to provide as grants the fund required for maintenance of these works as the gigantic problems were beyond the means of the State Government is not paying any heed to the State Government's request the lamented. The minister however said that the State Government would always welcome practical help from the Central Government in such matters.

India bundled out for 148

Shell shocked India, already reeling under a 50 run defeat at Barbados, were bundled out for a paltry 148 in their second One Day International cricket match against West Indies here today. Playing without any plan, Indians gave a pathetic display of abject submission as their two batsmen were run out four fell to the non hostile spin of Viv Richards and only four were claimed by the pace battery of the Carribeans.

Identity by culture or by faith

By Toki Blah

Going by the write-ups that have recently started appearing in both the vernacular and English dailies of Shillong, one is quite entitled to conclude, that once again Khasi society is apparently on the throes of yet another identity crisis. By 'Khasi' the comprehensive meaning of the term is made use of to include the indigenous Khyntiam, Pnar, Bhoi and War communities of these hills. Where does my identity as a Khasi lie, is a common question that concerned people, especially our youth, are asking themselves. Is it dependant on perceivable day to day practices and rituals or is it to be found elsewhere, perhaps in a concept called culture. So what is culture to a Khasi? Is it language, the way I dress, the faith one follows, the manner in which we dispose off our dead or is culture something more fundamental, something deeper, an intrinsic value that touches the very core of being Khasi? The problem is, the dearth of creditable people willing to step forth with a rational acceptable explanation. The danger lies in the readiness of bigots, rouges and charlatans with half baked ideas, in their desperate quest for power and social recognition, to fill in this crucial void, at the cost of the Khasis.

Problem is there are still many Khasis gullible enough to expect our political system to address this emerging ambiguity in our social lives. Its a fallacious expectation and we are paying for it. Meghalaya politics prefers to turn away from genuine concerns of the public. Service to the people is as alien to our politics as faithfulness is to a whore. In the midst of this political perfdy an encouraging trend is however emerging and impacting on the modern Khasi psyche, especially among the educated younger lot. There is this increasing public perception that, as a community, we must learn to put our heads together and come out with inclusive and all-encompassing solutions to the 21st century challenges that confront

us as a Jaitbynriew. There is a growing recognition that we are too miniscule a community to afford the luxury of cultivating hate among ourselves. That the future of the Jaitbynriew lies in our ability to move forward as a united Khasi entity rather than a spent divided force. In division lies our demise. In unity lies our hope. It's as simple as that.

In this worrisome social milieu many sincerely believe that culture and traditional practices are the corner stones to Khasi Identity. Some writers have raised doubts and concerns about the impact of Christianity over Khasi culture and tradition. And why not, as long as such worries are not to find fault but designed to seek genuine answers to the riddle of Khasi Identity. It is a historical fact that 200 years ago change did overtake Khasi society; definitely Christianity is part of that change; and yes Christians do form a major chunk of the present Khasi population. So is this bad or good? I leave this superfluous question for God men to answer. The purpose of this layman's writeup is not to praise nor to denigrate any particular faith or religion. In the eyes of the author they are all the same. All religions share a common goal - to bring man nearer to God and not to divide mankind. The focus of this write-up however is to highlight the need for a search - a search for issues that bond us in the past and will continue to bind us in the future! This search should assume the search for the Holy Grail. The Holy Grail of Khasi unity!

At this point there is an urgent need to come to some rational general definition of the word culture, as it pertains to the Khasis. Too often the word 'culture' has been used in its negative exclusive sense rather than as a word that encourages the ability to embrace and include. Culture is an English word and it essentially means the concept of being a gentleman. Within the context of Khasi society it is all about manners (ka akor), honour (ka burom) and equitable justice (ban kamai ia ka kok da ka nia ka jutang) that determine relationships among

ourselves and with others. The most unique and pertinent aspect of Khasi culture however is matriliney, or the descent of lineage from a particular womb or kpoh. This lineage binds one to the most critical component of Khasi society - the Kur or jait. With out the concept of the kur there is no Khasi Jaitbynriew. No research into Khasi Identity can afford to ignore or overlook the overarching binding authority of the kur system in the Khasi socio - political milieu. To be a Khasi is to belong to a kur and the ability to retain that kur's confidence. This kur that defines a Khasi is secular in nature. The kur remains impartial to a member's religious preference. An inclusive cultural trait that spotlights Art 25 of the Constitution as no other aspect can!

Today as Khasis prepare themselves for the future, a question needs to be answered. Who are we? Our DNA tells us that we belong to the Austronesian group of indigenous people. To that extent we are different from other tribal groups of the NE who are basically of Tibeto-Burman descent. Since time immemorial we have governed ourselves and interacted with others, irrespective of the faith we follow, with a set of value systems that have survived the ravages of time and history. Ka "tip kur tip kha", "tip briew tip blei", "da ka nia da ka jutang ban kamai ia ka hok" are social tenets that determine the Khasi way of life; the social norms that mould and steer social interactions; the bed rock on which our identity as an indigenous people is firmly embedded; the cultural DNA of a Khasi irrespective of his faith and religion. It was so in the past and it continues to the present. Is there need to change it?

It is accepted that with the advent of Christianity certain traditional practices have changed. Christians no longer cremate their dead but cremation within the church is once again on the cards. Christians do not observe the 'jer kyrnteng' ceremony. They christen their offsprings, but in both ceremonies the lineage of the mother and the reverence for the kur remains. Yet Christianity is not the only agent responsible for change

in Khasi tradition and custom. Khasis now wear modern apparel discarding their traditional dress for something more practical and cheap. However the above are insignificant changes. They hardly impact on the fundamentals that make up our cultural identity. Of concern for the entire Jaitbynriew are not changing rituals and practices but issues that impact on the welfare and wellbeing of the Jaitbynriew. Effective health care for all; meaningful education for our children; effective governance to protect the rights of all vulnerable sections of the society; these are issues that will determine the future of our Jaitbynriew; whether we remain masters of our own land or become hewers of wood and carriers of water for some other powerful community in the future. These are the real threats we should start worrying about.

As one recognises the positive and unifying aspects of culture in mobilising the unity of the Jaitbynriew, one still remains sceptical about the role of religion. Will religion emerge as a unifying force or a divisive factor in the Khasi's search for identity? It has the potential to make some yearn for the irreversible past or for Khasis of all faiths to move forward with a vision for the future. Choice is ours. Faith to a Khasis has always been a personal issue; his personal relationship with the God he believes in. It is when religious leaders, irrespective of faith, intervene that things can go wary. Nefarious and insidious attempts, especially by outsiders posing as friends of the Khasis, to introduce, based on faith alone, the concept of an original and duplicate Khasi is underway. How can we have original and duplicate kurs? I see it as a problem that only a united Jaitbynriew can solve. We have to decide as a Jaitbynriew what is best for us. Do we as Lot's wife of Biblical notoriety hold on to a nostalgic past until we all turn into pillars of salt? Or do we like one of our own heroes, U Sajarnangli, move forward but while doing so leave behind something beautiful and precious for posterity.

Bangladesh getting massive foreign investments Mamata's Bengal may benefit from growth

By Ashis Biswas

One interesting aspect of the BIMSTEC grouping is that smaller member countries set the pace in terms of attracting foreign investments as well as implementing the agenda of regional development. Until recently, Myanmar in the first flush of its post-dictatorship democratic dawn, was a magnet for international investors because of its enormous mineral and energy resources. Lack of infrastructure and political complexities have taken some of the shine off the Myanmar development story.

But the LookEast story continues not just for India, but for more advanced countries as well. The focus of international finance still remains firmly on India's East at a time of global recession. What has occurred is a change of location: major countries of the world are making a beeline to help Bangladesh grow economically.

The Economist has reported recently that China has promised a \$40 billion investment in 21 specific projects involving the construction of expressways, railways, bridges and power stations in Bangladesh. Russia, despite facing Western economic sanctions, will help with an aid package of \$11.2 billion, seeking to set up two nuclear power stations at Rooppur. Japan is not far behind, promising \$ 6.7 billion to be spent on setting up a terminal to liquefy natural gas and 4 coal-based power plants. Then comes India with a \$4.2 billion aid package of its own to launch two more coal-based power plants, along with helping railway and seaport projects.

Kolkata-based analysts wonder whether even India, the biggest member in attracting specific project-based foreign investments on the same scale as Bangladesh. Relative to size even Gujarat or Maharashtra, both much more industrialised than Bangladesh, have not received similar assistance.

In 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping promised a \$22 billion investment for mostly Gujarat-based projects. But China went slow on follow-up and implementation, as India opposed its ambitious 'One belt, one road' infrastructure initiative (OBOR) and dragged its feet on the regional BCIM economic corridor (Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar).

Any comparison between Bangladesh with neighbouring West Bengal is also pointless. West Bengal attracted industrial investments to the tune of Rs 300 crore only during one year in recent times, exceeded even by Assam which received over Rs 1000 crore! This was an all time low. And in 2016, with Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee crowing about her 'glorious success' in having returned farm land to the peasants in Singur big ticket industrial investments are yet to take place.

Says one economist, 'It is particularly galling that while it's raining dollars in Bangladesh, the clock is moving backwards in the supposedly more advanced Bengal. The once derided rustic country cousins in the East are having a jolly laugh at the expense of their snootier brothers in the West!'

It needs pointing out that

Ms Banerjee has so far visited the UK, Germany and Singapore with 'specialised' trade delegations (including singers and artistes!), in search of investments. Result? So far, not ONE industry or new project has been announced. She now plans to visit Thailand (where the weather is said to be good this time of the year) with another 'delegation' soon.

Contrast this with Bangladesh, where Mr. Narendra Modi, Mr. John Kerry and Mr. Jinping have visited Dhaka in recent times, not to mention other leaders. Investment has come to Bangladesh without its leaders having to go round the world begging for funds. The first question of West Bengal's Ministers after learning of the new Asian Infrastructure Investment bank (AIIB) from Chinese diplomats was, 'Do you have credit facilities for states in India?' This at a time when Bengal's outstanding debts to the centre are about to cross the Rs 300,000 crore mark!

One can only wonder what Mosley and Kissinger would say today about the progress made by Bangladesh in recent years. The country is second only to China in producing garments, and has over 8 million of its citizens working aboard. In terms of remittances, Bangladesh competes with bigger nations like Pakistan and India. Before 1970, West Pakistanis did not allow their fellow citizens in the East to get too many passports.

Despite its relative backwardness, its rickshaws, poverty and congestion, global warming threatening its survival as a country, there is a new vitality among its 160 million population. By 2025 or so the country expects to reach middle income status. Its annual rate of GDP growth is between 6 and 7%. It is ahead even of India in the implementation of some of its millennium goals, let alone the failed state of Pakistan. In infant mortality, women empowerment and spread of literacy, it is second to Sri Lanka in South Asia.

A sure sign that foreign investors are confident about investing in Bangladesh, despite its law and order problems and long spells of political deadlock, is that organizations like the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund are keener than before to participate in the ongoing and future projects. The WB's interest in financing the new big bridge on the Padma river is a recent example, but finding certain conditions unacceptable, Dhaka did not hesitate to reject the bank's offered help!

Economists welcome the Bangladeshi growth story because they feel in time it could help galvanise the stagnant economy in Bengal and East India as a whole. 'There would have been little development in Gujarat unless Maharashtra and Karnataka were also developing. Bihar and Orissa economies were driven by West Bengal's early industrialisation. Similarly, an economic take-off in Bangladesh might just help kickstart the economic regeneration of East and Northeast India,' says an analyst. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Kudos to those who kept the peace!

Editor

The recent Durga Puja and NH7 Weekender Musical event at Umroi has seen the changing mood of people towards positive fun and enjoyment. The enthusiasm of the crowd at the NH7 was infectious. There were people from different parts of the country who attended the programme, and happily returned home. Someone was heard saying, "Coming here is like going abroad. The function was very well managed and the law and order machinery including the traffic police did their work with aplomb. Cleanliness was maintained around the venues. Shillong is becoming a happening city and set to attain its past glory."

I thought this must be conveyed to all those who have invested their time and energy in the recent

mega public events.

It is not easy to control and host functions like Puja and the mega event at Umroi. We want to congratulate the officers, people and village heads who all were involved in the function.

Yours etc.,
Ajay Kumar Gupta,
Via email

Noisy religion

Editor,

Religion has become louder and louder over the ages. Be it Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and what have we in this world of ours today. One wonders what the need of this sound is. Of late there are opinions in this column regarding the Durga Puja pandals, post puja events with Bollywood numbers, traffic congestion and rest of it. While agreeing that religion is a private affair with regard to the letters by NR Pyngrope and column by Paramjit Bakhshi (both ST, Oct 25, 2016) I am not for this high decibel show and

traffic. It has been seen that the drum beating of the Islamic festival of Muharram is a daily affair in Jhalupara area of the city. Many dub this place as a mini Pakistan. However, regarding the pandals which are causing difficulties in movement of traffic and people, it cannot be blamed on the puja committees alone without knowing the essence of this festival. These are not feasts or marriage pandals that they will be removed immediately after the festival. It is believed that the spirit of the departing goddess lives on for days and so the pandals, as can be seen everywhere, is dismantled gradually. But if pandals are causing inconveniences to traffic and people then so does the demise of tribal people here whose departure results in immediate blockade of roads and erection of tents for grievors to mourn the occasion. This is a common sight here which cannot go unnoticed. Does this not also invite the saying here, "Give them an inch and they take a mile?" If festival is causing inconveniences so

does death. One is now living in trepidation with the incoming festival of Christmas. All localities will see temporary erection of pandals on roadsides and marketplaces with some larynx popping gosseller and his/her companion translator. I want to ask under what law this fortnight long act before Dec 25 every year is allowed in use of public roads for religious activities while blocking traffic, public movement, emergency services and public tranquility? I want to ask here Jesus, Allah, Bhagwan, Wahe Guru and the plethora all of whom I cannot name, are you all deaf that your propagators have to shout from roadsides, pandals and beat drums relentlessly without any rhyme or reason?

Yours etc.
PK Dwivedi
Shillong - 1

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.

“Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict.”

--- Will Rogers

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 76

SHILLONG, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2016

The SP dissensions

THE Samajwadi Party is now in the grip of a feud between father and son, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. The stink of such a feud is reminiscent of Mughal times. The link between the legislature and the executive is weakened by the miasma of feudalism. The main problem is that the SP has no internal democracy. There is a sad lack of clear decision making mechanisms and all decisions are arbitrary. Add to that rule through remote control. Overarching all is a personality cult characteristic of dictatorship. The patriarch holds sway sweeping away considerations of merit. The SP is splitting like the DMK. These parties are in reality oligarchic, even despotic. Transfer of power in these organizations turns into a struggle for succession.

Internal democratic functioning necessitates genuine election of leaders. That should do away with the system of patronage. Merit should be the chief criterion which enables a party to fulfill people's aspirations. Reservation in jobs and education and outside influence cause growing agitation in such a state. Legitimacy is a word which does not exist in the vocabulary of politics in Uttar Pradesh. The party machinery needs to be streamlined. Otherwise a patriarch will humiliate a Chief Minister as in UP and undermine the fundamentals of good governance.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

Naga Accord In The Offing?

IT IS about two decades after the Shillong accord that the Union Home Ministry is set again to thrash out another on the long-pending issue of a Naga settlement. The earlier one proved a virtual non-starter, some of the influential groups among the insurgents not being a party to it. Naturally the current initiative for renewed talks has been preceded by an understanding among these factions in the first place on the urgency of an accord. If reports leaking out by bits are to be believed, the Army and more particularly its intelligence agencies had a quiet role to play in winning over the leading men among the insurgents to come to New Delhi. The latter are lately divided to such an extent that violent clashes among themselves recently took a toll of more than a hundred lives at the Burmese end of the rebel hideouts. The worst victims naturally were men belonging to Indian factions from Nagaland-Manipur belts of the rebel-infected border areas.

The plan for a settlement seems to have been worked out on the Tripura model which produced the recent agreement with the TNV insurgents in that sector. The Army had the option of liquidating the Naga insurgents by taking advantage of the violent clashes among the insurgents themselves, but preferred instead the path of negotiation with the factional leaders. The latter also fell in with the plan, seeing the futility of any immediate alternative move regain in the confidence of the Burmese comrades and hence of any assistance of their safe hideouts at the Burmese end. The political scenario in the neighbouring country has also changed considerably in recent months, so that the hideouts at the Burmese end are no longer as safe now as hitherto. All this made it opportune for an offer to be made for a peace initiative which the rebel leadership has also found it more prudent to accept.

Mr S.C.Jamir's re-installation at Kohima is another factor which must have been useful for the present move. He had the boldness to initiate some useful political contacts

during his earlier regime as Chief Minister, but these were snapped with his peremptory transfer from Kohima. Presumably, the old links may now have been re-established. The intelligence agencies also have got a new leadership in the person of the same GOC who was behind the TNV accord, now in charge of the Manipur sector where the NSCN outfits are more organised and active. The Union Home Ministry therefore must have been impressed, because of a combination of these favourable factors, to renew the dialogue with the rebel leadership. There are reports that the rebel leadership is eager to get into contact with Mr Phizo. His presence undoubtedly will ensure a better workability and longevity for the accord that may eventually be worked out during the Delhi talks.

An answer to common cold at last?

A newly discovered body chemical may be able to lure the common cold virus away from its targets inside the nose offering the possibility of the first medicine to prevent the sniffles, scientists say. The research helps unravel the strategy used by Rhinoviruses the culprits in about half of all colds to get into the cells that line the nose and begin the all-too-familiar bouts of hacking, sneezing and sniffing.

While the research provides tantalizing clues for developing ways to prevent the common cold, scientists caution that such treatments are still years away. Even if they prove effectively, they will only work against the Rhinoviruses, not other cold viruses, and probably won't cure colds once they start. "This is not a cure. It is scientific step," said Dr Michael Kamarck of Molecular Therapeutics, one of two research groups that simultaneously made the discovery. The two teams provided the first detailed descriptions of the Rhinovirus receptor, the minuscule spots on cells where Rhinoviruses attach themselves.

Ram Chandra Guha, a free-thinker and historian who has authored numerous books on Indian history and random societal matters, recently enumerated eight reasons why Indians cannot speak freely. He says India is a 50-50 democracy. It is democratic only in a few respects and not so, in many others. The country is free in respect of conduct of free and fair elections and free movement of people within. However, it is only partly democratic in other ways: "The democratic deficit" that largely occurs in the area of freedom of expression.

According to him, there are eight ways freedom of expression is being threatened. Analysing the whole gamut of connected issues, Guha cites retention of archaic British-era laws, a faulty judicial system where the lower courts, particularly, are too eager to entertain petitions seeking ban on individual films, books and a variety of works of art, the rise of identity politics, especially of the regional kind, behaviour of the police force which generally sides with the "goondas" (goons), pusillanimity of the ruling class in decision making, particularly when votes are at stake and dependence of the media on Government for advertisements as some of the ways in which freedom of expression has been brought under threat, even curtailed.

Guha's analysis is unexceptionable. The last aspect is of specific concern, as I have had personal experience, like perhaps many others. Importantly, I also noted only recently, the Supreme Court directed the Rajasthan Government to release government advertisements to Rajasthan Patrika, one of the biggest newspaper group in the country with 37 editions across States and a readership stated to be over 1.25 crore.

According to the daily,

Freedom of Expression

Threatened by govt adverts?

By Proloy Bagchi

The State government had violated its own advertisement policy and was discriminating against the group. It elaborated saying the group had received 34.12% government ads in 2015, but the percentage had dropped to 1.26 this year. Its counsel alleged the Government was being vindictive because some articles were critical of it, and the action was a 'direct assault on freedom of press'.

This prompts me to my share my experience, about the denial of my right of expressing my views on local and other wider issues. I am a casual writer after retirement from the Government of India. To start with, the lack of civic amenities in Bhopal provoked me to write letters to the editor of the Central Chronicle, then the only English language newspaper in Bhopal with substantial local content but with limited circulation. Twenty years ago, public bodies and other utilities were far more inept than today and there was much to write about. Most of the times, the letters would not have any effect but some would go home and yield results. That itself gave a great deal of satisfaction.

The postal system was reasonably good in those days and my letters on local issues would get published within two or three days. The ones I sent on wider issues to The Statesman in Calcutta would take five or six days to be published if the newspaper's editor Irani then happened to put his seal of approval. I was gratified to see that some of my letters would occasionally lead the letters column on the Centre Page. That was a huge matter for me, and I would indulge in some slapping of my own back. The electronic media had till then not made the kind of inroads in journalism as now. The Statesman was then in a healthy state and used to be published from New Delhi and Calcutta and its Centre Page occasionally

used to carry letters of readers in two whole columns.

Soon the Hindustan Times came to town. The newspaper had a four-page city supplement which used to cover political, social news as also news from the world of fine arts and sports. Its editor then, Zaidi had a different kind of take on journalism. He once happened to tell me that both newspaper and city would gain and become richer if the local thinking people were given a platform. And he did that and, as far as I am concerned, there was never an occasion when my piece did not find the light of day in the Supplement.

Articles from Late Mahesh Buch, Kripal Dhillon, former DG Police who was hugely concerned about the deteriorating quality of life in the city, Prof. Zamiruddin Ahmed who has a flair for writing in English as well as Urdu, RJ Khurana, retired chief of Joint Intelligence Committee of India and so on were published. I too joined them and my first article entitled "The Dying Lake", was promptly published with photographs and all. It was an outright criticism of the way the Upper Lake, a great asset of the city, was being managed.

My honeymoon with the Hindustan Times continued for over five years till that editor left. Since then the editorial policy seems to have changed and the paper wouldn't publish unsolicited articles. Even the Times of India, which later started publishing from the town, adopted similar policy. It was not clear whether this posture of the newspapers was adopted of their own accord or the management received directions from the local government. Now, however, it seems the print media is under threat of losing government ads were it ever to publish comments and opinion pieces that happen to be against it.

So we, all of us who happen to have opinions of our own and can ventilate

them in our writings were effectively gagged. For some time, I was terribly annoyed and peeved but could do nothing about it. Everyone who used to read my columns would ask why I discontinued writing. I could only shrug my shoulders and say my lips were effectively sealed. Sadly, the healthy Bhopal supplement that HT used to bring out was scrapped and in its place what they came out with was nothing better than a rag to me. The same goes for the supplement Bhopal Live of the ToI - having more of Bollywood news than of Bhopal.

Print media, whether managed by corporate world or run on their own juice, are financially very vulnerable. While private sector ads seem to be running riot these days yet most of the papers hugely depend on government advertisements. Government is, therefore, a great benefactor for the promoters of print media. Scarce is a newspaper that cares little for the government ads. The net result is that a reader has no way to have his opinion published.

Most people would have noticed that even the column of "Letters to the editor" has been scrapped. What has been provided is space for a measly few words through what they call "feedback". So, even if one boils within with rage one cannot communicate it to the people through opinion pieces or letters to the editor.

Guha very rightly says that the dependence of media on government advertisements is especially "acute in the regional and sub-regional press. The State and political parties can and do coerce, suppress and put barriers in the way of independent reporters and reportage." Quite logically, therefore, the guillotine fell on us and we were all gagged. Our freedom of expression flew out of the window, forcing many of us to move over to social media. --- INFA

Attack on Manipur CM raises many questions

Despite accord, Naga insurgency is not dead

By Barun Das Gupta

Manipur Chief Minister Okhram Ibobi Singh and some of his senior colleagues survived an abortive attempt on their lives earlier this week by Naga rebels suspected to belong to the NSCN(IM) faction. The rebel outfit, which entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Centre decades ago, has been demanding a greater Nagalim which should include Naga-inhabited areas of States neighbouring Nagaland, including four Naga-inhabited districts of Manipur, namely, Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Chandel and Senapati. Naturally, all the concerned States - Assam, Manipur and Arunachal - are dead against ceding any territory to the proposed Nagalim.

The attack on Ibobi was daring and exposes the negligence of those who are responsible for the security of the VIPs. Ibobi, Deputy Chief Minister Gaikhangam, Forest Minister Hemchandra, Deputy Speaker Preshow Simray and Parliamentary Secretary Victor Keishing landed in a helicopter at the Bakshi helipad at Ukhrul town, the headquarters of the Ukhrul district. Ibobi had come to inaugurate a number of official projects like the 100-bed Ukhrul district hospital, high voltage power substations and some government offices.

The rebel attack came in the midst of a boycott call issued by the Tangkhul Naga Long. (The Nagas of Ukhrul district belong to the Tangkhul tribe.) The TNL had also imposed a day-long 'public curfew' in the town. What happened when the VIP chopper landed was indeed unthinkable. The rebels opened fire when the Chief Minister and his companions were alighting. And this despite the Assam Rifles' claim that it had brought the entire area under 'area domination.'

What followed next was stranger still. The Chief Minister was still determined to do the inauguration ceremony that he had come for. He wanted to go to the district hospital. But the road was impassable. The rebels had put burning tyres on a stretch of more than half a kilometre on the road, despite all the vigilance of the authorities. The police failed to disperse the TNL 'volunteers' and clear the road. These 'volunteers' had lobbed grenades, injuring two jawans. They also burnt some government vehicles. The CM had to return to the helipad. As his chopper was airborne, the rebels opened fire again - for the second time. The firing continued for full ten minutes. But the chopper could fly away safely.

The incident has raised a pertinent question. The NSCN(IM) had stopped its armed activities after it signed a ceasefire agreement with the Centre on July 25, 1997. The ceasefire has been in force since then. The armed cadre of the NSCN(IM) have been put in the Hebron camp near Dimpur, surrounded by the security forces. They have been allowed to retain their arms but are not allowed to leave the camp. Then in August last year, Prime Minister Modi signed another accord with the

NSCN(IM) the terms of which have not been disclosed. It is not known whether the accord has satisfied the rebel leaders' demand for a greater Nagalim or whether the degree of autonomy believed to have been offered to the Nagas has been accepted by them. The question is, in the circumstances, why did the NSCN(IM) indulge in violence?

The Naga insurgency has a chequered history. It was Angami Zapu Phizo, leader of the Naga National Council (NNC) who raised the banner of revolt in then Assam district of Naga Hills, following his failure to open talks with the then Assam Chief Minister Bimala Prasad Chaliha at Shillong. This was in 1953. Next year, 1954, Phizo set up the so-called Hongkhin Government of the 'Sovereign Republic of Nagaland'. It marked the beginning of the Naga insurgency.

Nagalang was carved out of Assam as a full-fledged State on December 1, 1963. It went a long way to meet the Naga demand of autonomy. But conceding Statehood within the Indian Union did not satisfy Phizo who had by then exiled himself in London. The NNC-led revolt continued till 1975. On November 11 of that year the NNC signed a formal peace accord with the Centre at Shillong. Clause 3(ii) of the accord said: "It was agreed that the arms, now underground, would be brought out and deposited at appointed places."

This raised a raging debate in the NNC which was then dominated by the Angamis, the tribe to which Phizo belonged. The other tribes did not agree to surrendering their arms. To them this was 'betrayal' of the Naga cause and 'surrender' to India. They decided to carry on the struggle. Five years later, in January, 1980, Isak Chishi Swu, Thuinggaleng Muivah and S. S. Khaplang formed the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) to continue the fight for Naga sovereignty.

Later, Khaplang fell out with Swu and Muivah and after a fratricidal war in which many were killed, the NSCN was split on April 30, 1988, into two factions: NSCN(IM) and NSCN(K). Subsequently, both groups signed ceasefire agreements separately but last year, Khaplang unilaterally ended the ceasefire. Still later, in April last year, two colleagues of Khaplang, Y. Wangtin Konyak and P. Tikhak, broke away from Khaplang and floated their own outfit - the NSCN(Reformation). The ostensible cause of the split was the repudiation of the ceasefire agreement by Khaplang.

As the latest attack on the Manipur Chief Minister shows, despite fragmentation in the rebel ranks, Naga insurgency is very much alive and a comprehensive peace accord involving all groups and factions and paving the way for permanent peace still remains elusive. (IPA Service)

issues. Do they support these terrorist attacks perpetrated by their country on us? And if not, what would they like to convey to their fellow countrymen? Unfortunately, when faced with these situations, Pakistani artistes always prefer to remain silent. This has more to do with the fear of a possible backlash in their country rather than any dislike for India or its people.

Post the Uri attack and subsequent military strikes by India, the government is trying as it should to completely isolate Pakistan-politically, economically and militarily. When such efforts are on, how can we be at peace, doing the business of mutual entertainment?

Bollywood must therefore take a united stand and support the ban. If they are to come back, their country has to make substantial efforts to normalize the situation with us and make the atmosphere propitious. It is indeed regretful that in this moment of national crisis, where the first concern of every Indian should have been safety of the country, its soldiers and the fellow citizens, the prime concern for some people in Bollywood like Salman Khan, Karan Johar & Om Puri was 'Pakistani artistes and their continued patronage by this country'.

Yours etc.,
Subhasish Das
Kahilipara, Guwahati.

TO THE EDITOR

Benami in MUDA complex

Editor,
I was heartened by the response to "Benami Transactions in MUDA" (ST, 14th Oct. 2016) by one PK Dwivedi (MUDA Affairs, ST 19 Oct. 2016) and am glad that Dwivedi reaffirmed my contention that stalls in MUDA Complex are held in Benami clutches 'right under the nose of MUDA'. However, I strongly rebut Dwivedi's generalised allegation that we tribals are lazy and alcoholic louts and therefore not fit for any front office. A walk down Laitumkhrah, Mawlai, Mawkhar Main road, etc., will reveal many tribals doing brisk business without having non-tribal managers. Come to Khyndailad after 8 PM and witness our tribal boys dishing out top class fares to tourists and locals alike at rates that will send many a non-tribal businessman back to their account books. The scenario amongst tribals in Meghalaya has undergone a sea change over the years thanks to government policies, parental guidance, and general awareness. Tribals are out to capture the world and many have excelled in their respective fields.

Yours etc.
Jonathan Lyngdoh,
Shillong-3

Indian Muslims are loyal citizens

Editor,
Apropos the letter by PK Dwivedi (ST, Oct 26, 2016), while I agree with him that making high decibel noise is not appropriate but I'm totally disappointed at how he pointed out the Jhalupara Area where the Islamic festival of Muharram is being celebrated. Playing drums or celebrating Islamic festival doesn't make the Muslims Pakistanis or Jhalupara area a mini Pakistan. He is questioning the patriotic sentiments of the Muslims residing in Jhalupara area. If he is calling the place a mini Pakistan because the population of Muslims in the area is high, then he should also know that not only Muslims but various people from other communities like Nepalese, Biharis, Bengalis, Khasis etc reside in the area. Even if the area holds a large Muslims population, Dwivedi does not have any right to call this place a mini Pakistan. Jhalupara is in Meghalaya, India and the people residing in the area are Indians, not Pakistanis. So I request him and every other person who keep a thought like him that Muslims are not Indians, or that they do not have the patriotic feelings for India, that they are wrong. And I also request Dwivedi not to such inflammatory language on a public platform.

Yours etc

Pakistani artistes

Editor,
Ever since the Uri attack and the retaliatory surgical strikes by the Indian Army in POK, the clamour for banning Pakistani artistes and their movies in India has grown louder by the day. All of us talk at home, at work and everywhere about terrorism and Pakistan, but eventually move on with our lives. For the last many decades, Pakistan's military, ISI and the government have been funding, training and supporting terrorists to cause trouble in India. As a result of their nefarious designs, we have never been able to put unswerving focus on development. Most of the resources and time have only been wasted in fighting insurgency and separatism in Kashmir. Nevertheless, we have created dedicated channel for Pakistani serials and made their artists our heroes.

We know well that Pakistani artistes aren't terrorists. But people like Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, Atif Aslam, Ali Zafar, Fawad Khan etc., have a mass following; when they talk, people listen. We should ask them and all the artistes from Pakistan working here to take a definitive stand on these

Akram Iqbal
Shillong-2

"All human life is here, but the Holy Ghost seems to be somewhere else."

--- William Ellery Channing

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 77

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2016

Will Donald Trump win?

REPUBLICAN candidate Donald Trump has been one of the most contentious presidential candidates that the world has ever seen. Brashness and vulgarity are his character traits. Trump has denigrated immigrants, the handicapped, Muslims and Mexicans; trashed all recent trade agreements and mounted a boisterous campaign claiming that President Obama was not born in the USA. Without any respect for the Constitution, Trump has insulted the presidential selection process by jumping into the fray without doing any ground work. Trump has boasted of grabbing women by their genitals; denigrated the NATO allies; praised the dictatorial president of Russia and encouraged him to hack Democratic Party emails. He even vowed to prosecute his campaign rival, Hillary Clinton if he is elected. Worse, he even threatened to curb the freedom of the press.

The belligerent right winger even dared to suggest that gun rights advocates might take the law into their own hands if Hillary Clinton were to win the presidential election. Trump has also tried to undermine America's electoral system by expressing his distrust for the voting method and claiming that the election is so rigged in his country that if he loses the election he would refuse to accept the verdict of the people. Times without number Trump has lied blatantly on many issues – something that others before him had never done. The US and indeed the world is facing a huge technological shift which is redefining the meaning of work and the workplace. Government can help only to an extent. Whoever wins the elections will need to reduce the tensions within the country and enable every American to face the growing economic crises and enable then to cushion off the worst. The more Americans are divided, the more likely it is for the American dream to collapse.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

Central govt. employees threaten to launch agitation

The Central Government employees of the North Eastern region have threatened to launch an agitational programme if their ten points charter of demands is not met by the Central Government within three months. This was slated at a mass rally of the Central Govt, employment organised to observe the N.E. Regional Demands Day" In Shillong on Friday. Participants at the rally shouted slogans protesting against the "discriminatory and apathetic" attitude of the Central Govt. towards them. Similarities were organised in other towns and cities of this region in response to a call given by the Regional Co-ordination Committee (RCC) of Central Govt employees in the North East.

At the rally, the RCC leaders cited instances of the Central Government's apathetic attitude towards them. The bone of contention seems to be their demand for Special Duty Allowance of 33 and one third % to compensate for the high cost of living in this region. But the Central Government sanctioned the allowance @ 25 % to only the senior officers having all India transfer liability and to no other staff. This, according to the RCC is ridiculous since the high cost of living in this region is felt more by the junior staff rather than the senior officers. Other grievances include the resumption of the winter allowance for Shillong which was arbitrarily withdrawn by the 4th Pay Commission; construction of staff quarters for the employees since only 5 % of the employees have quarters against the declared policy of the Central Govt. to provide quarters for at less. 60 % of the staff, declaring

Guwahati as B 2city whereby they would be entitled to higher House Rent Allowance and city compensatory allowance, opening of more Kendryia Vidyalayas in all town of this region; granting of Hill Compensatory Allowance to all stations' employees in this region at all.

As example of the apathetic attitude of the Central Govt. the RCC further cited the Special Compensatory (Remote Locality) Allowance which was granted to the Central Govt employees in Shimla in Himachal Pradesh while similar demands of the Central Govt. employees in Shillong were completely ignored Treatment of the entire state of Nagaland as "difficult area" and provision of residential accommodation to all the employees in Nagaland due to the peculiar conditions prevailing there and reclassification of Sibsagar and other towns in the same category at Tezpur, Jorhat and Dhubri to that the employees are entitled to similar allowances are the other demands that have been made by the RCC. The RCC has also demanded the granting of adequate flood relief to central Govt. employees in flood affected areas of Assam and other areas of this region as also the taking of effective measures to check the recurrence of floods in the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys.

The leaders of the RCC revealed to the Shillong Times that a convention would be held "sometime by the end of April" to "take stock of the situation and decide upon the future course of action.

NH7 Weekender and some gratuitous comments

By Patricia Mukhim

higher. In fact the online sale of tickets happened at least a month ago.

So NH7 Weekender came and went like it did last year. I got it from the horse's mouth that the show drew in 35% more crowd this year, although the line-up of artistes in this edition was less spectacular than last year's. From The Wailers, Megadeth, Kailash Kher etc., we are now down to Steve Wilson, Farhan Akhtar (who actually has no voice to talk about), Nucleya and a host of other lesser known bands. Perhaps Papon and Soulmate were the saving grace for this year's show. But that is only if you're there to enjoy good music. Now is that the only reason why NH7 attracts such a huge crowd? Or is it because drinks flow and there are no inhibitions on how much you drink, whether you get drunk or are just simply grooving with the music. It's a liberating feeling to be in an open field and be holding a mug of beer or any other drink and to be largely among your non-judgmental peers, if you are coming from a society that is squeamish about social drinking. That's why we now have cars that turn into bars in the evening because young people can't find decent and affordable pubs to take in their tots.

For Vijay Nair, the NH7 promoter, the event is nothing short of a show stopper. He is a wizard who knows exactly what rocks the people of Shillong. Ah... no not just Shillong now. The suburbans of Ri Bhoi (meaning Umroi and its thereabouts) have also learnt what it is to share the thrills of the towns- folk of Shillong, so this year NH7 distributed several hundred tickets to be given to the suburbans with the rider that they are to be identified by the Rangbah Shnong of the area. Not everyone can afford tickets costing Rs 2000 per couple and Rs 1250 per head for both days. But in a city where the disparities are glaring, there are enough takers for the tickets even if they were to be priced

technical stuff to host it. So in a sense he feels we owe him big time for putting up an event that people would otherwise have had to go to Hyderabad or Pune to witness. That he says would have entailed them buying air tickets, pay for hotels apart from paying for the tickets. But Mr Nair that works both ways! You are not exactly going out of pocket by putting up the show in Shillong are you? If you weren't making profit you would not have returned here. Not by a long shot!

Nair is sore about the rent seekers but he made sure not to ruffle the feathers of those in the Government who made the going smooth for him. The chief executive of the state received praises galore and his office was congratulated for facilitating the smooth passage of the show. You are smart Mr Nair. You could not have offended the Chief Minister and hoped to return next year for a bigger event perhaps. But yes you gave the villagers of Umroi a real dressing down. They don't really matter in your scheme of things because they can always be paid to get back into your good books. How sad is that, but, how convenient for you.

There were quite a few stinkers on Vijay Nair's post. One guy said, "Try and organize NH7 in Goa and watch the fun." Another said that NH7 pulled out of Gaucho because the rent seeking has become abominably horrifying. The NCR region has more people wanting free passes than there are people who would buy tickets. Shillongites are very honourable in comparison. Nair calls Shillong his second home but I guess that is only as long as he can rake in the profits.

But there are a few issues one has with NH7. Several brands of liquor not usually allowed to be sold in the liquor shops here flow freely at the venue. Bacardi is not the only liquor company selling its drinks here. And there is no excise tax on these drinks and no entertainment tax on NH 7.

happening before our eyes? Yours etc., Philip Marweñ, Shillong-2.

selection committee and it is in contravention of the Statute 20(6) which states as follows: "If the Executive Council is unable to accept the recommendations made by a selection committee, it shall record its reason and submit the case to the Visitor for final orders." It is clear from the above that the Executive Council cannot change the selection committee recommendations. Under such circumstances, we urge the media to enquire into the matter, since UGC is the highest Regulatory Body of higher education in the country. We are very concerned and would like to see the University maintain and uphold the sanctity befitting a Centre of Excellence. Your prompt action will save this university and help prevent gross violation of the Statutory provisions.

Yours etc., A. S. Mawphlang, NEHU

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

JNNRUM transport scam in Meghalaya

Editor,

The Government of Meghalaya under the Department of Meghalaya Urban Affairs received huge funds from the Ministry of Urban Affairs for the development of urban amenities in the state. One such scheme is the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNURM). Under the scheme, the Meghalaya Government has purchased fleet of buses and maxi cabs amounting to several crore rupees during last few years in order to meet the transport requirements of the public in Shillong. The transport service is called Shillong Public Transport Service (SPTS).

These buses and maxi cabs have been leased out to the NGOs at a throwaway price. It was revealed that for the maxi cabs the NGOs are paying around Rs 280 to Rs.300 daily per cab to the MUDA, whereas the drivers of these cabs are paying to the NGOs

Rs.1000 daily per cab in cash after meeting fuel costs and their food and snacks. The same arrangement goes for the buses but the bus drivers have to pay much higher daily collections to the respective NGOs on a daily basis. Here lies the crux of the problem. The vehicles belong to the Government but the real earnings from the vehicles are enjoyed by the NGOs and if there is wear and tear, repairs and major breakdowns the Government has to bear all the expenses. What type of agreements have been entered into by the government and the NGOs? If this is not a huge scam then what is it? Will the New Urban Affairs Minister, Mr. R.V Lyngdoh, endorse what has been done by the former Urban Affairs Minister? Will he scrap the agreements already made earlier or what will he do to set matters right?

Another aspect to this is that a good number of buses and maxi cabs are lying in a state of disrepair and also a good number of them are lying idle in the respective parking yards of the NGOs. Who can give an answer to such colossal waste of public properties bought from public funds? Shall we, the public, allow and tolerate such shady deals

happening before our eyes? Yours etc., Philip Marweñ, Shillong-2.

NEHU violates UGC regulations

Editor,

With reference to the above we wish to inform that in 2012, NEHU conducted interviews for CAS promotions as per UGC regulation 20(D) O. In keeping with NEHU Statute 20(6), the recommendations of the selection committee were put up to the Executive Council of the University which accepted the recommendations and so did the promotees. The selection committees had clearly mentioned the effective dates for promotions of respective candidates in their recommendations, keeping in view the eligibility as per the UGC regulation 2010, assessment of research and performance in the interview.

Now, six years later the University is changing the dates of promotion making it effective from dates earlier than those recommended by the selection committee.

I don't know if Vijay Nair enjoys the same patronage elsewhere. The affluent of Shillong who often feel besieged by busyness are also plagued by a daily excess of choices find NH7 an outlet for these souls with pent-up energy. No one has any problems with that! People who can afford have the right to enjoy themselves. But the problem is that the system that is meant to keep the law and order also looks the other way when this event happens. There were thousands of cars at the venue, not all of them chauffeur driven. So one can conclude that on Saturday evening there were thousands of drunken drivers on the road and a couple of pranks as well. Were those guys arrested for endangering the lives of non-drinkers on the same route?

Then there is the case of Farhan Akhtar who while on stage witnessed some unpleasant scenes. I am quoting a FaceBook post to show how enraged Farhan was. He said something to this effect. "At times and shows like these, we ought to help each other. So I have something to say, there are some boys in the front rows who have been behaving badly and groping the girls. If the security guys see you do that again, they're going to beat the shit out of you, and I'll join them. You'd better stop that behavior."

That's not a very good certificate for NH7 and one wishes this does not become a rendezvous for fornication. This is no moral tutorial. Those who have gone for the NH7 and are having their booze there are supposed to be adults (not below 18 years). Really?

So Mr Vijay Nair, profit is what drives everything in the world today. No one is doing anyone a favour. Of course Shillong gets prouder by the day and more famous perhaps for hosting these mega musical shows but I wonder what the social costs are and if anyone is interested in measuring that. And no, I am not a wet blanket, just an ant in your tight pants.

selection committee and it is in contravention of the Statute 20(6) which states as follows:

"If the Executive Council is unable to accept the recommendations made by a selection committee, it shall record its reason and submit the case to the Visitor for final orders." It is clear from the above that the Executive Council cannot change the selection committee recommendations. Under such circumstances, we urge the media to enquire into the matter, since UGC is the highest Regulatory Body of higher education in the country. We are very concerned and would like to see the University maintain and uphold the sanctity befitting a Centre of Excellence. Your prompt action will save this university and help prevent gross violation of the Statutory provisions.

Yours etc., A. S. Mawphlang, NEHU

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.

Karunanidhi bequeaths party to Stalin

DMK relieved to have Crown Prince at last

By Kalyani Shankar

The dynastic politics in India is getting stronger and stronger with the leaders of political parties naming their family members to succeed them even as their parties have been docile to accept it. Leaders like Sonia Gandhi, Parkash Singh Badal, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Lalu Prasad Yadav, K. Chandrasekhar Rao and Nara Chandrababu Naidu, and Farooq Abdullah, to name a few, believe in the dynastic politics. The latest to join this club is the 93-year-old DMK supremo Muthuvel Karunanidhi, who has declared his younger son M.K.Stalin as his political heir. "From his prison days where he faced a lot of hardships, he has himself worked very hard and elevated himself systematically to the position of future president (of DMK). In that aspect, he remains my political heir apparent today," he told in a recent magazine interview.

Stalin may not have the charisma or the literary reputation of his father nor his colourful life, but he has moved up by sheer hard work playing his cards well by working under his father for over four decades now. No doubt that the DMK went through the democratic motions of electing its office bearers all these years.

spectrum scam, the DMK has been on the back foot. The consecutive loss of the Assembly polls in 2011 and 2016 has made the party workers gasping for political oxygen. After his hard work in the 2016 Assembly polls, the party won 100 seats, which was seen quite creditable for the DMK.

At the family level, Karunanidhi has chosen Stalin ignoring the claims of his elder son Alagiri who one time asked if the party was a "mutt" where the senior pontiff could anoint his successor. For years Alagiri and Stalin had been engaged in a tussle for their father's favour and clout in the party. But Stalin trumped his elder brother when it came to winning the trust of their father, as also of the party rank and file. The sibling rivalry had been playing out as there is another claimant - Karunanidhi's daughter and the Rajya Sabha M.P Kanimozhi, who is also in the fray. In the '80s, Karunanidhi's eldest son, M.K. Muthu, was declared persona non grata in the DMK when he fell out with his father. An angered Muthu joined AIADMK and has been in political wilderness since. Karunanidhi promoted

The DMK has weathered many a political storm in the past. During the Emergency it faced an existential crisis. After MGR's death in 1987, the DMK wrested power from AIADMK in 1989 and from then on, both the AIADMK and the DMK have ruled the state alternatively.

Karunanidhi had all along said that the party would elect his successor. So declaring Stalin as his political heir apparent is not in the style of the original DMK. The issue of Karunanidhi handing over the baton has been a subject of speculation in DMK. His assertion that Stalin will succeed him has brought relief to the cadres and may put an end to the sibling rivalry in the party.

Strangely enough, the DMK was not a party which believed in dynastic politics. When the first DMK chief and Tamil Nadu chief minister C.N. Annadurai died in February 1969, although Nedunchezian was his number two, Karunanidhi succeeded him. He went on to win elections in 1971 but once M. G. Ramachandran (MGR) split the DMK by launching AIADMK in October 1972, it became tougher for Karunanidhi. The DMK remained out of power for 13 long years but Karunanidhi's leadership and organisational skills kept the party intact.

The DMK has weathered many a political storm in the past. During the Emergency it faced an existential crisis. After MGR's death in 1987, the DMK wrested power from AIADMK in 1989 and from then on, both the AIADMK and the DMK have ruled the state alternatively. In the 1991 general elections, after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the DMK won just one seat. But the party bounced back in 1996 and 2006. But all these were comebacks made by Karunanidhi. Today, it is for Stalin to boost the morale of the party. From 2011, after losing the assembly elections and facing allegations in the 2G-

Stalin in the nineties in preference to the firebrand leader Vaiko, who floated his MDMK.

Alagiri, elder by two years, had been aspiring to lead the party.

He was not only expelled from the party in March 2014 for alleged anti-party activities, but also lost the patronage of his father. The dispute gained fresh momentum in 2013, when he insisted that the DMK continue in the United Progressive Alliance government, but Stalin wanted to pull out.

Stalin had used the small window of opportunity after his brother was dismissed from the party and captured the party. Karunanidhi's move comes at a time when the AIADMK leader and Tamil Nadu chief minister J. Jayalalithaa is ailing in the hospital. The DMK and the AIADMK are ideologically from the same stable of the Dravida Kazhagam of Periyar Ramaswamy Naicker. There were apprehensions that the AIADMK might split if Jayalalithaa continues to remain incapacitated. That was one of the reasons for Karunanidhi announcing his crown prince.

Secondly, there are apprehensions within the party that if he did not name his successor, in the post Karunanidhi era it might split. Thirdly, Karunanidhi wanted to bequeath his entire party to his son.

Despite naming his political heir, Karunanidhi is clear that he will remain the party chief till he dies. With Jayalalithaa ailing and Karunanidhi getting on in age, Tamil Nadu politics is at an interesting stage as there are no strong leaders in sight. (IPA Service)

“After coming into contact with a religious man I always feel I must wash my hands.”

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 78 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2016

Festival of Lights

DIWALI or Deepavali marks the victory of good over evil and is the most widely celebrated festival in India. Also called the Festival of Lights, (not of sound), Diwali is spread across six days in various parts of the country. This year, the main Diwali festival falls on October 23. Apart from lining up the entire house with beautiful diyas and candles, people burst firecrackers. Worshippers of Lakshmi decorate their homes with lights and flowers, arrange for social events and distribute sweets among friends and family. Owing to India's cultural diversity, the festival has a distinct regional touch in different parts of the country. In north India, people celebrate Diwali to mark the victory of Lord Ram over the demon King Ravana and his return to Ayodhya with his wife Sita and brother Lakshman after 14 years of exile. Among the Sikhs, the festival of lights hold a special importance because on this day, the sixth Guru Hargobind Singh who was held captive under Mughal emperor Jahangir, returned to Amritsar. In the south, the festival is called Deepavali and marks the defeat of demon Narakasura. The festival also holds a special importance to farmers across the country since Diwali marks the end of the harvest season, which is why the farmers celebrate it.

This year in Meghalaya FM Radio and other media has been appealing to revelers not to burst loud crackers as they tend to terrify animals like dogs and birds, apart from causing discomfort to the elderly, the sick and infants. The Supreme Court has already held that crackers should not be burst between 10 pm to 6 pm. This year it appears there is more compliance but we have to wait and watch until October 30 when the Festival is celebrated across all communities. Nevertheless, we expect sanity to prevail. After all, Diwali is a Festival of Lights not of Sound.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

Cong (I) forges ahead in Tripura

The Congress (I) forged ahead of the ruling Left Front in Tripura with more than half the Assembly seats filled in the state till late tonight.

The Congress(I) and Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS) alliance bagged 24 out of 45 seats filled so far, the Congress (I)'s share being 17. On the other hand, the CPI-M and its ally the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) has won 21 seats, wresting two from the Congress(I), the CPI-M tally being 19. The Left Front suffered two reverses when Revenue Minister Khangen

Das and Forest Minister Araber Rehman were dislodged by Congress(I)'s new newcomers Surojit Dutta and Billal Miya respectively.

The CPI(M) wrested the Nalchar (SC) seat in Sonamura sub-division and Surma (SC) seat in Kamalpur subdivision and The Chandipur seat in Kailasahar subdivision.

The Congress(I) successes came in Manoharpur constituency in Sadar subdivision and the town seat in Beloina subdivision.

Some years ago, during an international conference organized in North Eastern Hill University the then Governor of the state was invited as the Chief Guest. During his speech he regaled the audience with a story which according to him reveals the typical nature of the people of Assam (and by extension of the people of North East India). There was an Assamese man who would catch fish every day to take them back home to his family. He would catch just enough fish for his family and then return home. One day a foreigner arrived and saw the fisherman engrossed in his daily activity. The foreigner approached the fisherman and suggested to him that by using a bigger net the fisherman would be able to catch more fish. On being asked by the fisherman as to what would he do with the extra fish, the foreigner replied that he could sell them. Then the fisherman could use the money to buy a bigger net and catch some more fish. Then what, the fisherman asked. Then, in a satisfactory tone the foreigner explained, the fisherman can use the profit from the sale and lead a comfortable life instead of catching fish every day. The fisherman replied that he was already living a comfortable life. By catching only what he requires he gets a lot of free time which he uses by relaxing with friends, family and doing what he likes. The foreigner got frustrated and left bemoaning the lack of initiative and fatalism of the fisherman. This attitude of the fisherman was termed as lahe lahe (laidback attitude) by the Governor which according to him is typical nature of the Assamese people and by extension the people of North East.

Some time ago, I was in a conference which was attended by some of the prominent people of the State. During the discussion one of the participants explained to the host about the unenterprising attitude of the local people and dependence on handouts as the reason for the lack of the state's economic development. Changing this attitude was touted as the main obstacle for improving the status of the people. This perspective is similar to the one expressed above by the former Governor, i.e., people are basically lazy and do not want to put any effort to improve their lot. What it also means is that people are poor because of their own laziness; it is their fatalistic attitude of depending on the government which keeps them in their wretched condition. To summarize, the poor people are their own enemies. However, my recent experience tells me otherwise.

Poor people do not enjoy being poor and they make every effort to improve their conditions. One such group in the State are the street vendors and hawkers especially from the rural areas. Braving sunshine, rain or cold they come out every day to sell their goods on the footpaths. The money that they earn is used to send their children to schools and provide for the daily needs. Some vendors come every day from their village carrying the fruits and vegetables that they grow in their farm. Some come barefoot while many are shabbily dressed. In their villages there is a lack of proper school, medical facilities or even decent road connection. In spite of all this, they would toil hard in their fields with whatever they have and travel to the city to sell their produce. The vehicles (buses/sumo) in which they make the journey is always overloaded and the mass of people cramped in a small space makes the journey very uncomfortable. Few years ago, I remember going to one such village in a bus which was full of supplies. I had to sit on top of a rice sack till I reached the destination. Another time I sat with 20 people in a sumo meant for 10-12 people. Life for these poor people is not easy and they work very hard for maintain their meager existence. If they were lazy, they would have starved to death a long time ago.

The urban poor also come into the street vending business because like the rural poor they have to make a living for themselves and their family. During the meeting in which the street hawkers/vendors of Shillong decided to organize themselves to fight for their rights, I met one young man who, like the

By Bhogtoram Mawroh

the people. This perspective is similar to the one expressed above by the former Governor, i.e., people are basically lazy and do not want to put any effort to improve their lot. What it also means is that people are poor because of their own laziness; it is their fatalistic attitude of depending on the government which keeps them in their wretched condition. To summarize, the poor people are their own enemies. However, my recent experience tells me otherwise.

Poor people do not enjoy being poor and they make every effort to improve their conditions. One such group in the State are the street vendors and hawkers especially from the rural areas. Braving sunshine, rain or cold they come out every day to sell their goods on the footpaths. The money that they earn is used to send their children to schools and provide for the daily needs. Some vendors come every day from their village carrying the fruits and vegetables that they grow in their farm. Some come barefoot while many are shabbily dressed. In their villages there is a lack of proper school, medical facilities or even decent road connection. In spite of all this, they would toil hard in their fields with whatever they have and travel to the city to sell their produce. The vehicles (buses/sumo) in which they make the journey is always overloaded and the mass of people cramped in a small space makes the journey very uncomfortable. Few years ago, I remember going to one such village in a bus which was full of supplies. I had to sit on top of a rice sack till I reached the destination. Another time I sat with 20 people in a sumo meant for 10-12 people. Life for these poor people is not easy and they work very hard for maintain their meager existence. If they were lazy, they would have starved to death a long time ago.

The urban poor also come into the street vending business because like the rural poor they have to make a living for themselves and their family. During the meeting in which the street hawkers/vendors of Shillong decided to organize themselves to fight for their rights, I met one young man who, like the

others had been chased by the police from doing his business on the roadside. He told us that after he was chased away he was working in a job which provided only ? 3000 per month which was not enough to meet the daily needs. By previously selling men's inner-wear he had been able to send his younger brother to college. He wanted to return to his old business as the current pay was meager. People have since returned to their old spots and I am sure he must be selling his goods somewhere along the footpaths at this moment. His story is shared by many of the urban poor as well, and he was definitely not lazy!

Then why make the argument for laziness. The answer lies in the colonial history of India. During the colonial period the British households kept a lot of Indian servants. These were derived from different castes and religious backgrounds, and a single British household would have many of them working together. Nupur Chaudhuri in her paper, 'Memsahibs and their servants in the 19th Century India' did a very interesting study regarding the attitude of the British women especially the wives of the British officials, military officers, missionaries, and merchants towards the native servants and how this created a perception about all Indians as well. According to the British women, the Indian servants were superstitious, unintelligent, dirty, lazy, and dishonest. These women then wrote advice manuals for instruction purpose where they "reiterated the physical, moral, sexual, and intellectual inferiority of the Indian servant". This negative attitude about Indian servants naturally spilled to other classes of Indians as well. One British woman wrote that "a great majority of Indian merchants have arms, legs, and body bare, and squat upon their shop boards or their doorsteps in attitudes strongly reminding one of the monkey tribes". Was this characterization of Indian people true? Of course not!

These negative descriptions were aimed at perpetuating the British supremacy in terms of wider political and scientific

discourse on race and the legitimacy of imperialism. This story was repeated in all the places that the colonials went; Africa, Asia, Americas and Australia. Treating the natives as sub-human and not worthy of having a dignified life, they were taken away as slaves and dispossessed of their community land. Below is an excerpt from the American State Relations, Foreign Relations part III, pp. 719-721, "The United States while intending never to acquire lands from the Indians otherwise other than peaceably, and with their free consent... (however). They will not suppose that the Government will avow, as the basis of the policy towards the United States a system of arresting their natural growth within their own territories, for the sake of preserving a perpetual desert for the savages". This attitude became the cornerstone of European expansion into North America that brought immense misery to the native Indians. Even at the present time, the plight of these native people displaced by colonialism is highly deplorable. Particularly in Australia, the aborigines suffer from many social problems and have a high level of poverty. This has resulted in a very high rate of crime and incarceration among the aborigines compared to the general population in Australia.

The argument of laziness performs two functions. It allows the government to abdicate its responsibility and also prepares the ground for dispossession of the masses. This is how the Indian caste system worked - one is born into a lower caste because of wrongdoings in the past. Therefore, in order to be happy in the next lifetime (possibility be born into a higher caste), the lower castes should accept the authority of the higher castes and serve them. Apart from neglecting the needs of the common people, if one also instills the belief that they are at fault, e.g., laziness, then they can be exploited as well. Once this is done the common people will always be dependent on the political class and those unscrupulous groups who want to exploit them for their benefit.

Political Delicacies

By Nora Chopra

Congress worker Kanojia helps Mohd Yusif big time

Mohd Yusif, a barber was allotted space by NDMC behind Press Club of India to earn his bread and butter from 1990. He has been paying rent regularly and has never been defaulter. Many members and staff of Press Club of India are his regular customers. Many politicians who stay nearby off and on visit his place for hair cutting and shaving. Recently NDMC has asked him to vacate this place in name of Sachh Bharat Abhiyan. Suresh Kanojia, a Dalit by birth, an alumni of Kiroirimal College, an active member of Congress Party and National President of Akhil Bharatiya Dalit and Muslim Mahasangh took the initiative and brought to the notice of Ms. Chanchal Yadav, Secretary of NDMC appealing to do justice to Mohd Yusif as other vendors near Krishi Bhawan and Shastri Bhawan who do not pay any rent and are at the mercy of NDMC officials. Kanojia's letter has brought positive response and Yusif has been reallocated his old place to work upon. A big help indeed.

Mulayam's second wife

party is unlikely to get more than 50 seats. Meeting was attended by 8 vice presidents and eight secretaries of the PCC. plus big leaders like AICC general secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad, PCC chief Raj Babbar CM candidate Sheila Dixit, campaign committee chairman Sanjay Singh and even Pramod Tiwari. The meeting is indicative of the fact that the Congress president Sonia Gandhi has to get full involvement of Priyanka in the UP poll campaign.. Mulayam seeking to unite all Lohiaites under one umbrella. Despite Samajwadi Party being in total shambles in the aftermath of the Mahabharata in the Yadav parivar, efforts are on to form a grand alliance in Uttar Pradesh poll. Mulayam dialled the RJD leader, the jat supremo Ajit Singh and invited him to join hands with the SP. Putting all the blame on Ram Gopal Yadav for rejecting his overtures earlier, Mulayam is supposed to have reminded the jat leader of his close association with his father Charan Singh. On Wednesday evening Shiv Pal Yadav, now the state

The Congress finally used its last trump card Priyanka Gandhi in Uttar Pradesh on Monday this week for the first time. Priyanka officially attended and chaired the review meeting of the Uttar Pradesh PCC. Along with Ghulam Nabi Azad, the general secretary in charge of UP.

called Kaikeyi in UP

Sadhna Gupta, the second wife of Mulayam Singh Yadav, is fast becoming famous as Kaikeyi in Uttar Pradesh. She was the second wife of King Dasarath and the step mother of Ram. She got Ram banished for 14 years of Sanyas to get her son Bharat the throne of Ayodhya and be the successor to King Dasarath. When Mulayam was told that Sadhna was being called Kaikeyi by the people of his state and particularly by supporters of Akhilesh, Mulayam is said to have said that Kaikeyi was after all the wife of Dasarath and the step mother of Ram. It was Ram's duty to obey her and Ram did that by accepting the 14 years of exile.

Priyanka Gandhi to be involved in poll campaign

The Congress finally used its last trump card Priyanka Gandhi in Uttar Pradesh on Monday this week for the first time. Priyanka officially attended and chaired the review meeting of the Uttar Pradesh PCC. Along with Ghulam Nabi Azad, the general secretary in charge of UP. Equally important was that her brother Rahul Gandhi was in Delhi but not present at this review meeting. Rahul Gandhi's yatras have made no impact at the ground level and that the Congress is unlikely to get even 50 seats out of the total of 403 seats in Uttar Pradesh assembly. The Congress leadership had no option but to field Priyanka in the election campaign now. The Gandhi girl had been attending Congress meetings unofficially and has given her suggestions but on Monday the meeting was different. She officially attended the meeting. In the meeting she asked every PCC member to air their views freely. Every member was given a chance to speak and the gist of their speeches made it clear that the condition of the Congress organization is not good. Priyanka listened to them attentively and asked them for suggestions. The general opinion was that unless there is some alliance, the

president of the Samajwadi Party called on the JD(U) leader K C Tyagi and Sharad Yadav to invite them for the 25th anniversary of the foundation day of the SP. The function will be held in Lucknow on November 5. Besides JD(U), Shivpal has extended invite to all the parties with roots in the socialist party founded by Ram Manohar Lohia, the leading socialist leader of the country. Besides JD(U), Shiv Pal also met the RJD leader Ajit Singh to invite him for the function. Besides JD (U) and RLD the invites will be given to Nitish Kumar and RJD. All these parties are offshoots of SSP. By doing this Mulayam wants to bring all ex Lohiaites on the same platform. This would be a show of strength. By doing this, Mulayam wants to prove to both his support base Muslims and the Yadavs that he continues to be strong. This is also being seen to be giving signals to the Congress not to take him lightly..

Amar Singh aims to be SP leader in Rajya Sabha

Ram Gopal Yadav's loss can be Amar Singh's gain. He is lobbying to become the leader of the Samajwadi Party. Amar Singh who has now become famous as a great conspirator knows well how to get even with his enemies. He is a very happy man. He has succeeded in banishing Mulayam Singh Yadav's cousin Ram Gopal Yadav from the Samajwadi Party. Ram Gopal was opposed to giving entry to the wily Thakur in the party. Ram Gopal was also opposed to giving him Rajya Sabha seat. But after he failed in stopping Mulayam from giving Singh the Rajya Sabha seat, he had the consolation of not giving him the chance to speak in the house as he was the leader of the party in Rajya Sabha. But now with Ram Gopal thrown out of the party for six years, Amar is likely to succeed him in the Upper House as the leader of the party but other SP MPs are heard ridiculing the possibility. (IPA)

TO THE EDITOR

NH 7 and beyond...

Editor,

Through this letter I would like to express my concern over the negativity that has been brought out in Patricia Mukhim's article, "NH7 Weekender...some gratuitous comments" (ST October 28, 2016), at the recently concluded Weekender NH 7 Festival in Shillong and its repercussions. The Event on the whole was successfully completed and yes, we too have experienced faults and glitches in our projects whether it's events, tours or production for travel and film houses. We must understand that NH 7 is organized on a magnitude of a different level and must acknowledge the efforts of Mr. Vijay Nair and the entire crew for bringing such a festival to Shillong. Apart from harping on only the negative side of such events we have forgotten to mention what it has brought to Meghalaya in terms of tourism (as that is all I am concerned about). The organizers may have raked in on the 'moolah' for two days, but we have failed to see the positive side of the rest of Meghalaya raking in profits

from the event as well and that too for an entire week!

Our hotels, guest houses, home stays etc. were packed to the rafters and this prompted our stakeholders to run camp sites with amenities for the huge number of visitors. We had travellers from all over India as well as abroad who carried on from there to places like Sohra, Mawlynnong, Dawki and Jaintia Hills. Motorcyclists staying at our camp rode on to beautiful locations and stayed on for days (This is our livelihood)! We have always worked earnestly to promote tourism here, whether it is motorcycle tourism, adventure tourism or even leisure tourism. We henceforth encouraged our guests to continue on their journey by arranging vehicles and accommodation at different locations. These were the same revelers who visited NH7 and I can say for one, they were the most amazing bunch of people I have ever met. Our conversations over breakfast, every morning, and again late into the night after the festival was over, was a learning experience as we exchanged stories, music and adventures. It was more than just the festival that Mr

Vijay Nair had brought to us and NH 7 has opened our eyes to a different kind of mass gathering (the happy kind).

We too had revelers who could not handle their drinks or their vehicles and kept them safe in the confines of our camp site but their numbers were so minuscule that it was not worth mentioning as the positive vibes were far greater. I'm sure through this exposure all will soon learn how to conduct themselves with decorum at huge festivals, like we did when we visited festivals in other states. The bigger picture of it is what's important and I really wouldn't care about the past history of a musician crashing into a police vehicle. The music here and now is more important.

To Vijay Nair, I would say I hope that he is not disheartened after all his efforts by a few negative remarks solely aimed at him and the festival. When a man strives to achieve great things, he is often criticized and pulled down by a few. Only the negative parts are remembered and the positive outcome is swept under the rug. This

is the nature of men. We hope Nair brings back NH 7, bigger, better and louder. I'm sure we all will learn from a few mistakes and rectify them next time. They were minor details but I'm sure we can all work together (crowds/ revelers, cops, organizers and the government) for a better Meghalaya. A special 'thank you' goes out to Meghalaya Police for their efforts in managing huge crowds and traffic in and around the venue and at the camp sites and I'm sure we can forgive our bureaucrats and politicians, as asking for freebies is our 'Indianness'.

Ashley Erasmus Lyngdoh Green Route Member, Confederation of Tourism Industry Meghalaya.

Patricia Mukhim replies:

All stakeholders in 'tourism' will defend to the hilt even a badly organized programme as long as the profits roll in. And I have no problems with Megadeth's past. It was just an insight into the man who is now a reformed Christian. So, there was just a minuscule number that could not hold their drinks, right? Were you able to count their numbers?

This is precisely the point to be debated. What sort of tourism is Meghalaya promoting? Is it going to be a free-for-all zone where criticism is no longer tolerated? Give me a break! There are too many vested interests labeling critics as negative and almost compelling everyone to be positive and "happy." Happy as in 'joint smoking' happy?

Extension for how long?

Editor,

It seems there is no limit to the tenure of the post of Secretary, Meghalaya State Electricity Commission (MSERC). The person presently holding this post, J.B.Poon, retired from MeSEB as Chief Engineer in 2008. He was appointed to this post on 1st November 2009 as shown in the website. By now he must have crossed 66 years of age. The tenure of the Chairman, MSERC is up to 65 yrs of age. However, it seems that there is no age limit to the post of Secretary. How is this possible? This person was also given extension during his time in MeSEB, but due to pressure applied by the various associations, his

service was terminated. Further, he also runs the Institution of Engineers (India) like his fiefdom. Though apparently there is election, the contestants and the subsequent result is nothing but a farce. He prepares the agenda and conducts the meetings to comply with the formalities without even being an elected member. No one has ever prepared and conducted the meeting without his knowledge. He invites or informs regarding any meeting or election only to a few selected ones. You will never see that there is any information in the newspaper regarding the various activities including invitation to meetings or conduct of election. Even the treasurers are asked to sign on blank cheques. Nobody knows the transactions. He maintains all the records and others are asked to put their signatures without going into the details. Even this information is never released in detail to the body. Wonder why no one dares to challenge him. His actions need to be investigated.

Yours etc,
Synrop Lang Dkhar,
Shillong 1

Braveheart in the face of calamity

By Ninglun Hanghal

An NGO worker encouraged & inspired helpless villagers in flood-ravaged corners of Manipur to stand together & be prepared to face nature's fury

Even thinking about the lashing rains, followed by massive landslides, road cave-ins, a bridge collapse and hundreds of crumbling homes, brings chilling fear back to her bones. If that wasn't apocalypse then what was. It has taken months for families in Chandel district of Manipur to get back to some semblance of a life that was so cruelly destroyed by the unprecedented deluge last year. But if it wasn't for Shangnaidar Tontang the affected communities wouldn't have been able to tide over this "difficult time".

With no previous experience in either emergency response or rehabilitation, it's been a huge learning curve for her, but living amidst the disaster and looking for solutions, keeping women, children and elders in mind, has enabled Tontang to make a difference.

Around 163 villages in the district were badly affected by the flashfloods and the subsequent landslides, and in Machi block, 36 hamlets were completely isolated once the communication lines snapped and roads vanished. According to Tontang, this area is anyway one of the most backward in the region considering the sustained violence they have witnessed over the last few decades.

"From the late 1980s and early 1990s, conflict and violence has been a part of everyday life here. This was the site of one of the worst ethnic clashes between the Kukis and Nagas, and people haven't really been able to regain a full sense of normalcy since then. Moreover, as it's a border district, clashes between the army and the insurgents is another regular feature. There are frequent combing operations carried out as well. All this has, unfortunately, ensured that communities are unable to get back on their feet and move forward. There is anyway a sense of fear among the locals and the disaster seemed to be the last straw. Everything simply came to a standstill," she says.

It was as if they had been caught in a nightmare that showed no signs of ending. Roads linking the small villages dotting the countryside were wiped out, bridges and several culverts were either damaged or swept away by the raging waters and homes at the riverfront



AGAINST ALL ODDS: (Above) Shangnaidar Tontang (below) motivated local villagers to step up and take on the task of clearing the debris off the roads; (right & below left) with roads wiped out completely after the floods, people's mobility was severely affected



Around 163 villages were badly affected by flashfloods and landslides. In Machi block, 36 hamlets were isolated once the communication lines snapped and roads vanished



were submerged. Crops and vegetables fields were gone.

"Without food, drinking water or medical care, and worst of all, no means to get in touch with each other, things were on a downward spiral. I clearly remember the shock I felt when I heard the news of a nine-member family being buried alive in the landslide at Joumuol village where the disaster claimed 21 lives. Those were some really difficult days that have stretched into months now," she says, her eyes clouding with pain.

Although Tontang, who runs the NGO, Weaker Sections Development

Council (WSDC), was already working with grassroots women on livelihood issues, she found she had to switch gears in the aftermath of the natural calamity. "We basically work for women's empowerment and on development initiatives. But when disaster struck, my colleagues and I decided to concentrate on relief work," she explains.

While this wasn't something any of them had ever attempted, in view of the prevailing emergency, they went ahead anyway. "We

started off by touring the area on foot. There were no roads left so it was not easy to traverse long distances but that was the only way to assess the actual extent of damage and see what needed our immediate attention," she says.

Incidentally, even as her team and she were out in field the rains hadn't ceased, making their survey activity harder than it already was.

That initial investigation gave them clarity on the way forward. Given the widespread destruction of basic infrastructure, they realised that without heavy machinery it would be

impossible to clear the larger debris.

"Nonetheless, we knew we couldn't just keep waiting around for relief to come from outside. There was an urgent need for food and other supplies and nothing would reach the people if the pathways were blocked. So we began by mobilising villagers to join us in clearing the internal roads that were inundated with mud and fallen trees," she elaborates.

This wasn't ideal because families were in a state of shock; however, Tontang and her team managed to motivate them to overcome their grief to ensure their survival. "We were in it together and I was ready to lead from the front; that finally galvanised them into action," she reveals.

The going was tough. There were continuous setbacks owing to the unrelenting downpour — "with a lot of effort we would clear some area only to find it blocked once again in a matter of hours". They somehow managed to make the smaller village roads serviceable but by then Tontang had understood that "physical work by the villagers and us" wouldn't

take them far.

"Once I figured this out, the WSDC team and I started work on raising funds and managed to get assistance from humanitarian agencies such as Tata Trust, CASA and Sphere India, among others," she says.

With funds in hand, the WSDC hired a JCB crane. "The roads had to be cleared in a big way and we needed proper equipment to get the job done quickly. The money came to us at the right time," she remarks.

What about government aid and intervention? "The administration had their job cut out as well. They were concentrating on getting the major trade routes to the region operational, especially the Indo-Myanmar road and another that leads to Imphal. These are the key for movement of supplies and other aid. But we couldn't wait till they managed to clear up those roads and come to us," she says.

For 45 days, the JCB crane was deployed to clean out roads for up to 70km, enough for families to make their way to the nearest town, located in



the adjoining Thoubal district. At the same time, this enabled rescue materials to be brought to them.

"For nearly two months, no one had been able to go for work or buy their daily needs, including food. There was no way to get medicines or go to the hospital at Kakching in Thoubal. With the roads accessible mobility was restored and at least government vehicles with medicines, clothes and other things could come in without any problems," narrates Tontang.

Of course, it was quite a while before people were able to emerge from the trauma of battling such extensive devastation and deep personal loss.

"Communities have had to overcome loss on several fronts. They lost their family members, homes, livelihoods and, for the longest time, weren't able to get back on their feet. Whereas the road blockages resulted in people not making it to the hospital in time, later on, water logging led to the spread of water-borne diseases. With schools in Thoubal, children had to put their studies on hold temporarily," says Tontang.

Income generation became the biggest hurdle. "The main sources of earning here are agriculture, handicrafts and handloom, and the sale of forest products like wild vegetables and firewood. The disaster had put a stop to all these activities," says Tontang.

Today, the determined activist has taken on the task of preparing her people for any impending disaster by introducing awareness programmes and rehabilitation services.

"We were caught unawares last year and had to struggle to find a foothold. In fact, for many, the painful memories haven't faded yet. We are conducting regular trauma counselling to help them deal with it. Besides this, we are doing trainings to empower communities to tackle floods and landslides. Though disasters cannot be predicted we will definitely be better prepared, emotionally and physically," she says.

Though India's disaster management capabilities are still not optimum, efforts like those heralded by Tontang are heartening and show the way forward. (WFS)

Rock star accountants

My wife says I'm listening to too much rap, but I told her: "Imma not, sista, Imma good mista, where my homeboy at?" Rap "music" was on my mind when a reader told me about blond Californian rapper Kreyashawn who tweeted that tax authorities had emptied her bank account but it was all her accountant's fault.

No doubt she'll soon tell the story in a rap "song": "It ain't ma fault, I blame da accountant, he took ma moola as I said in ma announcement."

And then actress Heather Dubrow told reporters that her accountant enticed her to invest in a dodgy deal that left her broke. I guess she can reprise her desperate housewife role with real feeling now.

And then a star from TV's Jersey Shore whose "name" is The Situation also blamed his accountant for his financial problems. What gives? Are all entertainment accountants criminals? So it seemed, until your columnist did some fact-checking. Kreyashawn later removed all her accusatory tweets about her moneyman. The small print in the desperate housewife case revealed that the advisor was not an accountant: she just thought he was. And the advisor to The Situation turned out to have "once been" an accountant.

Accountants are a bit like police officers and teachers: they get unfairly blamed for everything. When folk say accountants are boring, I point to Gibby Haynes. He did an accounting degree, was named Accounting Student of the Year and became an auditor at Peat Marwick. But he was also leader of a successful punk rock band that was so wild that radio stations refused to play

their songs. They are known as BH Surfers (full name unprintable in polite publications like this one). Not sure if he still does accounting.

Newsflash: I read that the rap star known as 50-Cent has filed for bankruptcy, which means that he is technically not worth 50 cents. One should never rejoice in someone's misfortune, but ha ha ha you have to laugh and dance around the table a bit, right? But a question for any accountants reading this came from a Twitter friend who likes to be known as Weird World: "What if dogs are way smarter than we think and they just play dumb so they don't have to work and pay taxes?"

I told him that that was a ridiculous thing to think about dogs. Cats, yes.

Anyway, back to the topic of rap singing. I'm going to start a band called Condemned Building Don't Enter so that after the posters go up everywhere, the whole population will be living in the streets, ready for my open-air concert.

I'll make a quick fortune, blow it all on hedonism and then blame my accountant. It's the done thing, right?

If you don't get rap, try translating it into British English. Original: "You ain't clockin' me, mutha, hittin' on my honies, brotha, Imma take you out, uh-huh, uh-huh." Translation: "I would rather you didn't look at me, sir, as I demonstrate affection towards my female companions, my friend, or I may have to bring your life to a premature close, what ho."

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

Revelry in Trinidad's Diwali Nagar

By Paras Ramoutar

It began modestly at the car park of the Mid-Centre Mall in Chaguana on a Sunday, October 26, 1986. Over the years it has graduated into an institution of international importance not just in this country but the entire region "that brought back lost pride and awareness in the Indo-Trinidadian community of their great and ancient culture."

Diwali Nagar is now a significant aspect of the annual calendar of Trinidad and Tobago and the festival has served to preserve and promote Indian culture, nationally, regionally and internationally, according to Dr Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts.

She said this while addressing the opening night of the annual Diwali Nagar at Chaguana in central Trinidad.

Dr Deokienanan Sharma, president of the National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC), said this year marked the 30th year of Diwali Nagar.

Recalling its beginning, Sharma said, "Despite our understandable fears and



trepidations, Diwali Nagar as its first opening became an immediate and huge success. On its very first, it graduated into a national institution, into a festival of national import that brought back lost pride and awareness to the Indo-Trinidadian community of their great and ancient culture."

"It was evident from the thousands that thronged the first Diwali Nagar that our people were looking for something that would revive the culture of the Indo-Trinidadian community that was in deluge and stagnation. The answer was found in Diwali Nagar, which presented our culture as

never before.

"There was no turning back and the festival grew in stature each year. Its fame spread far and wide and hundreds from the Indian diaspora, particularly from the West annually come to Diwali Nagar to reconnect with their roots and heritage," Dr Sharma noted.

Diwali Nagar, added Gadsby-Dolly, represents a cultural exchange among our people, and this cultural exposition has inspired persons around the world to revitalise their Indian culture and heritage. "Today, similar type festivals take place in Caribbean countries, the

USA and Canada."

She praised the National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC) for "serving the people of this nation. You have continued to bring awareness of the religious, social and cultural dimensions of this Diwali festival. Through your various themes, attendees have the chance to learn about the essential aspects of our Indian culture. This year's theme, 'Ganga Ma-Sacred River', focuses on the goddess and symbolises purity. It speaks of cleansing, health and mercy. It reminds us of new life, revitalisation and victory."

Dr Sharma said two traditions have developed at

Diwali Nagar over the past 30 years — the Nagar Yagna, which is a seven-day prayer meeting heralding Diwali Nagar each year.

The first year was officiated by the late Pundit Reepu Daman Persad, who was Minister of Agriculture in the Guyana government, and Head of the Hindu Dharmic Sabha of Guyana. Today, 30 years later the NCIC invited as its chief guest the daughter of Pundit Reepu, Dr Vindhya Vasini Persaud, who is also an MP in the Guyana government and Head of the Hindu Dharmic Sabha.

Over 160 corporate, religious, social and cultural groups are participating in Diwali Nagar and "this augurs well for the future of Diwali Nagar and Indian culture," Surujdeo Mangaroo, public relations officer of the event, told The Indian Diaspora.

Over 100,000 people from Trinidad and Tobago and other parts of the Caribbean are expected to attend the weeklong gala. Trinidad and Tobago is a country of 1.3 million people, of whom over 40% are of Indian origin.

(The Indian Diaspora)

Explore earth & beyond

By Ranjan K Baruah

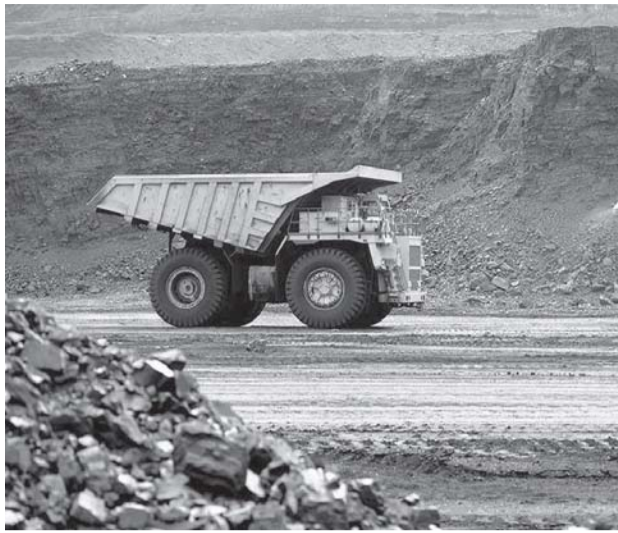
One of the words that is well-known to me since childhood is 'Geology'. This is because my father used to work in the Geology and Mining Department, so I used to hear about the term geology often. Today, I am trying to write about career related to this subject.

Geology is an earth science comprising the study of solid Earth, the rocks of which it is composed and the processes by which they change. Geology can also refer generally to the study of the solid features of any celestial body (such as the geology of the Moon or Mars).

It gives insight into the history of the Earth by providing the primary evidence for plate tectonics, the evolutionary history of life and past climates. Geology is important for mineral and hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation, evaluating water resources, understanding of natural hazards, the remediation of environmental problems and for providing insights into past climate change.

A geologist is a scientist who studies the solid and liquid matter that constitute the Earth as well as the processes and history that have shaped it. Geologists usually engage in studying geology. Geologists studying more of an applied science than a theoretical one must approach geology using physics, chemistry and biology as well as other sciences.

Geologists, compared to scientists engaged in other fields, are generally more exposed to the outdoors than staying in laboratories, although some geologists prefer to perform most of their studies in the laboratory.



Geologists, compared to other scientists, are generally more exposed to the outdoors than staying in laboratories but there are others who spend more time on research

Geologists are engaged in exploration for mining companies in search of metals, oils and other Earth resources. They are also in the forefront of natural hazards and disasters warning and mitigation, studying earthquakes, volcanic activity, tsunamis, weather storms, and the like; their studies are used to warn the general public

mineralogist, geohydrologist, hydrologist, paleontologist, seismologist and surveyor, among others. They may get jobs in Geological Survey of India, Central Ground Water Board, Directorate of Geology and Mining, Indian Bureau of Mines, Indian Space Research Organisation and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, among others.

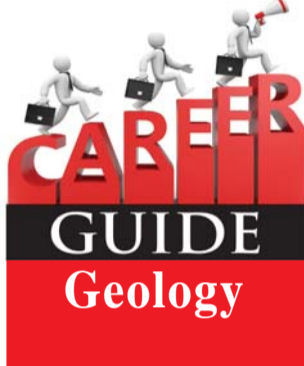
There are also private companies mostly related to oil exploration or related to minerals that engage geologists. There are options in India and also abroad for deserving candidates. Union Public Service Commission conducts Combined Geoscientist and Geologist Examination for recruitment of geologists in various government posts.

Geological Survey of India (GSI): Established in 1851, GSI started its voyage to investigate for and assess coal and other mineral resources of the country with regional level exploration. The principal function of GSI is to create and update national geo-scientific data and mineral resource assessment, air-borne and marine surveys and conducting multifarious geo-technical, geo-environmental and natural hazards studies, glaciology and seismotectonics, among others, and to nurture studies on fundamental research.

In all the developmental facets of the country including coal, steel, cement, metals/minerals and power industries, GSI made neat contribution and remained relevant to the national context. Outcome of GSI's work has immense societal value as well as relevant to global perspective adopting state-of-the-art technologies and using methodologies, which are cutting-edge.

Functioning and annual programmes of GSI assume significance in the national perspective since it is directly related to delivering the public good. With its headquarters in Kolkata, GSI has six regional offices in Lucknow, Jaipur, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Shillong and Kolkata and offices in almost all states of the country. The Geological Survey of India is an attached office to the Ministry of Mines.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a social activist and career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)



of the occurrence of these events.

Currently, geologists are also engaged in the discussion of climate change as they study the history and evidence for this Earth process.

There are a number of universities and institutes offering bachelor, master and doctorate degrees in Geology. There are different kinds of geologists like marine geologist, petrologist,

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambhani

Sunday, October 30, 2016

New projects can be initiated and you will be full of ideas as Sun conjunct Venus on your solar return chart. Once properly executed they are sure to be winners. If looking for a switchover then too you meet with success. Property deals and investments will be beneficial. You are far less inhibited when it comes to expressing yourself creatively, and you are a lot more fun to be around. Travel plans with the family will be met with enthusiasm. There is a general air of happiness in your world that will also include an affair which is very much on the cards. You may be drawn towards luxury items so there will be a tendency to overspend.

'This week for you'

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

The planetary configuration brings good results for you. Increased involvement with siblings, students, classmates, or neighbors may also figure at this time. This could also be a time of mental restlessness. The pace of your life may be a bit hectic now, and if you're not used to it, it could make you nervous. You are more inclined to seek a broad understanding of people around. Concentrating on listening, connecting, communicating and learning is highlighted. Your attention to the logical world of reason has also been a focus.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

This phase highlights friendship, love, romance and children in your life. Your home life is especially busy and sometimes hectic. Arguments with, or on behalf of, family members cannot be avoided but conflict resolution is bound to be quick and relatively easy. Excess energy is best channeled into constructive home improvement projects. You are slightly more defensive and certainly more protective than usual during this period. There may be the need to revisit old, nagging issues regarding personal finances.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

Communication, creativity and authority are highlighted. You are eager to investigate new things, whether scientific or technical. This is a phase of completion and transition. Social interaction is also emphasized. Give other people a little extra time and attention, notice their efforts on your behalf, and strengthen your connections. You are more curious and alert than usual, and you could be quite busy with errands, paperwork and phone calls. Much energy is expended in understanding and adapting to your immediate environment.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

You need for a little attention and career matters come to a head. You're called to perform, perhaps on a moment's notice, and it's best to keep your cool and do whatever you can to show your competence. A sudden job opportunity, or some form of assistance with regard to career, home, or property matters, could be part of the picture. This can also produce an event that requires you to take charge and show your responsible side. Your mind is especially inquisitive and learning, short trips, and other forms of communication and making connections appeal strongly.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

You are especially fond of the life of the home and family, as their entertainment and pleasure are on your main agenda. There is ample support and unconditional love from your partner. Take this time to re-budget instead of making premature purchases. Hold off on decision-making regarding money. Instead, take the time to rethink your sources of income and how you spend. Put off finalizing anything important for the time being. Some money-making ideas may be put on hold due to circumstances beyond your control.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

You may be involved in lectures, debates and discussions. You are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy. You are quite preoccupied with feelings of security and your inner experiences. This is a time when you find your roots and seek a feeling of belonging. Besides spending more time tending to domestic affairs, the focus can be on cultivating and nourishing your inner

foundations that support you and your growth. You might also enjoy analyzing different health or nutrition programs. It's an excellent time for entertainment, and fun.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

This period brings good-luck for love and romance. More loving and appreciative relationships with your children may also happen. Your power of attraction skyrockets during this phase. Yet, you are not aggressive in your approach to love. Instead, you attract more if you allow yourself to be pursued. Creative self-expression of any kind is favored. At this time, you instinctively know how to place yourself in the best light in order to make a good impression on others. Any love affair begun now will be characterized by good cheer, fun, and a fair share of emotions.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

People at work might find you less sociable, as you are busier than ever and you focus on your activities and your needs. You might have a more materialistic view of life and are more attracted to objects and possessions symbolic of status. You're called to take on an assignment, perhaps on a moment's notice, and it's best to keep your cool. A sudden job opportunity, or some form of assistance with regards to home or property matters, could be part of the picture. This can also produce an event that requires you to take charge and show your responsible side.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

This week brings new horizons in your romantic and love life. Your mind is especially inquisitive, when learning. Short trips, and other forms of communication and making connections, appeal strongly. You enjoy the challenge of tackling a variety of subjects. Talking, writing and studying can be good ways to handle stress. It's a good time for rethinking and revising educational plans, paperwork, mental projects and communications. You need a little attention and career matters come to the fore. It's an excellent time to further your interests.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

The stars promote your luck in service and work related areas. Your mind is especially sharp and you are quick on the uptake as additional work comes your way. You enjoy the challenge of tackling a variety of subjects. Expressing yourself using your writing skills, through the medium of arts or talking to a confidante are ways to handle stress. It's a good time for rethinking and revising educational plans, paperwork, mental projects, and communications. You are most likely to express your social, romantic, and artistic qualities through an intellectual appreciation of art, cultural pursuits, and literature.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

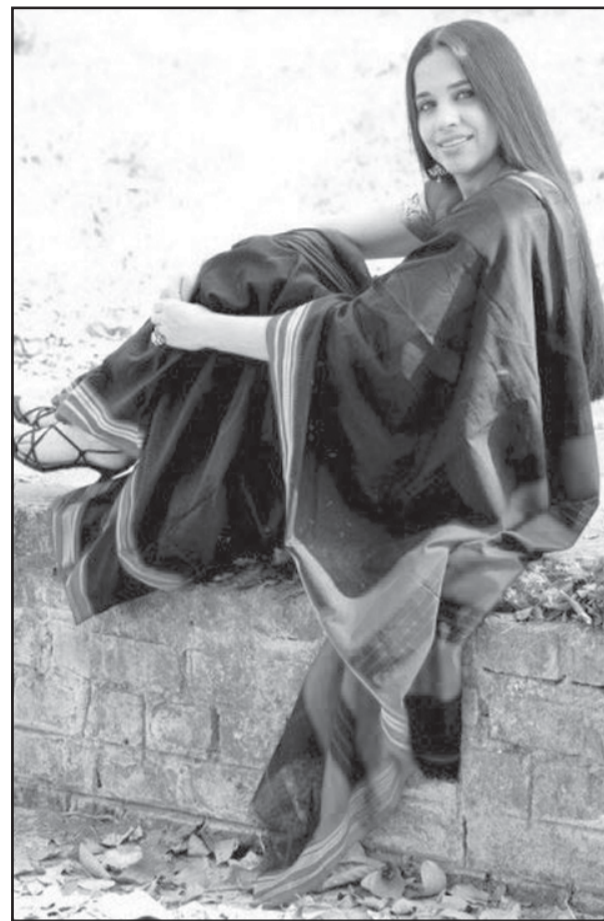
In addition to your efforts and hard work pay close attention to performance metrics. Your efforts will be rewarded and continuity to perform work would be visible to senior colleagues and people in authority. You have an increased interest in your own possessions. You are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of comfort, and luxury. Romantic matters are usually from within the local environment close to home, although many romantic short trips may be undertaken for pleasure. You prefer an intellectual and communicative partner.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

This phase brings in happiness and fulfillment through the expansion of your mind, widening your social circle, increasing travel opportunities, and connections to people of a different cultural background than yours is indicated. You desire to learn and improve your practical skills. You are especially drawn to family life where your affections find expression. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental or nostalgic now. You may now particularly value the aesthetics in and around your home. If things are out of sync on the home front, you will do whatever you can to re-create a peaceful and stable atmosphere.

'Propagation of art helps during war'

Well-known theatre personality **Ramanjit Kaur** of Kolkata has acted in Deepa Mehta's latest film *Anatomy of Violence* based on the infamous Nirbhaya gang rape case. It premiered at the recent Toronto International Film Festival. In a conversation with TWF correspondent **Souvik Ghosh** she shares her experience of working with the celebrated director. Excerpts from an interview:



What is the film *Anatomy of Violence* about?

The film is based on the Nirbhaya gang rape case in Delhi in 2012. It makes an attempt at recreating the lives of the six boys who were involved in this gruesome incident. By probing their backgrounds it tries to explore the reasons for their motives behind the heinous crime. We have also tried to recreate the life of Janaki, based on Nirbhaya, as well — her aspirations, dreams and upbringing. Intensive research and fact finding was done before the film was made.

Does the film try to delve into the psychology of the rapists?

Yes. It's not only their psychological make-up but also their backgrounds and upbringing which have been taken into account.

What is your role in it?

Each actor plays multiple characters in the film. I play three characters, which include Janaki's colleague in the bank, her mother and a young pregnant woman who is the mother of a 10-year-old child.

How was your experience of working with Deepa Mehta?

This is my third film with Deepa Mehta. The earlier films were also meaningful but this film is completely different. This time, the experience was much more intense because the film emerged out of a rigorous theatre workshop.

Mehta is a perfectionist yet gentle and subtle. She interacts constantly with the actors and tries to understand their views and

analysis about a particular character. Working with her is indeed a learning experience.

What convinced you to say yes to this role?

It was not a yes to the character but to the project. When Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry, my guru, called me up and said Deepa Mehta wanted to conduct workshops with the actors for this film, I thought it was a great opportunity for me to work with two of my favourite directors — Chowdhry and Mehta. At the same time I felt that it was also an opportunity for me to delve deeply into the case and analyse the human psychology that leads to the development of criminal leanings.

***Anatomy of Violence* premiered at the prestigious Toronto Film Festival recently...**

Yes. But I couldn't attend it because of previous commitments. But my co-actors who attended it said they were given a red carpet treatment. The film would feature in the Mumbai Film Festival, which I'll attend. I

feel quite excited about it. **It has been a long time since you featured in a film, *Heaven on Earth*. Are you very choosy?**

I do look for good films. Yes, there has been a long gap. I couldn't say yes to many projects as I was not comfortable with the scripts.

Do you think quality films often remain unrecognized in our country?

If we consider our population at large, the majority prefers films that entertain. At the end of a hard day's work, they would like to relax through an entertaining film and not force themselves to think about serious issues often dealt in films that appeal to the intellect.

Tell something about your 'all-woman' theatre group.

I run an organisation called 'Creative Arts' where we give training to children and adults. We explore different genres in theatre like 'theatre as science' and 'theatre as therapy'. Theatre as therapy is the department under which I created an 'all-woman' theatre group about five

years ago. It has already received a national award. This journey began with homemakers and people who never acted in a theatre before. But now various working women are signing up for the course. It aims at wholesome development and works on relationship building apart from acting.

So it's an effort towards enhancing women's presence in theatre?

It was a conscious decision. I was holding these random workshops for women, when I realised that women go through a lot of pain about which no one talks. I saw many women's lives being wasted and dreams lost. It's my humble effort to make women under-stand their own potential, their dreams and aspirations.

Since you are also involved with directing, does it help you in your acting too?

Yes, of course. Wearing these two hats does help me. My directorship has subconsciously honed my acting skills. I have also become more creative over the years. But I don't act while directing since I feel there must be a third eye to judge.

What about acting in Bengali films?

A friend is giving me lessons in Bengali language. I am really eager to work in Bengali films.

Any dream character you would like to play on screen?

Yes. The protagonist in Tagore's *Chokher Bali* and *Charulata*. These characters are extremely interesting.

Pakistani actors have been banned in Bollywood after the Uri attack. Do you think it is a good move or artistes should be spared?

I personally feel that everyone should work towards bringing peace. Propagation of art has helped during the time of war many times. I feel people should get together for more creative endeavours. I have been to Lahore for theatre festivals and got great acceptance... Steps must be taken to keep art thriving, especially during times of war. (TWF)

Rape in animal world

(Contd from last week)

In sagebrush and camel crickets, rape is the work of the ultimate loser on the edge of society, small and deformed, he can spread his genes in no other way.

The white fronted bee-eater is a small, colourful bird that lives in colonies in Africa. Males and females form stable pairs who nest together year after year.

But rape in the community is common, and if a female leaves her nest alone she will be chased by 1-12 male birds who, if they succeed in pinning her to the ground, jump on her at once and try to mate with her. In fact, when a female leaves the nest she whistles loudly, so that if her husband is nearby he can escort her. No bachelors form part of the rape posse — all married males on the prowl.

The lesser snowgoose also lives in colonies, but her state is much worse. Married males routinely attack nesting females. A female left alone for an instant will probably be assaulted, and is probably on her own because her husband has gone off to rape someone else. One attempt every few days is

the norm. The little brown bat is even more sexually deviant. When most bats are hibernating through the winter, hanging together in vast colonies, this bat works its way through raping male and female alike as they sleep.

Some species of male ducks and geese chase and have forcible sex with females. Mallard duck's males and females pair off normally, but the males that don't manage to get mates form gangs and use their combined strength to go after lone females. It's known to biologists as a "rape flight". Often, a gang of three or four of them attacks a female duck, two holding her down while one enters her, sometimes resulting in her injury or death.

They are among the 3 percent of bird species whose males have phalluses big enough to insert into the vaginas of females, whether or not she consents. The cockscrew-like male sex organ can be as long as 16 inches. However researchers have established that females of these species have evolved complex genitalia to thwart unwelcome pregnancies. Some vaginas have spiral channels that impede sex by twisting in the opposite direction to that of the male phallus.

Others have as many as eight cul-de-sac pouches en route that could prevent

fertilisation by capturing unwelcome sperm. These features are only found in the species renowned for forced sex. All others have simple male and female genitalia.

Control over reproduction alternates between the sexes. If the male develops a longer, more elaborate phallus to force copulation, females wrest back control by developing features to thwart males who rape by developing side chambers to hold sperm that is ejected later. The success of this design is proven by the fact that as many as one in three duck matings are rapes, but in nine out of ten of these the offending sperm is eliminated, so 97 percent of all duck offspring are the result of the choice of the mother.

If rape, like evil, could be isolated in the mind and manipulated by medical or psychiatric intervention, it would be easy to exercise it. But it is immensely more difficult when it comes from a view that women are an essentially different type of species and hence need a special kind of treatment — whether promoting gender sensitivity or using them as objects.

(Concluded)

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

Wildlife declining faster than thought

A recent report released by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) presses the alarm button by stating that global wildlife population could decline by an average of 67 percent between 1970 and 2020 as a result of human activities.

The Living Planet Report 2016 shows that global population of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles have already declined by 58 percent between 1970 and 2012. It highlights the magnitude of human impact on the planet and the changes needed in the way society is fed and fuelled. "Wildlife is disappearing within our lifetimes at an unprecedented rate," said Marco Lambertini, International Director General of WWF.

The top threats to species are directly linked to human activities, including habitat loss, degradation and over-exploitation of wildlife. Researchers are already calling this period the Anthropocene — an era in which human activities are influencing changes in the climate and the environment.

(Read the full report on www.wwf.org/LPR2016)