

"Courage is of no value unless accompanied by justice; yet if all men became just, there would be no need for courage."

—Agesilaus the Second

The Shillong Times

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Devastated Iraq

IRAQ has been devastated for a number of years causing severe hardship to the people of the country. More than 2 million have been killed, millions injured and around 4 million rendered homeless as a result of President and dictator Bashar-al-Assad's struggle for survival with the Iraqi rebels. Military aid and supply of weapons to anti-Assad rebels, some of them associated with Al-Qaeda, have turned the country into a killing field. The efforts of countless Iraqis to flee to neighbouring countries have failed because they will not have them. International aid sent to Iraq has not succeeded in coping with the humanitarian crisis to a desired extent. Assad should be on trial for the agony of Iraq. But he has the support of western nations. Like their new found ally Iran, Iraq under Assad is considered by the West to be a bulwark against Sunni aggression in the region.

Bashar-al-Assad has recently acknowledged that all is not well with his administration. Syria has been bled white by prolonged fighting between the government and the rebels. He has complained that the government forces have been depleted by death, desertion and refusal to go for compulsory service. He also said that in the circumstances, Damascus has been forced to give up some areas to protect other swathes of territory under its control. But in fact, Assad is merely protecting the interests of the ruling family and the loyal following. The government is content with the surrender of territories in the north and the south of the country. It will come as no surprise if his government also gives up territory in the east to the Islamic state of Iraq which is baying for blood. Even the historic city of Palmyra is under attack.

LOOKING BACK

January 11, 1988

PHE Ministers under fire

The Meghalaya Assembly on June 28 rejected by 19.36 votes a censure motion against the Ministers holding PHE portfolio for their alleged involvement in the swindling of several crore of rupees, but not before the House witnessed some scathing frontal attacks from the opposition.

The treasury bench was fully stretched to defend the two Ministers after the Opposition launched a two hours blitzkrieg. The Chief Minister, Captain Sangma conceded that "because of some difficulties" there had been "some delay" in ranking action by the Govt. There have been huge irregularities "nobody denies it." He added "if any of my colleague is found guilty, I will not spare him."

Capt Sangma appealed to the Opposition to depose before the Rynjah Committee with "more solid proof & evidence" to substantiate their charges.

Mr Salseng C Marak brushed aside the charges by saying "I do not accept that I am directly responsible." Regarding the issue of slips, he said "my stand is still the same - the slips are in no way intended to convey orders."

Mr Nihon Ksiah denied that he was sitting over files. He said the file was being disposed of in "a normal way". He flatly denied all charges against him, but did not reason it out.

Earlier, during the debate, Mr PR Kyndiah charged the two Ministers of concealing information from the Chief Minister. (The CM made an amendment to his earlier statement that he came to know of the affairs from the Opposition MLAs; he said

that he had sketchy knowledge about it before the MLAs met him on May 5 last.) He said that the Minister were responsible for the irregularities since they did not arrest the expenditure even after being enlightened about the whole matter. He said "the totality of the fact is that they are involved."

Mr B B Lyngdoh said that they were "guilty of corruption." The Ministers were in connivance with the suppliers. He said it was not an act of help but favouritism to issue slips in favour of certain suppliers.

Mr E Bareh (MDF) felt that that the censure motion were an act of political mudslinging. Dr B K Roy said it was the "cumulative effect" of the past and not "a creation overnight". Mr K R Khan (MDF) said there was no evidence of the involvement of the Ministers, the motive behind the chits would become clear on completion of enquiry. Mr B M Lanong (MUPP) said that the Govt could take action against the officers and suppliers, but did not act against the Ministers who had actually triggered off the whole thing. Dr P Pakem said the Minister of State had favoured two of his political supporters by giving them huge supply orders. He said that the Ministers had violated the Constitution by showing "favour and affection" to certain section Mr W Syiemiong alleged that the Ministers did not check the reputation and bonafides of the suppliers before recommending them.

Mr Chamberlin Marak (MDF) charged the Opposition of entering into a "witch-hunting spree" and "character assassination".

'Umkhrach: A river cries foul' (Part -1)

By Desmond Kharmawphlang

Once I had mountains in the palm of my hand/ And rivers that ran through everyday/ I must have been mad/ I never knew what I had/ Until I threw it all away.

—From I Threw it All Away

Believed to be written in 1967, *I Threw it All Away*, this Bob Dylan classic, was included in the iconic *Nashville Skyline* album released in 1969. A complication leading to a breakdown of relationship with a loved one is believed to have inspired the song. Dylan's use of metaphors is exemplarily adroit in the manner that he invests the acute sense of loss for love in a landscape he could no longer be a part of because a confessed callousness on his part. The evocation of mountains and rivers grafted in the physicality of his being evokes the quintessential feature of a pastoral trope which uses nature as a location or reflection of the human predicament. Dylan has demonstrated this dexterous use of voice and words in numerous songs and poems where, like composers in the great tradition of Virgil, Shelley, Rimbaud (for whom he had tremendous admiration) and Neruda, he strategizes the externalization of feelings with topography while conflating it especially with his love lyrics.

It is literature which, perhaps, provides the most powerful articulation of grieving for losses of all kinds. The lament for the loss of near and dear ones is rivaled very closely with that of the one composed, sung and written for the loss of nature and its variegated constituents. Oral genres such as the epic, lyric and ballad from different parts of the world are replete with examples of this strain of emotional versification. In fact, the reconstruction of environmental realities during the hoary periods of history has been made possible due to careful readings of ancient texts which include, among others, archaic haiku, and very significantly, the work of the Alexandrian poet, Theocritus (c. 316-260).

As early as 1962, the poet H. Elias offered an eloquent tribute to the Umkhrach river in a sixteen stanza poem of the same name. He described the pellucid water rushing down the hills and valleys, leaping and dancing from boulder to rock, from whirlpool to eddies, vibrant and strong:

1. Dancing and leaping down precipices/ I pirouette in joy reaching shallow rapids/ Between tranquil valleys/ I pace in quietness/ The banks where fruit-filled trees sway/ I fetch flashfloods from the bosom of summer/ To the cricket grounds of Pynthor Umkhrach / Fish of all hues hurry along/ I am everywhere, the coverlet like frost

2. I follow the great rain in its fury/ Causing ridges to shudder and shake/ Rocks the colour of dusk quake/ The very earth roils in fear

Published a couple of years later, in 1964, Victor Bareh's *Ka Wah Umkhrach* reiterates the same sentiments although there is a suggestion that he had detected a mild deterioration taking place:

1. From times of the ancient and the pure/Till today unto us river you flow/ Through villages of the free/ Signs of good life you inscribe/ Though frail and feeble you have become/ Soft colours of your raiment I still see/ Reflecting images and pictures/ Of the bitterness a generation tastes/ Like golden words on the pages of life/ Inscribed for the world to see/ Quiet ways of the Lord Creator/ Revealed in truth of eternity.

2. Shadowy wilds of countless trees/ Cast a cloth of shade in gorges dark/ Human hands now pry open the woods/ To wipe them clean from your flanks/ Umkhrach river you poor wretch/ Evil days slowly eating into you/ But once in a while you burst/ Along with the stones that spawn you/ Through lands emaciated and dry/ You cut a path of water to cleanse/ The filth of a stricken world/ Bearing away all from face of the earth.

H. Elias and Victor Bareh, were contemporaries as well as gifted composers. The seriousness with which they embraced their art and the sensitivity displayed in responding to the urge to place nature, at least through writing, at the critical juncture of the human

and culture dialogue, is to be appreciated immensely not only as a literary accomplishment but as an environmental statement. It is not coincidental that both poets would choose the Umkhrach river as the crucible for creating a representation of nature and the incremental loss of its attributes, the river being the most dominant ecological, geographical and cultural symbol of Shillong.

In doing so, these two writers can claim to setting in motion one of the informed ways of highlighting the close relationship between literature, culture and the science of ecology. Both poems are seen developing their own autonomous paradigms of ecological literacy. But there are points of divergences as well - while H. Elias's gushing tribute is constructed on the lines of a panegyric, Victor Bareh is more restrained, the work being finely interspersed with subtle suggestions about the beauty of the river being slowly but certainly and sometimes indelibly marred by an increasingly growing urbanization. This angst about urbanization is exemplified by the references to "Ka Luhop," a certain kind of humidity associated with air pollution.

Terms and terminologies that have wide social contexts are not fixed in their meanings and applications. They transform culturally and historically. An interesting example for our immediate reference is the word "Pollution". From its Latin etymology, *polluere* which means 'to defile', and through its early English usage reflects its theological origins which denotes moral contamination of a person, or acts (such as masturbation), thought to be responsible, in the very physical sense, for such contamination. This fundamentally interiorized and subjective definition was gradually exteriorized and objectified where we find that today, only the later definition is applied because it is widely known and taken as a presumed

use. Everything was going on smoothly, and then came industrialization. Humans suddenly realised that if they used the earth's natural resources as fuel there was no limit to what they could make or do. But the earth is also a living organism, it can accommodate just so much carnage! We all know the earth is made of many layers, an inner core of high temperature, an outer core above it, a layer of mantle over that and finally a thin crust. And all living things live on the crust. Over the crust is the atmosphere, spreading over and all around the earth, like a blanket. What is happening now is that almost all human activities being carried out on the planet involve the burning of fossil fuels, from the gas in your kitchens, automobiles and planes to the large factories which manufacture things in bulk. All these activities are hurting the atmosphere. The air has become so polluted that it is affecting all life on earth. It is time that all the nations of the world come together and start framing and implementing policies where the future of the earth will be safe again!

Yours etc.,
B. K. Lyngkhai
Shillong-14.

TO THE EDITOR

God save us from such heroes!

Editor,

Jerome's Diengdoh "Unforgettable heroes of Hynniewtrep (ST, July 28, 2015) made amazing reading. In an irony of sorts, this ill timed piece of junk was carried in the same issue which headlined 'Abdul Kalam breathes his last in Shillong'. The writer has gone to great lengths to paint his so called 'Unforgettable Heroes' with qualities of the head and the heart, but the portrayal lacked substance and conviction. It only serves to reinforce the point that, much like his "heroes", the writer is a rabid communalist with a hideous mindset.

More importantly, apart from Mr Hoover Hynniewta, none of the other characters like Bull N. Lyngdoh, Ardent M. Basaiawmoit and Adelbert Nongrum can, by any stretch of the imagination, be remotely compared to stalwarts of yore like Tirot Sing and Kiang Nangbah. It is indeed sacrilegious to utter the names of our valiant warriors in the same breath as those of the "unforgettable heroes" mentioned by this dim-witted writer. How can U Tirot Sing who fought with courage and fearlessness against the mighty British and had

to undergo years of imprisonment at Dhaka as the price for his bravery be ever compared to Adelbert Nongrum who lowered the dignity of the office of the CEM, KHADC by meekly seeking forgiveness from the High Court of Meghalaya after thundering against the same High Court for what he felt was its anti-Khasi stance? Would Tirot Sing have been looked up to by generations of Khasis had he submitted before the imperialists and sought their indulgence to remain 'Syiem' of Nongkhlaw? What a bad joke, Mr Jerome Diengdoh!

Your other hero, Ardent Basaiawmoit, is a dangerously egoistic and self-righteous rabble-rouser who brought the ARPA to its untimely demise by repeatedly bad-mouthing his coalition partners and even used vegetable vendors to coerce them into submission. Which noble hero would allow the revered premises of the KHADC to be used as a stage for daily theatres where foul-mouthed vendors would decide who remains Chief of the Council? And how heroic, Bah Jerome, is somebody who recklessly instigated the defenceless villagers of Langpith to take on the Assam Police personnel resulting in the massacre of four Khasi lives while the main hero staged a six-hour "hunger strike" in the safety of U Soso Tham Auditorium compound! And what happened

to your hero's holy war for clean politics and against corruption in public life? Is there more than meets the eye in his sudden silence on the stinking corruption of the Chief Engineer, PHE, after he had raked up the matter in the Assembly? It is pitiable indeed that Diengdoh has failed to mention luminaries who have persistently attempted to introduce important pieces of legislation and enhanced the standard and content of debates in public life like the (Late) G. G. Swell, (Late) T. H. Rangad, (Late) B. Pakem and younger leaders like R.G. Lyngdoh, Paul Lyngdoh, Jemino Mawthoh, among others. But if low-brow street antics mixed with nasty chauvinism makes one an "unforgettable hero", then we should raise a memorial column for these living "heroes" and invite Jerome Diengdoh to unveil the memorial which can be installed next to Gandhi's statue in the Main Secretariat Building.

Yours etc.,
B. K. Lyngkhai
Shillong-14.

Earth in peril

Editor,

This planet we call earth was created a long time ago and humans were given dominion over it, to protect nature and to harness its power for their

The concept of Hima (state) in Khasi governance

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

Whenever we talk about kingdom or state what comes to our mind is the physical and political aspect of it. We also identify a particular Hima or kingdom with the jurisdiction it covers. Without these, it is absurd to describe any Hima or state. Interestingly, the indigenous Khasi concept about the Hima conveys something else. In the minds of the Khasi people, State or Hima refers primarily to the people and the doctrine that guides their beliefs and in running the affairs of the Hima. Doctrine as defined in one dictionary is system of beliefs accepted as authoritative by some group. Whether big or small, this philosophy and doctrine defined the true characteristic of that state. Geographical extent 'ka Id' (border) is described by consensus according to the limit sanctioned either by the previous owners or by 'ki ryrngkew ki basa' (village patron Gods as per the Dictionary by Nissor Singh & Hajom Kissor Singh) in case of an unoccupied area.

With respect to those Hima where indigenous religion is attached to governance, the 'syiem' or chief is nominated or chosen not from a clan but a person born from a non-human creature but with human seed such as the syiem of Hima Shyllong, the syiem Sutnga, the Malngiang to name a few, who were known as the 'Syiemblei' resembling the birth of Jesus Christ conceived not from the human seed but from God, and having the eternal and immortal attribute. The Syiem also signifies the highest level of neutrality. As head of the Hima he is supposed to facilitate consensus decision-making on every issue since he is also the custodian of that doctrine and practice.

Without a kingdom there is no king, but in Khasi society, the state or Hima can exist without a 'syiem'. Therefore the 'syiem' here exists as a symbol of unity and approval of core values that emerged out of the mutual agreement of various clans and villages within the state or Hima. He is also vested with wisdom and insights to guide and warn against any attempt to dilute the genuine path and to caution those who indulge in strange and evil practice.

In my simple understanding, 'syiem' or chief of any state (hima) is not a right or title earned through muscle power but a privilege granted by the people in consultation with their gods. The guiding thread of modern democracy was embedded in Khasi society where governance was ordered by a clear conscience and honesty so as not to displease the gods and guardians of the land.

With regards to the system of appointing 'syiem' or chief, though it varies from Hima to Hima the core ideas are the same. The 'syiem' or chief of Hima Sohra is till today elected by an electoral college comprising electors from clans representatives and village representatives. In Mawsynram on the other hand, the 'syiem' is from 'Phanwanjah' or 'Rynjah' clan but as 'Ka Niam' (particular aspect of religious practice) does not favour them, the Hima is forced to search for a person from 'The Malngiang' clan.

Few days back I met the secretary of Hima Mawsynram who hailed from the original Hima 'the Hima Syntien' and it is interesting to learn that the first Syiem of the Hima Mawsynram from the Malngiang was a lady handpicked from Sohra and it is also interesting to know that only in this Hima a delicate form of religious sacrifice 'Ka Nnia niang' (pig sacrifice) is being practiced by the Hima till these days.

While reading the article by Kong Patricia Mukhim (ST dt. 24/7/15), I found some similarities of views but

to conclude that khasi society is clan based is incomplete because there are evidences where Khasi society was also built by people from common trades and not by clans. There are numbers of extinct villages like 'Rangjyrtch' situated opposite to Dainthlen falls. From the stone fencing that indicated residential plots, the presence of water containers made of stone for cooling hot iron, people who lived and settled in this village were foremen smelting iron. They are not from a single clan. Products from this place were sent to various places including East Pakistan but this trade vanished when better products were later imported by the British.

Alongside this village, few kilometers down is a village called Mawphu known for the famous oranges. This is one of the oldest villages along with others which constituted the 'Hima Khat-hynriew shnong' (a state of 16 villages) administered by elected representatives of the village, not clan. Later on it merged with 'Hima Khat-ar Shnong' (state of 12 villages) to form the Hima Sohra.

Upon merging, their identity as Hima is reduced to the term 'Raid' to describe a condition that has degenerated and reduced from its former structure and form. The religious aspect or 'ka niam' in these areas is personal and not incorporated to governance. Even where 'ka niam' is prominently attached, I feel 'The Raid' can reclaim their original position, provided the people who are the core element can project reasons that are historically valid. On the other hand, Hima is referred to a realm where common interests exist and the domain that constitutes that realm can enact for themselves certain beliefs and practices.

The Syiem or chief on the other hand is the icon where all these factors culminate into a single point, like a start button. In this IT generation, the Hima can be compared to primary software or Operating System built with numbers of applications and can acquire other compatible applications as well within its domain to serve the specific needs of the user. The Syiem by himself cannot execute or perform without synchronizing all components or applications created and installed therein.

In this context, Hima clearly refers to the conglomerate of elements or people who are involved and can impact decision making. It is wrong for the Syiem and his 'Bakhrav' (elders) to make arbitrary decisions without involving the whole Hima. What went wrong was that as people we have decided to let go the ownership over decisions to the elected or selected few. On the contrary, those who have acquired the responsibility will manage to remain in such position as long as opportunity exists.

Let us not forget that throughout the generations, changes within the society were very much part of the journey and adapting to change is essential and necessary in order to survive and progress. To subscribe to the view that Dorbar Shnong is not traditional is parochial since the freedom of adapting to changes and challenges necessitated the indigenous thinking to formulate a system suitable at that point of time. Understanding this behavior, the District Councils were postulated by the architect of the Sixth Schedule to safeguard the unique practice of indigenous people and against any dilution from external forces. Hence responsible people having sound knowledge and understanding with broad minds should be elected to govern District Councils otherwise, it will remain an option for any Tom, Dick and Harry to aspire to become the political master without the skills and responsibility to govern.

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 is that time of the year when people head for holidays, mostly to sea beaches and now, increasingly, to cruises who can afford it. What to wear on the vacation is a dilemma. Fashion designers extend a helping hand to rise to the occasion. **Pramita Bose** checks out some collections

On to the beach



also have the topographic road maps and linear drawings of cities as prime motifs and base-prints on the garments. Thus it shows various places around the globe," she explains. Shades of blue and green dominate her colour-scheme alongside highlights of bright, vibrant hues.

As for the fabric, Nayak uses georgette, crepe, handloom cotton along with satin to embellish her long resort-wear dresses, draped jackets, summer tunics, trousers, tops and flared gowns apart from the printed saris, kurtas, flared skirts and crop tops. While designing a range, she keeps in mind the wearability factor to suit global destinations too. "We try to create clothes without any geographical boundaries," she says.

Nidhi Munim of Mumbai has a signature array of

coastal wardrobe. "The whole idea is to make swimsuits a must have in every Indian woman's closet." She retails from her Santa Cruz-based flagship store.

Slim-fit, body-hugging suits, casual, sporty skintights, track pants and leggings steal the show if you aim to be a stunner on the beach. For the chic effect, Munim's judicious mix of pastel prints, monochromes and neutral tints in beige, ivory, taupe, black, gray variety is worth browsing. Buyers can also opt for geometric patterns, polka dots and stripes with clean streamlined and symmetrical cuts. Minimalism is her USP as she flaunts her wide range for every single body-shape. "Designing for the Indian women is a challenge. The figure-frames differ from a pear, apple to an hourglass type. If lean, teenage girls are given a narrow shoulder cut, plump women with broad shoulders are meticulously lent with cleavage-revealing halter-necks," she informs.

Munim suggests that on a cruise, the best accessory to match eye-catching swimsuits is a signature hand cuff, statement-furnished open-toe slide footwear and "the right panache to pull it off." Her luxury collection is priced between Rs. 4,000-Rs. 6,000, while the affordable chic range comes with price-tags of Rs. 2,000-Rs. 3,500.

Designer Chandrani Singh Flora counts on the comfort factor. Cotton she believes is the safest bet as resort-wear for this time of the year when experiencing warm and wet conditions. "Loose (Contd on P-VII)

'All women really want is to look feminine, beautiful'



Designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee with Christian Louboutin.

By Nivedita

Widely known for creating ensembles that are not only rooted in Indian culture, but also accentuate feminism even if draped in the simplest way, ace designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee says he will continue to celebrate the beauty of the human body through his work by making "beautiful garments".

"I have always stuck to one theory that different kinds of silhouettes and trends might come and go, but what women really want is to look feminine, beautiful and glamorous," Mukherjee told IANS re-

cently. Citing the example of international designer Valentino, he added: "Year after year, that brand has made business out of women who look very beautiful and pretty in almost a very straight forward way. And right now that has been accepted by editors worldwide in mainstream fashion."

"I have never understood the need to create an antithesis of beauty to keep our brand relevant. I would continue to make beautiful garments whether couture or ready-to-wear to celebrate the human body... (clothes) that celebrate women body and make them look beautiful."

Mukherjee's sartorial

creations, marked by traditional fabrics and techniques, have made him a globally recognised name in the world of design. And as the opening designer of AICW, he created the same magic on ramp.

"There has always been no fabric involved in this collection. Everything has been hand embroidered and tooled to create fabrics. Everything, from the lining to the under-linings to the shell fabrics, every square inch of it has been hand embroidered and an average garment has taken about 365 man hours of labour," the designer said.

That itself is the essence of couture.

"I think the first word that I would attribute to the making of couture garment is the audacity and the scale because what is very important in making a couture garment is to make sure that you make something that is so exotic that it is hard to replicate."

"Also, couture stands for things that are not readily available in the local market so in terms of man hours, a couture garment should be very detailed and it should take a lot of time to make because time is the essence of luxury in the modern world."

Mukherjee, who started his label 'Sabyasachi' in 1999, earned the distinction of being one of the few names in the history of Indian fashion to participate at fashion weeks in Milan, New York and London.

He has also styled for some of the popular Bollywood actresses, including Vidya Balan, Tabu, Rani Mukerji, Shabana Azmi, Aishwarya Rai, Sushmita Sen and Kareena Kapoor Khan. Among the current crop of Bollywood's ladies, he has got patrons in Deepika Padukone (Contd on P-VII)

Want to wallow in the waters of the deep blue sea or loll on the beautiful beaches of the Bahamas or, just lie prone on the sun-baked sands of Marina? What to wear, what to pack can be dilemma, though.

Not to worry. Fashion designers come to your rescue with customised beach-wear and resort-wear too. Kolkata-based Rimi Nayak unveils a unique collection of travel-wear to compliment the searing hot summer and moist monsoon. For example, for mon-

up with culottes, draped trousers and skirts.

On her unconventional sartorial line, she says: "My collection narrates the story of a traveller. Thus cartog-



raphy art is an important in-

spiration as maps are the most significant point of reference during a trip." Several hand-crafted techniques like digital printing, batik, cutwork, thread-texturing and hand-embroidery are put to use in her Travel Trails assortment.

Her travel-dresses are designed to reflect the different destinations world-wide. The complete set has some eye-grabbing world atlas prints along with Bengali typography mentioning the names of the oceans in vivid colour-blocks. "We



swim-wears and beach outfits. Her style is evocative of Indian prints. Having incorporated the evergreen ikkat weave in a brilliant shade-card, Munim has everything from luxury cruise-wear to a holiday-maker's

By Veturi Srivatsa

Paes, Sania perfected the winning mantra

As suspected, the Justice Rajendra Mal Lodha Committee report punishing two franchises and their officials for their notoriety in the Indian Premier League (IPL) had been the lead sto-



ries on front pages of the newspapers and also the main topic of discussion on television, leaving behind the great on-court achievements of Leander Paes and Sania Mirza over the last weekend at Wimbledon.

The two items continued to hog column inches and prime time television in the same proportion the whole week. As Indian cricket board president Jagmohan

Dalmiya kept talking to key officials connected with the IPL, Sania did one better by getting legendary Martina Navratilova to Hyderabad to visit her tennis academy and talk about the greatness of her and Paes.

Dalmiya specially invited former board president Shashank Manohar for his vital inputs on the IPL crisis besides confabulating with its chairman Rajeev Shukla even as some politicians and fans started expressing their unhappiness over the two-year suspension imposed on Chennai Super Kings (CSK) and Rajasthan Royals (RR), terming the punishment too harsh, though only.

The committee also punished Gurunath Meiyappan,



RR back into the fold once they serve out their suspension.

The board itself may go in appeal against the two-year suspension and ask for some other penalty so that the players do not unduly suffer. The problem the

team principal of CSK, and Raj Kundra, part owner of RR, by banning the two for life from board's cricket activities. That maverick Subramanian Swamy, in what he says speaking on behalf of the "nationalist Tamilians" wants the committee to review the "excessively harsh" punishment.

Shukla added his bit by saying that the IPL will be of eight teams and hinted at the possibility of the board fielding the two suspended sides under its banner. Few thought of this angle and it clearly points to a rapprochement between the former CSK boss and the Dalmiya regime or the chief protagonists in the clique. If approved by the IPL Governing Council and its parent body the Indian board, the move will bring CSK and



Governing Council is facing is if two other teams are brought in and the players of CSK and RR are distributed among them how will CSK and RR get back their star players two years down the road. Players like Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Suresh Raina, Dwayne (Contd on P-VII)

The fact that judges always have tiny hammers made me realize that in the old days they just went round tapping miscreants on the head. Bop! "Take that! Now go away and stop murdering everyone." "Ouch. Yes, my lord."

Judges were on my mind after reader Rahul Mangal told me that court officials sent an eviction notice to Lord Hanuman at a temple in India's Madhya Pradesh state. "You have illegally encroached (on) the road," the letter said.

This was unwise, Rahul explained, as "Hanuman is a powerful monkey god known for throwing mountains around and threatening to eat the sun".

Court officials must have realized this, because they quickly withdrew the letter and are now awaiting repercussions.

Official's wife: "How was your day, dear?" Official: "Fine. Except I annoyed Lord Hanuman who is now eating the sun, ending the solar system." Official's wife: "That's nice. We won't have to wash the dishes."

I mentioned this to colleagues who asked why officials didn't use traditional Asian methods of conducting evictions, which involves the organizing of spotty youths in sunglasses to loiter in a way that threatens violence.

Violence sucks. By chance, evidence came in the shape of a news item forwarded to me about a man in Ireland who turned around to see an ugly man staring at him. Gerard McGaughey stepped up to the stranger and head-butted him. Unfortunately, the victim was the attacker's reflection, so what he actually did was to cause significant damage to his own head. There's a deep moral here, right? I think it's "some people are dumber than rocks". Not a single rock I've encountered would do

Current disputes that could encompass all of us

such a thing. A colleague showed me another recent news item about an ill-judged legal



World War Three, which is a bit of a downer, but on the plus side I was three under-par."

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

World War Three). That could turn out bad.

Golfer's wife: "How was your day?" Golfer: "I started

World War Three, which is a bit of a downer, but on the plus side I was three under-par."

Would you rather be credited with starting World War Three or ending the solar system? Tough choice. Both would win one a place in history, but only the first would be likely to have survivors to appreciate this fact, even if they were hard-to-eradicate primitive life forms such as bacteria, cockroaches, nationalist politicians, Britney Spears and the like.

Anyway, my message to the Madhya Pradesh court is that if you are going to evict people, you have to be single-minded. How To Be A Landlord In Three Easy Steps. 1) Locate your heart. 2) Rip it out. 3) Start renting.

And if trouble follows, don't resort to legal threats. Sociologists say we all have powerful negotiation skills but use them selectively. This is so true.

If I negotiated as fiercely with my bosses as I do when talking myself out of sticking to a diet plan, my income would be the entire world economy by now.

It isn't. But I'm sure my landlord's is.

By Preetha Nair

Book: Ghosts of Calcutta; Author: Sebastien Ortiz; Publisher: Sampark; Pages: 330; Price: Rs399

When diplomats write books, they are expected to invoke political controversy, not ghosts. On that count, "The Ghosts of Calcutta" written by the French consul general in the city, Fabrice Etienne, is a book with a difference. Fascinated by Kolkata and its colonial past, Etienne, under the pen name of Sebastien Ortiz, goes on the ghostly trail of the men, women, buildings that constitute the hoary past of the eastern metropolis.

Released last week by

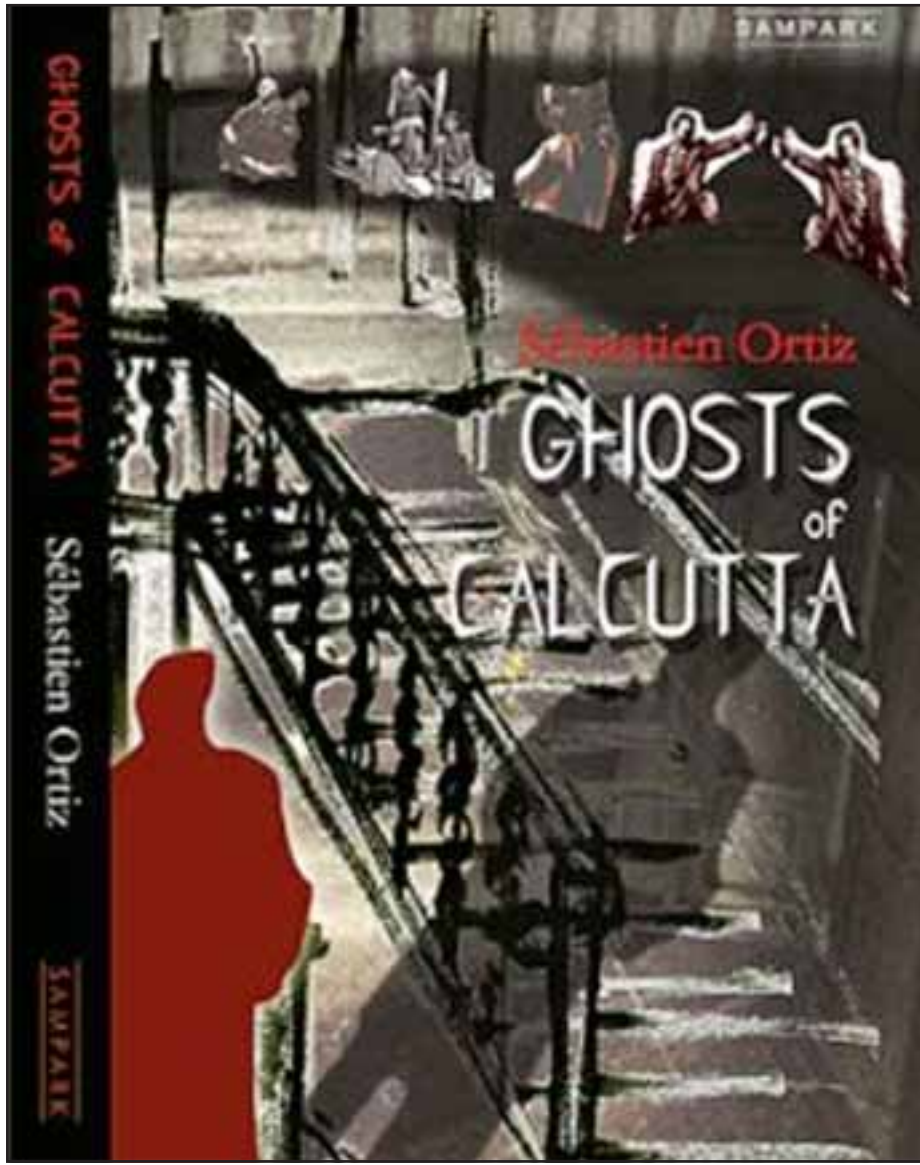


French Ambassador François Richier, the book is an interplay of histories, lives and myths. The reader will be intrigued when fact overlaps fiction, and fiction meanders along the lanes of the past.

The author has beautifully woven the narrative using ghosts as the metaphor. Ghosts have haunted Kolkata for as long as the city's memory goes back.

"I had lived in India in my twenties. It was in Calcutta and I was on voluntary overseas service at the French consulate. More than ten years have since passed. This lapse of time was necessary for me to make up my mind to come back. I found a pretext to write a novel about the ghosts of Calcutta - an excuse which was as good as any, to better reign in my own ghosts," Etienne writes in the preface.

A date with Kolkata and its ghosts



Translated by Sriparna Chatterjee from the French original "Fantômes à Calcutta", the novel narrates four parallel stories.

The protagonist, a Frenchman, arrives in Kolkata in 2005 to write a book on the city. He chronicles the lives of English men and women in the colonial era, many of whom died in tragic circumstances. He tells the stories of their lives and how they live on as ghosts in the city.

"The book was a project and a result of my long and wonderful association with the city. I wanted the French to read about the history of Kolkata," said Etienne.

There is Sarvesh, a Bengali who loses his wife and lives an existence that is a ghost of his vibrant past. Many lives criss-cross, for instance, those of a poor Christian maid and her beautiful young daughter Rosemarie.

The author's love and passion for Kolkata and its culture surprised Chatterjee. "He has detailed the book in a way that even a

homegrown Bengali like me did not know many things

Jorge Luis Borges that India is bigger than the world.



Sebastien Ortiz

he is talking about the city," said Chatterjee. An ardent fan of Satyajit Ray and Rabindranath Tagore, the author also mentions some Indian writers.

As one grapples with life and love in Kolkata, the book meanders through a city that is present in the past and weaves a narrative that is a magical as real. There are lines from

The protagonist feels that if this was so, then Calcutta is bigger than India. Could this be true?

The author's first novel Taleb (Gallimard, 2002) was shortlisted for several prizes in France, and has been translated into a number of languages. "Fantômes à Calcutta" (Arlea, 2009) is his fourth novel after "Mademoiselle Coeur Solitaire" and "Le gout de Bali".

(The writer can be contacted at preetha.n@ians.in)

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, August 2, 2015

Moon perigee on your solar return chart would heighten your creativity. You have been working hard and innovatively which brings you in line for appreciation and recognition and even an honour. Gains would follow. The way you are perceived is important and efforts at self-promotion can be made. You may have to undertake frequent travels during this period and these journeys will prove quite useful. These travels will also make you feel vibrant and alive and bring in spontaneity. Family celebrations would fill you with joy and verve. With so much happening, stress could get to you at times so take care to be regular with meditation and other techniques.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)
Your self-confidence and positive attitude will reward you. Constructive connections with others can be made fairly easily. A comfortable level of personal popularity helps to keep conflict to a minimum. Your attitude towards life would be changing. You are no longer willing to make compromises in the important areas of your life, particularly with regard to career. You are more determined, and it is an excellent time to get rid of bad habits. A new project or goal begun now has a good chance of being successful and long lasting. You would be able to find a way to strike a balance between self-gratification and the obligations of daily life.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)
This phase brings success and good fortune at work and opens new horizons for betterment and expansion. People are bound to recognize your leadership skills and talents. You want your life path and your objectives to reflect what you're really about. A balanced approach to life, in terms of realistic expectations, is the best approach for maximizing success. You benefit from being more decisive than usual, and your ability to concentrate and focus helps you to achieve what you set out to do in the coming weeks.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)
There will be harmonious relations in professional and personal life. Positive new relationships are formed. You are instinctively starting a new phase in your life. It is time to give your life a makeover, a time of new beginnings and fresh energy. It is a friendly time, when it is easy to enjoy life and other people. Focus is on personal freedom, reaching out to others, making new friends and exploration. A new project begun has a good chance of being successful and long-lasting. You are more enthusiastic and ready for adventure. You have to get yourself organized and work to build your resources.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)
This period brings good financial returns as you communicate well and present cordial relations with co-workers. You are inspired and could even inspire others with your words. You think more creatively and express yourself with more sensitivity, compassion, and warmth. You want your objectives to reflect what you are really about, and you are likely to rid yourself of unsatisfying goals. You benefit from being more decisive than usual, and your ability to concentrate and focus helps you to achieve what you set out to do. You possess a strong artistic sensitivity, and you are able to express your feelings openly and candidly.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)
This is a period of work and development and a boost to your self-confidence. It is a time to deal with practical matters, and it is not a time to be lazy or especially gregarious. It can be a time that feels hard, monotonous and lonely. Try to get yourself organized, work to build your resources, keep busy. Your main focus is on personal freedom, reaching out to others, making new friends, and exploration. You are more enthusiastic and ready for adventure. It is also a good time for expressing your creativity. Reach out, but avoid scattering your energies.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)
The planetary configuration brings unusualness and curiosity in your relationships as you feel they are more important to you. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental. This is a good time for reflection, prayer, and meditation. A higher purpose to your life is what you seek, and you rely more heavily upon your intuition in order to achieve it. Your physical activities tend to be more intense, passionate, and focused this week. You are more enthusiastic and ready for adventure. The way you present

your ideas, certainly helping to smooth over differences in your personal relationships.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)
New associations and beginnings as well as new opportunities and changes come your way. You would form new connections and relationships that enhance your spiritual and personal growth. Your popularity increases and efforts to smooth over challenges in partnerships are more likely to succeed. This is an excellent influence for negotiations, marriage, and business partnerships. You are likely to be actively involved with teamwork and collaboration with others. You are taking on new responsibilities, but generally enjoy the challenges.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)
You have to get yourself organized, work to build your resources and keep busy. There are better financial returns. You might have a more materialistic view of life and are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of comfort and status. You might find that you are very often encouraging and supportive of others. Certainly, you are more accepting and understanding of your friends and loved ones. Emotional security and being content in love will help to attract positive circumstances into your life. You are outgoing and your initiative is stronger than ever. Advice - stand alone, take action, start fresh and express independence.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)
New horizons in your romantic and love life open up. You might enjoy a favorable outcome when it comes to legal affairs, education, and travel. This week, you're bound to enjoy increased social opportunities as well as a boost in your personal popularity and magnetism. You are more friendly, optimistic, and big-hearted than usual. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation from others. This is a sociable, and perhaps self-indulgent, time when the pursuit of pleasure is one of your high priorities. Financial benefits may come your way. You may find that you have the right information at the right time. You could also have big ideas and plans. Work, especially in communications, goes well.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)
You have powerful, transformative energy at your disposal. Much will depend on how you handle it. Channeled positively, you could move mountains when it comes to pushing your projects ahead. If mishandled, however, you could be argumentative, stressed, and hell-bent on having your way. Avoid taking extreme measures to make things happen your way, and avoid people who might be doing the same. Deliberately trying to maneuver matters in order to get the upper hand will be a lesson in frustration. You need not over-analyze personal relationships but rather respond with your heart and deep feelings: as a new understanding and maturity with others around you at home and work.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)
There will be mixed results in domestic life and people you care for. You are practical, realistic, and your judgment is especially sound-and you derive much satisfaction from practical accomplishment. The key to harnessing this wonderful energy is to identify and find pleasure in the simple things that make you happy. You might enjoy a favorable outcome when it comes to legal affairs and travel. Financial benefits come your way. You find that you have the right information at the right time. You could also have big ideas and plans. Work, especially in communications, goes well. It is time to express your feelings and ideas and share what you have learned through a variety of experiences in this life.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)
The ability to express and communicate your ideas is extremely important to you this time. Surprises surrounding intimate matters, shared finances and resources and financial support will be in store. You spend more time on phone calls, emails, short frequent trips and communicating with friends. You pay attention to various ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one avenue for monetary gain. Your attention turns to domestic matters for a large part of the time and building, decoration and purchase of households for your home figures strongly now.

Book Review

On to the beach

(Contd from P-VI) fitting see-through apparels with sufficient air-passage and transparent netted fabrics are highly recommended. Long kaftans and stylish maxi dresses would ideally cover up the exposed skin from the hot sun. They specially come handy, when you are vacationing at the coastline cabanas. Short dresses are a strict no-no if you want to avoid that duskiness," she advises. "However in the evenings, shorts, bikinis and T-shirts with shape-wears underneath nicely club up the feminine ensemble to stroll on the sun-kissed beaches," she notes.

Singh also has a solution for middle-aged women who are slightly on the bulkier side and often show stretch marks. "High-waist swimsuits or waist-high bottoms can do the trick. Hide the navel and the midriff partially and you'll look perfect. Wrap-around skirts and sarongs can also camouflage the flaws," she says.

On her colour palette to turn heads are neon colours with exciting straps and attrac-



(TWF)

tive prints to add that extra dose of charm. "White is a perennial favourite. But grey, green, lemon yellow, strawberry pink, light dazzling lozenge-like oranges and cool, happy, tail-ending summer chromes are the favourite picks of this muggy monsoon," Singh says.

While some love to spin around at cruise parties or attend the ballroom dances in long, flowy gowns, others straightaway dive to indulge in adventure sports like snorkeling, kayaking, sea/snow skiing, sky diving, gliding, water scooting, etc. "Comfy, casual wear is ultimate in such cases. T-shirts teamed up with shorts or tracks or dri-fit quick-dry breathable pants will do the needful. Flip-flops are compatible to beaches but don't forget to carry sun-shielding glasses or goggles and caps in your purse for extra protection from the inclement elements," says Althea Shah, fitness expert and VP Marketing, Gold's Gym India.

'All women really want....'

(Contd from P-VI) and Kangana Ranaut, and among international actresses Renee Zellweger and Reese Witherspoon have sported his label.

Asked how he plans to take the brand ahead with same uniqueness, he promises not to disappoint. "I think over the years as I am growing up and the brand is becoming little more mature in terms of its market relevance and experience, I think we are striving more and more to make women's wear more luxurious, opulent yet at the same time not lose the sense of quirk that we as the brand stood for," he said.

(The writer can be contacted at nivedita.s@ians.in)

Paes, Sania perfected the....

(Contd from P-VI) Bravo, Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravas would never have left CSK in normal circumstances and likewise Shane Watson, Steven Smith, James Faulkner, Ajinkya Rahane, Stuart Binny and Dhawal Kulkarni may never leave RR as long as Rahul Dravid is their mentor.

As for our tennis stalwarts, quite a few commentators still grudgingly concede Sania's rise in stature even if they readily accept Paes's greatness. Some unfairly state that Sania could win the Wimbledon mixed doubles title only because of the protective wing of Martina Hingis. What the critics do not seem to have noticed is that Hingis at 34 waited for 17 years for her fourth title at Wimbledon. It is no fluke, Saina is World No.1 in doubles and Hingis No 2. Even those who partnered her in the last few years vouch for the Indian's tenacity and never-say-die spirit.

In Paes' case, it is now an accepted fact that any player partnering him can hope to win a title. At 42, the Indian seem to hone his skills with each passing tournament. For someone who has played with hundred partners in the doubles, he is still an epitome of fitness at 42.

Navratilova summed up the match-winning qualities of Paes and Saina. "Leander and Sania, they are always trying hard. That in itself wins a lot of matches. Without that you cannot win. She feels few people have the kind of consistency the two have and what's more they try hard. And Paes and Hingis could not have found better partners.

Navratilova paid a terrific compliment to Saina saying the two would have made a good team as well. "She makes a heck out of the ball. She knows where to put the ball, she is always very positive, no matter what. You can't tell her she is winning or losing by looking at her face. Because, she is always trying." Can there be a better praise for Sania?

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

“It is a mistake to try to look too far ahead. The chain of destiny can only be grasped one link at a time.”

--- Sir Winston Churchill

The Shillong Times

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Shillong's tryst with destiny

IT is exactly a week today since former President APJ Abdul Kalam collapsed in the middle of a lecture at IIM Shillong on July 27. Since then 'IIM Shillong' has been mentioned innumerable times on Twitter, Facebook, blogs and articles in newspapers and magazines. Condolence meets are being organised by different institutions on a daily basis this whole week and will perhaps continue for some time to come. Dr APJ Kalam's name is a familiar one even for school going kids. Parents said their children were sad to hear of the death of Dr Kalam. There is something about this man which endeared him to all Indians cutting across religion, caste, creed and gender. Not a few shed tears at his passing away. The IIM Shillong fraternity is still in shock and unable to reconcile to the fact that they would never again see Kalam Sir's familiar wave of the hand while talking to them informally or taking a verbal jibe at them. The scientist community feel they have lost a mentor and a cheer-leader. Children are sad because they will never hear Dr Kalam make them repeat his favourite exhortations again.

Dr APJ Abdul Kalam has revealed through his writings the intrinsic synthesis between religion and science and has shown by his own example that the two are not mutually exclusive. His last book, 'Transcendence: My spiritual experiences with Pramukh Swamiji' reveals the spiritual depth of a man who was India's first non-political appointee to Rashtrapati Bhavan. A prolific writer who enjoyed putting down every experience in writing, Dr Kalam has lucidly penned down his thoughts on 'Forgiveness' and Non-violence, virtues he has imbibed through his interface with Pramukh Swamiji, his spiritual guide and co-sojourner. Dr Kalam writes that nurturing revenge and the inability to forgive actually confines a person in a dark prison. Indeed the best tribute to this great Indian is to be able to emulate his qualities of humility and transparency. He is one President who rose above partisan politics and never took advantage of his position. It is a pity that the man's worth was not recognised during his lifetime. For Shillong his death has a message. Let that message be unraveled by the people of this city.

Dead Man Walking

By H H Mohrmen

Last month in the thick of the agitation programs spearheaded by the Joint Action Committee on Inner Line Permit (ILP) in Manipur, there was this short but interesting story which caught my attention. The story is about a unique form of protest organized by the citizen's forum to demand for implementation of ILP in the state, but the incident has some rather fascinating connection with the tradition of the Pnar people of Jaintia Hills and the recent unfortunate incident in the state.

The intensity of the public protest in Manipur increased after June, 8 when a Class XI student Sapam Robinhood died during police crack-down on ILP supporters. The protesting public was able to pressure the government to summon a special session to debate the issue but when the session ended on July 10 without the government making any move to introduce the much anticipated ILP, it compelled the public to launch a rather unique kind of protest.

It was reported that two days after the session the Pangal Political forum and Keiral Kendra Minority Muslim Development Organisation 'buried' effigies of deputy chief minister Gaikhangam, agriculture minister Abdul Nasir, parliamentary secretary in-charge of minorities and other backward classes Amin Shah and MLA Fazur Rahman on the banks of the river Iril in Imphal East. Along with the four legislators, Chief Minister Ibobi Singh's effigy was also burnt at the burial site with a proper burial ceremony. We were given to understand that the burial of the four other MLAs were performed with all the necessary rituals as prescribed by their respective religions.

We have seen people burning effigies of politicians and important leaders of the government or institutions to protest against their incompetency and unpopular policies or programs initiated by the government or institutions they lead, but one has not come

across a story of people conducting the last rites of a living person as a mark of protest. This unique kind of protest symbolizes that the famous five of Manipur legislative assembly are as good as dead, because their last rites have already been performed.

Interestingly in the tradition of the people of Jaintia hills, there is a special ritual of the dead which is similar to what was done in Imphal. There is ritual where the last rites of a person can be performed in- absentia or in the absence of a dead body. Among the Pnars of Raid Jwai in particular, we have a tradition called 'Kawah Sniñ' which is one of the last rites performed by those who follow the indigenous faith. This religious practice is performed when a person dies and the family is not able to conduct the customary last rites of the dead for various reasons.

As per Pnar traditional religion there are series of rituals performed whenever death occurs in the family. It starts from the moment the person breathes his last till the bones are interred in the clan ossuary. In a nutshell the last rites of the person in the traditional religion begins a few minutes after the person is dead. When the body is bathed certain rituals are performed. After the ceremony is performed the body is laid in state on the floor, on a bamboo mat for family and friends to pay their last respects. Then on the day the body is to be cremated and carried in a procession, the funeral pyre is lit and this is followed by a ceremony in front of the house. In the cremation ground there are two major rituals, the 'Choh syiar' a ceremony of sacrificing a rooster which as per Khasi-Pnar philosophy is the intermediary between man and God and the 'ka Siang ka pha/ phur' which is the ritual of offering food to the ancestors performed by women just before the pieces of charred -bones of the deceased person are collected. The final ritual is the cer-

emony called 'buh chyieñ' which is similar to the 'Thep mawbah' ceremony of the Khasis. This is the last part of the final rites of a person as per the Pnar of Jwai tradition, where the charred bones of the dead person are placed in the clan's ossuary- its final resting place.

Among the Pnar of Raid Jwai tradition if a person dies in a distant place, the body can be cremated in the place where death occurred and the charred bones but not the ash are collected to be carried and placed in the clan's ossuary. Earlier the Pnars of Jwai origin that lived in Shillong and cremated their dead in the city, would walk all the way from Shillong to Jowai to carry the charred bones in a tradition called 'Rah chyieñ'. The charred-bones are to be placed alongside the members of the clan in the clan's ossuary. In case the family decides to carry the dead body for cremation in Jowai, then the family will later have to offer sacrifices to all the rivers and streams along the way to appease the deities. Carrying a dead body over the rivers and streams is an offence against the deities and they have to be propitiated.

Coming back to 'Kawah Sniñ', the ceremony can be performed for many reasons, one of them being that the person died in a distant land and proper cremation ceremony and rituals were not possible so 'kawah sniñ' was performed to complete the last rites so that the dead person will reach the souls' final resting place and 'eat betel nut in the corridor of God's dwelling place.' Or it could very well be that a person had disappeared for many years together and the family does not know his whereabouts and have not heard from him or about him for many years. They usually perform this ceremony. 'Kawah Sniñ' is performed when the family assumes that the individual has died and decides to perform his

last rites in the absence of a dead body.

What if the family had already carried out a 'Kawah Sniñ' ceremony of a certain person and later he or she returns and it turns out that the person did not die but is still alive? Such incidents are rare but I was told that it happened once. A man in a certain locality in Jowai who for many years had lost touch with his family was assumed dead and the ritual of 'Kawah Sniñ' was performed on his behalf. But lo and behold a few years later he appeared again! So what happens when a dead man walks again? In such cases, even though the man is physically alive he is forbidden from taking part in any religious rites because he is considered dead. There is no prohibition for him to take part in any social activities for religious ceremonies and rituals. So he is dead even if he is still alive.

But the dead man who will always walk on the clouds over the hills of Meghalaya is the former President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam whose spirit left his body when nature is in full bloom in the area. When he breathed his last in the pine city, his spirit soared high over the green hills to meet his maker. Over the horizons, the sun had set to make way for the starry skies and he finally rested along with the birds in the forests. He died doing what he loved most. Like a true soldier he died with his boots on. His demise has left an empty space in the hearts of many, even if they had only seen him on TV. I was in a handshake distance from him at Pdenghshakap where he had foretold about what had happened to Myntdu-Leshka hydro electric project.

His final journey along the green hills and over the clouds has made him one of us. In the Pnar traditional belief of the afterlife, the spirit of the dead 'ki sa-ngia ki saret' will always hang around and the spirit can also 'ksan nia ksan chang' or plead with God that that he bestows his blessings on those who are still alive. May your spirit keep flying alongside our ancestors across the sky and over the hills!

ISIS a common threat

By M J Akbar

When India reassumes its engagement with successor states of the Safavid, Ottoman and European empires to its west up to the Nile and the Sahel in north Africa, it will renew dialogue with a region that has not had a good night's sleep for at least two centuries. Analysis is not an advent of any blame game.

The fault, as that crusty realist Shakespeare noted, may lie in ourselves, rather than our stars, but the destiny of men also has its profound cycles across the cartwheels of time. The past is littered with skeletons of nations which once ruled as much as the world as they could reach, and then imploded, leaving those who suffered colonisation to search for a new beginning within the debris. This search has never been easy, or short. All interventions disorient. Every collapse destabilises.

The one great incubation of the 20th century is that it has made the 21st a more egalitarian age. We should be careful, however, about how far we stretch the meaning of a more egalitarian spirit. It does not necessarily mean an equitable transformation towards democracy. But the era of acquisitive, or even domineering, empires is over. Great powers have to be more subtle in their manoeuvres, more guarded in their expectations. Only foolish powers, super or medium-sized, make non-negotiable demands.

The job of a contemporary diplomat, as he seeks to negotiate his or her way towards a better relationship, is certainly not to play God. The divine right of judgement is now best left to the sole custody of a historian. Nor can a diplomat afford to become a school-master. The class will soon become empty. The world may not be a comity of nations that are equal, but it is certainly a more equitable globe.

The best diplomat is a geologist working within the turbulent geographic and mental landscapes embedded in fast-changing scenarios. The objective? How do you spot a port for a bilateral anchor?

India has one substantive advantage in West Asia and Africa. It does not have to deal with hostile governments. Most nations of the region host Indians, some-times in millions, who work and contribute creatively to local economies. The crucial, if often diplomatically silent, question is: we may not have enemies, but do we have friends? More important: does friendship pass the strategic test? This is important because the nature of this region has changed. From the oil price

revolution of 1973 to the beginning of this century, this region was, albeit to different degrees, synonymous with economic growth and hence a welcome partner for all nations with the ability to participate in that growth. Today, the prime determinant of relations has become response to multi-dimensional conflict.

There are many wars going on simultaneously, but by far the most dangerous of them is the deadly challenge posed by terrorism in its latest manifestation. In its previous phase, terrorism was a manic form of hit-and-run, or hit-and-die violence organised by small groups or militias, many of whom were used by regular intelligence agencies in the service of "war by other means". The emergence of ISIS, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, has radically changed the metabolism and reach of this danger. It is true that ISIS rose from the swamp of contrary ambitions of regional powers. As always with Dr Frankenstein's monster, the end-product has moved away from the range of his master's voice. Today the pseudo-Caliphate has an agenda of its own, and threatens to destabilise regimes within its immediate periphery as much as it provokes murder and mayhem on more distant targets.

We in India understand this danger all too well. ISIS has formally declared India as an enemy. The diplomatic necessity is to raise sufficient awareness of the need for an uncompromising united front against ISIS. This pseudo-Caliphate has already acquired the geography of a medium-sized nation, and the revenue of a smaller one. But its enormous potential to destabilise lies in the fact that it has become the largest sanctuary of rogue-movements, sheltering under the banner of false fantasies but nurtured by the dialectic of radical Islamism. This is not new in the history of Muslims. Such extremist groups appeared in the time of the first four Caliphs, proving that the power to mislead can have as much traction as the ability to lead.

We know that we cannot be indifferent to this mortal danger, or take comfort in distance. The enemy is at our doorstep as well, and we are not speaking psychologically here. India must build strategic links and relationships with the major powers in West Asia in the common confrontation against terrorism and a terrorist neo-state. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi heads towards the region in the near future, this will surely be at the top of his mind. One hopes that his hosts are thinking on similar lines. If the mind is clear, the rest will follow.

Though credit must be given to the Hon'ble High Court of Meghalaya for taking up this paradoxical issue, one should also contemplate on the pros and cons of the issue because it could rake up many other controversies. The Hon'ble Court may also take cognizance of the many unreported matters of tax-evasion both by the business and salaried classes. The practice of collusion by ground level officials in relaxing the tax dragnet, especially to the business class is a well known fact. Secondary income from other sources are always kept under wraps, giving a slip to tax-related payments, even by the educated, blue collared salaried class. In spite of being educated and well-placed, they conveniently ignore that in a small way they are contributing towards the overall development of the economy and which has a cascading effect in adding

to the national income. If one can recollect, the famous footballer, Lionel Messi who though from Argentina, is still in a spot of bother in Spain, where he plies his trade, for suspected tax-fraud of over £ 3 million, for which, a penalty of a jail term awaits him, if proven guilty. Tax evasion is a normal practice in this country with the laws of the land letting the guilty go scot-free with minimum penalties. It is high time that the stringent laws of the West are enacted and enforced in this country as well so far as taxes are concerned.

Yours etc.,
Sugata Dey
All India Radio Qtr
Complex
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.

LOOKING BACK

January 11, 1988

Plea for qualitative improvement of employment services in North-East

A conference of the Directors of Employment Exchange of the North-Eastern Region held here recently has recommended a number of practical measures to bring about qualitative and quantitative improvement of the employment services in the North-East.

The Conference held under the Presidentship of the Secretary of the NEC Mr P H Trivedi, suggested the setting up of Coaching-Cum-Guidance Centres for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes candidates to promote self employment and extension of employment information services to the rural areas through mobile as well as extension services.

The other suggestions made by the Conference including improvement of Employment Market Information and Vocational Guidance Programme, establishment of vocational rehabilitation centres for physically handicapped persons and strengthening of the Employment Services at various levels. Mr Trivedi mentioned about the proposal of the North Eastern Council for placing a couple of officers of the rank of Additional and Jt. Director in order to conduct the programme of collection of information and data on employment in the region and to make necessary analysis of the same for assessing the real nature of employment problem. Stressing the need for arrangement of proper training

for the officers in the Employment Exchange Directories, Mr Trivedi also suggested that certain percentage of posts in the State Sectors should be created as apprentice. He also stressed the need for adequate placement of ITI trained candidates to fill the vacancies.

The Director General of Employment and Training, Govt of India Mr S Venkataramani, while addressing the Conference explained the salient features of the recommendations of the Working Group for Improvement of Employment Services and mentioned that the Government of India as well as the NEC could consider extending financial assistance for improvement and modernization of Employment Exchanges in the region so that the Employment Exchanges could be gradually transformed over the next decade into nuclei of manpower oriented Labour Market Information System.

Workers training programme at Jowai

A five day training programme for workers in unorganized sectors at Jowai on June 22. The Meghalaya Education Minister, Dr R C Laloo while opening the programme said it was the earnest desire of the Govt to provide more employment opportunities to the people with a view to uplifting them socio-economically on all fronts.

TO THE EDITOR

The kite-flying exercise

Editor,

Subsequent to the sighting of Pakistani flags at Them Mawbah by Ardent Basaiawmohit and subsequently to EKH District Administration's enquiry into the matter and discovering nothing but hot air, a number of jokes are circulating in town. Some of these are as follows:

1. People are convinced that the EKH District Administration had done a cover up job while reporting on the Pakistani flag issue at Them Mawbah. The DC had reported and displayed innocent red and green lid bunting as the cause for the original furore. Those who know better say that the District Administration report is simply an attempt to avoid further discomfiture to a media-hungry but short-sighted VIP. It is claimed that subsequent to the hue and cry mentioned above, the gentry of this locality have now become extremely shy of hanging up their underwear to dry. The chance that someone may mistake them for something far worse than an enemy flag simply refuses to die down!

2. A hopeful who recently appeared for the UPSC exams cleared his mains but was devastated when he flunked in his viva-voce. The apparent cause for his failure was his inability to identify flags of vari-

ous nations when asked to. His girl friend is now consoling him with the advice that his failure to make it to the IAS is no big deal. Politics in Meghalaya offers better opportunities with less risks than appearing for competitive exams. GK apparently is no qualifier to become an MLA. She clinched her argument and convinced her beau with the recent news that emanated from Them Mawbah.

3. Yesterday there was a kite flying competition in one of the busy localities of Shillong. Many kites were hacked, cut and carried away to destinations unknown. At the end of the day only one green kite decorated with a crescent moon and a star remained unconquered. It got immediate media attention; claimed front page news and made it as Breaking News in the local electronic media. Moral of the story - Kite flying can get you instant media attention!

Yours etc.,
KS Buhphang,
Via email

Keating Roads Happy Hours

Editor,

Apropos the letter by Leonard Wankhar published in your daily, the writer has expressed his genuine concern and has minced no words in bringing out the menace of illegal liquor trade hosted by some people in Keating Road, obviously with the conniv-

ance of the Police as well as the Excise Department. Who are the people from both these departments who are making money by partnering in this illegal business of liquor which results in drunken brawls, loud music, threats to passers-by, illegal sale of liquor through the night and believe it or not even police and other government vehicles are seen to be buying liquor from the vendors. The snacks stalls that start business as soon as the night liquor business begins are the other beneficiaries of this trade. All the adjoining so called paan shops sell soda, water and disposable glasses to ensure their customers are provided with all facilities in this open bar at Keating Road which shuts business only past mid night.

I question the government and the respective authorities as to why this blatantly illegal liquor business is allowed to carry on and why all the complaints to the authorities are met with deaf ears. What action is being taken against the Police and Excise Department who appear to be providing a cover-up to this business and what they are gaining in return need not be elaborated since it is obvious. Hope this letter wakes up the authorities and if this does not wake them up then we hope that the Hon'ble High Court take sup-moto notice on this menace that is going on right behind the High

Court itself.

Yours etc.,
P K Dhar & others,
Via email

Income tax for tribals

Editor,

Apropos the news item in your esteemed daily "Creamy layer under Scanner: Income tax exemption for tribals in Meghalaya" (ST July 23, 2015). Widening the income tax base is a right move but before the submission of the affidavit by the Income Tax department through its attorney, one must remember the "Schedule 6" areas earmarked for exemption of Income Tax both for the salaried and others. As stated in Section 10(26) of the Income Tax Act, "Income of members of Scheduled Tribes residing in certain areas of the North Eastern States or in Ladakh region with exemption limit only on income arising in those areas or interest on securities or dividends in these designated places are not liable for payment of Income Tax. Though the argument is that generally it is the tribal elite that benefit from the clause, the Constitutional amendment on the lines initiated by the Hon'ble High Court of Meghalaya, for bringing the so called "creamy layer," within the tax bracket, is going to be a long and tedious process. But this move is going to prove detrimental to the indigent and needy residing in the remote locations of the Schedule 6 areas.

"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."

— Sir Winston Churchill

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVII No. 353 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2015

Omar's death

RUMOURS had been afloat for some time to the effect that redoubtable Taliban leader Mullah Omar had been dead. The Taliban have finally confirmed it. For the last two years, they tried to keep him alive. They had at last realised that the conspiracy of silence is of no avail. If Mullah Omar had been alive, the Taliban would have had to accept the leadership of his deputy, Akhtar Mohammad Mansour. Many of them were reluctant to do so. It is because Abdul Qaoum Zakir leads the most organised insurgent group in Afghanistan and commands greater firepower. Besides, Mansour is known to have links with Pakistan authorities. By heredity, Mullah Yaqoob, Mullah Omar's son may claim to assume leadership. Mansour is not in agreement with the Taliban's official representatives who went to Qatar, which is held against him. He did not attend the talks with representatives from Afghanistan and Pakistan held in Qatar recently.

Mullah Omar has doubtless left a lasting legacy. But now that he is gone, the Taliban are likely to split up fast. The peace process with Afghanistan is also shrouded in uncertainty. The peace talks under the watchful eyes of China have been cancelled. However, with the void in leadership, the Taliban can be brought back again to the conference table. Nevertheless, Pakistan's image has been dented by the fact that Mansour, its protégé tried to keep the myth of his father being alive going for some time. That may provoke resistance in Afghanistan to Pakistan-brokered talks with the Taliban. No doubt, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani wants talks to be held as that would enable him to get more funds from the international community. But, if no progress is made, the ISIS may put its claws on disturbed Afghanistan.

LOOKING BACK

January 11, 1988

'Centre uncooperative n implementing Assam Accord'

Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, today accused the centre in the implementation of Assam Accord. Mr. Mahanta told newsmen here that while the state government had fulfilled all its obligations under the Accord, the Centre was yet to do so in respect of its obligations.

The implementation of Assam Accord was still the most urgent problem for his government, he said, while the Assam Government had revoked the suspension of employees and withdraw cases against those who has participated in the Assam agitation, the Centre had neither revoked suspension nor withdrawn cases against central government employee, he charged.

Mr. Mahanta said nothing much was done to prevent the infiltration of people across the border from Bangladesh. "It is the duty of central government to stop infiltration."

He said since the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) had not undertaken a survey to construct a road and fence along the 600-km Indo-Bangladesh border, the state PWD had completed it.

Darjeeling hill area peaceful for second day

The hill areas rocked by GNLf violence for several days, remained peaceful for the second day today, official sources said.

Power supply and telephone services disturbed in Kalimpong were restored today, and buses plied between Kalimpong and

Siliguri. The sources said 23 GNLf activists were detained under the Anti-Terrorist Act raising the num- of detenues under the act to 118.

Wide criticism for petrol hike

Various political parties, business circles and other groups today condemned the "petrol hike" as an "inflationary measure" which would hit the common man.

Business circles said that the hike would retard industrial production while political parties apart from criticizing it for the "immense agony" it would cause to the people regretted the government's parliament and make the budgetary exercise meaningless.

Baharatiya Janata Party President L K Advani said for the past several years it had become a routine practice with the government to impose such financial burdens on the people through "administrative price hikes" before announcing the budget.

S C to hear Indira Gandhi assassins' appeal

A three judge bench of the Supreme Court will start hearing from January 12 the criminal appeal filed by three accused sentenced to the death in the Indira Gandhi assassination case. Sawant Singh, Kehar Singh and Balbir Singh were awarded death sentence by the then Sessions Judge Mr. Mahesh Chandra after an eight-month trial in the Central Tihar Jail. The Delhi High Court had confirmed the reference made by the Sessions Judge and upheld its verdict.

Do we need a wakeup call?

By Toki Blah

People can argue, and with ample justification, as to whether breaking off from Assam was such a brilliant idea after all. That debate however should not in the least obscure the fact that we broke away from erstwhile Assam basically because at one point of time we sincerely believed we would be better off on our own. Having said that and forty three years down the line, we Meghalayans are yet to determine what exactly is it we want, expect, demand and desire from this political creation called the Abode of the Clouds. We got our Hill State but to our eternal shame have proved completely incompetent in managing it. Been totally inept in its governance. Essentially every half decade the management of our well-being; our economy and livelihood; the welfare and future of our children, is unconditionally handed over to leaders of our own choosing. These are Khasi, Pnar and Garo leaders, our own people, our own flesh and blood, no outsiders, no aliens from Mars - and for the last 43 years they bungled it! We seek answers for our misery and the 'outsider' emerges as the most convenient scapegoat for the sense of hopelessness; the poverty; the joblessness; the confusion and fear that now prevail in our hearts. Its sheer baloney! The first bitter truth we must accept - we have been betrayed by our own flesh and blood and by no one else!

Some of us have at times been cautioned from writing anything that throws our Khasi community in a bad light. The argument is that by doing so, especially in the English medium, simply provide outsiders with an excuse to laugh at us. "Look", we are told, "the vernacular press never entertains anything that is degrading to the Jaitbynriew". So, in the name of the poor Jaitbynriew, every kind of rubbish, corruption, nepotism, political incompetence, extortion, and even murder is swept under the carpet. Lack of integrity to call a spade a spade - that exactly is our greatest social handicap. At best it's the hypocrisy of the highest order, at its worst it's an ostrich like approach to challenges that confront the Jaitbynriew. It obviously serves no purpose except encourage those who exploit us to carry on with the

peace of his soul because Russell was not a believer. Swarup said that it would be an insult both to Russell and to his ideas. The meeting had heated exchanges and Swarup was over ruled. He walked out and being an admirer and a student of Shanti Swarup I too left with him. I remember how a dejected Swarup walked all the way from the University to the town (about five kilometres) and talked to me about the need to learn to respect views of people we do not agree with. He called me over for dinner and we kept talking. He spoke with some contentment about his colleagues and said a large majority of them should not teach in a University because they cannot rise above their immediate peers. He told me, "Learn to be a dissenter. A good intellectual is one who challenges the ideas that exist and tries to replace them with better ones. You must have only one master and that should be reason. As an intellectual you will not respect any other authority except reason." All through my teaching and research career I remembered those words and that stood me in good stead.

I am narrating this to make a small but important

abuse. Why can't we shout, point out and accuse, from the roof tops if need be, leaders who mislead, misinform, are irresponsible or corrupt? Why can't the electorate boycott those who corrupt tribal society not only with their dirty money but their absurd, obsolete ideas as well? The sooner we do this the better off we will be. The sooner we recognise that we too as an electorate are apathetic, unconcerned and totally vulnerable to the lure of money when it comes to electing leaders, the happier and more politically enlightened the Jaitbynriew will be.

To understand what is really happening to Meghalaya today one has to go back to the beginning - to the time of conception and birth of this Hill State. This Hill State was conceived on a notion, and with hind sight perhaps a flawed notion, that we can and should be able to take care of ourselves, better than what the Assamese were capable of. The idea flourished and grew, fed on beliefs that the mythical glorious past we exalt in, would somehow return if only governance of our land; its resources and its people were to revert back to indigenous leaders. The "No Hill State No Rest" slogan became the emotionally charged catchword for the Khasi, Jaintia, Mikir and Garo Hills of the 1960's. Then when we did get our Hill State we simply didn't know what to do with it! It's as simple as that. The second bitter truth Meghalaya must accept - 43 years ago, we failed to invest in rational visionary thinking. Today we still don't know what that means.

In the scientific world we live in today, genetic makeup is supposed to be a crucial guide into any attempt at finding out who we are; where we came from and what exactly makes us tick. In a paucity of any creditable data bank as to the genetic makeup of the Achik-Hynnietrep people, one has to look elsewhere for an answer to the question. As we search one thing becomes crystal clear. As the major communities that make up Meghalaya, we are very rich in Emotional Capital. In fact one can say we suffer from an overdose of it. It is one of our genetic signatures as indigenous people. We harbour roman-

tic ideas about ourselves; unblushingly accepting flattery that we are simple, innocent, backward yet noble God fearing tribals exploited by villainous outsiders. We love to gush forth with "That understanding White Man and his ILP, who isolated us from the rest of the World." We bristle when confronted with proof, that ravenous wolves tearing our society apart are our own flesh and blood; our own kith and kin; NGOs, leaders of Tradition, leaders of the ballot box or of religion. This is no turncoat (ingkhong shyllangmat) statement. It's simply the truth and sorry folks, but it had to be said.

This is the society we, I included, belong to. Let's hasten to add that there is absolutely nothing wrong with the possession of Emotional Capital. As a matter of fact for psychologists it is a considered asset - an Emotional quotient (EQ) to supplement Intelligence quotient (IQ). Problem starts when people with an overdose of Emotional Exuberance (shongshit khleh bijej) allow this enthusiasm to overtake common sense, logic and reason; when we entertain wishful thinking and become blind to facts and reality. In Meghalaya today there are hordes out there who actually believe, based on jingoism alone, that we are a unique chosen race occupying a land especially blessed by God. As such we can do no wrong! Such sentiments have blinded us to the fact that we are morally and mentally as strong or as weak as the next person. Such unfounded sentiments have denied us, for 43 long years, the blessings of responsive democratic representation and its Governance. The time has now come for us to do a reality check before we cause ourselves further grief and harm.

To be able to survive the 21st century, the Hynnietrep community must accept certain truths about itself. The first is that as a community we are a thoroughly confused lot. We have yet to decide and make up our minds about certain basic aspects about ourselves. Believe it or not there are still people out there confused over which

Law they fall under. Are they governed by provisions of the Constitution of India, the 6th Schedule or by Tradition? Many sincerely believe the 6th Schedule is above the Constitution and Tradition above everything else. Tragedy is that even teachers who should know better themselves believe in such nonsense and pass it on to their innocent students. Our Education system! Then as correctly pointed out by Bah Fabian Lyngdoh, a State conceived and born out of that emotion packed slogan "No Hill State No Rest" is now looked upon, by its own people, as a 'foreign' sorkar. As a community we have no concept on how to meaningfully interact with our own elected Government. We never engage with Govt. Instead we always confront it! Confront it with stones, agitations, suspicions or whatever. There are NGOs that make a living by being anti establishment, encouraging the notion that everything done by Govt is anti people. Point is, this attitude has led us nowhere but downhill.

Then let's turn our attention to Shillong. Whose is it? Is it ours or does it belong to someone else? We have never heard indigenous leaders - political, traditional, religious or NGO ever speak about Jaitbynriew ownership over this city. Everyone is focused on their own 'shong' or locality. They clean it; they manage it; they own it! Synshar Shong or village governance is Tradition and so it must be good. On the other hand the concept of 'Ka Synshar Sor' (Urban governance even if successful everywhere else) is non traditional so it cannot be trusted. Tradition has no history of 'Synshar Sor' simply because our forefathers never had need to govern a city. Our generation has inherited Shillong but refuse to accept the fact or to take ownership of what is ours. We prefer, it seems, to have no stake in Shillong's development. We have left Shillong to its own filth and garbage, to a defunct municipality, to rag pickers and uncaring hawkers. No one cries for Shillong. The notion that Shillong does not belong to us is the biggest mistake of U Khun U Hynnietrep. We might just end up losing it. Do we pass on this blunder to the next generation of Khasis? Any lingering doubts about the urgent need for a wakeup call?

(Author is President of ICARE)

proud to be an Indian citizen and teacher than being a member of any religious faith.

Yours etc.
Apurba K Baruah
Retired Professor of Political Science,
Via email

Government-sponsored state holidays

Editor,
The recent state holiday declared by Meghalaya Government on account of the death of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam in Shillong was totally unnecessary and arbitrary. Look at the most recent happenings in Kerala where the state government employees decided to forego Sunday as a holiday and worked to condole his death. This is an eye opener to all and the Meghalaya Govt in particular. Meghalaya already has numerous holidays and the unproductive work culture here is well-known. Already the state had numerous unofficial holidays in the form of bandhs etc. Hence, I hope that better sense prevails in the state establishment to improve work culture and ethics rather than giving more holidays.

Yours etc.,
H S Ranhotra
Shillong -3

How close are we to Kalam's ideals

By Albert Thyrmiang

The Meghalaya Government is keen to dedicate a day to Dr Kalam's memory and to keep alive his ideals. One is not against the annual commemoration for the people's President but will it be a mere tokenism? Is the announcement for the annual observation of the death of the former president a trumpet to proclaim to the world that we love the exemplary teacher? How far are we from his ideals? As a state are we serious in imbibing his ideals? Are there contradictions between our ideals and that of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam?

One, work culture: From the village of Rameswaram Dr Kalam occupied the Rashtrapati Bhavan. From the son of boat owner he rose to the country's highest office. From an average student in school he obtained multiple doctorates. From a newspaper distributor to an inspiring author and writer. From the poorest background he won the Bharat Ratna and numerous other honours. From an ordinary beginning he became 'India's missile man'. His place of birth did not limit his horizon. His circumstances did not determine his dreams. In short Dr. Kalam came up in live by dint of sheer hard work.

Are we in Meghalaya inspired by him? Are we willing to imbibe his work culture? On hearing of the death of the hard-working personality, the first thing we wanted was a holiday. We did not pay heed to his advice, "Don't declare holiday on my death, instead, work an extra day if you love me". By declaring a public holiday on July 28, a day after his death, the Meghalaya government has proclaimed to the world that we don't want to emulate his example. We will continue to clamour and crave for holidays. We will carry on with large number of public holidays. We will go on with our practice of bandhs and non-cooperation movements to the detriment of the development of the state. So what is the point in observing Kalam's day?

Secondly Dr. Kalam valued education. From personal experience he knew that education is the biggest tool for development - personal, mental, spiritual economic, social and political. He knew that education is more than information or passing examinations or possessing degrees. He was for value based education. This was what he did - inspiring children and students all over the country. He inspired them to achieve greatness through hard work.

He was a teacher. He loved teaching. He travelled the length and breadth of this vast country to teach. He breathed his last teaching. It is here that Dr. Kalam can teach us, teachers exemplary lesson. There are too many teachers in our state who take teaching as a pure job not a profession or a vocation. There is no commitment or passion. Quite often we see and hear that teachers want to do the minimum. There are hundreds of teachers across the state who teach one or two hours a day and draw enviable salaries. I wonder what they do the whole day.

On the day that Dr Kalam was cremated his aide, Srijan Pal Singh revealed that he was particularly concerned with the state of education at the primary level. Educa-

tion at this level is crucial but sadly the quality is very poor all over the country. A large number of children do not learn the necessary literacy and numerical skills. This leads to high drop out rates.

In 2013 Pratham, an NGO, conducted a survey in rural Karnataka and shockingly found that more than half of class I students can read only letters but not words. Only 42.2 percent children of class V can read only class II-level text books. Worse, only 28 percent students of Class III can do subtraction.

It is feared that the situation is no better in Meghalaya. Education is qualitatively poor at the primary level especially in rural areas. Unfortunately those responsible are teachers themselves, more specifically government teachers. Large scale absenteeism and irregularity is the order of the day. The practice of proxy teaching is also common. More points can be added. Unqualified and unskilled teachers, poorly paid teachers, absence of inspection, etc are the reasons for the sorry state of affairs. Is the Meghalaya Government contemplating to do something to improve the quality of education in rural settings at the primary level to pay tribute to Dr. Kalam?

Amid public suggestions for imprinting the image of the ex-president in the currency notes, Srijan Pal Singh revealed that Dr. Kalam would not want it. He had expressed sadness in seeing the Mahatma Gandhi borne Indian currency being stashed abroad. He was also alarmed at the uncountable black money. Ruling out the 'image on currency' demand the Srijan said that Dr. Kalam would be happy to have an institute in his name to train primary teachers to improve the level of education at primary level. Can the Meghalaya government not think on these lines rather than a token annual observation of the teacher par excellence?

Thirdly Dr. Kalam was an honest man. He legitimately earned his living. He was never involved in corruption. He amassed no wealth. Now look at our politicians for a moment! They are the richest in the state. They win election by money power. They use politics to accumulate more wealth. The veterans too are among the wealthiest in the state. Have they amassed wealth by legitimate means?

Here we have the Education scam, the CMJ University Scam, the Khyndailad Beautification Scam, The Public System Distribution Scam, the PMGSY Scam and others. These are only some major scams that are in the public domain. We know there is corruption at every level. We know the ministers, bureaucrats, officers, contractors take their share for every developmental work. The beneficiaries are left with 30 to 25 percent. We know money changes hands at different levels of government. We also know how ordinary citizens encounter corruption and have to bribe their way everyday. They have to pay even for a signature.

Then we have the rich business class who do not pay taxes but want to accumulate more wealth without contributing to the state's revenue. We also have government departments and corporations which have not audited their accounts for years. So is there meaning in celebrating Dr. Kalam's death anniversary?

"There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build and yet leave a landscape as it was before."

—Robert Lynd

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVII No. 354 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2015

A historic pact

INDIA has signed a historic accord with the rebel NSCN (IM) promising that state will return to normal and enabling India to promote its Act East policy. The Naga insurgents were led by T. Muivah, chairman of the NSCN(IM), the largest of the Naga insurgent groups and marked the end of the longest period of insurgency in the north-east. The pact was signed in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, home minister Rajnath Singh and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. The terms of the accord have not yet been revealed and it is actually a framework including aspects which are commitments to the Nagas and assurances to neighbouring states. It can be seen as Modi's biggest achievement in the north-east. If it finally succeeds, it will be comparable to the Mizo accord of 1986. Nagaland and India should develop together, Modi said while acknowledging the uniqueness of the Naga leadership.

The over 60 rounds of talks in the past had failed because of some non-negotiable demands made by the NSCN(IM). The most contentious issue was the demand for greater Nagalim threatening the territorial integrity of neighbouring Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Muivah is reported to have diluted the demand. Only a step towards more autonomy in the Naga Hills of Manipur is expected to resolve the crisis. A larger cultural body of the Nagas living in Nagaland and the mManipur hills is likely to emerge. The NSCN(IM) is unlikely to go into electoral politics but the proposed cultural body could become a political party at some point. The other sticking points concerning demands violating the Indian Constitution can be easily removed. Besides, with greater investment flowing into Nagaland, the NSCN(Khaplang) can be isolated and India's relations with Myanmar will improve.

LOOKING BACK

January 11, 1988

303 File Nominations

Some 303 candidates for the 60 seats in the State Assembly as the last date for filing nomination was over on Saturday at 3 PM. This is against 358 candidates of last general elections held in February 1983.

The scrutiny of the nomination papers will be carrying out on Monday. The last date for withdrawal of candidates is January 13.

The Congress (I) the only party to field contestants in all the 60 constituencies. The Hill People Union, the principal opposition party in the Assembly, has fielded 55 candidates. The HSPDP has set up 30, while the PDIC has 15 nominees.

A good number of "rebel" Congress (I) candidates are reported to have filed their nominations. While detailed reports from the district headquarters were still being awaited, one estimates showed that at least 15 to 20 "rebels" has filed their nominations.

Meanwhile, hectic efforts are being made to persuade them to withdraw from the contest. Party leaders said that before the last for withdrawal, all possible means would be adopted to avoid any splitting of votes.

Ex-Minister Among 6 Killed In Punjab

Chandigarh, Jan 9: Former Punjab Minister Tarlochan Singh Riasti and his driver was among the six people killed while hardcore terrorist Satnam Singh Bawa, a close associate of Harjinder Singh Jinda; escaped from police custody during the past 24 hours in Punjab.

Syiemship in traditional Khasi polity

By Fabian Lyngdoh

It is said that among the Khasis, a man cannot make himself a Syiem or to establish a Syiemship of his own. It was ki bakhrav (elders of founding clans), as the leaders of their respective villages or raids, who, after establishing a state through their confederation, sought a particular family and appointed it as the 'jait syiem'. Almost invariably, a syiem family has never been appointed from among the founding clans, but non-Khasi families such as Assamese, Bengalee, Karbi, Garo etc., were brought from outside the raid or hima and 'tang jait' (consecrated) as the syiem. In some cases, to rationalize the process of adoption, myths of a fish, or pig, or nymph were created to mystify or obscure the origin. One of the basan clans of Raid Iapngar is also said to have originated from a fish caught from the river Umiam. So it is said that such syiem are called 'ki syiem-blei' (syiem- of the gods).

The word 'blei' had been liberally interpreted in the context of 'God' only. But the word 'blei' in Khasi concept does not only mean 'God', but it generally means 'spiritual beings'. In some clans, 'ka chwar', 'ka taro', 'u thlen' etc., are considered as 'ki blei', but for others they are 'ki ksuid' (demons). In the clan religion, the spirits of the dead are also called 'ki blei', such as 'ka blei lawbei' and 'ki blei synrap' (spirits of twins). Persons who are fully ripe in age with flowing white hair are honourably called 'ki tymmen-blei' because they are nearing the entrance into the spiritual realm. Some locations called 'khlaw-blei', 'lum-blei' 'maw-blei', 'um-blei' etc., are not places where people expect blessings, but they are places where people fear 'ka pakhu' (attack by malignant spirits). So the concept of 'syiem-blei' does not mean 'progeny of God' but simply means progeny of ka puri (nymph) because her real identity is mystified, or hidden from people's knowledge.

A brief review of the origin of the jait syiem in Khasi society would throw more

light on the issue. The first ancestress of the jait syiem of Hima Shyllong is said to be 'Ka Pahsyntiew,' a mysterious little girl likened to 'ka puri' (nymph) discovered by an elder of the Mylliemngap clan in 'Krem Marai' (a cave by the side of Shillong peak). Similar to the 'Krem Marai' episode, the Basan Sangot of Raid Nongbri, entreated a girl from Raid Nongtham to follow him to his Raid and hid her in a cave called 'ka Krem Khlieh-Umsohsai' and secretly brought her daily food to the cave. Few weeks later she was discovered by some wood cutters who asked her who she was and where she came from. The girl replied that she belonged to the Markhap clan from Raid Nongtham, and that she was brought in there by u sohphri (cyclone). The Basan Sangot could not keep the secret any longer so he agreed to bring the girl into the Nongbah (capital) if the people promise not to harm her but to adopt her as the syiem. Hence, she became the Iawbei of the jait syiem of Raid Nongbri and her clan is known as 'Markhap-Sohphri' (a clan that was brought in by cyclone). It is said that the jait syiem of Raid Narlein originated from an Assamese family and hence they are called 'ki syiem Asem'; and the jait syiem of Raid Nongtluh from a Gobha family, also from Assam. The jait syiem of Raid Iapngar originated from a straying non-Khasi family from Sibsagar under the care and protection of the jait lyngdoh.

The jait syiem Sohra, originated from ka Jah, whose funeral rites had been performed because her relatives thought that she was dead. According to the Khasi belief, a person whose funeral ceremony has been performed can no longer enter as a normal living person among his/her clan members and in society. It is said that u Basan Swer consecrated ka Jah and her lineage as ka jait syiem, and her son, u

Morsing was the real founder of the Hima Sohra. In Hima Shella, ki bakhrav purchased u Ganga Singh from Durgapur for 23 pen of cowries to be their syiem. In Hima Myriaw ki bakhrav captured u Bortap Khan, a straying Masulman soldier and appointed him as the syiem. Hima Nongkhlaw was founded by the federation of eight independent villages each ruled by a lyngdoh similar to the raids, and they adopted as the jait syiem one of the lineages the jait syiem of Hima Sutnga which is said to have originated from a mythical fish. In the year 1867 when the jait syiem of Hima Bhowal became extinct, the new jait syiem, was appointed not from one of the eight founding clans but from the Nandah clan, an outsider clan in the hima.

The syiem is appointed because the council of ki bakhrav needed a neutral centre around which the interests of their clans can revolve without affecting their respective statuses and dignities as the founding clans. The neutral centre in Thomas Hobbes' social contract theory is an artificial person distinct from the natural individuals, but in the Khasi context, the artificial person is in the form of an artificial clan distinct from other normal clans. According to the Khasi political thought, the syiemship is an external authority. Its establishment is within the territory of the society and the state, but it is not a normal member of the society. The family of ka syiemsad, who belongs to the eldest kpho, is an extra-normal family and stands distinctly apart. Traditionally ka syiemsad has no mei-kha and no khun-kha in the proper sense of the terms.

In due course of time, all the other kpho (lineages) of the jait syiem including the youngest, merged normally into the Khasi society and became a normal kur, but the family of whoever is ka syiemsad remained distinctly apart and cannot become a normal member of

the Khasi society. The family of ka syiemsad is expected to have relationship with the whole community of the raid or hima through 'ka synshar-ka khadar' (politics), but no special kinship relations with any of the founding clans by virtue of ka longkha-longman (marriage). It is said that in the past no one from among the bakhrav clans was willing to be a husband or a wife in the family of ka syiemsad because the syiemsad's husband called u kongor and the wife of the syiem called "ka dhei" or "ka dhai", are like slaves to the family of ka syiemsad. Hence, marriage transactions of the syiem family are extra-normal and under the control of the council of ki bakhrav through the process of 'ka ring-kongor' (finding a husband for ka syiemsad), and "ka ring-mahadei" (finding a wife for the syiem).

It is said that the Syiem of the Khasi state was not a King or a Raja who has a throne and a crown. The British had earlier mistaken the Khasi Syiems as Rajas, but later, through Political Proceedings, Nh. 14, March 1867, they ceased to class the Syiems as Rajas and the title of 'Syiem' was officially recognised. Unlike the Kings or Rajas on whose protection the security of the people depends, the Khasi jait syiem depends for its security on the protection of ki bakhrav. The translation of the terms 'Hima' as 'Kingdom', 'Raid' as a 'sub-division of a Hima', and the title 'Syiem' as 'King' or 'Raja' is not in accordance with the real meanings that these terms imply in Khasi polity. Nevertheless, the syiem may be subordinate to the dorbar, but without the office of the syiem, the bakhrav clans would not find a common neutral point around which to rally their strength. The Khasi syiemship is like the queen bee, it may just sit there powerless without motion, but its only presence is sufficient to keep the state running in working order. It is in this spirit that u Soso Tham, the renowned Khasi poet says, "No matter if the syiem be just a stone / The State runs on the people and bakhravs". Is this tradition still in vogue? If yes, is it still relevant? I pause for a reply'.

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However, have you heard of reconfirming before alleging something? It shocks me to see how Basaiawmoit resorted to alerting the media on such a delicate issue, when we have always heard him claim, "I don't gather the press and media for everything I do, I don't desire and work for publicity". His very own claim pertaining to publicity makes me doubt his stand. Well Basaiawmoit definitely did not gather the press and media the day he declared a PWD (internal road) scheme sanctioned at Laitkor Rngi (that dates back to 08th January 2013), where he boasted to the innocent masses about being a man of his words. He definitely won most of the innocent votes and on the contrary, an RTI revelation in July 2013 stated that there was no internal road scheme sanctioned and we realized that it was merely a part of his "dirty political campaign" to dupe the innocent JAITBYNRIEW (people) that he claims to protect and love. Mr Basaiawmoit, we will no longer be blinded by your ignorance. We are indeed let down that you failed (maybe intentionally) to differentiate between a symbol of a religious community and the flag of a neighboring country and since we know that he does not usually take suggestions we also know

what caused the blunder. Basaiawmoit's sheer ignorance on the matter (something that he may term minute) could have led to a massacre, bloodshed and much more. Or is it that this is what he actually planned for?(hidden agenda that politicians cultivate). I request the newly appointed DC to enlighten the Nongkrem and all other like minded legislators by simply handing them a pocket book displaying different country flags before we have any further ignorant claims in the future. I apologize to all my friends from the affected community for having undergone any kind of harassment due to nothing but ignorance on the part of our so called leaders.

Yours etc.,
Rupert Lyngdoh,
Laitkor Rngi

A glimpse into the vision behind the Library

Editor,
I am writing this piece as a rejoinder to Prof.A.K Baruah's write up 'remembering APJ Kalam' published in the column 'Letters to Editor' (ST August 4, 2015) in your esteemed daily. The respected professor is a bit sceptical about naming the library after Dr Kalam as he put down in his contention that naming a library of a particular religion by the taking the name of a great man like APJ Kalam is against the secular ideals that he stood for. Anybody who has visited the this nascent library might have known that is the first of its kind in this region which has collections of all other religions too. We know that Dr Kalam was not

Can Naga Treaty end insurgency?

Details of deal will decide future course

By Barun Das Gupta

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has hailed the peace accord, signed in New Delhi on Monday between the leaders of the NSCN(IM) and the Centre, as being a "landmark" one. What is intriguing, however, is that the details of the peace treaty have not been made public but kept a closely-guarded secret. But from what the PM told the Naga leaders, like "we will also be your partner as you restore your pride and prestige" it seems reasonable to presume that a substantive degree of autonomy has been given to the Nagas, because a 'partnership' can be entered into only by two distinct bodies, each retaining its separate identity.

But how substantively will it affect the Naga peace process? The Nagaland insurgency has been both a law-and-order and a political problem which has persisted for the last sixty-two years, ever since the rebel Naga leader, Angami Zapu Phizo raised the banner of revolt against India demanding sovereignty for the Nagas way back in 1953.

Those who are fully acquainted with the developments during those momentous days know that the high-handed attitude of the then Chief Minister of Assam, Bishnuram Medhi, was largely responsible for Phizo giving up the path of negotiations and taking to armed struggle. In 1953, Phizo came to Shillong with a large delegation to meet Medhi and discuss the Nagas' demand with him. After waiting for a few days at Shillong for an audience with the Chief Minister who refused to meet him, Phizo went back to Kohima and soon raised the banner of revolt.

Phizo's party, the Angami-dominated Naga National Council or NNC, signed the 'Shillong Accord' in 1975. It included a clause that the rebels would surrender their arms. This led to a split in the NNC and ten years later in 1985, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) led by Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah was born. The leadership of the rebels passed from the hands of the Angamis to other tribes. Three years later, the NSCN suffered a split when Shangwang Khaplang broke away from Swu and Muivah. This was followed by a fierce armed battle between the two sides in which many were killed. Two factions of the NSCN came into being, the NSCN(I-M) and the NSCN(K).

In July, 1997, the NSCN(IM) signed a ceasefire agreement with the Centre. It stipulated that the IM would not engage in armed

action and the security forces would not operate against them. The ceasefire agreement has been periodically extended since then. The armed men of the IM faction are all cooped up at a 'designated camp' at Hebron, close to the Dimapur town. For all practical purposes, this faction has long ceased to be a source of trouble for the Centre. It is with this faction that the Centre has now concluded a peace deal.

The threat to peace now comes from the Khaplang faction. The Centre had a ceasefire agreement with this faction also since 2001. It was an uneasy truce but it was in place. But in late March this year, the representatives of the Khaplang faction walked out of a meeting with those of the Centre at Dimapur and reiterated their resolve to renew insurgency for Naga sovereignty. On June 4 came the deadly attack on an army convoy in Chandel district of Manipur in which eighteen army personnel were killed. The Centre retaliated within a few days by mounting an aerial attack and busting NSCN(K) camps in adjoining areas of Myanmar.

Khaplang is a Hemi Naga who live on both sides of the Indo-Myanmar border. There is some uncertainty over which side of the border Khaplang was born on. That is, whether his nationality is Indian or Myanmar. Khaplang is believed to be working in close cooperation with the Chinese and reportedly has a house in the Yunnan province of China adjoining Myanmar.

The Naga people had two major demands. The first, of course, was secession from India and full sovereignty for the Nagas. The second was unification of Naga areas in India and Myanmar into one composite Naga State which they call Nagalim. While they are now reconciled to the fact that no territory can be gained from Myanmar, they insist on the integration of all Naga areas in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh into Nagalim. This has been fiercely opposed by all the States concerned.

As the details of the peace treaty with the NSCN(IM) have not been made public, it is not known what agreement has been reached on this thorny issue. The immediate reaction of the Manipur Deputy Chief Minister Gaikhangam, on hearing of the peace treaty was "We welcome any peace accord but it should not be against the interest of Manipur. I believe the Government of India will not try to solve one problem and create multiple problems." So long as the full text of the treaty is not made public, doubts and fears will continue to prevail among all concerned. (IPA Service)

faith and spirituality from the clutches of unhealthy perversion. We want to experiment with this library in this great city of Shillong to open a centre for inclusive learning for which we have always extended a hand to all, seek suggestions and guidance from the academic fraternity as well as religious luminaries of all religions. Though the library is a small piece of work and no tall claim is admissible yet, but the underlying vision is to streamline and bring about a harmonious blend between different religious views by looking at common philosophical threads. That is the reason why the members of the Union have a genuine reason to name the library after our beloved late President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. The library is a separate entity from the Mosque though both are in the same building in different storeys. This library is aimed at becoming a repository of academic resource all religions.

Yours etc.,
Sayeedullah Nongrum
General Secretary
Shillong Muslim Union

TO THE EDITOR

Poor judgment!

Editor,

A little knowledge can be dangerous and may even spiral out of control if people, especially legislators, who are the people's representatives are not careful with their observations and words. The complaint made by the MLA from Nongkrem constituency to the DC East Khasi Hills that Pakistani flags were being draped and flown in a particular locality should have been thoroughly checked and double-checked before making statements that could incite communal passion in a city that has experienced communal violence. It was only after proper verification by the administration that the complainant later came out with the word 'unaware' which puts the legislator and the party he represents in a poor light. Is there any mechanism within the HSPDP to check such foot-in-mouth statements coming out of their leaders? Or are they allowed to blabber away what they wish, because when I was earlier part of the party and certain views which appeared in the 'Letters to the Editor' column were not liked or appreciated due to my stand on certain issues I was reprimanded saying that I could not use nor misuse the party's name when publishing general public views. Perhaps the same principle should be applied to these MLAs as well.

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

Editor,
Yet again we have the Nongkrem legislator in the news and this time around

due to a blunder created by self ignorance. This has in turn incited people on social websites to pass hate comments and dislike our fellow Indian brothers and sisters of different FAITHs by alleging that there were Pakistani flags displayed in parts of the city. I understand the confusion that we may have had at the first look.

Editor,
On the early morning of 31st July, because of a furious storm, a large tree had fallen on the power lines at Wahdienglieng thereby cutting off power to all the adjacent areas. With the unending rain and the cold winds the people were doubtful that repairs by the Meghalaya Power Distribution Co Ltd (MePDCL) would be carried out but, lo and behold, a group of workers were at it the whole day in spite of the rain and cold winds. Two guys only in shirt sleeves were up on the pole for what seemed like hours while being guided by others on the ground standing in the rain - it must have been freezing but these chaps worked almost non-stop till power was restored at 8.30 pm. Such dedication is rarely seen nowadays and on behalf of the residents of this area I would like to whole heartedly offer our grateful thanks to this group of workers and their bosses. We would also request their bosses to see that they are adequately compensated. Alas, if only our ministers and MLAs could show such dedication, Meghalaya would then really be a high voltage state. A big Khublei again to the above group of workers, may you all get your just rewards.

Yours etc.,
D M Pariat,
Via email

A little knowledge is indeed dangerous

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Yours etc.,
Rupert Lyngdoh,
Laitkor Rngi

"I have always felt that a politician is to be judged by the animosities he excites among his opponents."

--- Sir Winston Churchill

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVII No. 355 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2015

Shillong's cosmopolitan character

IT takes a lot of positive energy to maintain the cosmopolitan nature of a city. Shillong has historically been home to different races and religious groups, and, citizens of this city have tried to maintain this heterogenous character of Shillong because it serves a purpose - social and communal harmony based on mutual trust and respect for one another's views. And this is not just an indifferent sort of 'tolerance' but a proactive preoccupation by all to ensure that the fragile thread of human relations is not frayed by sporadic outbursts from one or other of the several communities living in Shillong. Unfortunately Shillong's history is marred by the violent incidents of 1979, the spin-offs of which were carried forward until 1992. This is a sad chapter in our history and the incidents should serve as lessons to the present generation to try and maintain these tenuous yet precious ties. It is therefore out of character for an elected representative to cast aspersions on a particular religious community and accuse them of hoisting "Pakistani flags" when all that were put up were bunting that signify the Islamic religion, on the occasion of Eid.

It is gracious on the part of the Muslim community in Shillong not to have taken seriously the allegation that they are fraternising with Pakistan. Assumptions that Muslims in this country owe their allegiance to Pakistan are fraught with religious and communal undertones. Such assumptions could lead to a bloodbath should the Muslims choose to react. India is a country with such great diversities that citizens of this country must learn to transcend these racial and religious differences. And elected representatives are expected to lead the way in promoting and propagating communal harmony; not to fragment the community through irresponsible comments!

It is of course necessary that citizens maintain vigilance at all times to ensure that illegal immigrants do not integrate with local co-religionists and become Indian citizens by default. Localities have the resources to identify such interlopers and bring that to the notice of the authorities. If such resources are lacking then the Dorbar Shong need to get their act together.

LOOKING BACK

January 11, 1988

PM summons Tariatang

The solitary Rajya Sabha MP from Meghalaya, who recently rebel against the State Chief Minister, had been summoned by the Prime Minister for discussions here tomorrow. Apparently, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi wants to ensure that after the failure to tame Mr. G.G. Swell, there is no further erosion of the party's strength in the State.

The sources said that in order to ensure the Congress (I) victory in the State was even willing to consider the idea of inducting Mr. Tariatang into the Union Council of Ministers to fill possible breach to be created after Mr. Purno A. Sangma's entry into the State legislature.

Meanwhile, Mr. G.G. Swell told Shillong Times that he was not in favour of the move for grafting in Mr. Purno A. Sangma as Meghalaya's next Chief Minister. Mr. Swell believes that Mr. Sangma will be defeated in the coming election. The Congress (I) MP who has been in the lime-light following, his rebellion against the party, denied the reports appearing in the section of the press that he was trying to call the national opposition leaders like Mr. V.P. Singh for campaigning against the Congress (I).

AGP Wrests Nazira Seat

The ruling Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) today wrested the Nazira assembly seat in Assam from the Congress (I) when its candidate Mr. Tonu Konwar defeated his near rival Mr. Rohiteswar Saikia (Congress I) in the by-election by 714 votes in a six-cornered contest.

The by-election was held on December 23 and the counting of votes was completed today after the repolling in four counters yesterday.

While Mr. Kanwar polled 21603 votes, Mr. Saikia got the supporters of 20889 electorate.

The by-election was necessitated following the resignation of the sitting MLA, Mr. Hiteswar Saikia on his appointment as Mizoram Governor.

A Clarification

The Shillong Police has clarified that news item on "Police smash tricksters' gang" (ST Jan 10) was slightly erroneous: the 13-year old Dushal Gandhi was arrested by the police and not by Mr. Rakesh Verma as reported. It was clarified that the Assam Rifles jawan had lost Rs. 10,000 and not Rs. 1000 as reported.

Social enterprises and entrepreneurs

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

'All Birds find shelter during a rain. But eagle avoids rain by flying above the cloud's - APJ Abdul Kalam

Khasis believe that when a person dies, his soul goes to its maker, the body to the dust and 'ka rngai' (ghost) remains on earth. Going by this mythology, Kalam's spirit may well live in this region. To translate Kalam's mission into reality let me draw the analogy from two entities. During the middle of 2009, as member of the team lead by NABARD to visit Bangladesh and get first hand knowledge on the success of micro-finance there, I tried to document the strategic process and the brief discussion we had with the founder of Grameen Bank Prof. Muhammad Yunus the Nobel Prize Laureate in 2006. It is here for the first time that I came across the term Social Enterprises and entrepreneurs visualized by this man.

Grameen was established in 1983 a decade after the inception of our state and the co-operative movement here as well. During the war and after, Bangladesh was under severe crisis due to famine and people were dying of starvation. The condition was such that a 25 year old person is like an aged one with only skin and bone. The situation was further aggravated by the presence of money lenders and the rich who exploited every opportunity and oppressed those depending on them. Micro-finance was not known till 1974 when the young lecturer and his student came across a situation that became a turning point in his career leading to the establishment of Grameen Bank or 'Village Bank' an institution worthy for the Nobel Prize. On that field trip they found out that people borrowed small amounts of money for purchasing raw bamboo and returned the money after selling the products at the rate of 10% per week leaving the borrower with a penny margin. So he decided to lend the same amount from his pocket to few people at a minimum rate with flexible repayment. Overwhelmed by the good response, he decided to move ahead reaching to large number of borrowers.

In my understanding, micro-finance and social enterprise are similar in nature. Whereas, finance refers to capital or cash, entrepreneur and enterprise refers to a person or entity who is willing to take the risk to invest. Both are connected by this factor (risk taking) before benefiting. The objective of social enterprise on the other hand is to promote the society and those deprived of corporate benefit through creation of jobs and other opportunities. Through his books, innovative banking system and dozens of such enterprises, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus wanted to impart and convey to the world these tools for combating poverty, unemployment and injustice in the distribution of income and wealth.

Based on success and impact, Grameen diversified to dozens of industries under its umbrella in order to support and sustain the mechanism of fighting poverty and the people who have been ameliorated from the trap of vicious cycle of poverty. In our brief discussion with this Nobel laureate, it is understood that micro-finance initially began with micro-credit or loans of small amounts but now, Grameen is providing loans, financing projects, insurance and many others coupled with the skills and strategy of effective recovery, which are the broad concepts of micro-finance.

The Bank is based mainly on trust and solidarity where each borrower is also a share holder and owner of the bank owning at least one share of one Taka (Bangladesh currency) with a maximum of 100 shares each. Today the bank has more than 8 millions borrowers and covers more than 80,000 villages. These borrowers are structured and organised into Zones, Sub-zones or Area-wise, branches and the lower level is the Centre, a point of contact managed by trained and well paid professionals of the bank. Each centre connects and maintains the grass-root layer called group (not SHG) comprising one woman from each household of 5 to 10. These groups never handle any accounts except peer pressure and welfare pro-

grammes. People can borrow loans ranging from 500 to 3 lakh taka depending upon their project and track records. In fact, these centres serve as counters for disbursement and collection of loans on weekly basis where the recovery rate by Grameen these days is 1.5 million US Dollar per week.

Another aspect of the Bank that interested everyone was the Governing Body. Nine out of thirteen members in the board are women elected from these groups. The Grameen model is being replicated in many countries like Africa, Europe, America and Canada including Asia and India. Above other things, the fascinating part is the vision in the form of a booklet entitled "Poverty in museum".

During the trip we also interviewed some families who experienced the trauma of starvation during the seventies. One family whose monthly income in 2009 was between (20,000-30,000 taka) was initially afraid to accept a loan offer of 500 Taka. From this incident, it is understood that borrowing and repayment are the cycle that these borrowers who are members and share holders of the Bank continue to practice as long as they want.

In 1995 Grameen Bank decided to withdraw itself from Donors support since the Bank had become self-sufficient and was able to pay dividends to its borrowers besides, incentives to reliable borrowers. Grameen type of intervention has significantly contributed in reducing poverty in that country by 40%.

The valid question here, is, why private initiative endured and sustained whereas, government sponsored organizations are on the verge of extinction. Those assigned with specific mission too could not make any visual impact that everyone except in papers and files or during the project period. Our Apex co-operative bodies and few others exist today because of employees that have been recruited and because those who aspire to become Board members elect themselves from primary

societies that are not functioning or in some cases a one-man society with no scope for expansion.

Another contrasting attitude that has been unknowingly inculcated in our minds is the attitude to call government jobs as proper employment with enormous efforts applied to get one. On becoming a government employee, a person thinks his salary and pension is assured even if his actual amount of work done is only one hour a day and with the ideal position to look for extra benefit. This indeed violates the principles of modern management and reduces the creativity and productivity of an individual. If this kind of attitude prevails, surely an enterprise dies because skills and expertise are being curtailed. Without skills no one will survive in a competitive world and a community that possesses skills and passes it on to the next generation will ensure uninterrupted sources of income to their offsprings.

The Adivasis are a living example where employment as a community is not a concern; their skills and expertise make them the only people fit to work in tea gardens and as long as tea garden exists, they will dominate the market.

The young lecturer, Yunus never dreamed of a Nobel Prize. Yet he received it not because of his academic achievements but because of the work he chose and devoted himself relentlessly to. President Kalam once said, "Work is a never-ending process, it can never be completed and life is not only about work. You need to socialize as well." If everyone is determined to self-sustain without any external aid, no institution would ever wind up or employees compelled to go for VRS. On the contrary, if Mecofed, Housing, Handloom, Apex Bank, Cement factory and others could capture and visualize right from the beginning the idea of creativity, I am positive that thousands of jobs could have been created by these organizations alone. Once an opportunity is created by setting up and employing people, they should be productive and not to exploit the resources available but multiply them manifold. Only then can they fly above the clouds.

(The writer can be reached at alyngdoh2006@yahoo.com)

TO THE EDITOR

Baffled commuters and VVIP movements!

Editor,

The sporadic traffic snarls in Shillong are well known and have become an integral part of our daily routine. However, on 5th August '15, at about 10 O'clock, I amongst many others were baffled by a unique block when all vehicles were stopped at the junction near Raj Bhawan, MBOSE, & CPMG's offices for about 5 minutes though the road ahead leading to IGP was devoid of vehicular traffic. I'm sure all commuters, especially the punctual office goers, must have been at a loss to understand why traffic had been brought to a grinding halt by the young, smart Traffic Policeman. Alas, our bewilderment was broken as a Pilot Vehicle followed by the Hon'ble Chief Justice's car zoomed by, and we were relieved of yet another waiting ordeal.

As a Shillongite I've seen vehicles being flagged down momentarily by Pilot Vehicles enabling V.V.I.P.s. to pass by, but this was something new to me. Watch out punctual office and school goers, you'll have to brace yourselves for such stop-

page time(s) when you set out for your workplaces henceforth.

Yours etc.,
Mohitosh Chakravarty,
Shillong -3

MUDA: A failed Institution

Editor,

Apropos your news report, "Hawkers' menace reaches epidemic proportions", one can't help but ponder as to what may be the root cause of MUDA's inability to solve the issue of hawkers spawning their petty business outlets in every footpath across town. I for one refuse to believe that MUDA is working hard to find a solution, for finding that solution would mean that a regular illegal collection of fees from the hawkers would not reach the deep pockets in MUDA or Urban Affairs officials. It is for this simple reason that hawkers are seen setting up their outlets just minutes after a raid is conducted by concerned Urban Affairs officials. I will not be surprised that the next reason the concerned officials will provide is to indulge in a blame game between the three institutions that are meant to look after urban affairs matters.

Further, I cannot help but wonder how many of the hawkers have the required papers or are required to have them to open shops in un-authorized places. Maybe we should suggest the hawkers to open shops in front of the seat of power, the Main Secretariat for there is ample space and this would surely make the office goers happy. This assumes a larger picture in the midst of the debate on issue of permit for trading (both for tribal and non-tribal). A lesson to be learnt from your report is that the involvement of the local dorbar is a must, and it has proven to be working in many localities. Last, but not the least, the ineffectiveness of MUDA puts a serious question on their quest to administer building bye-laws outside their jurisdiction. They first need to straighten their own backyard and make the Chief Minister's effort to make Shillong a tourist destination into a tangible reality.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Good work MePDCL!

Editor,

On the early morning of 31st July, because of a furious storm, a large tree had fallen on the power lines at Wahdienglieng thereby

cutting off power to all the adjacent areas. With the unending rain and the cold winds people were doubtful that repairs by the Meghalaya Power Distribution Co Ltd (MePDCL) would be carried out, lo and behold, a group of workers were at it the whole day in spite of the rain and cold winds. Two guys only in shirt sleeves were up on the pole for what seemed like hours while being guided by others on the ground standing in the rain - it must have been freezing but these chaps worked almost non-stop till power was restored at 8.30 pm. Such dedication is rarely seen nowadays and on behalf of the residents of this area I would like to whole heartedly offer our grateful thanks to this group of workers and their bosses. We would also request their bosses to see that they are adequately compensated. Alas, if only our ministers and MLA's could show such dedication, Meghalaya would then really be a high voltage state. A big Khublei again to the above group of workers, may you all get your just rewards.

Yours etc.,
D M Pariat,
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.

Increasing crime and fewer convictions Prosecution failure going unpunished

By Nantoo Banerjee

Too many prosecution cases - routine or those having exceptional political and financial ramifications involving the rich and famous - are being dismissed by the judiciary as prosecutors are failing to establish charges before the court. More and more accused are being let off by the higher judiciary though rarely before their custodial harassment and discomfort for weeks, months or even years as prosecutors make persistent plea for extension of custody to help investigation into crime. What happens to the accused who are let off by judiciary after long suffering at the hands of mischievous, often dishonest, politically guided police or enforcement agencies, including the Central Bureau of Investigation? Should not the relieved accused be adequately compensated for the mischief, mistake and incompetence of the prosecution after deliberate and politically-prompted harassment by the police and law enforcers?

Justice is not guaranteed merely by prosecution or rejection of conviction. The wrongful harassment, confinement and media trial of those accused discharged by the court "with honour" (ba-izzat khalash) need to be adequately punished. The untenable and irresponsible prosecution deserves exemplary punishment with exemplary fines and jail terms. The "honour" and livelihood of

the subsequent move to take up the matter with the Supreme Court could be others such. Out of jail following the Karnataka High Court order, Jayalalitha sought and got public mandate to reinstall herself as the Tamil Nadu chief minister.

The abysmally poor crime conviction rate has been a matter of grave concern. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data showed almost 40 per cent drop in the crime (under the Indian Penal Code) conviction rate between 1972 and 2012 - from 62.7 per cent in 1972 to 38.5 per cent. In other words, the prosecution failed to establish charges against over 60 per cent of the accused before the court of law. What does this mean? Is it because of gross incompetence and callousness on the part of the police or law enforcers, dishonesty on the part of crime investigators and judges or strong political interference? The poor conviction rate may be responsible for increasing rates of crimes of all types - from financial to murder and rape. The latest NCRB report recorded almost 80 per growth in rape cases across the country in a single year, between 2012 and 2013, with Delhi topping the list recording 1,441 rape cases in 2013 as against 585 in 2012. The recorded number of rape cases in India went up from 24,923 in 2012 to 33,707 in 2013. Some 93 women are raped in the country every

Freed Mumbai filmstar convicted of drunken driving and killing and injuring footpath dwellers or the rejection of conviction of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalitha by the Karnataka High Court in an alleged disproportionate asset case and the subsequent move to take up the matter with the Supreme Court could be others such.

the so-called accused, freed of unsustainable charges by the court, deserve to be restored by the judiciary as much as possible. Freed of charges and from prosecution, many of them deserve special attention of the judiciary. Wrong prosecution often ruins the life and livelihood of an innocent accused.

It may be time to ponder over the matter again following the growing failure of conviction before various courts and public loss of faith in judicial proceedings in growing number of cases -- from some of the young second-rung cricketers falsely accused of match fixing to a number of so-called terror and scam accused, including government officials, ministers and even ex-judges of reputation. Organised protestations by social and political hubris against prosecution and even conviction of accused facing gallows seem to be gaining ground these days as external forces and factors forcing control of the situation. The general public is increasingly losing faith in judiciary and the government. Even the Supreme Court seems to be sometimes getting confused as the intelligentsia and media raise voice against its judgement. The latest controversy over death penalty for convicted Yakub Memon in the Mumbai serial bomb blast case killing over 250 people and severely injuring several hundreds could be cited for an example. Freed Mumbai filmstar convicted of drunken driving and killing and injuring footpath dwellers or the rejection of conviction of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalitha by the Karnataka High Court in an alleged disproportionate asset case and

day. Is it anything to do with the falling conviction rate for reasons that only the police and judiciary can explain?

Ironically, the Supreme Court had issued an order to formulate a procedure for taking action against erring investigating and prosecuting officials for acquittals that, if effected, could spell trouble for the entire criminal procedure system. The investing and prosecuting officers in a number of states, including Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra and Telengana, Orissa, J&K and Bihar, could be in deep trouble. Conviction cases in some of the sates for murder vary between 19 and 27 per cent and for rape from 7.5 to 21.3 per cent. The rampant corruption in police and lower judiciary is given as one of the key reasons.

Suffice it to say that the poor conviction rate is throwing a major challenge to the proper functioning of Indian democracy while going soft on politically sensitive accused and convicts questions the very purpose and authenticity of Indian law. The talks of police and judicial reforms end up in endless debates. As a result, the innocent produced as accused suffer while hardcore criminals, including the rich and famous, often get off the hook for want of strongly admissible facts and evidence. Key witnesses often turn hostile or die unnatural deaths before their judicial hearing. Unfortunately, it would appear that not many law makers, law enforcers, law practitioners and judges are truly concerned about the falling conviction rate, increasing crime rates and the plight of 'innocent' accused. (IPA Service)

"I cannot pretend to feel impartial about colours. I rejoice with the brilliant ones and am genuinely sorry for the poor browns."

--- Sir Winston Churchill

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVII No. 356 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2015

Pluses and Minuses

THE Speaker's decision to suspend 25 out of 44 Congress MPs from the Lok Sabha was unnecessarily harsh. To close the doors of the Lok Sabha for six days to more than half of the main opposition party militates against the norms of parliamentary democracy. Speaker Sumitra Mahajan's decision was further unjustified in a house which is dominated by the ruling BJP. The opposition can expect the Speaker's indulgence in such a scenario. The government is no doubt facing charges of serious impropriety against some of its ministers. The opposition could not take effective action in the House as it is a small minority. However, the opposition cannot escape the charge of misconduct though the situation has saved it from the glare it calls for. Nevertheless, something good has come out of the shenanigans. Democracy demands a strong opposition but in the present Lok Sabha the opposition is as a rule fragmented. On this occasion, the opposition has forged unexpected unity. The Trinamool Congress and the Left are on the same page. In the past, the Trinamool Congress refused to join hands with the Congress on the GST bill and backed the Narendra Modi government. However, on the issue of the suspension of MPs, it is with the Congress. The BJD has also taken the same stand. Led by Sonia Gandhi, the Congress has taken to the street and has taken the agitation to the Speaker's home.

The time has come for the Modi government to do some rethinking. Revoking the suspensions should clear the logjam. That is not necessary merely for securing opposition support on crucial issues in the Rajya Sabha where the NDA does not have a majority. It will also prove that the BJP is not intransigent in dealing with criticism from the opposition. The primary need is to restore parliamentary functioning.

LOOKING BACK

January 11, 1988

Terrorist among 2 killed in Punjab

Two people, including a terrorist were killed and the security forces arrested nine extremists during the past 24 hours in Punjab. In an encounter, security forces shot dead one terrorist at Kahlwan village in Gurdaspur district late last night. A revolver and some ammunition were recovered from him. The encounter followed a raid of hideout of terrori t following a tip off provided by their accomplice arrested earlier.

Earlier, in another encounter near Kot Todarmal village under the Oadian police station in Gurdaspur district a joint party of police and BSF arrested two terrorists after an exchange of fire in which there were no casualties on either side. One revolver and a pistol with ammunition were recovered from them.

The Faridkot district police has arrested seven terrorist and recovered on rifle, there 38 bore revolvers, smuggled from Pakistan, and three country made pistols, along with about fifty cartridges from their possession. A police spokesman today identified them as Harpal Singh, Karnail Singh, Gurdev Singh, Manjit Singh, Haridial Singh, Raju and Rawa. The spokesman said during preliminary interrogation Harpal Singh and Karnail Singh confessed that they were members of the outlawed "Khalistan Liberation Force".

Petrol Price Hiked

Condemned

Friday night's petrol price hike today continued to evoke condemnation from various opposition political parties and group with the

refrain being that the increase be immediately withdrawn. The Jan Morcha, in a statement, said the colossal petrol price hike proceeded by similar increases in prices of coal, sugar steel, and edible oils, was a clear indication of the Government's pathetic mismanagement of the nation's economics.

The fact that the all the increase have been made by executive action completely ignoring the people's right to discussions and expression of their free will clearly establishes that Government is nervous to face the people's wrath, said the statement.

KSU Calls Off Shillong Bandh

The Khasi Student's Union sponsored Shillong bandh scheduled for January 14 next has been called off. Informing this the President of the KSU Mr. Bull N. Lyngdoh told this reporter on Saturday that the decision was taken "due to unavoidable reasons".

He said no fresh date had been fixed for the bandh.

According to informed sources, the decision to call off the bandh came in the wake of "requests" from the members of the public and also because it clashes with the "Magh Bihu" festival of the Assamese community.

It may be recalled that the bandh call was issued as a mark of protest against the detention of the some of the KSU activists under the National Security Act. Three persons who refused to give an under taking are still lodged in the Shillong District Jail, while eight others were released on Christmas eve.

RKM ... the Backbone of Indian Modernity

By Deepa Majumdar

When I reminisce about the Shillong-of-the-sixties, faint sprites float from the past. Like ghosts they gather, forming a kaleidoscope of images ... Yes the air was pure and bracing ... and the winter sky eternally blue. Yes the forests were verdant and the streams pure and sparkling. Yes Loreto Convent still had those enchanting boat swings. Yes the hardy potato-man still trudged down the hillsides from his remote village to sell his goods. Yes, hawkers still cried their wares in multifarious keys. They did not advertise. Yes busloads of church-goers still sang their hymns up the winding hill roads. Yes the winter frost, shimmering on the grass still made us long for snow. And yes, State Central Library still had its Children's Corner - with revolving bookshelves and wood stoves. Yes, the winds of colonialism transitioned to those of post-colonialism ... as Britain gave way to America and Enid Blyton and Richmal Crompton to American authors. The "Five-Find-outers" and William Brown seemed so much more subtle, cozy and innocent than Dennis the Menace. Yes people actually got married and started families ... often joint and extended. Unmarried couples living together were unheard of in middle class Shillong ... as were divorce and sexual orientation. Yes heterosexuality was still the norm. Yes that certain odd innocence that pervades puritanical societies still lingered ... an innocence that redeems the cruelty of puritanism. And yes, we were still religious in an old-fashioned, unabashed manner, which may be the reason why India fascinated the west.

But these are the brighter sprites. Many were the dark, ominous ones ... In the same Shillong-of-the-sixties, it was dangerous to go out after sundown. Murders, kidnappings, drunken brawls, and rumors of human sacrifice kept us indoors. Rape and incest happened behind closed doors ... To speak of these tragedies was to be ostracized. If there was no homophobia this is because homosexuality was well-concealed. The xenophobia that simmers forever beneath the thin veneer of Indian cosmopolitanism spilt forth often in racist riots against "outsiders." Yes our world was horribly schizoid with more-than-usual confusion of the post-colonial potpourri we inherited historically. On the one hand we had Anglicized convent schools, where to be a dark native - at that Hindu, or worse - was to be disdained. Color mattered horribly in this clashing-confused cauldron of east and west. To be light-skinned and if pos-

sible, blonde-haired, was to be closer to heaven. Accents mattered as well. As did school uniforms. The convent accent declared its supremacy in no uncertain terms. We were western in school and Indian at home. To be ethnic Indian wearing a sari or salwar kameez to school was a shame. But this impenetrable divide between east and west was not the only barrier that fragmented us. Our Indian world was fractured as well ... and for this, the west was not to blame. These further schisms that ruptured our Indian selves, engendered linguistic, religious, caste, class and gendered factions that hung together in a loose federation, unsoftened by even a semblance of political correctness. Khasis hung out with Khasis, as did Bengalis with Bengalis, Assamese with Assamese ... and anglo-Indians with anglo-Indians. Hindus hobnobbed with other Hindus, even if they communicated with Christians, Muslims and Parsis in other facets of civil society. The same was the case with Christians and Muslims. Rare was the genuine, thoughtful atheist. To recognize a common mystical universal oneness ... or even ordinary secular humanity ... was perhaps too much to expect of this slice of urban modernity, where caste was the invisible divider and class the visible. Mute in their unmitigated pain, the multitudes of the poor were no more than the barely acknowledged ocean of humanity that milled around us ... Our only contact with them lay in the questionable culture of house-servants. This horrible class-based inequality applied perhaps far more to the plains-Indians than to the Khasi, Garo, Mizo and Naga communities, which appeared to me to be more egalitarian.

And yet, the factions thus divided somehow co-existed in that wonderful sauce of assimilation we call Indian culture ... a powerful civilization that has descended down the annals of History to take on the challenge of modernity. But co-existence is not the same as love and friendship. The blight of communalism was perhaps the most obvious cancer poisoning human relationships. But there were other cancers as well. All of this conjured a type of alienation unique to India, the only redeeming panacea being the sincere friendships that obliterated all differences in the pure spirituality of mutual esteem. But friendship alone cannot bind a society together. Other unguents that might have redeemed this alienation were shared customs, traditions, rituals and festivals. But these being simply accepted, without reflection

or rebellion, could do no more than forge a rigid, unthinking togetherness that erupted easily into conflagrations of fanaticism. Far greater is the moral togetherness that comes about as a result of shared virtues practiced with conscious deliberateness. But for this type of conscious moral endeavor, one needs an "I" un-smothered by the overbearing "we" ... a free-floating postmodern "I" that had not yet appeared in the Shillong-of-the-sixties. To receive this "I" we had to turn to the west ... especially America. Even if ego-vested and sense-driven, this "I" is essential for voluntary, uncoerced, conscious moral conduct.

But this imported "I" faces the blind alley of the sense-world. It has no means of overcoming itself, to do which it needs the greatest, most universal inward I ... And it is in this quest for radical introspection and Self-knowledge that Vedantic mysticism, especially the Advaitic School, becomes indispensable. It is not as if we Indians did not possess the ordinary "I." Of course not ... Every human being possesses an ego. But the Indian ego in my limited world of middle-class India, was, as I recall ... on the one hand, metaphysically alert, even if morally unconscious, and thus inflated in its air-tight egotism. On the other hand this "I" was rather diffident - crushed as it was by the post-colonial world order and the historical heritage of British colonialism ... but also by our own Indian regimes of familial, social, and political authoritarianism. A stunning lack of justice smothered this lower "I" beneath the bulldozer of the "we." India, which has perfected the virtue of renunciation, yet seemed to me to have wholly lost the virtue of justice so cherished (even if not always practiced) by the west. As a result, this native "I" required arduous labor to ascend to the level of moral responsibility and self-knowledge. This then was the tragic irony of the India-of-the-sixties ... Although possessing the greatest spirituality ever and the means to release the "I" from its own bondage, India did not yet possess the ordinary self-sufficient "I." Profoundly spiritual, yet India was wholly inadequate psychologically. Reaching for the highest flights of self-transcendence, yet, India did not have an adequate foothold in immanence. Yes, the hippies flocked to India to find self-realization, but we Indians did not yet possess enough of the ordinary "I" to ascend volitionally to the univer-

sal I and the inner peace this promises ... a peace sought by the hippies and taught by our heritage. It is perhaps for this historical purpose of interchanging the Indian universal I with the western free-floating "I" that the Holy Trio - Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda - were born. The twin organizations (RKM) - Ramakrishna Math and Mission - along with Sarada Math for nuns combine the highest flights of universal mysticism or gnosis with selfless service to the poor and the downtrodden. They therefore combine a meditative revelation of the highest universal I alongside service towards the mundane, long-suffering lower "I" in the poor and the dispossessed ... and all this without the media fuss and global accolades showered upon the more westernized humanitarian organizations (whether religious or secular) in India. Even if technically Hindu, RKM is ecumenical enough to transcend the boundaries of narrow-minded, fanatical Hinduism, for it recognizes all religions as equally valid. Likewise, RKM is ecumenical enough to recognize the same all-shining universal I in all beings, regardless of caste, class, gender or creed. As a result, RKM will never yield to the witch's brew of the anti-modernity politics of authenticity now plaguing the Islamist factions (ISIS, Boko Haram, Taliban, Al-Qaida) of the world. The global reach of RKM lies not merely in the physical monasteries and Centers it has created all over the world, or in the western disciples it has attracted, but in the ideas of noble universalism it disseminates ... ideas well-tested by the spiritual flights of ecstasy experienced by the Holy Trio. We should not be surprised by the fact that western sciences are now exploring human consciousness ... not merely the human ego. If there is anything that Swami Vivekananda's blessing of east and west achieved, it is perhaps this vital exchange of the universal I to be reached by radical inwardness, with the externalized western "I" which, although sick and retching, is yet the only fitting instrument of ascent towards voluntary goodness. One manifestation of this interchange lies in the exchange between western science (for India) and Indian contemplation-wisdom-meditation (for the west) that Swamiji expressly sought and that we are now witnessing unfold worldwide.

It is in this special sense that RKM (alongside all universalist creeds of mysticism) constitutes the backbone of Indian modernity ... in addition to the obvious reason - that Swami Vivekananda (founder of RKM) himself was the prophet of modernity worldwide.

rehabilitation centres should be under complete security. Efforts should be made to find out why they have turned into terrorists? Are they pawns of a foreign power and are simply brainwashed? The deep-rooted jihadi or separatist instinct should be diagnosed. Capital punishment is similar to killing a person who suffers from some ailment without diagnosing the cause. It is important to root out the reasons that create a terrorist's mindset.

Yours etc.,
Priyanka Chakrabarty
Guwahati -24

know that terrorists act as human bombs which indicate that they have overcome the fear of death. Hence death penalty has no significant impact on their mindsets. The objective should be to kill these evil instincts in the terrorist, not to kill the terrorists themselves. It is necessary to bring them to the mainstream because they have been alienated from it. No human being is perfect. Similarly, no one is totally imperfect. Even a dreaded criminal must have some positive instincts. It is important to focus on the positive values which remain at the sub-conscious level of the terrorist psyche. For this, rehabilitation centres are required where hardcore militants will be provided counselling. Such

stretch along MTC being use as a dumping site and open defecation by hawkers and passers-by, even though a public toilet is accessible at the MTC parking lot. The smell emanating from the site is worrisome and it will not be long before human health is affected. Also the presence of a Government asset - a lonesome road-roller - acting as a safe haven is an encouragement for such irresponsible deeds. Will the concerned authorities take drastic steps in this matter?

Yours etc.,
A concerned citizen

related to "dos" and "don'ts" or "right" and "wrong". Pope Francis is making an important analogy between the "oppressed environment" and the "oppressed sections of society" namely the poor and marginalized people or countries. He tries to demonstrate the elemental connection between the two. There is a sort of organic relationship between them. What affects one affects the other equally. Human ecology therefore refers to the condition of the present human society where there is a distinct division between the haves and the have not's, the economically powerful and the economically marginalized. The fact that there are nations who enjoy all the benefits that the Earth affords (minerals and energy sources) though in many cases not their rightful property but exploited from others, is indicative of the lack of a stabilized human ecology. This is a picture of today's world where we witness developed countries like USA and China who are always energy-hungry and they go round the world exploiting poorer countries in continents like Africa and Asia. Their economic greed can never be satiated and their craze for production goes on in order to meet the never-ending desire "to have" of their consumerist population. In the mean time the Earth is fully ravished and now we have to bear the consequences of it. It is said that the onset of global warming was warned by scientists decades ago, but the capitalist governments intentionally muffled their voices so as to be free to exploit the earth

Yours etc.,
A concerned citizen

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.

Human Ecology: What is it?

By Barnes Mawrie

The latest encyclical letter Laudato Si of Pope Francis is fast becoming a best seller all around the world. It is being acclaimed as one of the most forthright documents of the Church in the last few decades. The document has won accolades from many sectors of society, religious and secular. Ban Ki-Moon the current U.N. Secretary-general has this to say about the Pope's encyclical: "I thank deeply Pope Francis for taking such a strong stand on the need for urgent global action. His moral voice is part of a growing chorus of people from all faiths and all sectors of society speaking out for climate action." Of course, as expected there are disconcerted voices from some quarters of society, especially from those people who view this document as a threat to their free exploitation of the planet.

In my opinion, Laudato Si apart from speaking about common ecological issues like pollution, global warming, climatic changes and technological aberrations, has dwelt on a topic not heard of so far. It speaks about "human ecology" which is a new concept never used in any environmental forums or Green summits. Yet this is a topic that is so vital to finding solutions to the present ecological crisis. It is an issue that bears a profound moral implication on man as an individual or as a member of society. It is a matter

as much as they want.

When speaking about "human ecology" Pope Francis is trying to arouse the moral sense in rich nations and among rich people. He calls upon them to stop their "grabbing" attitude and to start thinking of solidarity with the poorer nations. As of today, developed nations behave as though the earth belongs to them, as if it is their private property. In fact the Pope says beautifully "the principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a golden rule of social conduct and the first principle of the whole ethical and social order" (n. 93). Pope Francis recalls the words of late Pope John Paul II who said "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone". How can it be morally justified when "twenty percent of the world's population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive" (n. 95). Human ecology is in fact, inseparable from the notion and practice of common good. In the present context where there is a growing number of people deprived of basic human needs (food, shelter and clothing), common good would urgently imply two important things: sense of solidarity and a preferential

The sense of common good does not limit itself to the present but it extends to the future. It means that we should have great concern for the welfare of future generations and thus we should act responsibly in the use of natural resources etc. The words of the famous Chief Seattle are very apt here.

option for the poorer brothers and sisters. The sense of common good does not limit itself to the present but it extends to the future. It means that we should have great concern for the welfare of future generations and thus we should act responsibly in the use of natural resources etc. The words of the famous Chief Seattle are very apt here. While referring to the use of land and resources, he said "this land we use, we only borrowed it from our children". If we only borrowed it from our children then what right have we to despoil it?

The reminder about human ecology, in my opinion, is the right note the document has struck in the consciousness of the world today. It would be useless to talk about stopping pollution, controlling green house gas emission, cleaning rivers and lakes etc, as long as human beings are not converted. In fact, what is happening in every Earth Summit is exactly this, hypocrites coming together to discuss vehemently on ecological issues but without a willingness to change their policies. They go back only with the psychological satisfaction that they have said something but nothing happens on the ground. Therefore the call to stabilize human ecology is the most radical and the most authentic step that the Church has taken in the attempt to address ecological issues. Let us hope that the appeal of Pope Francis would not fall on deaf ears and that persons and nations all over the world would consider human ecology as an indispensable approach towards a holistic solution to the present ecological impasse.

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TO THE EDITOR

Of terror attacks and capital punishment

Editor,
Yakub Memon was hanged after being convicted for the 1993 bomb blasts in Mumbai. In a civilized world where life and its sustenance are considered as a pivotal human right, will capital punishment bring any change to the human psyche? Death penalty has not been successful in terminating terrorism or any violent activities so far? This question has more relevance in all conflict areas of the world. Death penalty as a legal provision is placed in our law books. But, of late, we

know that terrorists act as human bombs which indicate that they have overcome the fear of death. Hence death penalty has no significant impact on their mindsets. The objective should be to kill these evil instincts in the terrorist, not to kill the terrorists themselves. It is necessary to bring them to the mainstream because they have been alienated from it. No human being is perfect. Similarly, no one is totally imperfect. Even a dreaded criminal must have some positive instincts. It is important to focus on the positive values which remain at the sub-conscious level of the terrorist psyche. For this, rehabilitation centres are required where hardcore militants will be provided counselling. Such

Swachh Bharat a total failure!

Editor,
It is a sad plight to see

Sometimes a small idea can result in big results and make a difference to a whole lot of people. A community fridge for the poor in Jaipur, Rajasthan's Pink City, is one such. A first of its kind initiative in India, some colonies- both posh and middle-class, in the city have put together a simple yet innovative idea to make a difference to the underprivileged and saving them from hunger pangs.

People looked curiously when recently a 450 litre refrigerator was placed in the city's Mahesh Nagar locality which can store food for at least 400 people. A fridge in urban homes is almost an essential item today. The same facility, unavailable to the poor, can change the way they live and eat.

The core idea is that residents of the area would leave their surplus or leftover food in this fridge everyday, which would then be distributed amongst the poor and the needy next day.

The simple idea is to make people understand that the surplus food, which we often throw away can be easily stored in the community fridge, which can then be distributed amongst the poorest of the poor after a proper quality check. This way the food is not wasted and the needy would not have to starve. Foods vans have been pressed into service to

A common accessory to modern living like the fridge can make a huge difference to hungry and poor on the street as an innovative experiment in Jaipur shows. **Rekha Pal** reports



A fridge to beat hunger



collect the eatables and transport them to areas where there are poor people. Annakshetra Foundation, which has been working in this field for over four years now, took the initiative to launch this new mission to stop food wastage and bridge the gap

between wastage of surplus food and those who do not have enough to buy food.

Says Vivek Agarwal, heading the foundation: "Our single-minded belief is that nobody should sleep hungry. We have been collecting surplus food from weddings, restaurants,

caterers and distributing amongst the poor. The food is generally distributed amongst people like labourers, rag pickers, waste collectors etc. who do not have enough money to buy food. Since most functions are held at night, our two vans collect food after the functions are over."

Agarwal says that people of various residential associations, who came in contact with them and had seen and appreciated their work thought up of this unique initiative of community fridge and wanted to be a part of this social cause.

"The vans usually had duty during the night; we thought why not utilize vans in the mornings as well."

The vans can be used to collect surplus food from the community fridge placed in various residential colonies in the mornings.

People can keep their leftover and surplus food in the fridge after all their meals are over. "The food would be distributed only after medical and food experts check the food quality and certify in writing if the food is fit for consumption."

The foundation has plans to install ten more such refrigerators across the city. The only requirements include a proper place for placing the fridge, electricity connection and also security to guard the fridge, which the resident associations have promised to provide.

The approximate cost for installing the refrigerator is about rupees one lakh, the maintenance of which has to be done by the residents themselves. Some banks, schools are also interested in getting these fridges installed outside their

premises. Residents of Jaipur have a tradition of feeding animals and birds, especially cows, and also give food to beggars at the temples. Most people now think the fridge is a pioneering idea to help the deprived class.

Says Navha Sisodiya, a resident of Mahesh Nagar area: "It is a unique initiative to work towards zero wastage of food and to help the poor. We throw away surplus food or give it to dogs and other animals but now we can store it up for needy people."

Agarwal says that he had read reports that a person in Saudi Arabia's Hail city had placed a refrigerator outside his house last year and called on neighbours to fill it up with surplus food for the needy. This had set him thinking before he floated the idea before the people,

who gladly wanted to put in their resources to help the poor and marginalized.

According to the Global Index Hunger, India ranks 55th in the 2014 enumeration, lagging behind Nepal and Sri Lanka. Its hunger status is classified as "serious" in the report prepared by the International Food Policy Research Institute and NGOs

Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide.

Besides, India is home to the largest number of chronically malnourished and stunted children under five.

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger globally and by country and region. It is calculated each year by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). (TWF)

The World's top drinker is an Asian

Made an important discovery last week. There is no masculine way to carry a giant teddy bear and a Disney Princess helium balloon back from a funfair.

Never mind. My ego should recover in three to four months with sufficient stroking.

And now to the news. The biggest consumer of alcohol on the planet is an Asian, a science report said. That headline made me think they'd located a gentleman I shall refer to only as Uncle E.

When I was growing up, his daily beer intake matched everyone else's daily oxygen intake, the only difference being that humans can survive several minutes without oxygen. When he went on holiday, they shut the local brewery. In biology class at school, I used him and the brewery as an example of symbiosis, entities dependent on each other for survival. We used to joke that when pink elephants got drunk, they saw him. He cut himself once, and no blood came out, just pale stuff that looked like Corona Extra.

But a read of the report revealed that scientists hadn't found my relative. The world's biggest drinker is probably the Malaysian pen-tailed tree shrew. It lives on a type of flower nectar which has evolved to be an alcoholic drink, said the study published by the Royal Society. (Evolution is a wonderful thing.) I wish I had known about alcoholic flower nectar when I was young, and was busy giving up frivolous luxuries like food, water and shelter

to pay for my beer. Scientists also found a type of chimpanzee that regularly drinks the equivalent of a whole bottle of wine in fermented tree sap. Since most mammals have much smaller bodies than humans, drinks should affect them more. So I guess three glasses of beer might be 21 glasses in "dog beers".

By coincidence, my youngest child a few days ago asked me: "Why don't you drink wine, Dad?"

I was first asked this question when I was about 28, three or four years after I had given up alcohol, and I'd answered: "People who drink alcohol say and do stupid things." But this answer stopped working when Donald Trump stopped drinking and became measurably stupider.

So I gave my daughter a different answer. "Alcohol reverses evolution, making you smell like a pangolin, grow extra nipples and gradually turn back into a lizard," I said. (It's never too early to teach hard science to children.)

In my reader contributions mailbox was a report that some days ago in India, goat farmer Ramesh Patni found members of his herd staggering around or fast asleep. Police had steamrollered 11,500 bottles of seized liquor on the field and the goats had partied for three hours before collapsing. Mr. Patni took

The Funny side

By

Nury Vittachi

last year they'd smashed the bottles on a different field and the cows had got wildly drunk.

I have a new respect for wildlife. We think they're just innocently chewing grass or sitting in trees, but these guys know how to party on a low budget. I just hope no one tells my Uncle E about the flower nectar.

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

In a state where roadside dhabas - its gift to the rest of the country - are a common occurrence, one such eatery stands out. Dhaba Express, on the outskirts of this town that is believed to date to the fourth century, is certainly much more than a dhaba alone.

While tables and 'charpais' (traditional beds of hand-woven jute or nylon strips) and open tandoors (clay ovens) and big containers are what one expects at the conventional dhabas, Dhaba Express is quite different.

It has the look of a restaurant from outside while it offers air-conditioned comfort within. The service and menu too are better, though the attempt is to ensure that the dhaba "feel" is not lost.

Be it the mutton curry or chicken and mutton biryani, kadai paneer, dal makhni, kadhi or paneer koftas, the preparations at the joint, which is located on the Hoshiarpur-Chandigarh highway (just three km from Hoshiarpur city), is certainly a foodie's delight.

"Our whole emphasis is on proving fresh and clean food to visitors. There is nothing better than getting a fresh, clean meal at the right price when you are travelling," Dhaba Express owner Bhagwant Singh Ahluwalia, 68, told IANS.

A well-off horticulturist-cum-agriculturist, who has been into kinnow farming and growing poplar trees, Ahluwalia opened the eatery in 2013 to share his experience of good food with others.

"I have always been a



Harley Davidson and Superbikers at Dhaba Express.

Dhaba Express

FAQs:

Location: Hoshiarpur-Chandigarh highway, 3 km from Hoshiarpur town (Opposite St. Joseph's Convent School) and 140 km from Chandigarh
Meal for two/three: Vegetarian - Rs 400-Rs.450; Non-vegetarian - Rs.600-Rs.700
Buffet (12 noon to 7 p.m.): Veg - Rs 110; Non-veg - Rs.200 (both with sweet dish)
Timings: 8.30 am till 10.30 pm daily.

good cook myself. It is this passion for cooking that led me to open this place. We had an old building on our own land and I thought that a dhaba would be a good option," he said.

The dhaba not only at-

tracts travellers but also locals from this town.

"It is a very nice and clean place to have good food. I come here often," Hoshiarpur resident Kultar Singh said.

Besides the a-la-carte option, (Contd on P-VII)

By Veturi Srivatsa

Making the right noises about his teammates, skipper Virat Kohli may have won them over. Usually, captains are guarded while talking about the abilities of individual players. Not Kohli, he speaks his mind out to reveal his strategy and the men he needs to carry it out.

The media has realised that the India captain, who is leading the team on his first full tour to Sri Lanka, is articulate and can give good copy. They got a lot to write and interpret about as he spoke on the eve of the team's departure, leaving no one in doubt that he is firm in his beliefs.

He is clear who he will ask to bat at crucial No.3 position and why he needs to play five bowlers to win Test matches, hinting he could even go in with three spinners. By the end of the pre-tour media conference he has left no one in doubt that he is the boss and will operate on his own terms, whatever the selectors, directors and coaches may think of him. Yet, he might have discussed his plans when the selectors sat to pick the squad.

In form, both Cheteshwar Pujara and Rohit Sharma can be scintillating. If Pujara can add a bit of solidity at No.3 holding one end up, Rohit can be entertaining on his way to big hundreds.

Kohli in no uncertain terms stated that in his scheme of things, Rohit will bat one drop and reasoned out saying that the Mumbaier is a game changer and he can do it in

Captain Kohli's innovative ideas

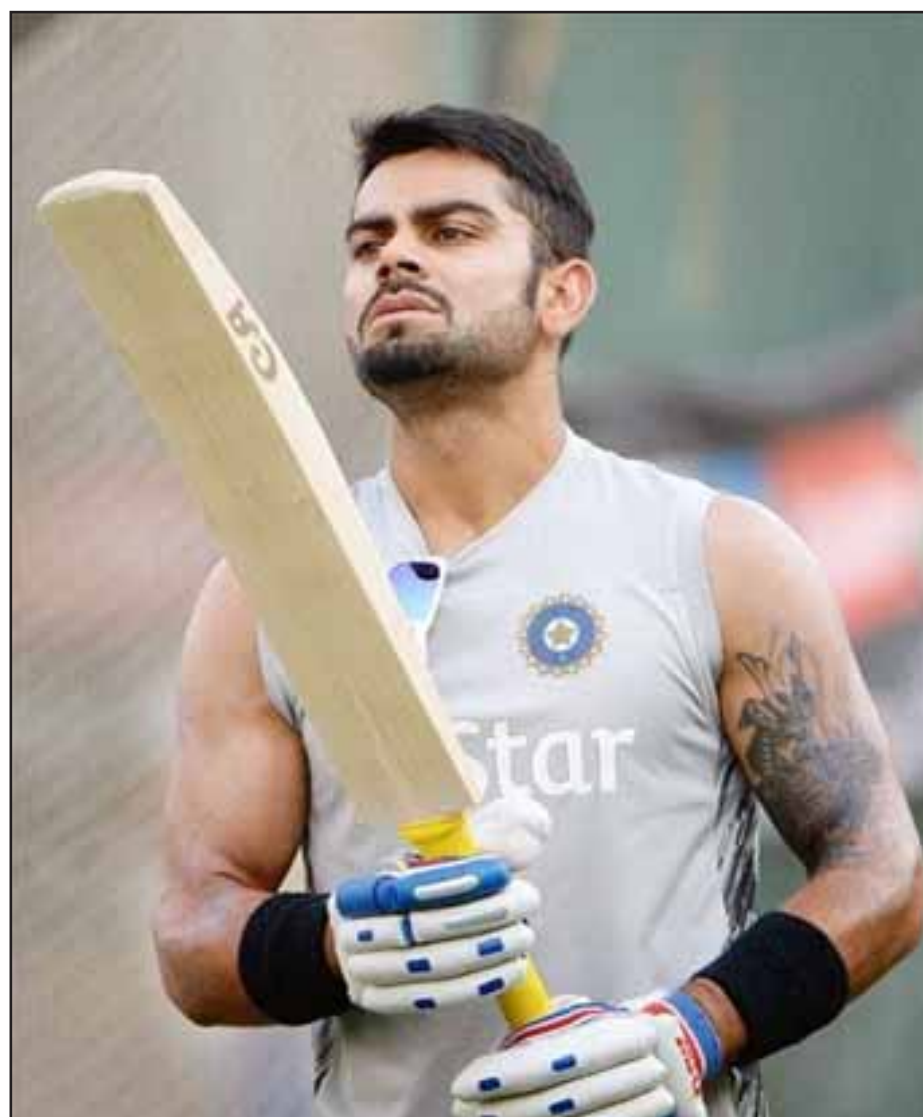
one session of his batting.

A good start by the openers will allow Rohit to bat freely and he will also be able to negotiate the new ball if the need arises as he opens in the one-dayers. Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane to follow, the top five batsmen must get 300 plus so that the so-called all-rounders can hold the innings at the lower end.

In the captain's game plan, if the top order comes good he can play five bowlers on a regular basis to get 20 wickets needed for victory. For that to happen, Wriddhiman Saha at No.6 will have to concentrate more on his batting as his glove work is near faultless, though he is nowhere near Mahendra Singh Dhoni's class as a batsman.

Does Kohli's "assigning responsibility to players" mean promoting Ravichandran Ashwin to the key position of six in the order with the message that he is in the team as a genuine all-rounder?

If Ashwin's position is settled then the question arises of accommodating Harbhajan Singh in the eleven. Kohli has opened so many of his cards before leaving on the tour that it would make (Contd on P-VII)



With the revival of the monsoon across the country, enrich your weekends with these inspiring books. Read a tale of a photographer who cannot get the dream of a three-legged dog out of his head. Join in his Kafkaesque trials to decode the dream. Also learn how to leave your mark at work, with the right tools. Being admission-time for many colleges abroad, also learn how to crack the code of landing at your dream university. This week, yet again, the IANS bookshelf comes with an assorted fare. Read on!

1. Book: 35 and Sexless in Ahmedabad; Author: Robin David; Publisher: Harper Collins; Pages: 215; Price: Rs.325

The journalist-turned-author of this book pens a dark comedy about a lonely man's quest for real connections in life.

Anant, a struggling photographer in Ahmedabad, often has a recurring nightmare. He sees a three-legged bitch chained to his ankle, dragging him out of anger. He cannot find a way to free himself nor can he get the dream out of his head.

Attempting to demystify the dream, Anant turns to Google and then psychiatrists for help, but they leave him on a Kafkaesque spree to gain knowledge.

But what does the dog mean? Is it Raashee, his old lover who now exists digitally only on chat windows? Or Diane Arbus, the legendary 1960s photographer whose groundbreaking ideas find no one interested in Ahmedabad? Or is it his father, with whom Anant doesn't have the most perfect relationship?

2. Book: Leave Your Mark; Author: Aliza Licht; Publisher: Piatkus; Pages: 259; Price: Rs.399

For all the competitive ones who want to excel at work, this book offers the

Kafkaesque trials to decode a dream and other tales

right ways to do so.

Coming from a communications executive, the book has key insider tips on how to nail a perfect job - and later how to excel in it. She tells her story drawing lessons from her experience as a fashion publicist.

For instance, there's her clever use of Twitter and how it led to her success as "fashion's favourite PR girl".

This guide opens the key to succeeding in a contemporary working world, where many a time, personal and professional lines get mixed up.

3. Book: Acing Admissions; Author: Kavita Mehta and Kimberly Wright Dixit; Publisher: Collins; Pages: 280; Price: Rs.250

There is never a dearth of students in India who are aspiring to study abroad. Be it for their masters in sciences, technologies or even more preferred Ivy League MBAs.

This book comes in

From Bookshelf

handy for those aiming to land in the top colleges of the world. With experts writ-

ing the book, it is the perfect guide to profile building and fetching financial aid and other key steps involved.

Studying in dream colleges seems like just a book's read away!

4. Book: The Real Life MBA: The no-nonsense guide to winning the game, building a team and growing your career; Author: Jack Welch and Suzy Welch; Publisher: Thorsons; Pages: 227; Price: Rs.599

Ever wondered if you can land a dream job you have always been rejected for? Or if the career path you have assumed is the right one for you?

Here's the book to answer many such career-related questions, which could be taking a toll on the personal life. Take these steps from the experts on how to move beyond everyday challenges at work to focus on what really drives you. Unleash the growth hidden in you, to turn into your biggest advantage. Hire people with a technique that leads to far fewer occurrences of 'What was I thinking?'

Supported by logical arguments, this is a must-read for all aspiring to further their careers.

By
Preetha Nair

Anuradha Roy, longlisted for Man Booker Prize 2015, dispels the notion that Indian writers sell dark social realities of the country to the western world

As a writer, she says, she can't close eyes to the unsavoury truths around her. "Why wouldn't I write about something which affects me deeply? A writer's job is not to make a tourist brochure of the country," said Roy, whose previous books "An Atlas of Impossible Longings" (2008) and "The Folded Earth" (2011) had won several prestigious awards.

Roy was nominated for the coveted prize for her third novel "Sleeping On Jupiter" (Hachette India) which explores the issue of sexual violence against women and children in India.

The author, based in Ranikhet (Uttarakhand) said she could not believe it when she was told about the listing. "It was complete disbelief, when my husband broke the news to me. It is satisfying and wonderful to make it to the list, which is open to the world," Roy said adding that the controversy surrounding the new rules of Booker Prize hasn't taken any sheen off it.

"The opening up of Booker to the world has not gone down well with the British. They feel that when Pulitzer is not open to others, so why the Booker Prize should be open to the Americans," asked Roy, who runs a publishing house, Permanent Black, with her husband.

Roy's new book traces the journey of the protagonist Nomita Frederikson from Oslo to make a documentary on Jarmuli, (a fictional place), the Indian temple town by the sea.

It traces Nomita's experiences, as a child - of violence and sexual abuse.

At the age of seven,

'A writer's job is not to make tourist brochure of India'



Nomita goes to the orphanage in the temple town run by a world-renowned guru, after losing her family in a war. Though she was adopted and taken to Norway, she continues to be haunted by memories of being sexually abused by the guru in the orphanage.

The author also slammed reviews describing the book as an expose on Indian hypocrisies. "If somebody chooses to say the book is about Indian hypocrisy, it doesn't mean the book is one. In the book, I deliberately refrained from specifying the wars and tried to universalise war. It applies to everyone affected by war and displacement," Roy opined.

The book talks about communal violence, war and a larger than life holy man who turns out to be a sexual predator.

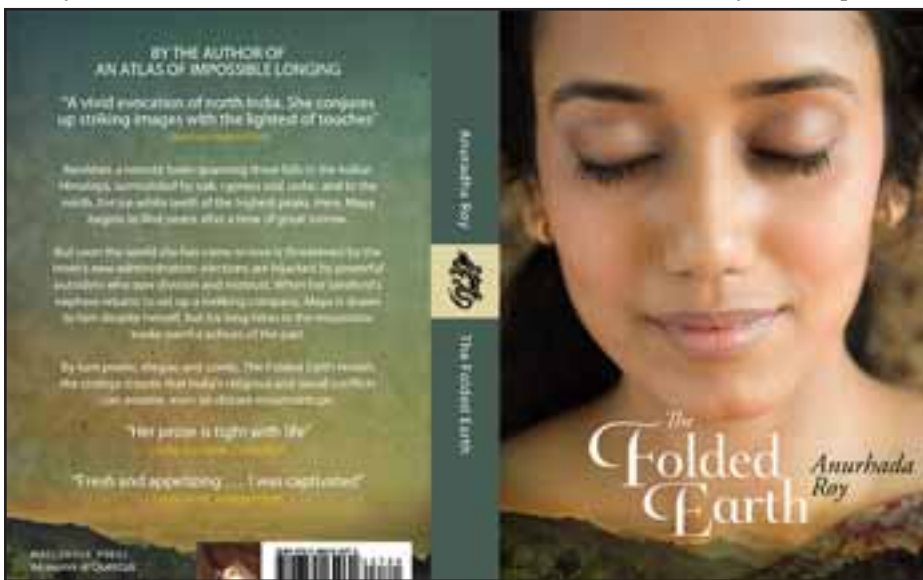
The idea of the book came from a long short story which Roy wrote in 2008. "The protagonist and the temple guy are mere glimpses in the short story. Later I kept thinking about the characters and thus the novel," said Roy adding that there are three older women characters from the story. "The three women were also in the short story. It's about their first and last holiday where they are in search of happiness, which is fragile," she said.

Though Roy's well-crafted prose exposes the

unequal and unjust gender reality in India, she doesn't

was more relevant now. "It's absurd to disassociate from

tense visual appeal to the book, Roy has no plans to



want to make any statement on the condition of women. "One starts out with a world of imagination while writing fiction. As it happens, the theme develops towards characters

and situation. Though I don't have a huge statement on the condition of women in India, I really wish I can take a public transport instead of hiring a car at night for home. That is never possible in Delhi," she rued.

Calling herself a feminist, Roy felt that feminism

make it into a movie. "I am not ready for it," said the author who loves well-written crime fiction.

Pitted against the likes of Man Booker Prize-winning Irish author Anne Enright and the Pulitzer Prize-winning American author Anne Tyler among 13 others, does she harbour any hope of making it to the distinguished title? "I am not thinking about it now," Roy quipped. The Man Booker shortlist will be announced in September and the finalist will be decided in October.

(The writer can be contacted at preetha.n@ians.in)

Interview

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Calling herself a feminist, Roy felt that feminism

Though there is an in-

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, August 9, 2015

This year brings forth a powerful and energetic approach to handle the professional projects in hand as Moon sextile Sun on your solar return chart. 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. Your image too would enhance. You gain money and influence through business ventures and partnership. Being open and receptive, you attract prestigious opportunities and interesting people. Be sure that you take timely action on health issues. Travel would help you develop a new perspective.

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

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

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

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

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

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

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

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

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

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

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

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

remember that bringing them to a completion is just as important. A little attention on fitness and health related programs would be helpful.

Libra : (September 23 - October 23)

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

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

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

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)

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

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)

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

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)

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

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)

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

Dhaba Express ...

(Contd from P-VI) the dhaba offers buffet from 12 noon till 7 p.m.

"The place has hosted travellers from many countries and even groups of bikers," said Harkirat Singh, owner of Citrus County farm-stay resort located nearby.

Dhaba Express is not about good food alone in the right ambience. There's more to it.

It has a small garden in the front as well as at the back where one can take in the open skies in the evenings or sit outside during winter (November to March). There are swings and other games for children as well.

The place offers parking for around 100 cars. The dhaba is also a popular outing spot for kitty par-

ties and even birthdays. People book the place for other events as well.

Though not really a thing to write, especially when one is discussing food, the Dhaba Express management vouches for the cleanliness of its toilets. "We ensure 5-star level cleanliness in the toilets," the owner said.

Though a relatively new joint, Dhaba Express is gaining popularity for the newness it offers.

Hoshiarpur is located in the extremely fertile Doaba region - the land of five rivers of northeastern Punjab. Considered India's 10th most literate city, former prime minister Manmohan Singh is an alumnus of its Government College.

Captain Kohli's innovative ideas

(Contd from P-VI) it difficult for him to discard any.

He has also hinted at playing three spinners, probably after seeing how top-flight tweekers can get assistance from the Sri Lankan pitches. Ideally, playing the leg-spinner is a must to bowl with Ashwin but can he leave Harbhajan out after specially asking for him? Kohli may have landed himself in a bit of jam and to wriggle out of it he might play all three available spinners to justify his philosophy.

If things don't work out, Kohli may even make Rohit or Murali Vijay a Moeen Ali to chip off some 10 overs in a day an odd wicket from them as a bonus. He will have to try his pet plan at least in two of the three Tests in Sri Lanka before taking stock of the situation.

Unlike his predecessor Dhoni, who was clearly disgusted with the wayward speedsters in the one-dayers in Bangladesh, Kohli believes raw speed can still make a big difference in Tests. And when the only bowler with lively pace and a fair amount of accuracy, Mohammed Shami,

returns from his rehab following surgery on his left knee, Kohli may even play three strong pacers if he sees the pitch is likely to provide the slightest help.

Kohli's plans are for flat pitches on the subcontinent where he hopes he can get away with his five-batsmen-three-spinners theory. The Indian think tank will not take long to revert to six batsmen at the slightest hint of panic in the dressing room.

Even that shrewd captain, Sourav Ganguly, could not think of playing five regular bowlers with Virender Sehwag, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, V.V.S Laxman and himself embellishing the line-up. Overseas, he even dropped Anil Kumble to play three seamers, the using Sehwag and Tendulkar as backup bowlers.

Kohli does not have the players anywhere near the calibre Ganguly had at his command and for all his bravado, he will, at some stage, realise that discretion is the better part of valour.

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

"It's not enough that we do our best; sometimes we have to do what's required."

--- Sir Winston Churchill

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 1 SHILLONG, MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 2015

Bigotry on the rise

The Salesians of Don Bosco, a congregation that is modelled around the life and ideals of St John Bosco, known as a friend and educator of youth, are celebrating his bicentenary this year. Don Bosco institutions are spread out in 132 countries and reaching roughly 15 million people. Although Don Bosco was a Catholic priest, the schools, colleges, universities and vocational institutions that are built in his name are known to accommodate students of diverse religion, nationalities, caste and community. The Salesian congregation of Guwahati wanted to install a statue of Don Bosco at Bhalamukh on August 7. The statue was to be unveiled by Assam Chief Minister, Tarun Gogoi. But in the early morning hours of August 7, a section of rightist bigots who claim that Don Bosco is an Italian missionary and has not contributed anything to the cultural growth of Assam and hence does not deserve a statue in the city, vandalised and defaced it and pushed it into the river. This action is a body blow to the much touted secularism - a principle that is fundamental to the idea of being Indian. Without the secular ethos the Indian polity will be fragmented even while religious differences will polarise communities and make them vulnerable to communal conflicts.

The arrest of a BJP woman councillor and her husband and also members of the Cotton College Students' Union on the issue of defacement of the Don Bosco statue only goes to show that the ugly face of fascist politics has entered Assam and the North East. It will not be long before the communal violence fuelled by political ideologies is unleashed in Assam and the region. The perpetrators of this act of vengeance may be a small number but they have supporters who are equally rabid and fascist in their views over social media. Such dogmatists have openly supported the idea that only the statues of Assamese freedom fighters and heroes should be put up in any part of Assam. Such cultural chauvinism does not bode well for Assam and for this country. Don Bosco is above all religions. He stands out as an educator whose ideals have spread far and wide. If people cannot accept this fact it is not Don Bosco who is belittled but those whose minds refuse to transcend parochial mindsets.

LOOKING BACK

January 13, 1988

Tripura tightens security after poll clashes

The Tripura Government today ordered tightening of security precautions throughout the state in the wake of increasing election clashes. Authorities of all the districts have been asked to districts have been asked to districts have been asked to promulgate prohibitory orders and suspend issue of firearm licenses till the assembly poll on February. They have also been directed to keep a close watch on the international border so that no arms and ammunition are smuggled into the state. In another development, Chief Minister Mr. Nripen Chakravorty could not address an election meeting yesterday at Gobindvati as tribal insurgents left some posters and a letter asking him to leave the place. Gobindvati is situated close to the Bangladesh border and is a known entry thoroughfare of the outlawed Tribal National Volunteers (TNV) guerillas.

Meanwhile normal life came to a standstill in entire Kailashahar subdivision of Tripura's north district today, following a Left Front sponsored 12 hour bandh.

The bandh was on protest against killing of two persons one each of Congress (I) and CPI (M) on Sunday. All shops markets educational institutions remained closed and vehicles were off the road.

Violence claims 67 lives in January

Punjab remained incident free today with no un-

toward incident reported from anywhere in the state, an official spokesman said.

As such, escalated terrorist violence since January 1 has so far claimed 67 lives. The dead include three terrorists and two policemen.

In the last 11 days two Congress (I) leaders Mr. Jagat Ram and Mr. Tarlochan Singh Riyasti fell to the terrorist's bullets.

Pilot died in Plane Crash

An Indian Air Force fighter plane on regular exercise crashed here last evening killing its pilot Anil Raj, police said today.

The plane caught fire in the air and soon fell down near a village, about ten Km from here. A thirty year old woman Kosolya Nego, was badly injured while a piece of burning part of the jet fell on her. Another house was damaged. Investigation was on.

Taxi to go off road for 3 hours today

Taxis in Shillong will be off the roads on in Shillong on Wednesday (Jan 13) from 12 noon to 3 PM as a mark of protest against the hike in petrol prices. The General Secretary of the Shillong Region Taxi Owners' and Drivers' Association, Mr. M.N. Syiem said that the rise in price of petrol will "ultimately adversely effect" the public because of the "unavoidable increase in taxi fares".

Spare a thought for the environment please!

By H H Mohrmen

It seems like the National Green Tribunal ban on unscientific rat-hole mining has not taught us any lesson because till date our political leaders and the mining lobby are advocating for the immediate resumption of coal mining even before a proper policy is in place. The mining lobby continues to pressure the government to find out ways and means to allow recommencement of coal mining in the state as soon as possible; even if that means having a half-baked policy. All that the coal mining lobby wants is immediate resumption of coal mining even while the government itself is in a dilemma, not knowing what to do next.

In its recent media briefing the mining lobby has come down heavily on the Government for not coming up with the State's own mining policy and has even threatened to come up with their own policy if the government fails to do the same immediately. The coal mining lobby blamed the government for not doing anything on this front even after more than one year had elapsed. Obviously, the mining lobbies are anxious that mining activities in the state should start pronto. They are using every trick in the trade to pressure the government to come up with the policy. We do not know what is Government's response to these threats are, but one thing is obvious. The Government does not have an easy answer to the question.

Surely, the mining lobbies have every right to beat the Government on the issue because it has done precious little to come up with a policy that will convince the NGT to allow coal mining in the state to resume. But the Government too can also use the same stick to beat the miners. It is true the Government is yet to come up with a mining policy, but what about the miners? What have they done in the last few months? Have they been able to close any exhausted mines? Have they tried reclaiming any land or rivers polluted by the mining activities? Have they even tried to clean any streams or rivulets? Have they compensated their labourers for their loss? Have

they tried planting any trees in order to increase forest cover in the area? Have they (as a team) visited any village in the down-streams of Myntdu, Lukha and Kopli to see for themselves the damage that coal mining has done to the water in the rivers? What have they really done (precious little it may be) to compensate for the more than four decades of plundering of Mother Nature?

I shudder when I remember that the two leaders of the coal mine lobby were themselves former leaders of the organizations that claims (and still does) to champion the cause of the jaitbynriew and yet have only advocated for one section of the jaitbynriew and not the other. And these leaders still behave like irresponsible kids who after making a mess, push their parents to clean up the mess. They destroyed the environment and then leave it to the Government to do the needful. They still carry with them the pressure group's attitude that we can do whatever we like and let somebody else clean our mess. The saying in Pnar "I eit dei iong bru, ki dien da ki iong mrad" aptly describes their attitude. Can we still allow them to continue to do so? Can we still allow the pressure group/political parties to call for bandh/strikes and then disown violence or untoward incidents which happen during that period of the strike? The answer is a loud no. Pressure groups/political parties should be held responsible for any untoward incident occurring during their strike. The same logic should apply to the coal mining lobbies, if Sonny Khyriem, Bolious Swer and others claim that they are the leaders of the mining groups in the state, they should then be held responsible for all the violation of NGT orders which was reported by the press on a daily basis. We can no longer allow people to call themselves leaders and at the same time refuse to take responsibility for what their supporters or followers have done. The leaders should be held responsible for the folly of their supporters.

The Government should not take the coal mining

group seriously until and unless they start showing some responsibility and start conservation efforts. For more than four decades they have conducted their mining activities without any control or regulation and had destroyed the environment. In the process they have also acquired immense wealth. It is therefore their responsibility to see that nature is brought back to its pristine glory. The coal mining lobby has no right to dictate to the Government to toe their line until and unless they too start repairing the damage that they have done to the environment.

Personnel from the North East Electric Power Corporation had recently stated in the press that although it has been more than one year since the NGT banned unscientific rat-hole mining in the state yet, acidity in the water of Kupli river is still very high. No one knows how long will it take for the river to regain its natural state. The question is can the NGT allow mining to resume even if there is no improvement on the quality of the water in the rivers along the coal mining areas? Acid mine drainage will continue to flow to the river and pollute its water as long as the Government refuses to direct the coal mine owners to close exhausted mines and take due care to reclaim the water discharged from the active mines. It is a business both ways and we cannot expect the Government to clean their mess.

But how can we expect the MUA II government to even try to control and regulate mining in the state, when the Government itself is not sure where it stands on the issue of mining. The Government is seen to be flip-flopping on the issue and there is no other occasion which best illustrate the situation than the recent statement of the minister in charge of Forests, Government of Meghalaya. Prestone Tynsong in his public statement made it clear that the Government is going to appeal against the Hon'ble High Court ruling which bans all kinds of mining in the State without obtaining all necessary

and relevant permissions and clearances. And instead of welcoming this order with open arms and acting on the order, the Government is considering to move the Supreme Court to appeal against this landmark order.

At times I am not even sure if Tynsong is speaking in his capacity as the minister in charge of the Department of Forests or is only trying to please his constituency. As a Forest and Environment Minister one expects Tynsong to support the court order because it is the duty of the minister to protect forests and environment - as simple as that. But how can the Minister of Forests and Environment take the initiative to appeal against the court order which if implemented will only help protect the environment? The Government instead of seizing the opportunity and using the court order to start doing conservation work, decided to appeal against the order instead.

Isn't it true that it was Prestone Tynsong himself who as a minister in charge of the Department of Public Health Engineering, stated that the major threat to the Greater Shillong Water Supply Project is because of sand and stone mining activities that is prevalent in catchment areas of the river which supplies water to the project? It was Tynsong who had come up with the idea of acquiring the catchment areas around the rivers instead of Government formulating policies to control and regulate mining activities in catchment areas of important rivers. His idea found no takers and he now instead decides to appeal against the order which if implemented will only help solve the multitude of problems that the state is facing.

At least for once let us take the opportunity provided by the NGT ban to look beyond our vested interests and come up with a policy for sustainable extraction of minerals in the state. Let everybody put their vested interests aside, sit together and come up with a policy for sustainable use of minerals in Meghalaya. The Government should take everybody on board and stakeholders should also include people who live down stream of the rivers. For once in our lifetime let us spare a thought for the environment.

Comparison Done Wrong

By Oliver Lyngdoh

How many of you have siblings? How many of you have what the world calls it- 'Sibling Rivalry'? Are you one of those who would constantly bicker and fight and pull hairs with each other and then gang up on your other sibling the next moment? Well come what may, these acts of warfare between and among siblings, believe it or not are what draws them towards each other and also helps them build a long lasting relationship which would last through the years. Heck! I have had my share of fights with my sister and she has more than once used a pen as a dagger against me. But that isn't what I want to talk about today. Today I would like to talk about a simple thing that plagues our households. A simple act voluntary or involuntary, by parents or any other elder for that matter, that can mar and scar a child. Parents have you ever talked to your children and I'm sure more than one occasion compared your ward to that of another? Let me make it easier for you; have you ever uttered this sentence before- "Why can't you be more like X? Look at how good he/she is." Well if you have done so; or have made similar remarks, let me tell you this; you are not doing any good at all towards your children. You might have the best of intentions but nothing good ever comes out of this.

As parents or as adults or elders, we must keep in mind that not all of us are of the same calibre. We should know better. There are others who have a better knack for English, some who are well suited for Maths and some for painting. Not one of us is the best in everything we do. Growing up has made me realise that comparing yourself to another isn't the ideal way to succeed in life. Success is defined by what you aim at; of course if you aim low then that's not success; that's just laziness. If you are aiming for success which you defined yourself in your own walk of life, do it reasonably. Let's take an example- say you are a person who loves to draw and paint and has won accolades in your university where you study the same. But instead of aiming for becoming the best at what you do, you suddenly decide that your aim in life is to become like Bob- the top architect of your time. Sure there can be some who might say why not? Anything is possible. But one has to be realistic. Painting a building as a work of art and designing a building as work of art are two completely different things and two completely different goals.

Coming back to my original point- Comparison, no doubt we all compare ourselves with our colleagues, counterparts and of course classmates. We try to see who is better, who scored the highest and then who is the best performer? Let me ask you this- for those who do this, what do you feel when you realise that even after giving your best, you failed to meet your expectations of being at par with your friends, colleagues or counterparts? Do you feel low? Sad? Of course you do! Now, how about you put yourself in the feet of your wards - be it your 15 year old or your 25 year old. How would you feel when you are put up on the pedestal against others and you must fight

for that place? Regardless of whether you want to stay there or not, I have seen and witnessed a lot of this happening to my friends growing up. Just because my friend's cousin went on to become a doctor after his 10+2, that too studying in a reputed medical college, my friend's father moulded his son's dreams to be the same. The son, my friend who I know full well wanted to study the arts, performing arts that is, and wanted to pursue his passion in music was pushed to pursue the same because being a doctor would not only give him reputation but would provide his dad with the same reputation as well. To cut a long story short, it has been five years now and my friend is yet to become what his father wanted him to be.

Now this comparison doesn't stop here. Even though one might have achieved this fabricated dream of theirs, there are times when that too isn't enough. There are instances when, "Because he is going to that college for this course, you too must go there." Or "Your cousin could top the exam so well, and you only secured a meagre 1st division?" followed with "Your life now is in ruins". As free willed-thinkers and the correct guidance from home and school- one could be anything they wanted to be. Just because the best option in India to get a secure job is going into the medical field doesn't necessarily mean that you push your children to that dream. Let them dream their own dreams. Encourage them and teach them to be more imaginative and more free willed. Free them from the clutches of societal norms. If your daughter wants to be a mechanic- why stop her from being one? If your son wants to design clothes- encourage him to do so. At least they will be working in the field of their own interests. Words of encouragement are different from words of mockery. Encouragement means being the voice at the end of a failure which slowly and calmly speaks to a child saying maybe you should reconsider your options or motivating her to keep moving forward. "I told you so" and "He can do it, so can you" types of messages are what drive children to desperation.

Comparing one's abilities to another is a bad idea not only while dealing with your kids. As any life coach would say- You Are You. No one else can be you. Be yourself but better. If you sow this thought into your kids involuntarily or voluntarily and make them think that you want them to be like this or that, they won't only grow up as disappointments to you but to themselves. This then can lead to various types of depressions and disorders. Instead be someone who would encourage the good in a child. Be that person who is at ease with yourself and satisfied with what you have. Then only would your children be raised in an environment that would help them to achieve their own free-willed dreams. What I am saying is this- there is no basis for comparing the success and the abilities of your wards to others, there's no benefit and there's no outcome. The only outcome is a heavy heart on both sides- yours and your kid's. If you lead your kids in the right path, they would surely shine in their own way and would make you proud in their own way.

TO THE EDITOR

VIPs and equality in society

Editor,

Over the past weeks there have been a lot of discussion in the newspapers and on social media about the VIP and VVIP movement in the city. Much indignation has been expressed and people want to call meetings to protest this VIP cult. I would like to approach entire VIP culture from a different angle. Attacking and protesting the VIP's snarling the roads will not solve the problem. From a law point of view, it can only be tackled if the "VIPs" themselves pass a law in parliament regarding this, but that is not likely to happen. Actually there may be a law already, but then who is going to implement it?

So what is the root of the VIP culture? My thoughts come from the Shillong perspective as that is where I live, but it is easily transferred to many other areas. As humans, we are inclined to use our supposed status to get us what we want when we need it; whether it be a jump forward in a queue because we are female, a quick signature from an officer to expedite some paper work or a quick visit to the doctor or hospital check-up without waiting in line. For every one of those doing this there are

many others with no clout who will always have to wait in line, while the ones who have the right connections move forward. Now what does this have to do with government officials snarling traffic? The point is that it is all about inequality and the overall concept of one individual being better than another, which then perpetuates on to the concept of a government official, who in reality should be the humblest but who is in fact the most arrogant. That's because we as a society perpetuate that, and we the people, who are in fact the government, don't change things.

I recently went to a popular eating establishment in Shillong. I arrived early, before my wife. Being a white foreigner living in this city, I was welcomed with, "good afternoon sir, come sir, sit here sir." Then when my wife came in a little later dressed in Jain Kyrshah and Khasi Shawl, she was treated rudely by the same waiter that had earlier greeted me. Imagine the embarrassment when she sat with the only white guy in the restaurant and spoke perfect English as did her husband speak perfect Khasi. This is a fact of life here, what I call reverse discrimination. Certain people are treated too well, why? Because they look a certain way! We both entered the establishment ready to pay for a service, and were asking for no more than that.

My wife and I have been running a small 'Bed and Breakfast.' One day an IAS officer came with his wife and child. He was a nice guy and we talked and looked around but we emphatically said we could not provide anything to drop-in clients. Then we meet the same person when he was hob-nobbing with Ministers, at an event and not even acknowledging our presence. His perceived status would have dictated that we take care of him fully if he dropped by at our place.

Then there are people who consider it important to introduce themselves to us by their status such as, "I am a doctor, a lawyer, engineer etc., Perceived status is what makes this world we live in go around. So when we think of politicians or bureaucrats, we cannot say too much against them because who knows when we might need them. Then there is the incident when we first set up our place and a friend was doing an unfamiliar Barbecue. Five from the group (ladies), were standing around telling him their designations. They were caught off-guard when our friend courteously told them that at that particular time what he needed was help to make the barbecue and their profession was immaterial. People are often surprised when we don't really pay much attention to

their supposed positions when announced to us. My father, who worked with a church as a layman, was often, to his annoyance referred to as Reverend or Pastor, here in Shillong. To this day, I refuse to address a preacher or church leader as Pastor or Rev so and so. We were always taught we were equals. Each had their own skills and we respected them but they were neither above us, nor we above anybody else. We had one of these "Pastors" who works for one of the fellowship groups in the village; he came to the property when we were really busy so we just said 'Hi,' but did not offer him tea. Later on we heard from members of the church organization that he had gone to several houses and told them that we were proud people. Wonder about a church leader judging us and going out to homes and telling his judgment to others. All because, of his perceived status!

So how does this all affect VIP's shutting down roads and blocking traffic? I am not saying it is so much better in other countries, however, in many other countries I think there is greater sense of equality, and that feeling is instilled in you from a young age. So that even if one does become a public figure, one does not normally take that to mean that he/she is above everybody else. They just are in a different position of respon-

sibility to the public. I personally can remember many a time, running or walking in Victoria, British Columbia; the Capital of the Province, and bumping into and chatting with the premier (equal to the Chief Minister of the state), or any other minister of the province, out

walking. Until we as citizens of a particular area take up the mantle of forcing all to be on an equal footing, we cannot change things. Equality is the key.

Yours etc.,
James M Perry,
Via email

"There was a time when we expected nothing of our children but obedience, as opposed to the present, when we expect everything of them but obedience."

—Anatole Broyard

The Shillong Times

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J&K prospects

THE Centre is reportedly considering a Rs 70,000 crore financial package for Jammu and Kashmir. The money is to be invested in roadways, education, health, renewable energy, urban renewal and tourism in the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was expected to announce the bonanza last month. He may do so later this month unless tensions between the PDP and the BJP, the coalition partners, stand in the way. Undoubtedly, the PDP and the BJP alliance is a marriage of convenience. But it was necessary to cobble it together for stability. However, regional distrust cannot be easily wiped out. The Centre should do its utmost to bridge the differences in the state government. The internal divide should not be an impediment to the sanctioning of central assistance to meet J&K's needs. The state had severe floods nearly a year ago which undermined its infrastructure. 261, 361 structures were damaged as well as 1700 km of roads and 271 bridges. Heavy rains always cause alarm in the Valley. Flash floods occurred last March. 44 people were killed and thousands of structures caved in.

J&K is an integral part of India and should receive the Centre's attention like other states when it is affected by natural calamities. A delay in assistance causes immeasurable suffering and has adverse political consequences. Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed is under fire for showing poor results so far. The BJP and the PDP alliance cannot be altogether popular. If the aid package does not come through, the alliance may even break up. The Centre must ensure that such an eventuality is averted.

LOOKING BACK

January 15, 1988

7 Killed In Punjab

Seven people were killed while security forces arrested five terrorists in Punjab during past 24 hours.

A body was recovered at village Kotfatuhi in Hoshiarpur district last night, while a woman was killed at village Oja in Jalandhar district.

A report said one Pritam Das was stabbed to death in Batala in Gurdaspur district last night, another person was hacked to death in Randhawa village in Jalandhar district last night.

An official spokesman said here today three bodies were recovered from a farm house at Buttari village in Amritsar district this morning.

A report from Amritsar quoting police as saying that terrorists shot dead Harbans Singh, Sukhchain Singh and his brother Gurminder Singh in the farm house.

Two scooter-borne terrorist shot at and wounded a man at Mohali, a suburb of Chandigarh, in Punjab territory last night while he was celebrating "Lohri" along with his friends.

He was rushed to the PGI hospital here where his condition was stated to be out of danger.

Late , the terrorists went to another place and again opened fire on a crowd. However, none was injured.

In another incident, two persons were injured when another terrorists opened fire on at a village in Gurdaspur district last night.

The security forces arrested three terrorists near Ferozpur city at a check post last night.

They were identified as Harbans Singh, Baj Singh and Gopal Singh.

218 Are In Fray In Tripura Election

In all 218 candidates are left in the fray for the February 2 election to the sixty member Tripura assembly.

A total of 276 aspirant filed nomination papers for contesting poll. While one nomination was found invalid, 57 other candidates withdrew their papers.

TN Governor To Consult Experts On Majority In Assembly

Tamil Nadu Governor S. L. Khurana said he was consulting legal and constitutional experts on the question Chief Minister V.N. Janaki Ramachandran proving the majority of her group in the state assembly through a confidence vote.

Meanwhile, smarting under yesterday's attack when police resorted to lathi charge to disperse her supporters and prevent them from forcibly entering the party headquarters, now under the control of the ruling Janaki faction, Ms. Jayalalitha, General Secretary of her of the party demanded central intervention to put down "police high-handedness" and "lawlessness" in the state.

In telegrams to the President and the Prime Minister, Jayalalitha alleged that Chief Minister Janaki Ramachandran has resorted to police high-handedness to coerce MLAs to move in the coming assembly session.

She alleged that apart from herself, three former ministers and district secretaries were "brutally assaulted, manhandled and lathicharged" during yesterday's incidents.

'The Serpent tempted me and I ate'

By Fabian Lyngdoh

The Bible tells us that man put the blame on the woman for having eaten the forbidden fruit; the woman in turn put the blame on the serpent. But God pronounced His judgment on every one of them. To the serpent, He said, "Be accursed beyond all cattle, all wild beasts. You shall crawl on your belly and eat dust every day of your life". To the woman, He said, "I will multiply your pains in child-bearing, you shall give birth to your children in pain". And to the man, He said, "Accursed be the soil because of you. With suffering you shall get your food from it...With sweat on your brow shall you eat your bread, until you return to the soil...For dust you are and to dust you shall return". (Genesis: The Jerusalem Bible)

As human beings, all of us have the tendency, in various degrees, to put the blame on others for all the real or imaginary ills and misfortunes in our lives. We the Khasis are not free from this weakness. Indeed, this weakness seems to have become a fertile source of strength for the opportunists. There is a belief that the Khasi society had perfect social values enshrined in every person's heart because it is based on 'ka tiphok-tipot' (know what is right and just); 'tipbriew-tipblei' (know man and know God), and 'tipkur-tipkha' (knowing and respecting the Khasi matrilineal kinship relations). But today, there is a general feeling that the tribe is fast losing the purity of its traditional values because the above ethical norms are disappearing from the human hearts. There is a tendency to put the blame for the dilution of Khasi ethics and morality on the teachings of Christianity and modern education and civilization, and it seems to have become fashionable for every so called social leader to express serious concern for the predicament of the jaidbyrniew.

Speaking of purity of culture, the Khasi society had been much infiltrated by good aspects and dark aspects of Hinduism long before the advent of the British rule. For example in Raid Iapngar, Raid Bhoilasa and

Raid Thaiang there had been human sacrifices to a Hindu deity and the elders say that this practice is brought from Nartiang where there was a Hindu Raja. There had been a worship of the goddess Kali in Hima Mawlong and the goddess Bisory in Hima Shella brought there by a Brahmin from Nartiang. There had also been religious sacrifice to ka Ramchandi during wars between one raid and another, and between one hima and another so that their swords would 'shong tyrud'(become blood thirsty). The people had adopted some aspects of other alien cultures, because of the social situations or necessity of survival, not because of any degradation in ethics or morality. The necessity of survival is the Lord, the lawgiver and the director of actions at any point of time in the history of any people or nation; and culture and tradition get adjusted from time to time according to the demand of this necessity.

Every preacher says that the Khasi ethics is based on the inherent and special sense of ka tiphok-tipot; ka tipbriew-tipblei, and ka tipkur-tipkha in the heart of every Khasi with traditional mentality. What are the bases of these beliefs and expressions? The fact is that the Khasis are not endowed with such special sense of morality exceeding all other races or tribes. The Khasis had to speak the truth because they fear that falsehood would be revealed in the process of divination conducted in 'ka bishar' (judicial proceedings). They had respect for 'ka lawkyntang' (sacred forest) or 'law-adong' (community reserved forest), not because of any particularly unique sense of morality or respect for the environment, but because they fear that the gods or goddesses of those forests would punish them if they act tiri biri. The Khasi ancestors invoked certain spiritual beings to guard these forests and to punish anyone who transgresses them. The elders say that these spiritual beings are maintained in the forests through continual offering of animal sacrifices called 'ka

ai-dan ai-khat' every year or every three years or whatever it might be. So, if the traditional authorities who conduct the judicial proceedings can still discover the truth through divinations, the people would still uphold 'ka tiphok-tipot'; and if they can still maintain the presence of the spiritual guardians in the forests, no one would dare cut down a single tree, and it is not necessary to put the blame for moral deterioration on the teachings of this or that religion or on modern education and civilization.

It is also not proper to simply say that 'the Government and the outsiders had taken over our land' without calculating how much percentage of the land had actually been acquired by the Government and how much is under the perpetual ownership of the outsiders. If I had stretched out my hand to receive a handsome amount of cash from the Government as land compensation, I have no right to say that the serpent tempted me and I ate the forbidden fruit. If the Siyem of Mlyliem had encouraged and given permission to the non-Khasi traders in Iewduh, he has no right to say that the serpent had tempted him. If I had cast my vote for a corrupt and ignorant person as a leader because he handed me a bundle of cash, then I had fooled myself and I have no right to say that the serpent had tempted me. What is lamentable is not so much that the Government and outsiders had forcefully taken away our lands, but because of the Rupia, we had handed over our community lands and private lands to the ownership of few local tribal crore-patis who can do whatever they like with these lands and resources.

The State Government is our own Government and there is no reason to look at it as a foreign authority. Indeed, almost every so called NGO leader, MDC and every crore-pati, aspires to be an MLA, and people would be heartily involved in the MLA elec-

tion frenzy. There are many Khasi MLAs, Chairmen, and Co-Chairmen in the State Government. If these are 'ingkhong shalangmat' (traitors) then who is not? There is no ground to believe that the MLAs who are not in the Government, are not corrupt, not traitors or not self-centred as the MLAs who are in the Government. If a Garo is the Chief Minister, we have no right to say that the serpent has tempted us, because a Khasi Chief Minister would not be allowed to complete his term by his own tribesmen, as the Khasis have a tradition to appoint a clan from outside the hima as the siyem.

Let us look forward towards a better future. Factually speaking, the society had dramatically improved in every aspect of life. It has increased in population; it has improved in health conditions, in collective knowledge and skills, and in peace and order. In the past, there had been continuous bloodsheds between the clans, and between ki raid and ki hima. But today, the rule of law has taken over to regulate these institutions, and there is comparatively more peace and order than in the past. The expression 'ka riemsnam u nii u kong' refers less to the bloodsheds in the fights with non-Khasi enemies in acquiring or protecting the land of the Khasi and Jaintia hills, but it means more with the 'ri-kur' (clan lands), the raid or the hima that have been established after much bloodshed among the Khasis themselves. Those who doubt this truth are advised to study the histories of the various kur (clans), the raid and the hima. For example, we cannot imagine how much blood of the people of ki raid in Ri Bhoi area was shed to protect their lands against the incursion of the Jaintias in the 'Thma-Synteng'; how much blood was shed in the wars between the Khatynriew-Shnong and the 'Khat-ar Shnong of Hima Sohra, and how the Kur Yong War was miraculously saved from the bloody persecution of u Sajar Nangli.

By nature, life evolves to a better stage. Let us fall in love with the present and the future while at the same time maintain a sweet memory of the past.

Among those lined up large investments in India are Alibaba (China), Foxconn Technology Group (Taiwan), Google (US) in education, Google Fibre broadband services and Street view, Warburg Pincus (US), Gap Inc. (US), Dalian Wanda Group (China), Microsoft Corporation (US), Royal Dutch Shell PLC (UK and the Netherlands), Nando's (South Africa), BrightSKY (US), Carlyle Group (US), Bosch (Germany), Softbank (Japan) and Wal-Mart (US). A host of global pharmaceutical giants from the US, EU and Japan plan to invest in India. Defence manufacturers and insurance companies too have big plans for India which is expected to add at least one trillion dollar to its GDP in every five to six years. The International Monetary Fund sees India overtaking even the US and China in due course if it is able to maintain eight to 10 per cent growth rate in the next 15 years. Presently, India is the fastest growing large economy in the world.

The most painful is the performance of BJP or NDA in Lok Sabha, which is unable to manage the floor despite its combined strength of 337 in the 543-member House. BJP alone occupies 280 seats. The function of the most important lower House is blocked by a small shouting brigade of 25 to 30 Opposition members led by Congress demanding resignation of BJP chief ministers in Rajasthan and

rowdy members to represent this country and stoop below standards in front of the world? Can we in Meghalaya hold our three MPs accountable and call

them for a talk where their recent behaviour can be discussed?

Yours etc.,
Dominic S. Wankhar
Shillong-3

Shameless MPs!

Editor,
What a pathetic, and immature behaviour was displayed by the Opposition Bench led by the Congress Party in the presence of a visiting Parliamentary delegation from Bhutan. Political differences have always been part of parliamentary discourse especially in the Lok Sabha. However the shouting, howling and name-calling during a visit by a foreign delegation must have shocked our guests who were in India to learn lessons on democracy. The Bhutan MPs were graceful enough to say "No Comments" when asked as to what their experience was in the August House of the world's largest democracy. Worse was that our MPs laughed gleefully when the Speaker said that the delegation was in India to learn from us. Perhaps some order and sense should have prevailed over the Opposition members but Speaker Hamid Ansari's repeated appeal for decorum fell on deaf ears. The Congress seems happy to insult this country and its democratic ideals. Are we to be fools again in choosing such

Billion Dollars worth foreign projects getting blocked

Pending key bills stalling Modi Magic, FDI flows

By Nantoo Banerjee

The monsoon session of Parliament got washed away. And, with it, the prospect of getting such important executive policy moves through Land Bill and GST introduction got further clouded. The BJP-led NDA government is already about 15-month old, spending 25 per cent of its normal tenure before the next Lok Sabha election. If any group is really upset with the poor legislative function of the country, it is the foreign direct investors who banked big on India after BJP acquired the controlling party position in the 2014 Lok Sabha election.

Modi's Make-in-India call bolstered the foreign investment sentiment. By the end of 2014-15, the FDI inflow was up by over 61 per cent over the previous year to nearly \$35 billion. The amount was small compared to the requirement of at least \$100 billion per annum. In the current financial year, FDI in India could go up to anywhere between \$50 and \$90 billion. India is regarded as the best investment destination by global business leaders, including those from China which is witnessing economic slowdown and continuing stock price crash despite frequent government intervention.

India suddenly emerged as the most promising region for foreign direct investment (FDI). But, foreign investors have started rethinking. Brief-tenured executive ordinance is no substitute for law in a democratic country. The government promulgated ordinance for the second time to push a new land bill. Even this one is set to be infructuous soon. The paradox is the government, despite a massive public mandate, is held hostage in both the houses of Parliament. Can this India be trusted by serious long-term global investors?

Among those lined up large investments in India are Alibaba (China), Foxconn Technology Group (Taiwan), Google (US) in education, Google Fibre broadband services and Street view, Warburg Pincus (US), Gap Inc. (US), Dalian Wanda Group (China), Microsoft Corporation (US), Royal Dutch Shell PLC (UK and the Netherlands), Nando's (South Africa), BrightSKY (US), Carlyle Group (US), Bosch (Germany), Softbank (Japan) and Wal-Mart (US). A host of global pharmaceutical giants from the US, EU and Japan plan to invest in India. Defence manufacturers and insurance companies too have big plans for India which is expected to add at least one trillion dollar to its GDP in every five to six years. The International Monetary Fund sees India overtaking even the US and China in due course if it is able to maintain eight to 10 per cent growth rate in the next 15 years. Presently, India is the fastest growing large economy in the world.

The most painful is the performance of BJP or NDA in Lok Sabha, which is unable to manage the floor despite its combined strength of 337 in the 543-member House. BJP alone occupies 280 seats. The function of the most important lower House is blocked by a small shouting brigade of 25 to 30 Opposition members led by Congress demanding resignation of BJP chief ministers in Rajasthan and

rowdy members to represent this country and stoop below standards in front of the world? Can we in Meghalaya hold our three MPs accountable and call

them for a talk where their recent behaviour can be discussed?

Yours etc.,
Dominic S. Wankhar
Shillong-3

Madhya Pradesh and the external affairs minister in the union government on the basis of allegations posted in the social media such as twitter and facebook and unnatural deaths of witnesses in an allegedly rigged recruitment case called Vyapam in Madhya Pradesh which is under-investigation. Opposition MPs themselves have little admissible proof so far to justify those allegations.

It is rather inexplicable that despite its 337 MPs in Lok Sabha, the NDA is unable to move proceedings in the House. Both the NDA and Lok Sabha speaker would have appeared to have let down the people of the country, who gave overwhelming mandate to BJP and its allies to lead the country's economic development and provide political stability and national security. On a few occasions this year, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley spoke about passing key bills in Parliament through joint sessions. What is holding the NDA back to execute the threat? Without even clear mandate in all-important Lok Sabha, Congress and its allies have ruled the country for 15 years - first, under Narasimha Rao and, then, under Mrs. Sonia Gandhi-Dr. Manmohan Singh combine. The global financial crisis of 2009 followed by repeated financial scams unearthed by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) check-mated the Congress-led UPA government till it was shown the door by the public in 2014 Lok Sabha election.

The country's economy suffered badly for almost full five years between 2009 and 2014. No constitutional authority such as CAG or independent investigation by CBI or CVC is yet to put the Narendra Modi government or BJP in similar awkward situation. As of now, BJP controls majority Assembly numbers in eight states. In addition, BJP with political allies are in power in four other states and one union territory. Unfortunately, the Party is getting cornered daily by its opponents on issues - from foreign infiltration to flood - that seemed to have remained constant and endemic since the country's independence.

BJP's inability to take strong decisions and get them implemented despite the public mandate have been causing a concern among overseas investors who thought India could be a safe haven for at least the next 10 to 15 years, especially in the wake of China's seamy economic meltdown, poor EU growth rate and falling oil prices that threaten to bring down a host of economies around the world except probably India, one of the world's largest importers of fossil oil and energy.

A falling investor confidence in India poses a threat to BJP's ability to rule the country smoothly and fulfill its promises to the electorate. Industry associations in India, including an apex body such as the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), have already voiced concern over the continuous blockade of parliamentary proceedings. At a stake is India's development, its future. If the trend follows, no party in power would be able to ensure operation of the country's legislature. Parliamentary democracy in India has never been under such a threat. (IPA Service)

"The best way to learn to be an honest, responsible adult is to live with adults who act honestly and responsibly."

-- Claudia Jewett Jarrett

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 4 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2015

Parliament disruption

IT is a sad commentary on India's largest democracy that the basis on which this democracy is premised, which is a robust debate on the floor of parliament, is sought to be hijacked by an obdurate opposition. The Congress party which is leading the opposition pack seems determined to disrupt every parliament session for the next five years. This has thrown out of gear all important bills which need to be thrashed out before they are passed. The BJP-led, NDA Government had earlier pushed through a number of ordinances to be able to pursue the agenda that the Party had promised to the electorate, foremost among which are economic reforms. These reforms require a series of actions on the ground. The 'Make in India' slogan requires more than just lip service. It needs massive infrastructure creation which in turn will fuel employment generation. This slogan is yet to materialise.

Granted that there are sticking points in the NDA objectives particularly in the area of land acquisition for industrial growth but the reverse is also true. No infrastructure can come up unless land is available. There are arguments that several thousand hectares of unutilised land is already owned by big industrial houses and that Government should not be rapacious for more land. Even this can be thrashed out in the August House. But from what is visible the opposition seems hell bent on obstructing the NDA Government from pursuing its objectives even if those are for the larger good. The Government has meanwhile been painted into a corner with one of its leading lights, Sushma Swaraj, being accused of facilitating the movement of an alleged economic offender – Lalit Modi by hobnobbing with a foreign government. This singular thoughtless action has put the Modi Government on the back-foot. It is something he could have done without. That said, an opposition cannot interminably hold parliament or the Government captive without hurting its own prospects as well. The electorate is a good judge of politics and political shenanigans. They will give an appropriate response.

LOOKING BACK

January 16, 1988

Khasi independent candidates form alliance

Ten independent candidates from Khasi Hills have written to the Election Commission informing about their formation of an alliance called Khasi National Alliance of Meghalaya (KHNAM). The letter dated Jan 14 was signed among others by Mr. Kitdor Syiem, ex-Minister, Mr. M.N. Majaw ex-Minister, Mr.H.S. Sawian MDC, and Mr. S. Kalwing MDC. It appears that the move is directed towards securing protection from anti-defection law in the event of their success in election and lending support to any group in ministry making. Under the law an independent MLA cannot join any party.

One killed in fresh wave of GNLF violence

In a fresh wave of violence coinciding with GNLF chief Subhas Ghisingh's return here, the militant ambushed raiding police parties in four places in Kurseong division during the past 24 hours and the resultant skirmishes claimed one life. Official reports said tonight that the fatal casualty was on the GNLF side. Another five person including four policemen were injured.

In one of the incidents, police fired 44 rounds to repulse the ambushers who freely used pipe guns and bombs from all directions. Police recovered a huge quantity of ammunition from the spot immediately after the encounter.

Police also raided a GNLF

hideout at the seventh mile in Kalimpong and recovered eight pipe guns, two guns, one rifle, some gelignite stick and a huge quantity of ammunition. The source said 25 GNLF activists were arrested. The militants attacked a border security force camp at Rause Bazar in Kalimpong yesterday. They hurled bombs at the camp. The BSF men fired back. No casualty was reported.

The attack followed at the expiry of a 48-hour ultimatum given by the Gorkha Volunteers cell to the authorities asking them to shift the camp from the area.

An unseemly controversy in Tripura

The relic of a bygone age has triggered a controversy in the Tripura assembly election. The wife of former ruler ans candidate in the Agartala constituency Mrs. Bibhukumari Devi is still known as "Maharani".

But Chief Minister Mr. Nirpen Chakraborty has taken "serous exception" to the use of the title on the ground that it was "illegal".

But Mrs. Bibhukumari Devi has refused to knuckle under. She said, people, called her Maharani to denote their affection. "If people want to call me Maharani, how can I prevent it", she countered. Former Maharani of Tripura is locked in a four corner contest in the Agartala assembly constituency. Among her rivals is CPI-M Chief whip Mr.Manik Sarkar.

Meghalaya BJP - A Sinking Ship

By L G Laloo

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) entered Meghalaya in 1992. In 1997, after being personally convinced of its principles, ideology and commitments to eradicate poverty and corruption at all levels, I joined the party. It was a tough time for the BJP at that time to get the support of the tribal people in the North East particularly in Meghalaya because all existing parties like the Congress, regional and others tried hard to propagate that it is a communal, anti-Christian and anti-cow slaughtering party. But irrespective of the negative propaganda, the party under the leadership of die-hard leaders could fight back and in the general election of 1998 surprised the political pundits by winning three prestigious constituencies of Meghalaya. The outcome of the 1998 Assembly Elections and the chance to be part of a coalition Government in Meghalaya had opened the way for expansion of its base all over the State. The party was visible because of the continued efforts of leaders like Late HA Kharphuli, Late TH Rangad, Late Rosland lawphniaw, Dr W Kharshing, Me AL Hek, Ganesh Khongjoh, and many others including non-tribal friends and members who are always ready to make contact with the people at the grass roots level both in the urban and rural areas to enlighten them on the policies and ideologies of the Party, particularly in uprooting corruption.

Under these principles the party during the period from 1998 to 2003 had formed many Units and Mandals in the State and in 2003 Assembly election was able to set up more than 20 candidates, making a mark in increasing vote share in the entire State of Meghalaya.

It was after 2003 that due to the weakness of the State Party leadership that the party lost steam. Mandals and Units has disintegrated throughout the State and this backsliding has now raised a question as to whether the party, in spite of the claims of its Ad-hoc President Mr Khlur Sing Lyngdoh and General Secretary, Dipayan Chakraborty would still be able to contain the vote share it had gained in the

2003 Assembly Election only time will tell. As a senior member of the Party who has been with it for nearly 18 years I find that the answers are not far to seek.

With the exit of Mr A L Hek as State President of the Party in 2006 no viable successor had emerged to lead the party in the right direction. For the last 8 years the Party is being run by the President and General Secretary on adhoc basis violating all the rules and regulation of the party constitution. There is no attempt on the part of the ad-hoc President to revamp the party as most members are not acquainted with the transparency and accountability procedure. Proof of this is evident from the manner of discarding and side-lining of all senior members who insist on transparency and accountability while running the party. No auditing of party accounts has happened for many years and there are rumours that there are huge discrepancies in the regular and election expenses. The present Adhoc Body does not worry even if the central leaders visiting the State are not satisfied with their performance. Their action indicates that the Meghalaya Unit of the BJP does not belong to the public but is their personal and ancestral property.

This being the style of functioning of the present incumbents of the party, its future position in Meghalaya is doubtful and it can easily become a political Titanic in the region. Worse, the present adhoc body seems to play the fiddle for other parties both National and Regional for their own benefit.

Reverting to the point mentioned earlier it was observed that even the appointment of Khlur Singh Lyngdoh as ad-hoc President was invalid and illegal. Article XVII(4) of the Party Constitution clearly mentions that the President of the Party State Unit should be elected/appointed from among the members of not less than 3 terms as active members and of not less than 10 years as Primary members or getting the support of ¾ of the elected District Presidents in the state. This rule is also not honoured and implemented by

the outgoing President, H S Syiemlieh when he nominated Khlur Sing Lyngdoh, a man who defected from one political party to another and who had joined the party just 5-6 months when he was appointed Adhoc President. It is also clearly mentioned in the rules that an Adhoc President can hold office for a period of six months after which a regular president should be elected failing which another adhoc arrangement can be made by the National President. Unfortunately all the provisions enshrined in the Party Constitution have been violated by the State Unit and the Central Unit. The reason for non regularization of the post of the regular President of the Party in Meghalaya in spite of the report made by the present Adhoc General Secretary, who is all in one (GS, spokesperson, adviser, organiser etc) that they have organized 31 mandals in the State and enrolled quite a number of members proved to be a false claim just to impress and mislead the Central Leaders.

This point was proven during the visit of Amit Shah, the National President of the Party on April 22, 2015. Most of the senior members of the party who have been sidetracked by the present adhoc body in spite of the assurance given by Mr Mazumdar i/c Meghalaya were not invited to meet Amit Shah but thanks to the generosity of Ram Madhav, Secretary of Amit Shah they were able to meet him and conveyed to him the state of affairs of the Party in Meghalaya. To those who have eyes to see they should have seen what actually happened during the visit of the National President of the BJP on that day. Everything was only a ploy to mislead the national leaders and save their own skin. We have noted in the past that whenever the National President visited non BJP states, massive rallies are organized by the State Unit and public interaction is held. But in Meghalaya during Amit Shah's visit no public meeting was organized or even attempted, on the plea that a Bandh was called by the HNLC and be-

cause of the protest called by the TUR (NGO). Had the public meeting/rally been organized as usually done in the past, the strength of the party workers and the party members would have been manifested before his eyes and he would be satisfied that the 40,000 members and the 31 Mandals as claimed are factual. But by holding a meeting in Hotel Polo Towers, the party missed the bus and failed to obtain the required result only because of the narrow mindset of the Adhoc State Party Leaders who synchronised the programme of the day by fooling the National President and inviting only the NGOs, religious leaders and minority leaders and that in the conference hall of the Hotel after 5 p.m.

The people of Shillong expected the national leaders of the BJP particularly the Party President to address the party workers and members of the general public on the stand of the party on its being termed as a communal party, anti-Christian and anti-cow slaughter. But from the arrangements made by the State Unit it seemed like a desperate attempt to put up a show.

Today the people of Meghalaya are watching with keen interest whether BJP of 1992-2006 could replicate party activities in combating corruption of the present Congress-led Government in the State. The general public are definitely pinning their hopes and expectations that BJP under the leadership of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister is the only party that can bring good governance and eradicate corruption in Meghalaya. But doubts arise whether the BJP can accomplish anything under the present state leadership.

The senior and old members together with all the party workers of the BJP in Meghalaya are elated to know that Mr Nalin Kohli had been recently designated as the in-charge of Meghalaya BJP Unit. We hope that under his dynamic and fair leadership the State party cadres are restructured with dynamic people having no personal vested interests so that the cause and success of the Party is assured in the forthcoming elections and can withstand the future onslaught.

(The writer is senior Member, BJP Meghalaya.)

TO THE EDITOR

Futile exercise

Editor,
So there I am having my coffee and reading the newspaper when I see my name mentioned by Micheal N Syiem saying he wanted to respond to my comments as well as another person's. I am game for a debate, but the debate has to have some sort of grounds. And when one debates, in my opinion, you go at it and then at the end of the day you sit back analyze your point, change if you are convinced by the other's points. But one holds no grudges and no personal animosity. If Micheal Syiem ever wants to really thrash it out with somebody who will not hold a grudge he is more than welcome to come and visit me. However be it known that I don't hold back. Life is a learning experience and debate is the ultimate for me.

That being said, in his article, Micheal Syiem puts this sentence below a bunch of quotes he has gathered, "Coincidentally as per their own admission, James Perry is married to a Khasi lady and Yona M Nonglang is married to a non-Khasi gentleman," thereby insinuating that we may be of the same opinion as the people whose quotes he has gathered. Actually, for any intellectual reader, it means a 50/50 since one is married to a Khasi lady,

another to a non-Khasi man. Not much of a pool for good statistics but does not really give much on what Micheal Syiem's reaction to our comments are. I have never denigrated the Khasi male nor said he is just a breeding bull. In fact, I respect the Khasi male in this society; many are loving care givers, far from the macho males of many other societies and are fairly open to their feminine side without being scared to show it. I just wrote a letter about equality, which also should translate to equality in marriage and gender, but that was not specifically my topic.

One thing that I find in Micheal Syiem's letters or articles, is the constant topic of: Compulsory Registration of Marriage and Equitable Distribution of Ancestral and Self Acquired Property which are important topics to be discussed. But what does that have to do with a response to my comments or Yona M. Nonglang's comments. I wrote a letter expressing my opinion, and did my best to be neutral. But honestly, I have spent much time interacting with people from both sides of the spectrum in Khasi society, those males and females who appreciate their Matrilineal System and those that don't. The fact is problems abound in almost every society. So does one seek for solutions by changing the

system that is inherently built in or change the problems within the system? I personally don't see any conclusion to Micheal Syiem's article, nor any premise, except to promote once again the Maitshaphrang Movement. So why not discuss the Maitshaphrang movement, not what we have given our opinions about, and that by insinuating something that we never did say.

Yours etc.,
James Perry

Food for thought!

Editor,
The Shillong Times of August 10, 2015, carried two interesting write-ups one, a letter to the editor captioned, "VIPs and equality in society," by James M Perry; the other an article titled, "Comparison Done Wrong" by Oliver Lyngdoh. Perry's letter makes interesting reading because it refers to what is visible in our society – a society that gives undue importance to status and position and the who's who rather than seeing one another as human beings first. It is now common practise to show more respect to people who are affluent and influential. We are embarrassed and ashamed of our poorer acquaintances. Sadly, this is the example we

are setting for our young minds. And young minds will follow what adults act out. A sad state of affairs indeed!

Similarly what is also detrimental to our well being was highlighted by Oliver Lyngdoh. As parents, we knowingly or unknowingly compare our children to others or one child with the other. This does not only discourage the child but also creates low self esteem in him/her and jeopardises confidence as well. As one individual is different from another it is not proper to measure and weigh the capability of one by the achievements of the other. Instead as adults we must appreciate the worth of the child and be sensitive to identify the other potentials that the child may have and work towards bringing out the hidden potentials of the child.

Both writers had serious and good intentions when they spelled out their thoughts. As adults we must be mindful of what we say and do as our young minds are receptive to what they see and hear. As much as it is important to allow our children to grow freely without pressurizing them into doing anything that they don't have a liking for it is equally important to inculcate good habits and nurture clean and conscientious minds.

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Viaemail

Legacy of injustice

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

'Injustice Gods Among Us' is a PC game developed by Nether Realm Studio based on fictional universe of the DC comics publishing house that produced superheroes such as superman, batman and wonder woman. The plot of this fighting game depicts how people struggle to survive in the realm of injustice.

There are two primary options to choose from: left or right, good or bad, light or dark, right or wrong, love or hate, etc. If there is a third, it can be called adjustment. Injustice of any nature and magnitude attempts to capture everyone under its domain. From professionals to religious, to sport's persons to families, even kids, all are affected and exposed deliberately or unconsciously in the sphere of their activity. This is not merely human erratic nature but the realm of injustice is ruled by the master of unrighteousness who deliberately attempts to make everyone harbour and breed injustice in the guise of success and self-justification. Through adjustment he controls the transpiration process in everyone. Even those who fight against injustice had in some way or the other applied its techniques and tactics to meet their objectives. In my simple understanding, injustice implies acting against one's own conscience despite knowing that what one is about to do is wrong. A Khasi gentleman who retired 15 or 20 years ago once told me how he regretted because he did not employ his son in the department while he was in position to do so. Injustice corrupts discipline and people die young, a destiny they reap from the habit they sowed which defines their character, thereby leaving many Khasi families single-parents. Perhaps this is the negative aspect we inherited which disqualifies us from having a regiment of our own. Had we been disciplined people, we could have been the world's number one.

I completely agree with the article by Fabian Lyngdoh that truth can be sweet or bitter and the best option to handover truth is to start practicing now. But we have totally forgotten our origin and how a child is christened (jer) in the past. The three arrows for a male child symbolize the expected roles for a Khasi male. These are (1) to defend and protect his own household and clan (2) to protect his society or land and (3) to defend and keep his culture and ethics without fear. But looking at the trend in the midst of vast religious sentiments around us, it seems as if crediting God for whatever good or bad is justified too. A small lie also amounts to injustice because when a person lies he saves himself at the expense of others.

The first commandment to love thy God is easy to practice, but the second, to love thy neighbor or a fellow human being as 'thyself' will open a can full of worms. But the greatest injustice happens when children are abandoned by their own biological parents who for the sake of their reputation and selfish desires deliberately forget their identity and responsibility. In most cases it is the father who distances himself and even shies away from claiming a child as his own.

In a religious country such as ours where people hate the devil but cannot delete his virus of injustice implanted in us pointing fingers at politicians is easy. It is assuming that injustice is the politicians' way of life because of their various acts of omission

and commission. But religious leaders of any faith too are not free from the effect of this virus. There are times when they use their position to influence someone here and there secretly to suit someone close to their heart. I like the attitude of one church leader who refused the suggestion from his family to help lobby for a vacancy that his nephew had applied for by saying 'this is not the purpose of God for his position'. As a leader the church's duty is to mend the broken hearted, find the lost and restore them back. If there is someone among the flock who deserves attention the church should give all assistance to that person.

The Bible describes that pure and undefiled religion is to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction rather than build orphanages or children's home and apply for sponsorship. In a joint family such as ours, the set up is ideal for a child to be brought up as part of the family. Understanding its importance to declassify children from being tagged as orphans, the UNCRC (United Nation Convention on the Rights of a Child) has underlined in its preamble that 'biological birth place is the best place for the child to grow'. This justifies the feeling that he/she belongs to that environment even when the parent has gone. But removing a child from that environment and uniting him/her with other children of similar condition in a new set-up is a form of classification (if not racial) to categorize them from other children.

When we initiated ICPS (Integrated Child Protection Schemes) in March 2010 when WMS Pariat as Chief Secretary and Dr Mukul Sangma as new and first time CM of the state, the idea was to do some justice to under-privileged children and those in conflict with law but not to encourage opening up of shelter homes everywhere. ICPS is a mission to reduce the number of abandoned children and prevent those who are vulnerable, and through ICPS intervention such children and care-givers can sustain at minimum support of not less than Rs 700 a month per child. Shelter homes are in fact short-stays equipped with counseling facilities to help a child reunited with their biological roots. Injustice is being perpetrated when these objectives are not followed and achieved.

A dangerous form of injustice is where people around the world are being abused, brutalized and utilized for settling of political scores. Just politicians of our state are undermined by the corruptible mindset of the electorate. Those who survive are the ones who can satisfy the desire of their supporters from their normal salaries even while hiding their assets in the custody of their near and dear ones who are either housewives or are jobless. In this situation, if income tax or wealth tax is exempted it also amounts to injustice but on the contrary, if 50% tax is charged from jobless crore-patis it is still justified.

Therefore, when injustice abounds, it is also imperative for our judicial system to be more aggressive and to display superhero type of actions without bias or prejudice where the highest level of neutrality is paramount. Here, the preeminent quality of a human being is the ability to choose to decide which way to proceed. But if a stone is as good as the 'syiem' in Khasi polity then I have to disagree with Soso Tham because a stone is as good as a dead man without sensitivity. So how can he adjudicate or dispense justice?

“That’s the great thing about being in the third grade. If you’ve got one polysyllabic adjective, everyone thinks you’re a genius.”

--- John Green

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, FRIDAY, AUGUST 14, 2015

Muivah’s stand

THUINGALENG Muivah, General Secretary of the NSCN(IM) has asked Nagas to understand the problems of India and respect the rights of neighbouring states. The details of the framework accord between the NSCN(IM) and the Centre are still awaited. Muivah has come to Nagaland for the first time after signing the agreement with the Centre earlier this month. He clarified that all Naga groups would be stakeholders in the accord and consulted before the final deal is concluded. He insisted that all solutions to the six-decade-old Naga political crisis would be based on shared sovereignty. He added that Nagas should also understand New Delhi’s compulsions in arriving at a solution acceptable to all. He indicated that his organization was anxious to avoid confrontation with Nagaland’s neighbours without naming Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

The governments of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur had welcomed the announcement of the framework agreement. But they had reservations about the NSCN(IM)’s agenda of integration of Naga inhabited areas under one administrative unit. These areas include four hill districts of Manipur, three of Arunachal Pradesh and large swathes of Assam bordering Manipur. The governments of the three states were reportedly unhappy about not being consulted by the Centre before the signing of the accord. Muivah’s statements may now allay their misgivings to some extent. However, Muivah has said nothing about the intransigence of the NSCN(Khaplang) and it is not clear how the accord will finally go down with it.

LOOKING BACK

January 16, 1988

CRPF jawan killed by TNV Guerillas

Armed Tribal National Volunteer (TNV) guerrillas sprayed bullets on a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) patrol, killing a jawan at Rajkumar Para under Sabroom police station in South Tripura, last night.

Police said the guerrillas, who had been campaigning in the area for the past ten days flashed powerful lights that took the jawans completely by surprise.

the insurgent, numbering ten and led by one Tikendra Debbarma, escaped. It was not immediately known whether any guerrilla was killed in the shootout.

Senior CRPF officials have rushed to the spot with reinforcements to launch combing operations.

Yesterday’s killings raised the total number of people, mostly non-tribals killed by the TNV.

Veteran journalist dead

Veteran journalist of Shillong Mr. Ranjit Naug died at his Umpling residence on January 15 after a sudden cardiac arrest. He was 80.

Mr. Naug who was associated with a large number of regional and national newspapers during his long journalistic career. He was the founder editor of the now defunct Frontier Times of Shillong. He was also the editor of North East Mirror which ran briefly as a daily newspaper in Shillong in the mid 70’s. He was the editor-proprietor of the weekly Shillong Herald.

He served the Tribune, Dainik Basumati and Desh Sevak as their Shillong correspondent. In the late 50’s he was associated for some time with the Shillong Times.

A man of extra ordinary drive and initiative, Mr. Naug was also associated

with a number of organizations. He was connected with the Meghalaya Cooperative Apex Bank Ltd., Meghalaya Cooperative Union, Laitumkhrah Cooperative Society, Meghalaya Editors’ & Publishers’ Association. He leaves behind a widow and a daughter.

Reconstituted Haryana ministry sworn in

A reconstituted Ministry assumed office in Haryana today. Seventeen Ministers were administered the oath of office as secrecy by State Governor Mr. S. M.H. Burney at Raj Bhavan here this afternoon.

The reconstitution of the Ministry followed acceptance of the resignations of all the 22 ministers in the previous Ministry by the Governor on the recommendations of Chief Minister Mr. Devi Lal yesterday.

Non-Cong-ICMs to meet PM on Jan, 30

Seven non-Congress (I) Chief Ministers will meet Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at New Delhi on January 30 to discuss alternative terms of reference for the ninth Finance Commission.

West Bengal Finance Minister Mr. Ashim Dasgupta told newsmen here today that a telephonic message from the Prime Minister’s secretariat was received by the Chief Minister’s office here yesterday. A written message in this regard was expected in a day or two.

Mr. Dasgupta said alternative terms of reference for the ninth Finance Commission, worked out by a working group comprising the representatives of the respective States was approved by the non-Congress (I) Chief Ministers at their Bangalore conference held on January 11.

Congress Party’s disruptive politics

By Patricia Mukhim

In a parliamentary democracy where one or other political party or, a coalition of parties is elected to form a government, parliament is the only place where the government can be held accountable for its acts of omission and commission. Parliament is where government bills and policies are debated and critiqued. Because the fine points of each are discussed, the public also get to know their implications so if the government’s policies are anti-people, then parliament can vote against those bills. It’s a different issue, though that since the government usually has a majority in the Lok Sabha, the different bills it presents are also passed or pushed through by brute majority. Political parties issue whips to their members to vote in a certain way, hence there is very little scope for conscience voting.

In India where we have an upper house (Rajya Sabha) and if the number of representatives of the ruling party (as in the present case where BJP does not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha), fall short of a majority, several bills can be scuttled by an obstreperous and malicious opposition. Unless a bill is passed by both houses of parliament it cannot become an act. Vociferous disruptions to the smooth conduct of parliament started during the UPA -1&2 regimes where the BJP, that is now blaming the Congress for murdering democracy by creating a logjam in parliament, actually did the same during its term in the opposition.

The Congress party is now paying back the BJP in its own coin, but at what cost? People have elected their MPs to represent their grievances, not to play disruptive politics. Meghalaya has elected three MPs of which two are Congress members. This state suffers from several development lacunae. The two MPs are expected to draw the attention of Parliament to the special needs of Meghalaya. In fact this is the time when they could actually make their voices heard since they are among the few opposition members. But the Congress party has never allowed its MPs to think for themselves. Sonia Gandhi dictates and they listen meekly. She tells them to jump; they ask, ‘how high.’ This implicit obedience that

Sonia Gandhi demands from Congressmen and women has turned the Party into a personal fiefdom of the Nehru-Gandhi family. Today Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi, who is at best inconsistent, and worse, displays facets of infantilism, are clenching their fists to protest the NDA government’s non-compliance to their demand to drop External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj from the cabinet on the Lalit Modi case; fire Rajasthan CM Vasundhara Rajde also for Ligatige and Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan for the Vyapam scam. The Congress says they dropped A Raja and Shashi Tharoor from the ministry; one for the telecom spectrum scam and the other for the IPL imbroglio. But in both cases there was prima facie evidence of dubious monetary transactions. The jury is still out on the above-named three BJP personalities!

In the case of Sushma Swaraj there is no evidence that she or her family gained anything from Lalit Modi. Swaraj should, of course, have been more circumspect and weighed her own actions before helping an Indian fugitive wanted by the Enforcement Directorate for financial improprieties. How a politically savvy and mature politician could slip on this issue is difficult to fathom but the fact remains that she has embarrassed the Modi Government. People will judge the Government accordingly. The Congress does not need to score political points by demanding Swaraj’s resignation. This is petty politics that a party desperate for attention is indulging in.

The majority of Indians are no card carrying members of any political party. They vote on the basis of a political party’s manifesto and after judging its past performance. In most tribal states of the North East people vote on the basis of religion, community personality and not so much on issues. Vincent Pala was largely supported by the Catholic Church which has wide outreach. His rival, PBM Basiaiwmoit of the HSPDP enjoyed the confidence of the Protestant Churches. So, religious polarization in the last parliamentary election in Meghalaya was complete even though the campaign was a ‘whispering’ one.

The sad saga of

Meghalaya is that the State too is ruled by the Congress dispensation which has to toe the party line. Those who watch the daily shenanigans of the Congress party leadership in Delhi are beginning to wonder if this is the party birthed by Allan Octavian Hume a British statesman with empathy for Indians. Hume was a rare civil servant who criticized the then British Government for its injudicious acts in India. He had to suffer much on this account and was even demoted. But Hume stuck to his guns. After retiring from the civil service in 1882, he wrote an open letter to the graduates of Calcutta University in 1883 urging them to form their own national political movement. This led in 1885 to the first session of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay. In 1887 writing to the Public Commission of India, Hume stated something that was unexpected from a British civil servant. He said, “I look upon myself as a native of India.” Hume worked in tandem with many independent Indian thinkers who also had nationalist ideas. This led to the idea of creating the Indian National Congress. Think of the legacy of this Party and see where it has reached today. Perhaps it is also a measure of our own decrepit nature and lack of moral and intellectual depth that even polished statesmen and former diplomats continue to hang on to Sonia Gandhi’s apron strings. It’s actually pathetic. There is no internal party democracy, no discussions or deliberations on the way forward. Everyone just hangs on to Sonia’s every word! And yet the same Congress camp followers call Modi a despot. I wonder who the greater despot is!

Parliamentary democracy is a fragile instrument, and can be disrupted or destroyed if the MPs violate its rules. The disruptive activities of the Congress Party in the recent session had embarrassed even the likes of Mulayam Singh Yadav who publicly expressed that things have gone too far. Parliament is today reduced to an impotent institution incapable of executing business. When the Speaker suspended some Con-

gress MPs for unruly behavior, the Party created uproar outside Parliament. Is this what MPs, (including Sonia Gandhi) are paid to do? Is protest outside parliament a new form of political gamesmanship for television eyeballs? If so, I consider this a poor strategy which the Congress Party will pay heavily for in 2019, unless of course they change leadership and tack.

The monsoon session of Parliament ended on August 13 and will be remembered as the least productive of the four sessions under the NDA government. But look at the amount of taxpayers’ money that is washed down the drain! According to official estimates, Rs 260 crore is spent per session for running both Houses at Rs 2.50 lakh per minute for six hours a day. But that is not the only loss. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Constitutional Amendment Bill needs to be passed or the exchequer will suffer grave financial loss. Is this what the Congress wants for the country? That if the Congress is not ruling the country then no other Party will be allowed to do so?

In an article titled, ‘Can our MPs do anything other than humiliate India?’ Minhaz Merchant says the Indian Parliament works only 80 days a year spread over three sessions, budget, monsoon and winter whereas the US Senate sits for an average of 180 days a year. The US House of Representatives is in session for 126 days annually while Britain’s House of Commons meets for an average 130 days a year. France’s National Assembly sits for 149 days annually. In no other country has Parliament been disrupted for an entire session.

Last but not least, the visiting MPs from Bhutan, a brand new democracy, came to see Indian democracy in action. What they saw was a spectacle of political delinquency where the Speaker’s repeated pleas to the MPs to be respectful for the visiting dignitaries not only fell on deaf ears but was ridiculed. What a despicable low we have fallen to as a country! We should thank the Congress for painting us as a nation of bullies and scallywags which is exactly what Winston Churchill had predicted we would be! What an inglorious self-fulfilling prophecy!

TO THE EDITOR

Building bye-laws

Editor,

The recent tussle between the MUDA and the District Council on the building bye-laws, which has been going on for the past few weeks, is an eye opener to all of us residing in this city. There is need for a final solution to solve this issue. We all agree that there is need to have an authority, to look into the construction going on in this city and adjacent zones. However, several points have to be taken into consideration. Most of the areas, come under the Sixth Schedule, hence the bone of contention arises between the MUDA and the District Council as to who is authorized to issue permissions for such constructions. The question that arises is why hasn’t the District Council come with its own bye laws for construction? The whole North Eastern region comes under the same seismic zone 5. If Guwahati and other main North Eastern cities can come up with perfect solutions to deal with building constructions, why not us, in Meghalaya?, in fact the State of Meghalaya, consisting of rocky topography provides a much stronger foundation for buildings compared to plain areas of Guwahati city. The recent tussle be-

tween the MUDA and District Council could have been resolved for the benefit of the people. People have lost faith on the MUDA for good reasons. It’s excessively high cost for building permission and labour cess, which for an ordinary person is a very huge amount to spend on just getting a building permission. It’s because the people have lost trust on this Department that these issues arise. Besides the areas come under the Sixth Schedule and are under the jurisdiction of the District Council so why does not the KHADC come up with its own building bye laws and issue building permissions which are reasonable in costs and people friendly. The KHADC , should start its own technical department that is specialized to deal with this subject on a scientific basis, and fix building permission rates which are affordable for all sections of the society keeping in mind, that the funds collected from such building permission fees are also adequate to help them maintain the technical section of the department.

Yours etc.,
C Lyngdoh & P Lyngdoh,
Shillong-2

State of the BJP

Editor,

The article by L G Laloo on the state of affairs within

the state BJP party has laid bare the facts which have resulted in the gradual decline of the party. As a keen political and social observer I am aware that there are a sizable number of charismatic, energetic and active people who wanted to join the Party. But with the ‘All in One’ General Secretary who doesn’t see the reality and hardly steps out of the city to feel the pulse of the people, those enthusiasts have become disillusioned. Having said that, the people in the Meghalaya BJP are egoistic and status conscious and drunk with false pride. They have no inkling about a strategy for building the tempo leading up to the 2018 assembly elections. And they still out up a brave face! Let us hope that those in Delhi are not fed with false hopes and propaganda and that Nalin Kohli will come to grips with the ground reality here. Whether the Congress will be reinstated or whether the BJP is a Party to reckon with, only time will tell.

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

Excellent book launch programme!

Editor,

I first read Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih’s ‘Time’s Barter’ in a bookshop in Mawkhar last month. I was enthralled by the concision, depth and multiple interpretations that the poems provoked in me. Nongkynrih seems to be writing in every genre of literature- Drama, the Short Story, Satire, Free Verse...and now Haiku and Senryu in English. But he’s always up there, and, stylistically and thematically, all his books (be they in Khasi or English) have been top notch! One wonders, what specifically is his forte, for he seems to be good at everything. August 8 last at St. Anthony’s College, the day of the release of his book, ‘Time’s Barter,’ was to my mind, one of the most entertaining book launches I’ve ever been to. This, the audience of over a hundred, owed it to each of the speakers, Gavett Rumnong, Michael Scharf, R.G Lyngdoh, and the poet himself) for their deep insight and knack for humour. It is also worth mentioning that Sudeep Sen, the eminent Indian poet, in an online magazine rated ‘Time’s Barter’ as his top eleven books of poetry this year. To quote him, “Nongkynrih injects new meaning and texture, adding an Indian fabric” to the form.

Yours etc.,
Willie Gordon Suting,
Shillong 1

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

IS VARUN THE CONGRESS MOLE IN BJP?

Varun Gandhi, who has dared the basic thinking of the RSS and the Narendra Modi government on the issue of death penalty soon after the Yakub Memon hanging, has become suspect in the eyes of the BJP. There is a lurking suspicion within a section of the BJP that Varun is not trustworthy and that he may be passing on information to the Congress via Priyanka. Varun is said to be on a 24x7 vigil and his phones are also tapped. If the BJP sources are to be believed, then he called up Priyanka some time ago and soon after that started the Lalit Modi episode. The BJP leaders even believe that Varun may join the Congress soon after Sonia Gandhi hands over power to Rahul and Priyanka. Meanwhile, the Congress may throw a surprise by projecting Varun as the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh in 2016.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AJIT DOVAL

Ajit Doval is graduating to the status his predecessor in the previous BJP government,

Brajesh Mishra, enjoyed. Doval is the Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s man of action. Very recently, it was on the initiative of Doval that the government could sign the Naga peace accord. It was a secret shared only between the PM and Doval. It is said that besides the three Congress chief ministers of Northeastern states, even the home minister of the country Rajnath Singh, the number two in the government hierarchy, and his officials, which is the nodal ministry, were not consulted. Doval made several pre-accord visits to NE states and was stationed there before the accord was signed. It was Doval on whom Modi depended even in the aftermath of the Yakub Memon hanging. PM sent Doval to Mumbai to ensure that there was no adverse impact of the burial in the presence of thousands of mourners. Then it is Doval who has drawn the framework of the Pakistan and Kashmir policy.

MAMATA, THE QUEEN OF ROLE PLAY

The maverick chief minister of West Bengal is an excellent actress, with a multi faceted personality. She has one face for the Muslims of West Bengal and the other saffron face for the Hindus of the country. And she has another for the opposition driven anti establishment man, and another for Narendra Modi and his government. Her multi faceted personality was very much on display this week when her MPs joined the Congress-led opposition against suspension of the 25 Congress MPs by the Lok Sabha Speaker. But in actual terms she is saffron. If you happen to visit the TMC office in Parliament that has been allotted to them very recently, one can feel the saffron pinch. A huge painting of multiple flowers adorns the room. The painting has been gifted to Mamata by one of her Rajya Sabha MPs and the famous artist Jogen Choudhury. But what is surprising is that the middle flower around which the other flowers are painted appears to be a lotus and the basic colour that dominates the painting is saffron. Eyebrows were raised when on Tuesday her MPs decided to join Sonia Gandhi in her decision to boycott Parliament to protest against the decision of the Speaker Sumitra Mahajan to expel 25 Congress MPs. She may have stood by the opposition but she managed to kill two birds with one arrow. She was successful in pushing out the Left from this show of Opposition unity. The Left though kept protesting inside the house, but did not join the Congress leadership in their walkout. Though realising this mis-

take, the Left was there on the second day along with the rest of the opposition. Earlier, Mamata surprised everyone again as her MPs came to the rescue of WBCPC chief Adhir Chouhury. A bitter critic of Mamata, he was expelled for thrusting his placard on her face on her table and guess who came to Adhir who is fighting a direct fight with the West Bengal CM? It was Saugata Roy, who is well versed in the Constitution and the parliamentary acts. But on the other hand she has kept her channels with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi open.

NITISH, RAHUL COME TOGETHER FOR BIHAR

The Congress is divided over going with Lalu Prasad Yadav. While Rahul is reluctant to go with Lalu, there are leaders who think that unless the opposition is united in Bihar, the BJP is sure to sail through. Bihar is a prestigious turf for both Modi as well as Nitish. Nitish has already started his campaign. After the parliamentary session, he will be joined by Rahul Gandhi. Nitish and Rahul are likely to campaign together all over Bihar.

BATTLE ROYALE FOR UTTAR PRADESH

After Bihar, Rahul Gandhi is likely to focus attention on Uttar Pradesh, where the battle royale will be fought first in 2016 followed by 2019. One thing is sure: the Congress will go alone in the state and will not strike any alliance with either Mulayam Singh Yadav or Behenji Mayawati. The thinking in the Congress is that there is tremendous anti incumbency against the Samajwadi Party rule and leadership. And Mayawati is a tricky fellow traveller. Not trustworthy to tie up with. Rahul feels that they should go alone and to go alone, they have to prepare the ground too. The Congress leadership has already sounded a search for a UP PCC chief. The top leadership is of the view that in UP, the party should be led by either an upper caste Brahmin or Thakur or a Muslim. While the Rajputs were aligned with the BJP because of Rajnath Singh, but the way he is being treated by the BJP top boss, they have started looking for other options. Brahmins, too, are unhappy with the BJP for not giving fair deal to either Kesrinath Tripathi or Kalraj Mishra or MM Joshi. Thus even the Brahmins are looking for another house. The Muslims will only support the party that can defeat the BJP. Among those that are on the Congress list are Jitin Prasad a Brahmin, Sanjay Singh a Rajput and Imran Kidwai, a Muslim.

WHO KILLED MAHARASHTRA CONGRESS?

Ashok Chavan, the PCC chief of Maharashtra and his predecessor Manick Rao Thakre have been summoned by the central high command for questioning. One CWC member, Vilas Muttamvyar, the MLA from Gondia, met Rahul Gandhi last week, to complain against Ashok Chavan and Manick Rao. There are allegations against both Chavan and Thakre of financial irregularities and of hobnobbing with the BJP. Despite the fact that the central high command was so pissed with that they changed him and handed over the charge to Ashok Chavan as he was facing charges of corruption and involved in underhand dealings with the BJP and other parties during assembly and Lok Sabha polls and for selling off tickets to weaker candidates and even to immigrants from other parties. Pressure had mounted from within the state leaders demanding a change. But even when Ashok Chavan replaced Thakre, there has been no change in the working of the PCC. Both Chavan and Thakre together are doing deals with the BJP. The duo have practically liquidated the Congress in Maharashtra. (IPA)

"Facing a mirror you see merely your own countenance; facing your child you finally understand how everyone else has seen you."

--- Daniel Raeburn

The Shillong Times

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Meghalaya's tryst with freedom

THERE was a spirit of celebration in the air on August 15, this year. It's almost as if we were set free from some kind of self-imposed bondage. Self-imposed because the bandh calling organisation, namely the HNLC, hardly has any presence and does not even have the capacity to deliver a hard copy of their diktat to media houses. Hence they took the route of cyber space where they could send an email sitting somewhere in Bangladesh (as claimed by the Police) and media houses would oblige and publish their bandh call and their tiresome rants against the Indian state. This year, thanks to the Meghalaya High Court, the media had to refrain from publishing any such call for a bandh from any group/militant outfit. At first look this directive from the Court to media houses looks like an infringement on Article 19 (1)(a), the Right to Freedom of Expression. But the question arises as to whether anti-national elements also enjoy similar rights. Can they use a Constitutional Right to curb the fundamental rights of the citizen to free movement and the right to pursue their livelihoods? After all not all citizens are salaried persons who enjoy a paid holiday on national holidays. When a bandh is called on such days, daily labourers are the most affected.

This being the first time that the Khasi & Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya enjoyed a bandh-free Independence day, many were still unsure of how to claim their freedom. It is like using a limb that has been under plaster for a long time and taking tentative steps, not knowing if it will actually support our movement. But a beginning has been made. Thousands of citizens moved around with a sense of liberation and gaiety. Downtown Shillong where the fun and frolic happened was agog with revellers. Of course this event at Khyndailad was initiated three years ago by the then Deputy Commissioner, Sanjay Goyal. This good initiative has continued and will continue in the years to come. August 15, 2015 is a red letter day for Meghalaya and will be remembered as the day when citizens actually had their tryst with freedom after over two decades of bondage.

LOOKING BACK

January 17, 1988

Rajasthan CM resigns

Rajasthan Chief Minister Mr. Harideo Joshi today bowed out of the office submitting his resignation to acting Governor Mr. J.S. Verma immediately on return from Delhi. His successor has been chosen by the Congress (I) legislative party on Wednesday.

Mr. Joshi assumed the leadership of the Government in his second term on March 9 1985 drove straight to the Raj Bhawan from the Sangner airport to submit his resignation. Talking to the news-men later at his official residence, Mr. Joshi said that he had been asked by the governor to continue in office till an alternative arrangement was made. Mr. Joshi ended the three-day high voltage drama of the change in leadership in the state.

Mr. Joshi parried persistent queries by news-men. He merely said his resignation was 'voluntary' and that he had not been asked by anybody to do so. "My decision to resign was purely personal and voluntary and nobody asked me to resign", he asserted.

Asked about his future plans, he said he would continue to work for the party as he had doing all these years. Mr. Joshi refused to be drawn into any controversy over the way in which his thirty four-month-old reign was brought to an end under dramatic

circumstances. Mr. Joshi's decision to quit after 34 months of Chief Minister ship came in the wake of reported displeasure of the party high command over his government's management of drought in the state and his style of functioning.

CPI Activist among 8 killed in Punjab

Chandigarh, Jan 18 terrorists killed eight people and one extremist escaped from police custody while the security forces arrested two terrorists during the past 24 hours in Punjab.

An official spokesman said terrorists came to a gurdwara in Jandsahib village in faridkot district last night and shot dead guruwara president Hari Singh. The assailants escaped. In another incident late last night in the same district, some terrorist gunned down one Jit Singh in Ahel village under Sadio police station. Terrorists shot dead Communist Party worker Hajara Ram at Nurpur Jattan village in Hoshiarpur district last night. The CPI worker owned a meat shop at Kot Fatuhi village in the district, a report from Jalandhar said.

In another incident in Hoshiarpur district, one cooperative bank employee Sohan Singh was gunned down by terrorist while he was returning to his home in village Binjo.

U Kiang Nangbah: Story of Tribal Democracy at Work

By H H Mohrmen

The Jaintia rebellion which started in 1862 saw the rise of U Kiang Nangbah a commoner from a humble beginning to a freedom fighter who led his people against the mighty British Empire. From both historical evidence and local oral narratives we learned that the cause of the uprising was due to the blunders made by the British officers stationed in Jowai; the sub-divisional headquarters then. U Kiang a young man rose to the occasion and fought valiantly against the mighty British Empire. The failure of the British to estimate the strength and more importantly the resolve and unity of the people in the face of adversity led to the prolonged fight against a rebellion of an unorganized group of this small Kingdom.

Jaintia Kingdom of the Pnar was traditionally divided into twelve elekas and almost all elekas had their own territories and interests and in most cases the elekas under the leadership of the Dalois were in conflict with each other. The defeat of the Jaintia King by the British was also a challenging occasion and at that point of time the people under the Kingdom including Dalois in the elekas were literally left leaderless and rudderless.

It was because of this internal conflict amongst the Dalois that the British got the wrong idea about the Jaintia Kingdom. They also failed to anticipate that an upheaval of a small tribal group could create so much trouble for the government of the empire where the Sun never sets. This is obvious from the correspondence between the officers. Captain BWD Murton Deputy Commissioner of the Cossayah and Jynteah Hills, in his letter to Major J.C. Houghton, officiating Agent of Governor General, North East frontier in letter No. 278, dated, Cherapoonjee, the 28th August 1862 in which he stated "that the rebels have no general grievance, such as would in any way justify or account for rebellion of some dozens of inhabitants of which in ordinary circumstances had nothing in

common, but were also at feud with each other."

In the oral tradition we also have stories like the "Thmi thad-khiar" or the battle which ripped the fences of the eleka Nongtalang and as a result of which certain villages in the eleka decided to integrate their territories with the eleka Jowai. Therefore the British officers were not wrong in taking this line of thinking because the elekas were indeed not at peace with one another for various reasons.

Then the officers also failed to understand how a mere interference in a religious festival of the natives could escalate to a full fledged revolt against the Empire. Capt Murton further stated "that the only grievances which could be considered as unitary is the solitary instance of Police interference with religious ceremonies at Jallong Illakah (eleka ?along)." Murton was also convinced "that mere interference with religious ceremonies in Jallong would not account for a rebellion in Raliong District (eleka Raliang), the rulers of which, even in the face of a common enemy declined to cooperate with the Illakah Jowai, to which the poonjee of Jallong (raid ?along) is subordinate." The British failed to comprehend that the police meddling at Ialong where the soldiers forcibly stopped the locals from performing the religious warrior dance 'chad pastieh' and also confiscated the swords and shields used in the ceremony could hurt the sentiments of the entire Pnar community. The incident at ?along could very well be the last straw which sparked the Jaintia rebellion which united the Pnar to fight against the then British government because they considered it an act of sacrilege.

With regards to imposition of taxes, Capt. BWD Murton was also of the opinion that "he cannot call complain against a grievance as the governments were perfectly at liberty to impose what taxes they pleased on their own subjects." This is a major blun-

der of the government as levying of taxes by foreign powers on the residents of the area was something they could not accept. Though people did pay some form of tax to the Daloi but it was in kind. I still remember the 'Wasan' collecting 'dan' from the people who are not from eleka Jwai every Musiang and Khyllaw during the market day in Jowai. So it is not as if the people were not used to paying taxes to the authority because people did pay 'dan' to the 'wasan' on behalf of the Daloi. But the question is why were people not ready to pay taxes to the British government then?

The Jaintia rebellion was people's immediate reaction to the intrusion of the British government on the day to day affairs of the people. Of course by 1862 the Jaintia Kingdom was already under the dominion of the British kingdom and the King was paid a pension by the government. People had no leader and they were looking for one to lead them against these intolerable interferences of the foreign government. In his letter to the Officiating Commissioner of Assam, dated Jowai, the 30th of September 1862 BWD Murton DC of Cossyah and Jynteah hills informed 'that no chiefs of sufficient influence had as yet delivered themselves up.' So till the end of September 1862, the government has not even been able to trace who the leader of the rebellion was, U Kiang Nangbah being a commoner who decided to rise to the occasion- remained elusive.

In his journal BWD Murton informed that at Jowai he met the Dolloye of Shillong Muntang and Jowai and when asked about the rebellion, the former feigned ignorance while the later casually stated that it could be because of the Police interference with the religious ceremony at Jallong. Manik Pakyntein the Daloi of Jwai knew about the rebellion because as per oral tradition he helped im-

posed the tax by targeting a widow ka Lakhi Pyrdiang who lived in Chilliangraid and the people of Jwai had expressed their discontentment to the Daloi.

From the above correspondence it can be established that there were three major causes of the Jaintia rebellion of 1862 (a) the demand for restoration of the legitimate King of the Jaintia Kingdom whom the British had put on pension after the Pnars were defeated in the earlier rebellion (b) the imposition of house tax and (c) the irreverence of the British police on the religious festival at Ialong and the shooting of animal from Khloo Langdoh, Jowai. The final cause of the rebellion was due to the insensitivity of the British to the religious sentiments of the native.

U Kiang Nangbah stuck to his demand for reinstatement of the King in spite of the fact that the royal family which came all the way from the plains to meet him expressed their apprehension about the rebellion. They were afraid lest they be blamed by the government for inciting the rebellion and deprived of the pension that was paid to them. When the 'Kurs' (clan members) of the Rajah visited U Kiang Nangbah in his hideout, they advised him not to demand for restoration of the Rajah. To this the rebels replied, "In that case we have nothing to do with you, we will make whom we will Rajah."

What was initially considered a disturbance by the British officers in the region propelled into an independent uprising because the British had misjudged the strength and determination of the Jaintias. U Kiang Nangbah and his followers were all commoners with no military training. Perhaps, except for the few Dalois who decided to join him, the rest were mere peasants.

The Jaintia rebellion proved that the Pnar people when face with adversity would set aside their differences and remain united to fight the common enemy. The Jaintia rebellion also showcased the true Khasi-Pnar democracy at work when a commoner was chosen to be leader and if need be even the Syiem can be relegated by the public.

TO THE EDITOR

Fun-filled Independence Day!

Editor,
It was indeed a free and fun filled Independence Day celebration for the people in Shillong after so many years of bandh call by the HNLC. This year both young and old participated in the celebration. From the parade to the revelry at Khyndai Lad, it seemed like half of the population of the town was gathered there. I, for one was happy and thrilled to be amidst a huge crowd along with my family members. Though such programmes were held every year to mark this day yet this time it was a year that gave us the freedom to enjoy our Independence Day without any inhibitions and hindrance. I had always wished to go back and relive those times when as a child I would be taken to Polo Grounds to witness the parade by my parents. All these years, I had wondered if our children would ever get a chance to celebrate our Independence Day without any fear of the unknown but this year my faith was restored. I thereby take this opportunity to thank the

Police Department for the security provided by them, the Deputy Commissioner who sat amidst the populace, the Chief Secretary for his participation, the other Government officials, the organisers of the programme, the performers, the food court and most of all

the people of Shillong who thronged the place and showcased their solidarity and oneness on this great day. Thank you all and Happy Independence Day!

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Via email

Freedom regained

Editor,
We have to give credit where it is due. For years the Government struggled to convince people to celebrate Independence Day with the same fervour that people in Delhi and elsewhere do but the media headlines announcing a bandh on Independence Day and Republic Day duly put paid to our enthusiasm. I used to wonder why the media houses allowed themselves to be used by these militant organisations as their publicity agents. At last the Meghalaya High Court has come in with an enlightened ruling telling media houses to stop publishing news about bandhs. The Court also ruled that no group has the right to call a bandh that disrupted freedom of movement and the right to livelihood. In fact in recent times the Court has stepped in where the executive has failed. People are beginning to look to the judiciary for justice since they are tired of the way that governments function or don't function when they should. Hence if Independence Day this year has been celebrated with the true spirit of freedom then we ought

to give credit to the High Court here. Of course there were adequate security drills in the run-up to Independence Day and we thank the Police Department for the vigilance they have shown and for creating a climate of confidence in the citizens with their ubiquitous presence.

Yours etc.,
AL Nongrum,
Via email

The times they are a-changing

Editor,
Back home in Hyderabad, 15th August was always a very special day of the year. Especially when we were children, it meant waking up early with great excitement, dressing sharp in crisply ironed school uniforms, humming Manoj Kumar's songs, participating enthusiastically in the march past and/or cultural completions at the district parade grounds, feasting on sweet and savory treats, partaking in the festivities around town, and returning home to watch Attenborough's Gandhi. This annual ritual did play a critical role in strengthening my pride in being Indian and in molding me to be a responsible citizen.

Given this, the bandh calls, desolate streets and the absence of revelry were too much of a contrast when I first landed in Shillong way back in August 2006. In the last nine years I celebrated majority of the Independence Days

in Meghalaya and I always wondered if things would change, if kids here would ever experience 15th August the way I did in my childhood, if I would ever see Shillong buzzing with celebrations and fervor on this special day.

Yesterday (15th August 2015) was the answer! For the first time in my life I was pleased to be in a traffic jam as I headed to Kyndailad to be part of the Shillong style celebrations packed with music, dance, food, and everything else that is quintessential Meghalaya. The tri-colour was everywhere- printed on banners and balloons, painted on kids faces and pinned on adults chests. To experience people of all ages and from all social groups dressed in their best and celebrating the occasion was a sheer delight. Yes, the times are changing!

While rejoicing in this welcome change, I thought it appropriate to commend the efforts of the District Administration of East Khasi Hills and the State Government for making sustained efforts over the last few years to make this change happen. This year's larger turnout should probably also be attributed to the order of the Hon'ble High Court and the cooperation of the media. All this makes me ponder, if Shillong can show the way for other regions and cities across the country (Srinagar for instance and closer home, Garo Hills) where 15th August still remains a day of absolute shutdown.

Yours etc,
Vijay Kumar, IAS

Turf battle on Urban Governance: MUDA versus KHADC

By Phrangsngi Pyrtuh

The amended Meghalaya Bye-Laws 2011 to the 1992 Bye-Laws was prepared by MUDA and passed with immediate effect stipulating among others things structural safety, administration etc. of building and construction requirements. Though the objectives of the bye-laws were not explicitly stated, it was implied that the MUDA as the nodal agency would assume the role of the regulator on matters concerning urban governance in general and the Shillong Master Plan in particular. On the face of it the Bye-laws are a progressive piece of legislation attuned to the needs of urban governance of cities/towns. Other laws on urban governance include the Slum Areas Act 1973 or the most recent Street Vendors Act 2014. Urban governance is a universal concept and far removed from the politics or ideology of political organization. Meghalaya is an exception. Recent controversies surrounding MUDA and KHADC have manifested the chasm on issues surrounding urban governance.

The Bye-laws 2011 have not generated public confidence till date. For one the bye-laws are regarded as being devoid of any public consultations and therefore extremely defective such as those on norms of relaxation which have been interpreted as a political move to accommodate violators. The amended Bye-Laws have been targeted by the KHADC right from the beginning. The main objection is that the Bye-laws contravene the Meghalaya Town and Country Planning Act, 1973. Moreover the KHADC expresses fear that laws would threaten or mitigate the power of the traditional institutions (the Dorbar Shnong) and ipso facto affect the traditional practices of the indigenous community. The KHADC has been pointing fingers at MUDA without streamlining a system where the Council as the custodian of tradition and culture can make a case against such infringement. It took the Council until recently to express the need for its own Bye-laws resulting in hasty notification of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Land Development & Building Regulation 2015). Apparently urban governance is not found in the dictionary of the Council since urban is not traditional. If it is not traditional it is bound to be detrimental to culture et al. Urban governance is part of New Public Management (NPM) which is totally missing from the vocabulary of the ADCs. NPM requires restructuring institutions through a system of transparency and accountability which is absent in our local governing institutions.

The amended Bye-Laws are seen by many including the KHADC to accommodate vested interests. Many politicians and bigwigs with political connections have been given space to breathe with the new norms. The KHADC has often objected to the different modes of amendment made to the Bye-Laws since 1992. However if the Bye-laws of 2011 are defective, is the Council's 2015 Regulation more robust? Since the draft is not in public domain there are speculations on its contents. One only hopes that it does not replicate the 2011 Bye-laws act of MUDA otherwise it would make the marching and storming of the Secretariat by Ex-CEM Ardent Basawiamoit look even

more silly. If the question is on jurisdiction where the KHADC claimed that MUDA's authority is illegal, what about the JHADC and GHADC? These two councils are yet to frame their own Construction and Building laws. Or will the KHADC be magnanimous enough to transfer its new acquired knowledge on urban governance to these other councils? We need a law which does not contradict jurisdiction and a subject such as urban governance transcends all barriers. This is why MUDA's Bye-laws have to adhere to the National Building code which is also mandatory for the KHADC.

The Bye-laws though being in place have little impact on the construction sector in the state. Contractors and even MUDA have paid scant regards for the Bye-laws thus making a mockery of the law. Construction of illegal structures go on right under MUDA's nose until recently when the High Court asked the administration to seal all such structures. Rampant violation continues with little regards for structural safety and exigencies outside MUDA's jurisdiction. The situation may be worst in Scheduled areas with no laws to regulate construction activities. The Bye-laws are supposed to operate throughout Meghalaya and as clarified by the government even in Scheduled areas that falls under the KHADC. But if the law is completely disregarded in Shillong city where construction business is thriving, its difficult to see the effectiveness of the law beyond the city. Ultimately it will be left to the judiciary to intervene and ensure execution throughout the State.

The issue of 1% labour cess is another bone of contention which according to the KHADC is a form of tax. This is completely wrong. Cess just like other forms of revenue generation such as fees, special assessment etc is not a tax which is a compulsory payment. It is a payment for the services rendered based on quid pro quo which does not exist if it is a tax. MUDA has already clarified that cess is charged only on construction above 25 lakh and therefore not a tax. The 6th Schedule exempts tribals from paying taxes but it does not prohibit the Council from mobilizing resources and augmenting its dwindling revenues from sources such as Cess. Labour cess is also a requirement stipulated in the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1996. The MUDA has only followed the directives of the Act and has not committed any illegality. The KHADC should impose the 1% labour cess for the welfare of the construction workers outside MUDA. It is only fair to all construction workers to avail of the benefits accruing from the cess whether they work in MUDA regulated areas or Scheduled areas of the Council.

MUDA is yet to live up to its image as the nodal agency of urban governance and the District Councils have failed us many times. One is the custodian of the past the other of the present and future. In the battle of who can better safeguard our welfare and well being, the citizens of the state are losing each time such battles translate into personal ego and political arrogance. The proposed 6th Schedule amendment should take cognizance of these anomalies for better cooperation and coordination on matters affecting the citizens of the state.

"The best way to keep children home is to make the home atmosphere pleasant--and let the air out of the tires."

--- Dorothy Parker

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2015

Myanmar shifts

AS Myanmar is preparing for a general election, a split seems to have occurred in the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). Shwe Mann, a former general who is regarded as a moderate has been ousted from the post of party chief. There has been long-standing rivalry between him and President Thein Sein and the conservative military officers associated with him. One of Shwe Mann's allies, Maung Maung Thein, the party's general secretary has also been removed from his position. A statement issued by the USDP's new leadership claimed that Shwe Mann was stepping down as chairman because he was too busy with his other job as Speaker of the Lower House of the Myanmar parliament. But that seems to be a feeble alibi. Both Thein Sein and Shwe Maan were members of the brutal junta that ruled Myanmar for five decades. In 2011, a notionally civilian administration took over. But it was old wine in a new bottle, being composed of retired generals. At that time it was felt that Shwe Mann would head the government but Thein Sein finally carried the day.

The latest development should strengthen the position of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. As Speaker of the Lower House, Mann formed a close relationship with the country's most popular politician, Suu Kyi. The Myanmar Constitution written by the junta allocates a quarter of the seats in parliament to unelected, military officers and bars from the presidency Suu Kyi whose sons are American and British. The sad lot of the Rohingyans persecuted by the Buddhists has been advantage USDP. But the split in the party may throw a new complexion on the scenario.

LOOKING BACK

January 17, 1988

Experts to study exports potentialities in NE

The Union Commerce Minister has decided to send a team of experts to the Morth-East to study the export potentiality if the region's agri-horticulture and cottage industries products. This was disclosed by the Union Minister of State for Commerce Mr. P. R. Das Munshi in an exclusive interview with Shillong Times here on Monday.

Mr. Das Munshi who came here in connection with the Congress (I) election campaign, said that jute, rubber and ginger had tremendous potentiality as export items.

The famous Naga shawl, which has a great demand in the United States, could be one of the major foreign exchange earners of the region, he hoped.

The Union Minister saw great potentiality in the rubber production of the region. Tripura and Meghalaya had taken up rubber cultivation which had started yielding encouraging results.

Asked if there was any contemplation for exporting the Khasi Hills potatoes to Bangladesh, Mr. Das Munshi said that there was no specific plan but the expert team would take this into account. He said no decision could be taken unless there was elaborate study of the annual yield and the demand in the neighboring country.

Taking of tea exports from the region, Mr. Das Munshi said there was a decline in the demand of Assam tea in the international market owing to the Sri Lankan invasion of the international tea market. Against 430 million kg of tea was exported last year. Bulk of the export was from Assam, he said.

Army to move into Tripura's disturbed areas

The army units would be moving into the disturbed areas of Tripura during the current week, state director general of police Mr. R. P. Sharma said today. Details of the deployment of army at different vantage points were discussed at a meeting between Chief Minister Mr. Nripen Chakraborty and the Goc-In-C of the Eastern Command, Mr. Sharma told UNI here. The operation of the army would be restricted and confined to 430 square km of the insurgency-ridden areas including Jampui Hills bordering Bangladesh and Mizoram.

Mr. Sharma said adding that the part of the Assam Rifles, to be stationed in the disturbed areas, would work under the army while the rest operating outside would continue to work under the state government.

The decision of deploying the army in parts of the state had been reached at a meeting between Union Home Minister Mr. Buta Singh and Mr. Chakraborty early this month following a spurt in killing by the outlawed Tribal National Volunteer (TNV) insurgents.

Mr. Sharma said apart from intensifying the vigil on the clandestine entry of the insurgents across the international border, the army would launch a counter-offensive against the tribal insurgents who killed a CRPF jawan on January 16 in South Tripura.

Meanwhile, the process of identifying the sensitive vulnerable and disturbed areas on to ensure adequate security arrangements for the February 2 assembly elections.

Learning in Bliss: Learning from Tagore

By Debasish Chowdhury

Tagore's vision of an 'Ideal School' for the brood; placed away from clumsy bustling human dwellings where the tender learners can receive their lessons in an ambience of unbound natural beauty under open sky stretching unto horizon; can easily pass these days as utopia. His envisioning of such a school as ideal learning environment for the children, however, paved the way to the establishment of 'Patha Bhavana' in 1901 in the serene natural settings of Santiniketan.

Literally meaning 'the Study House', Patha Bhavana's learning ambience, originally planned in the model of ancient Indian ashrams, had accommodated and accepted changes in order to remain relevant to the evolving needs of time. Fortunately, however, these unavoidable changes did not force it to completely shelve its original open air, under tree shade learning sessions. The skyline of Santiniketan may no more resemble what it once used to be but Path Bhavan's learning ambience till date continues to be an inspiring attraction to the scores of learners it keeps on drawing in its fold from Bengal and beyond.

Early life learning, it is well accepted, always leaves a lasting impression in the unfolding midscape. Being alive, thanks to his own childhood learning experiences, to this reality that the education received at the formative stage of life plays a vital role in shaping the recipient's evolving worldview, Tagore engaged himself in the task of developing quality study materials, the outcome of which manifests in his work entitled 'Sahaj Path.' Learning materials for the tender minds, felt Tagore, must aim to boost imagination and creative genius. A critical concern for ensuring quality of these study materials, he held firmly, therefore has to be a must.

In the dozens of essays he had penned on education such as *Shikshar herfer, Shiksha Sanskar, Shikshar Samasya* to name only a few, Tagore sought to repeatedly underscore the importance of making early age education a joyous and participatory exercise that can help young learners accept it with ease. In a letter to Professor Mohit Sen, for instance, he once wrote, 'boys should regularly engage in literary activities. Please remain connected with them in each of their endeavours; be it study or be it an exercise in char-

acter building. The task of shaping up the young minds, he elaborated in that letter, '.... must be embarked upon with a spirit of love and must never be taken as a lifeless mechanical exercise.' Every effort', he emphasised in another letter to Ajit Kumar Chakraborty, 'is called for to ensure that these ashram boys do not eventually become blind slaves of mere customs and rituals.'

An early school dropout in the typical sense of the term, Tagore's distaste for standardised formal schooling as is our practice is legendary and the same finds a vivid expression in *Jeebansmriti*, sort of a piece of his autobiographical writing. In 'Shikshar Samasya' his terse observation that 'what we understand as school is nothing but a factory of education in which the teacher is only a cog' therefore comes not as a surprise. '... the products from such factories,' he further wrote in that piece, 'hardly are any different from each other.' 'Wide variations, however, exists' he insisted in that piece, 'between one man and another to treat men as stereotypes, as such, is highly unwarranted.' Education, Tagore was categorical, must make a conscious effort to make its recipients evolve and attain fullness.

Comprehensive learning that enables its recipients to relate to their socio-cultural environment with an open frame of mind was what Tagore envisioned in his scheme of education. The need, however, to integrate in it a component of skill learning too was also not lost sight of. The abjectly poor, largely ignorant and unskilled people in rural Bengal, he regularly came in contact with, convinced him of the reality that but for an uplift in the economy of rural Bengal; sustainable improvement in the quality of village life would remain a dream ever unfulfilled. But for adequate skill education, boosting rural economy, he knew well, would hardly be feasible.

The Sriniketan endeavour launched a little later in time, as such, was his response to this need for skill education and community learning. 'All efforts', Tagore wrote in a letter to his eldest son Rathindranath 'must be made to maintain closer ties amongst boys of Santiniketan and Sriniketan'. To suggest Rathindranath to 'press Kalimohan into service to help the students learn to study the village people and appreciate their views on

any matter concerning their village', betrays his view that such education 'is of critical concern provided one seeks to effectively put in place any developmental initiatives planned thereat. Education, for Tagore, was an exercise aimed at building self reliance as also an effort to empower the powerless.

Tagore's scheme of early stage education envisaged initiation of the tender minds into the realm of knowledge through use of mother tongue. Familiarising the child with his surroundings, an essential for early age learning, he felt, must avoid burdening the child with translation tasks. Building a sense of oneness with nature, physical development, skill generation, comprehensive development of the intellectual faculty seeking self-realisation and learning to appreciate one's culture and social values were the other salient features of Tagore's educational scheme. Much of the lofty ideals of a comprehensive education as envisaged by Tagore, in reality however, remain yet a far cry. The load the little learners carry on their tiny shoulders each day to school, the weary look in their eyes on their way back, no playtime and pressing home works they routinely require to perform are all bold avowal of the bitter reality that learning in bliss is a concept that simply makes no tangible sense to them.

Personally committed to the *upanishadic* values, Tagore, however, did not slip in making a conscious effort to incorporate in his educational scheme the basics of modern science. Tagore's India of course was more of a cultural and civilisational entity. Her socio-cultural aspects, as such, occupied a position of pre-eminence in his thoughts and literary expositions. Spread of education, the kind of it that encourages self-realization while equipping its recipients with the wherewithal to earn a decent livelihood with uncompromised self-dignity, Tagore felt was the remedy to most of her ills. It is this conviction that encouraged him to firmly assert that "the widest road leading to the solution of all our problems is education."

Environmental studies have lately become an integral component of the national school curriculum. The move, though a belated one given that

Tagore envisioned and incorporated it in his education scheme a century ago, deserves appreciation. Making the children alive and aware to the needs and concerns of their environment, notwithstanding the fact that compulsions of time are ceaselessly pushing the natural world out and away from our otherwise busy, bedevilled mechanical urban life we have gifted unto us in the excuse of progress and development, has its own advantages. Our young learners, often disconnected as they are with the pristine nature, however, take these lessons mostly as unavoidable additions in their prescribed syllabi.

Learning about environment by rote and learning to grow with it are widely different entities. Growing in her lap enables the tender minds to appreciate the beauty of nature and facilitates their falling in love with it. And love, one of the finest of human qualities, bequeaths one with a sense of responsibility that strives to protect the object it loves. Protecting nature, as such, might have been a job much easier to accomplish provided our children could be brought up in a nature friendly ambience The dry lessons we impart on environment are unlikely to espouse in children that spirit of oneness with Mother Nature but for which, the urge to protect her hardly appear to them as an impelling necessity.

Tagore envisioned a school where loveless learning is gratuitous. The limited success he could achieve at Santiniketan in this regard notwithstanding, a nature friendly learning ambience at the schools; in the land that bears the ignominy of being known as the world's largest illiterate nation; remains yet a dream as distant as it ever was to realise.

Given our tendency to be ritualistic, arranging shallow, non-committal cultural fiestas in the excuse of paying homage to the revered bard of the world on his anniversary days is something that comes naturally to us. Our real tribute to this great humanist could have been an earnest commitment in espousing the cause of education the way he desired it to be. And, in the striving to transform learning into a blissful experience, we might, as our surprise gift, be learning a lesson or two that enable us to live our lives a little notch better. After all, this world of our love also, in a way, is nothing but only a gigantic school.

(The writer is presently the Controller of Examinations, Sikkim University).

TO THE EDITOR

Freedom in August 2015!

Editor,
Kudos to Hon'ble Meghalaya High Court for liberating Shillongites from the oppression named 'Bandh.' India got its freedom in 1947, but our generation who are born and brought up in Shillong only got their freedom on 15th August, 2015 which will be considered a red letter day in the history of Meghalaya.

Yours etc.,
Deeshant
Bhattacharjee,
Via email

Chocolates the new currency of Shillong!

Editor,
In what can be called a unique solution to the "coin menace" the restaurateurs of Shillong have started using one rupee chocolates as currency.

Taxi drivers using such legal tender isn't something new, but restaurants of all places using such legal exchange is baffling. Bread Café in Police Bazar seems to be making a tremendous profit from such a venture. Such is their confidence in this transaction that in the cash counter, instead of keeping stock of coins, they now display good quantities of chocolates which are now given to the customers in place of coins. I do not know under which ruling this law has come where chocolates are used as currency and "only" by the staff, not the customers! The simple rule of customers' happiness being the sole objective of service providers seems to have vanished. I had gone to Bread Café on two consecutive occasions and on both occasions I was given chocolates cumulatively worth Rs 12. The sole reason they have been giving and duping people over the years is, "because we do not get change at all"! I fail to understand how this can change scarcity af-

flicts Bread Café when there are so many customers who keep giving coins. Isn't it embarrassing for such a "reputed" restaurant to indulge in such shameful activities? Especially astounding is the fact that we pay a very high amount of VAT for every order. The lackadaisical attitude of customers is also another reason why such methods are flourishing literally at the expense of our money and wrongful gain by such restaurateurs. I would request the concerned authorities to kindly take action against such rampant "looting" and also appeal to the customers to stop taking the chocolates offered as currency. If we the public do not put a stop to wrongful acts these wrongs will continue to thrive and we are the exploited ones.

Yours etc.,
Bipasha Bhattacharjee
Shillong- 4

Mass slavery in 21st century

Editor,
Garo Hills went quiet and motionless from 5 am on August 14. On the 69th year of India's Independence (freedom) the people of Garo Hills will be indoors barring some official hoisting of the National Flag at designated spots. The days of the ANVC are back. The GNLA which is presently the most powerful militant group in the region had declared the boycott of the National Day on Facebook about a month ago after its Publicity Secretary, Savio Marak died in an encounter with the police. The Facebook account is probably blocked. Prior to August 14 there was some confusion since after the Meghalaya High Court ruling against bandh calls with a directive to the media not to publish such bandh calls, no newspapers published a word on the GNLA sponsored bandh. So the outfit resorted to SMSes. This was enough for Government officials not to report for work, banks to close financial transactions, businessmen to pull down their shut-

PSU bank reforms may not stop private loot Public made to pay for 'recapitalisation'

By Nantoo Banerjee

A former Citibank trader, Tom Hays, recently found guilty by a London court of rigging London interbank offer rate (Libor), was sentenced 14 years in prison for conspiracy to defraud. Earlier, many top executives of multinational banks have lost their jobs, following the revelation of the Libor manipulation scandal. Libor is used as a benchmark for trillions of dollars worth bank loan transactions. India's corporate sector is among the major borrowers under Libor and has been bearing the burden of the Libor manipulation for years. Unfortunately, there is no exemplary punishment in India for financial fraud and manipulation, including understatement of junk loans and large bank defaults by big borrowers in connivance with bank officials.

The NDA government is in the process of overhauling the management and structures of public sector banks. The intention is good. Nothing much has changed in PSU banks' management style since they were nationalized over four decades ago. However, the key questions of fixing responsibility of messing up with public deposits and trusts and awarding strong punishments to those helping bank frauds, including certifying faulty balance sheets as good for giving more credits, remain hazy. Hiring private sector executives may not help. Most large foreign banks flopped and sold in recent years under the massive burden of fraud were all so-called professionally managed private banks. Japan's Dai-ichi Kangyo, once the world's largest bank, was just one of them.

At 2014-end, India's 30 top bank defaulters were sitting on bad loans of over Rs. 95,000 crore or one-third of the entire declared non-performing assets of public sector banks. Big financial crimes by large and medium business houses, by way of their financial engineering, asset overvaluation and 'bank loots', should have put several of them and their bankers in jail for long years. In the 1980s, Dunlop India and Shaw Wallace and their bankers were among the biggest offenders in this regard. More recently, Ispat India and Kingfisher Air robbed PSU banks of over Rs. 5,000 crore each. Taxpayers or the public are indirectly made to pay for them by way of the government's 'recapitalisation' of PSU banks. Also, permission is given to them to raise more equity capital from the public. Banks are rarely pulled up for massive annual loan write-offs. No one is held responsible. No one is punished.

While, heads of educational institutions to declare holiday, motor operators and owners not to ply their vehicles and the general public not to venture out. The militant-political connection is certain though not established. Incidents have happened in the past to strongly point to the nexus. But for the convenience of the political class no investigation was done. The nexus through clandestine will be on display in the run up to the GHADC elections. In the meantime our 21st century society is under a mass slavery - an enslavement alien even to the medieval and pre-medieval era. It's time to rise up against this mental and physical enslavement. But who will take the lead? What a pity really!

Meanwhile the High Court which was able to pull the rug from under the HNLC's feet and defeat their annual bandh call should not summon the telecom service providers for allowing their networks to publicise something that is anti-national. In the first place how can militant outfits get such easy access to SIM cards? Are the service providers not responsible for helping the militant outfit - GNLA to spread a climate of fear and oppression via mobile phones?

Yours etc.,
Albert Thyraing
Chandmari, Tura

PSU banks wrote off loans worth Rs. 1,06,170 crore in just last five years, according to the Reserve Bank of India. The gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of PSU banks at the end of last year stood at Rs. 2,60,531 crore. And, those 30 defaulters accounted for 36.5 per cent of these 'badly sticky' or irrecoverable assets. Bank defaulters even enjoy a kind of social protection from the government, which rarely discloses the names of defaulted companies and their owners. The employees' unions, such as AIBEA, sometimes do. RBI governor Raghuram Rajan has expressed concern over the reliability of NPAs disclosed by banks. The actual figure of sticky bank assets could be much larger than what is officially reported. This is a real cause of worry.

India's large commercial banks are mostly owned and controlled by the government. A borrower's political profile often plays an important role to influence lending decisions. A former prime minister's entrepreneur son was reportedly involved in the 1993 bank scam. Another top politician's businessman son-in-law has been in the news for his involvement with one of India's top real estate tycoons, running massive debt with nationalized banks and contingent liabilities. Law's so-called long hands rarely reach them.

Meanwhile, PSU banks unpaid loans are ballooning. Their large bad loans, already high, rose 20 per cent over April-December period in 2014. Together, these banks account for 72 per cent lending in India. Their gross NPAs may have actually topped the Rs.2.75 lakh crore mark. The picture could have been much worse but for corporate debt restructuring by which borrowers reschedule loan repayments and tinker with interest rates. The gross NPAs plus restructured loans by the end of 2014 would amount to Rs.5.45 lakh crore (almost \$88 billion). Infrastructure (including power, telecom, airports, roads, ports & rail), iron & steel, textiles, mining and aviation contributed significantly to the level of stressed advances.

Of the 26 PSU banks (including the SBI group), as many as 19 reported gross NPAs of five per cent or more in the last quarter of 2014. By 2018-19, the government wishes to infuse Rs.70,000 cr into PSU banks, including Rs.25,000 crore each during this year and next year. Even Moody's think the amount is small to realistically cover the capital adequacy ratio of these banks. Unfortunately, the issue of systematic bank fraud by industry in India continues to get glossed over. (IPA Service)

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.

"Turbulence is life force. It is opportunity. Let's love turbulence and use it for change."

--- Ramsay Clark

The Shillong Times

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Institutions of Excellence

THE problems facing many of our premier institutions ranging from IITs to IIMs and medical bodies are all too obvious. Most of them are crippled by inadequate faculty and paucity of infrastructural facilities and funds. The Film and Television Institute of India (FTTI) is now going through a crisis. Many students have been living on the campus for eight years or so during which period they have not submitted any work or had it evaluated. The FTTI has been through such agitations from time to time. The Institutions of Excellence in India are nowhere near the top in international rankings. Little is being done to tone up their standard of performance. In the FTTI, the problem has gone out of hand and not much learning is taking place at this once prestigious institute.

It is time the authorities took an active and hard look at the systemic flaws in these Institutions of Excellence. Heads of these institutions should be selected by experts in respective fields and not by politicians with axes to grind. International examples may provide guidelines in the selection process to ensure that the faculty is the best possible available. In cases, foreign scholars may be invited to add lustre to the faculty. Infrastructure and funds have of course been long standing problems. These problems have led some of the institutions to become non-operational. Students overstaying their courses on the campus should be dealt with firmly. The output of these institutions should be subjected to periodic reviews and streamlining should be done whenever necessary. Those students who are not up to the mark should be given an opportunity to improve their performance or otherwise asked to go. The problem of our Institutions of Excellence lies in systemic flaws, which need elimination with professional competence. The present chaos in the FTTI should be a chastening experience.

LOOKING BACK

January 22, 1988

Firing on Congress (I) men in Tripura

Police fired several rounds and used lathi to disperse violent Congress (I) supporters which gheraoed the Udaipur police station in South Tripura today.

The Congress (I) supporters gheraoed the police station following a clash with the CPI(M) workers in which 40 people were injured, one of them seriously. No one was however, hurt in the firing. Police said they opened fire when the agitating Congress(I) supporters stoned the police station injuring five policemen.

The clash between the rival parties occurred when Congress (I) candidate for Salgara constituency Kamini Das was undertaking a door to door campaign along with his party workers. The Congress (I) claimed that its candidate Kamini Das was assaulted while the CPI (M) denied any attack on the rival party workers.

Security measures have been tightened in Udaipur and its adjoining areas as tension ran high there.

Meanwhile the businessmen in the area have decided to down their shutters for an indefinite period from tomorrow.

AGP blames centre for delay

The ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) has alleged that the centre was delaying the implementation of Assam Accord with "intention and political purpose".

Adopting a resolution at its three-day first general meeting which concluded at Mangaldoi in Darrang District yesterday, the party

said the centre had evinced no sincerity in implementing the accord and it was the state government which had done its job.

Releasing the resolution at a press conference here today, re-elected party President Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and General Secretaries Bhrigu Kumar Phukan and Atul Bora said that the AGP was committed to implementing the accord. If the centre did not give up its attitude of non-cooperation the State Government would implement the accord as far as possible on their own.

The party also decided not to keep any relation with the communal and separatist organizations and said it would have no understanding with the political parties working against the interest of the state.

The meeting took exception to Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's reported threat to dismiss the state governments indulging in anti national activities. It demanded the re-delimitation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies as early as possible.

The leaders said a demand had also been made for establishing a federal structure of the government. Besides, the party had opposed any further division of the state, they said.

It also demanded that more power be given to the state governments and said except defence, communication, external affairs and currency, other subjects should be transferred to the state. Human chain to demand PM's resignation

IoA and 6th Sixth Schedule: A Layman's view

By Morning Star Sumer

It is surprising that the Union Government has proposed to "surreptitiously" amend the Constitution of India. I say "surreptitiously" because a copy of the covering letter F.No.11012/120/2009-NE.IV dated New Delhi, 21st April, 2015 from the Ministry of Home Affairs, North East Division, forwarding copies of the "Draft Bill amending the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India and Article 280 of the Constitution of India", addressed to the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura, bears the category classification "SECRET"! In fact it should not be a surprise to me since I had occasion to have experienced a similar action of the powers that be when the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Bill was put by a Union Ministry in the public domain in July 2011. This was suppressed by the powers that be in Meghalaya which I had commented upon on September 6, 2011, after having gate-crashed into the then Deputy CM's, Rowell Lyngdoh's office in the press statement, and, covered in the following day's issues of many newspapers including The Meghalaya Guardian (English) and other dailies in their issues of September 7, 2011. It is also an eye opener to view the acts of the powers that be with suspicion! In this case the subject matter is, and should not be a classified one!! Questions are asked. Why the amendment? Who initiated or asked for it? And more!

Many people are seriously concerned about the current political scenario in Meghalaya; just as I am. We seem to have reached a dead end. The reality is that things are better than we think. What we lack is awareness among the electorates. To make things worse we have at the helm of affairs only politicians who have mastered the art of wearing the mask of fake populism to fool the unwary and gullible public that we are, and, have led us to this pass. To strike out of this situation we need to introspect and be honest enough to admit our mistakes and lapses and to turn over a new leaf.

To introspect we need to work hard by studying the relevant issues which, in our arrogance, we have left to the machinations of corrupt politicians. Since at present we are seized of the fact that our present woes seem to emanate from the IoA and the Sixth Schedule it is necessary to study

these instruments very closely. After studying the relevant provisions of these documents I have come to the conclusion that we have miserably failed to grasp their meaning and purport and substance.

To concerned people like me who have been watching the scene where provisions of the Sixth Schedule are being discussed, invoked, criticized and ignored, it is shameful that seemingly responsible persons, whether in or out of office, should expose their ignorance of the rudiments of debate/discussion/rhetoric/dialogue, which ought to be observed or applied in every argument between people who may claim to be regarded as intellectuals or even just decent responsible persons. In all the activities/happenings that I had personally witnessed, whether by invitation or by happenstance, illogical arguments and/or unrestrained emotional outbursts by one or more of the participants had often led to acrimony which rendered the exercise futile. As an instance of this, I recently witnessed the illogical, unrestrained outburst of emotion at a meeting purported to be one to create awareness among the people about the provisions of an Instrument of Accession and Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.

About the Instrument of Accession (IoA) I have questions to ask those who would campaign or crusade for implementation of the IoA as signed by the 25 members of the Federation of Khasi States. It should be understood that the terms and conditions laid down in Sec. 6 of The Government of India Act, 1935 are and should be the same with some flexibility save for three subjects. One question that tickles me is, "Was the Instrument of Accession signed by members of the Federation of Khasi States in conformity with Sec. 6 of The Government of India Act, 1935? I suggest that this IoA signed by our 25 Heads of Himas be compared with those signed by Heads of other States, princely or otherwise, in the Union/Dominion prior to, or, post Independence! There are more questions that the would-be crusaders/campaigners have to answer for undoing the shackles of the IoA that was signed by the heads of the 25 Himas. Not that we do not appreciate the seriousness of lapses when the IoA was signed by the 25 Heads; on the contrary we see them and opine that

there is need to unshackle ourselves from them. But how, and to what ends, are questions to be urgently and seriously debated/discussed in the public domain: until we do that it would be futile, counter-productive and disastrous to dwell upon this matter too long.

We would like the would-be campaigners/crusaders to go back in history beginning with the passing of The Government of India Act, 1935 to prepare us for what they may wish to say about the IoA. In Part II of the Act there was provision for the formation of The Federation of India for uniting

(a) the Provinces, then called Governors' Provinces and

(b) the Indian States which had then acceded or may thereafter accede to the Federation in which should be included the Provinces, then called Chief Commissioners' Provinces.

It was in this Act that the IoA was provided for. We would like to hear from them about the details of the IoA. Only after hearing their views in the context of the provision of the GoI Act of 1935 may we consider whether to join them or not. It should be clear to all that we want to free ourselves from the shackles which signing the IoA had clapped on us.

It is now time we consider the question of amendments to the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India as proposed in the documents mentioned hereinbefore.

Before we consider any attempt or proposal to amend a Constitutional issue like the Sixth Schedule we should first project our views on or about the provision(s) that we consider flawed. At the risk of being considered verbose I would like to remind readers about the Schedule as generally perceived by the people concerned about the administration and governance in Scheduled-area states in the North East India like Meghalaya. The first question about the Sixth Schedule is what purpose was it intended to serve. Summarising all the points and counterpoints raised in the debates in the Constituent Assembly of 1949 one could answer that question by a simple statement that the purpose was to enable the indigenous citizens of the areas to govern themselves within the constraints of their cultural practices or moral laws

which are vastly different from what are obtained in the majority of states in the country. I have taken great pains not to use the term "tribes" and "tribals" which are substituted by the terms "indigenous citizens" and "indigenous community". One should have no difficulty in accepting these terms if one is educated enough to understand the terms "tribalism" and "tribalist" which were used by some hostile non-tribals (non-indigenous people) to deride our leaders' efforts to extract favours from the central government bodies for the development of areas populated by indigenous people (tribals? no more). That said, it is hoped that readers will follow the trend of my thoughts while writing this piece.

The 6th. Schedule, to my mind, is an excellent piece of legislation for our education to learn the intricacies of governance to enable us to stand shoulder to shoulder with the more developed people in the world without losing our unique identity. When all is said and done it will be evident to an unbiased or unprejudiced mind that the problems we face today are not owing to the provisions of the Schedule. Rather it is our failure to understand its provisions and to do our part to reap the gains that they offer. If amendments are necessary it could be

(I) Proviso to Para 3(a) should be amended to read, "...compulsory acquisition of land through lease deeds, executed according to law, between the state and the land owner(s) (holders).

(II) Proviso to Para 20(2) should be deleted/repealed.

The proviso, as it stands now, renders the autonomy of District Council obsolete. (III) The last clause of the sentence in the Para 14A of the proposed Constitutional (One Hundred and Twenty-third Amendment) Bill, 2015, "...and the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of directions...of such areas" is not acceptable because, its meaning and purport are tantamount to taking away the autonomy of the Councils as indicated in the designation 'Autonomous District Councils'. It is the sting in the tail of the proposed amendment: it should be deleted!

It appears to me that, having discovered our failure to grasp the meaning and purport of these instruments we choose to play the blame game by imputing evil motives to the fathers of the Constitution. Our would-be liberators would do well to seek and find constitutional doors to have flaws ironed out as and when discovered! Oh! For responsible, committed and sedulous MDCs, MLAs and MPs!!

Yours etc.,
S Blah
Shillong-2

NEIGRIHMS seat controversy

Editor

It is ironic that the majority of students, doctors and nursing staff in NEIGRIHMS hail from outside Meghalaya even after all these years in operation. With regard to MBBS seat allocation for example, the NEIGRIHMS website declares that 9 seats are reserved for Meghalaya, 4 for Arunachal Pradesh, 3 for Mizoram, 8 for Nagaland, 18 for all North-Eastern States and 8 for 'All India' based on AIPMT exam. However if we study the student demographics year after year, we see that the majority of students who avail admission into NEIGRIHMS hail from Manipur. The

Of masses and classes

By Diganta Halder

A recent upload in the social media quite ludicrously projects a rather cynical picture of the Scheduled Caste, Tribes and Other Backward Classes in India. It announces that while SC/ST and OBC pilots should fly planes carrying ministers and politicians, it needs to be ensured that only the 'reservation class' doctors operate upon sick politicians and ministers.

That's not the way we ought to look at things. Had India not incorporated the caste system, by now many ethnic communities would have been completely vanquished by the vicious currents of non-equality. The self created upper class always dominated the masses, took the best of everything, twisted up all the happiness of others and jolted the basic fabric of the country for their own self-seeking benefits. History repeats indeed and now it's turn for the once agonized classes to reap the harvest. Not even a century has passed since independence and we have begun the uproar. Let us for once ponder over the torturous ordeals the so called 'reservation class' of today obligatorily endured for thousands of years under the cruel pounding of the self created upper class. I have recently seen very pathetic conditions of some tribal people of Odisha who are still deprived of the basic human rights. No bridges, no schools, no colleges, no transportation, no luxury of electricity, no exposure and above all, no homes and no food! The heartache is that they were born deprived and will die deprived unless someone tells them that the nation today has given them due recognition by way of a number of schemes for their social and economic uplift!

I'll feel happy to be the passenger of an aircraft flown by a pilot belonging to the Scheduled Class or the Scheduled Tribe. I'll feel safe to be operated upon by an SC, ST or an OBC surgeon and privileged to be educated by an SC/ST or OBC teacher. I'll feel proud to enjoy a drive over a long and stable bridge designed and constructed by an honest SC, ST or an OBC engineer. All this, because I'll know that my country is truly on its path of unbiased progress! All this, because I can undoubtedly vouch on the straightforwardness and simplicity of the SC, ST and the OBC people as my childhood was spent in their safe arms cajoled in heartfelt cuddles and embraced at different villages of Assam. The question isn't whether the pilot, the surgeon or the teacher is a SC, ST or an OBC. The question is whether or not he possesses the knowledge, integrity and honesty to work. The question is not who was chosen to be trained but how well was he trained!

We never cause mayhem when it comes to allocating seats to children in staff and management quotas. Why then all the pandemonium when it comes to an SC, ST or an OBC seat? Till date we have never disputed the sharing of seats by the privileged class in the best of colleges in India which they greedily buy with fat cash. It is almost an open secret that most good institutions keep blocked certain percentages of seats

which they give away only in exchange of plump greens. As non SC, ST and OBCs are we not examples of hypocrisy ourselves when we stealthily buy seats for our own kids and raise the roof when an SC, ST or an OBC admits his child as per laid out government norms. At least the SC, ST or the OBC isn't doing something surreptitiously. There was a time when SC, ST and OBCs were prevented from entering temples. Till today it's the 'Brahmin' who holds the right to offer pujas. Why isn't there no hullabaloo about such stone age deplorable customs in the social media? Or is it that we still do not hold the rights to raise our voices against the self created 'upper class' who still feel that they are indomitable in all senses?

Be it Mrinal Miri from Assam, MC Mary Kom from Manipur, Lou Majaw from Meghalaya, Jeje Lalpekula from Mizoram, Temsula Ao from Nagaland, Somdev Devvarman from Tripura or Baichung Bhutia from Sikkim, each one is a contributor to the development of the nation. The list is endless and the nation will very soon realize for good that talent is not the possession of the upper class only. Of late, the Commonwealth Games and Olympics laurels being brought to the country by the people of the North East bears testimony to the immense aptitude and potential that people from different castes and tribes possess. The sordid reality is that the 'reservation class' people from Jharkhand, North East etc. were never ever considered gifted enough to carry the torch of progress forward. It is only recently that due weightage is being given, more so because the media has played an extensive role to open up the deliberately closed eyes of the Centre.

Just as we appreciate the efforts of the striving and the successful lot in our communities and expect our own children to follow their footsteps, those from the SC, ST and the OBC categories also need to look up to their own exemplary idols. It is imperative that the government continues to offer categorized admissions so that the flames of touching the higher horizons of life do not get extinguished in these communities even before they are lit. It shouldn't at all matter to us if a child from the reserved category with lesser academic performance is provided the opportunity to enter into the best of higher institutions in the country because it is only with greater exposure that he can know the world he co-exists in and draw a rational impression about how much more his own community needs to uplift itself in order to walk shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the country. In fact, this should be viewed with all positivism and with an obliging mind and outlook.

It's time now to discard such coldhearted uploads in the social media and denounce them who unscrupulously do so as they only instigate non-secularism and inject disharmony that disarrays the secular fabric of the nation.

(The writer is Principal Assam Rifles Public School, Laitkor, Shillong and can be reached at diganta_halder@yahoo.co.in)

demographics are similar for NEIGRIHMS staff, especially nursing staff, who are again mostly from Manipur. Their numbers have swelled over the years until they outnumber all other communities inside NEIGRIHMS. Does anyone else see a problem here? Can the Director explain the reason for this huge bias to-

wards citizens of one community which has been the norm for many years? What about being fair to the locals for a change? This problem needs to be addressed once and for all. Backdoor allotments and appointments must be stopped.

Yours etc.,
Partha Dasgupta
Viaemail

TO THE EDITOR

Congratulations Shillong!

Editor,

Congratulations are due to Shillong and its inhabitants for working so hard to make this city proud by upgrading it to the rank of 120th dirtiest cities in India. I am amazed how the authorities in question like the MUDA, Shillong Municipal Board etc allowed this to happen. Here the government agencies and the people of Meghalaya are to be blamed. Who makes the Bara Bazaar (lewduh) and Police Bazaar dirty? The blame should go to those who have invaded this beautiful city by the thousands to settle here and do business. The Syiem of Myllem has no control whatsoever over the lewduh. Sixty percent of outsiders control the prices of all essential items like fish, vegetables, beef and chicken etc. that is sold at lewduh. What is the job of the Syiem of Myllem? Just collecting taxes amounting to several crore rupees

every month? Are the accounts of the Syiem of Myllem subject to audit by the Accountant General? I doubt very much. All along GS road from Binola point (Bara Bazaar) to Centre point (Police Bazaar) there is only one public toilet at MUDA complex. I don't understand why the authorities concerned cannot enforce the rule that every shop in Police Bazaar & Bara Bazaar should have their own dustbins in front of their shops. I also wonder how the State Government authorities cannot enforce discipline among the hawkers in Police Bazaar, Bara Bazaar, Civil Hospital etc., where they have occupied the footpaths. Where are the NGO's who talk about "Jaitbynriew"? Maybe because there is no money involved here so they are bystanders. I would suggest that the concerned authorities and the public go and visit Sikkim (Gangtok) and see for themselves how clean the city is and how traffic moves in an orderly manner. There are some points like M.G road where there is

a walking zone and no vehicles are allowed to ply. I would suggest that the Government take the help of the school students to prevent the hawkers from occupying the road and help maintain cleanliness. I think Prime Minister Modi will weep if he visits Shillong and sees how dirty the city is.

Recently while shopping in Police Bazaar, I met a foreigner from Sweden. I asked him how he liked the city. He answered me in only two sentences. Beautiful weather; but Shillong city stinks! I am ashamed to be a Meghalayan. I also remember vividly the story narrated by my late grandfather who was in the British Army. While being posted in Kolkata in 1943-44 he asked his superior officer, an American Major how he likes India. The Major replied flatly, "To tell you the truth man, this country is neither fit for the man nor beast." That was way back in 1943-44.

I also am of the opinion that either we restore the cleanliness of Shillong so

Are god men and god women exploiting people's faith, questions Uma Ramachandran

The business of selling God?

The biggest blow to Hinduism -- triggering a crisis of faith -- has been inflicted not by outside forces of infidels, but from within, by some of its so-called spiritual gurus. The self-styled godmen and women who have made a mockery of faith by leading gullible devotees up the garden path to salvation.

The latest to join the league of dubious characters are Swami Sachidanand, Radhe Maa and Trikal Bhawanta. The Swami, previously known as Sachin Dutta, has managed to become mahamandaleshwar (a high priest), despite a colourful past, to put it mildly. He has several criminal cases pending against him.

A beer-bar-owner-turned-realtor-turned-sadhu, he has duped several buyers with his dream-home projects in Noida. Radhe, whose claim to fame is holding extremely popular jagarans (late night prayers) and chowkis (prayers) in bridal attire, seems to have a long-standing affair with controversies.

A video purportedly showing her dancing to Bollywood tunes is much

came to light. In an act of cleansing, both Sachidanand and Radhe have been prohibited from participating in the ongoing Kumbha Mela celebrations in Nashik by the Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad. But, that's hardly a deterrent for other notorious purveyors of spirituality.

Spirituality and crime, the gateways to heaven and hell, have often elided into the quest for power and authority. It is not difficult to imagine why key witnesses against Asaram Bapu, who has been accused of rape, have been



known assailants. Rampal, whose fan-following ran into lakhs, had turned his ashram in Haryana into a fortress as the police tried to arrest him on charges of murder and attempt to murder. Only after a series of violent clashes, which also led to the deaths of six devotees, could he be finally arrested. Rampal enjoyed immense respect in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Delhi.

less of a crime, compared to what she has been charged with in a FIR lodged by a homemaker in Mumbai, who has accused her husband, in-laws and Radhe of dowry harassment. Earlier in July 2002, Radhe allegedly paid a huge bribe to bag the post of mahamandaleshwar of Juna Akhara, from which she was removed shortly after the bribery scandal

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rich and poor devotees. They lead a lavish lifestyle, some of them are affluent

are above the laws of the land. The other dangerous

are dedicated to the cause of the so-called Hindu nation, which they aim to achieve by shedding blood of innocent Muslims. The deep polarisation in society is as much their handiwork as that of radical Muslims.

Today, secularism is much ridiculed and vilified in the country because sane voices who speak up against these self-styled godmen and terrorists are drowned by the rants of the so-called patriotic voices of Hindutva. Ironically, in the age of modernity and modernisation, blind faith has trounced rationality.

India today shows more signs of regression than progress. How else does one explain the tremendous faith so many people repose in men and women who claim to have supernatural powers, but are the proverbial wolves in saint's clothing? INAV

enough to travel around the globe in private jets and count among their friends politicians and industrialists. Intoxicated on power, it is but natural for them to believe that they

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Of late, there has been a rising murmur about the idea of women travelling alone. Here's an insight by Ayushman Dutta

"To awaken alone in a strange town is one of the pleasantest sensations in the world." - Freya Stark

Like everything else, the stereotype that women cannot travel alone permeates in the conventional minds of society. Give it a second thought and you would realise that this notion is not just archaic but rather ludicrous. The fact is women today have left their imprints in all human endeavours be it politics, business or sports suggest that there is absolutely no reason why women can't venture out of her nutshell without company.

Studies reveal that women who are in the habit of travelling alone are better decision makers and are more confident as individuals. Various independent researchers have tried to gather the opinions of different women across the country on travelling alone and though there's a fair bit of discrepancy when it comes to the varied outlook, there is also a positive air of energy spurring out from some of the women. The business women are believed to be the torch-bearers when it comes to travelling alone as their jobs force them to take several trips every now and then. They are closely followed by working executives of companies who are believed to follow similar traditions.

In the recent years, there has been a growing popularity amongst women on travelling solo and inde-



Going solo

pendent across the globe. Though this travelling 'culture' is most popular in Europe and America, the other countries too are not far behind and are picking up pace as the idea of a woman travelling alone is becoming an increasingly fashionable trend. In India too, there's a steady increase in solo women travellers in spite of the rigid societal norms and security concerns that restrict them from undertaking such escapades. This is a welcome move indeed and such bravado (considering the fact that most women are rather apprehensive of such 'adventures') is definitely

laudable. Talking about our own country, one cannot help but wonder about why is there such a big fuss about solo women travellers and if men can do it, why can't women? Perhaps, it is the inherent insecurities in most women that limit them from breaking the cliché and taking a simple, trivial step. Also, the rising security concerns and the fear of facing an untoward situation could also contribute to a possible aversion. However, amidst all this we have to make sure that there is a renewed belief and there is encouragement and promo-

tion of such an empowering idea. I mean, what better way to empower a woman than drive out all her fears and inhibitions? So here's to all the women who are trying hard to match their itinerary with a travelling companion-get over it, pack your bags, book a ticket and go solo! Maybe this would not only enable you to look at the world from a refreshing new individualistic perspective brought by those travelling quests but also make you feel like Goddess Aphrodite ruling in Mount Olympus!

By Brij Khandelwal

The Taj Mahal in Agra is perhaps the world's most photographed monument. Each minute hundreds of cameras click to shoot memorable photographs.

"It's a matter of pride to be photographed with the Taj Mahal," Denis, a tourist from Australia, told IANS.

These days, with almost every one in possession of a mobile or a digital camera, you can see people taking selfies or posing for a group photograph with friends or relatives. Now with the Taj Mahal getting its own Twitter handle and the monument complex equipped with WiFi facility, no one misses the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shoot and share.

The Taj has not lost its charm. It continues to remain the delight of photographers from all over the world. Lonely Planet's 'ultimate travel list' includes the Taj in the top five tourist destinations in the world. The Taj Mahal is annually visited by over six million people. Unofficial figures are 10 million, as children below 15 do not have to purchase a ticket to enter.

Each day hordes of photographers - both amateurs and professionals - shoot pictures of the white marble mausoleum, bringing joy and excitement to those who pose against its backdrop. "Many feel it's a fulfilment of a long-cherished dream," Amit Sishodia of Agra Beats travel agency said. "It's the architecture, the perspective and the unique

Photographers' delight



backdrop that includes the Yamuna and a whitish skyline that appears to extend to eternity that I find most appealing," city photographer Hemant said. Ramesh Chandra Khandelwal, 90 plus, Agra's oldest photographer who runs the more than a century old firm of Priya Lal and Sons, said the Taj Mahal will never lose its fascination and awe.

"It is one building with immaculate, Nayaab dimensions, perfect lighting conditions, such variety of angles and contrasts, what else could a photographer want? And if you take into account its history and the romanticism associated with it, who would not like to be photographed with it," Khandelwal told IANS. Wildlife photographer Lalit Rajora, who began his

journey 18 years ago from the Taj Mahal, still cannot delink himself from the grand Mughal monument. "The grand Taj Mahal, with its enticing beauty, has an eternal fascination for me. Its aesthetic beauty, pristine craftsmanship and grandeur attracts me as a photograph does. As a photographer, when this attraction converted into an unending romance (Contd on P-VII)

Just did some calculations on my savings. If all goes well, I will be able to retire by my 212th birthday. Ageing is tough. For example, there's a Briton with amnesia who wakes up every morning believing he is repeating one particular day, a medical journal called Neurocase reported last week. It's the day he was scheduled to go to the dentist for root canal surgery - but had an operation which left him like the guy in Groundhog Day, said Dr. Gerard Burgess. By the way, root canals are dental operations with a pain quotient similar to having your body cut in half with a broken jam jar or listening to half a Justin Bieber CD. Groundhog Day is (a) a time-loop movie, and (b) an item on the weekly wall menu at my office canteen. Anyway, it's sad that they can't cure the guy, but they should at least try to make his repeating day a happier one, so he wakes up daily thinking: "Yay! Today's the day a group of bikini models deliver my lottery winnings!" His memory only lasts 90 minutes, so if you just tell him the ladies arrive at lunch-time, he'll have forgotten the whole thing by then. But I do worry about dentists. Earlier this year, I had four dental X-rays. "Is this safe," I asked the dentist. "Sure," he replied in a distant shout from the corridor where he and his assistant covered behind two lots of lead-lined doors. "It's perfectly safe." Children make you feel old, since they think any age over 20 is ancient. A woman once came to our front door saying she was collecting for an old folks home", and my kids asked her: "Have you come to take dad?" I should have sprang to my feet to remind my children that I was in the prime of life, but I was in a really low chair that it takes a while to get out of. We should all take a lesson from China, said to have the healthiest old folks in the world - thanks to their tradition of morning dancing. There was a report in the paper last week about a group of outdoor dancing grannies

who found cars parked in their favorite dancing spot, so they surrounded the cars, lifted them up and placed them elsewhere. Yes, mature adults can be strong. I once separated two supermarket trolleys with my bare hands, and opened a milk carton without power tools. And adults have other uses, too. A reader sent me a recent report about a school district in the US where officials discovered that the heating and air-conditioning systems were still being run by a Commodore Amiga computer. Only one person there remembers how to use it. I remember those first personal computers from the 1980s, made of granite and wood (although I think I had a desktop model, made of dried cow dung and twigs). They were so exciting. Some had eye-popping color graphics (green letters on black), and could produce a wide range of sounds such as "beep" and silence. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to do my regular weightlifting exercise, also known as "standing up". (The writer is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send ideas and comments via his Facebook page)

For amnesia sufferers, every day is dentist's day

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

think I had a desktop model, made of dried cow dung and twigs). They were so exciting. Some had eye-popping color graphics (green letters on black), and could produce a wide range of sounds such as "beep" and silence.

Now if you'll excuse me, I have to do my regular weightlifting exercise, also known as "standing up".

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

Clothes in the sports arena has gone high fashion keeping with today's mood, Pramita Bose discovers

Courting fashion in the play ground

During the recently concluded Wimbledon, the Centre court, as usual, was the focal point with the world's best tennis players vied for the coveted title. But no less of interest was the high-street by fashion reflected in the sportswear adorned the players serving up aces, smashing the ball hard and winning a point.

Over time, custom-made sportswear -hand-crafted or machine-stitched, have set a trend. Fashion has increasingly forayed into sports arena, thanks to an upsurge in consumer culture and corporate sponsorships. The lifestyle and sportswear brands are going in for the kill in the market by flooding it with sportswear that make a statement.

Gone are those old austere dresses of the vintage Victorian era when women players were restricted to a slick, classy white dress with long-sleeved shirts and foot-length skirts. Cut to the current scenario of tennis and badminton, where hip, haute fashion and luxe glamour today rewrite the rules of the dress-code.

Designers too track the trend in sportswear undergoing a sea-change. For women, the modest hemline of old has gone up and up and necklines are also dipping. The T-shirt with collar has given way to lacy backless tops.

"We've always viewed sportswear in fitted silhouettes and solid colours. With people turning more health-conscious and increasingly investing in the same, the stress is on fashionable active wear," observes Delhi-based designer Ishita Mangal.

Given a choice, she would definitely wish to style up the Russian tennis beauty Maria Sharapova. She would like to drape her "in a loose sleeveless shift

dress which is simply cut out in a round neck with a tunic shape to breathe through because, the game requires a lot of movement to maintain the momentum."



She selects metallic dyes like a lustrous watery gold to do the honours. "The gold material has to be in a see-through, transparent gauzy fabric with very subtle appeal to the eye. Inside, she can wear high-waist hot pants and a cropped top in off-white lycra texture. I think she would totally pull this off on any tennis field," she suggests.

Says designer Masumi Mewawalla of Mumbai-

based Pink Peacock Couture, "Fashion has surely become integral to sports and it's a concept much in vogue. Both men and women sports icons seem

doing the rounds now with a slick T-back or crossed-back tee teamed with a skinny pair of three-quarter tights, a contrast head band and bold-coloured shoes. Great for showing off a toned body. "

For men, baggy loose tracks with stretch vests and a smart cap can complete the perfect get-up. "For the on-field option, the jersey with its brand-loyal logo and a brazen monochrome look is the ideal mantra, while off-field, an iconic sports-figure can smoothly parade comfort with a stylish edge," she summarises.

Accessorising is also an art to be cultivated with accuracy. "It enhances the fashion appeal in the best possible way. Keeping the

flavour of the season, sports accessories come in smart shades, head bands, caps and the widely-used latest gadget of pedometer bands which is a must have," Mewawalla adds.

The chrome-palette is vast and vibrant varying from elegant whites, blacks, pinks to jazzy neons. For the Indian runway, she votes for Virat Kohli and Sania Mirza to grace it as Mewawalla reasons: "Kohli knows the



gentleman's game as well as fashion in the correct proportions which is an impeccable quality." Tennis diva Sania, according to her, "walks the ramp like she owns it". Internationally, former England soccer-legend David Beckham knows fashion like the back of his hand, she observes.

"Often the relentless match-schedules, rigorous training and constant monitoring in public domain make things too suffocating for comfort. There steps in the necessity of a suitable wardrobe to ease the aching pressure off one's back," observes Olympic bronze medalist badminton player Saina Nehwal. "One can certainly modify or tailor-make the dress as per requirement in order to perfectly fit the body. It also depends on the type of physique the player

has with a view to look best in the garb. Besides, the fabrics must be cosy to the skin and weather-friendly," shares the 25-year old, presently ranked second in the world.

With an affinity for orange, light blue and black hues for her costumes, Saina picks up simplicity for casualwear. "My style statement is to do something which suits me best. Many a time, I put on a track suit which is cushy for travel purposes. But it is my mother who mostly takes the call on my sartorial choices," she reveals. Opting for "hygiene which means health", the world-class player never forgets to stockpile a box of comfort-lingerie and inners to feel good.

Menswear designer Medhavini Khaitan looks

into the paradigm shift in sports designer-wear. "Earlier commercial brands would chip in for the players' kit and their wardrobe. But now couturiers look for the job individually." Designers being a creative lot would naturally love to broaden their repertoire with theme-oriented stuff. From gym-addicts to kids' clothes to lifestyle products, they aim to stamp their legacy." There is a difference between designing a single man's outfit to a composite squad. "There's more scope in a one-man show than an entire club, where you have to follow a set code of norms," she explains.

For the soggy monsoon season, Khaitan roots for sky blue, burnt yellow, orange and tints of mint.

Looking back to the more 'old school style' of

players' 'dressing room' Medhavini mentions the retro debonair Nawab of Pataudi, Ravi Shastri and Mohd. Azharuddin as the most well-dressed men for their sheer sense of fashion and sophistication.

Sportswear manufacturing companies with top-rung brands are also into getting mileage out of fashion with functionality facility. Premium brand names are swamping the market to unpack an extensive array of fashion-friendly leggings, jackets, tees, tracksuits, joggers' pants, sports-bras, racerback tanks, plimsolls, gym-shorts, go-faster stripes to add loads of killer attitude to the wearer's wardrobe. (TWF)

Image: Serena Williams looks fashionable in blue while India's Sania Mirza is a trendsetter too in sportwear. She also walks the ramp with elan.

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambri

Sunday, August 23, 2015

As Mercury semi-square Mars on your solar return chart you may have to change and adapt to circumstances and situations and may need to make some compromises. Make the best of what is available and keep the ideas and innovation coming as this will help you make the breakthrough. It is a good phase for romance which will have a positive impact on you. If you are in the midst of any dispute regard ancestral property then it can be settled amicably. Family life will be pleasant and supportive. There will be harmony in your interactions as you take the initiative to be proactive.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

You would be highly ambitious and work hard to fulfill desired professional goals. The key to success is adopting a realistic, practical and disciplined approach towards work and commitments. This period brings excellent opportunities for people in show business, beauty-culture and related fields. Your ability to express yourself and to solve problems is enhanced. Professionally there will be huge expenses as well as financial gains from foreign business associates. Family members would be supportive. It is easier than usual to be sensible about your diet, health and fitness needs.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

The planetary configuration is such that it brings desire for love, harmony and peace in your life. Personal and professional relations are loving, stable, and harmonious. This would be a good week for financial undertakings involving electronics, technology, arts as well as group activities. Learning new things is your passion. You are more sensitive artistically, your imagination is stirred, and you have an increased appreciation for subtleties. You are thinking more creatively and express yourself with more sensitivity, compassion, and warmth. There may be a minor health problem and you need to give more attention to your health.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

This period brings financial benefits and proves good for long terms investments and finances. You would impress people with your communication skills inspiring people to trust you. Self-confidence and actions are highlighted. You tend to instinctively know the right course of action to take in adverse situations. You will be responsible, hard working, dutiful, and serious when it comes to finances and romantic relationships. This is an excellent time under which to work on resolving differences in values or problems with loved ones.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

Your courage and confidence will keep your hopes alive. You can attempt difficult tasks, resolve complicated issues and connect with unapproachable people at work. Increased energy along with a renewed feeling of confidence favors you. Make the best of time and utilize your energy accordingly. Problems in your life may be overcome by bravery, self-assertion, and directness. There's nothing wrong with a bit of self-centeredness. You are highly motivated to make money and this enhances your energy for new moneymaking projects. Romantic matters, as well as pleasure-seeking activities, come to the fore this week. You might spend a lot of time in making short frequent trips, visiting friends and relatives.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

You achieve success as you are outstanding in your work. Attend to professional, personal and material aspects during this time. You interact with people in position of power and authority gracefully and diplomatically. You think in an unorthodox way and this brings appreciation from seniors and peers alike. You take on a dreamy and philosophical outlook, which opens up your heart to new experiences. Strong existing relationships are likely to grow and transform this week. Your finances could also improve by continuous efforts and follow up. In love and romance your personal relationship takes on a special quality as you communicate beautifully. Health needs care and old habits of excesses need to be kicked.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

Self-confidence and quick action are highlighted. A strong positive feeling towards your beloved encourages you to do something new that is unusual and would be a wonderful surprise. Your personal charm and charisma take you through complicated situations. You tend to instinctively

know the right course of action to take in most situations. This stands you in good stead when you are faced with opposition. This is a good time for teachers and those in manufacturing and finance industries. People in marketing and sales will have to work hard to meet professional commitments.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

Your domestic and career needs are fulfilled. New ideas and concepts floated by you at your work place will be appreciated. You find an intoxicating romance and express your feelings to your loved one. At work, you may take up new assignments and projects that would bring creativity and innovation. Your inner hopes and desires come to the forefront even as you tackle your job with a realistic and practical purpose of mind. There may be gains from property, ancestral land, shares and assets in hand. Spending time in solitude among natural surroundings is therapeutic.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

You are unusually introspective and reserved. It is a good time to organize your workplace and make it well equipped with the latest infrastructure. This would help you to get better efficiencies to achieve desired goals. This is an exceptionally exciting time as professional and business opportunities are offered to you. Your communications and presentation style brings accolades from people who matter. Your actions and emotions are balanced as you bring more accuracy in your work area. You are just fair and generous in family and professional situations. Health needs to be looked at also be careful in your interpersonal dealings and avoid confrontations.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You work hard to handle business ventures and collaborations. You may take up assignments and projects but would require extra effort and networking to take them through. Your efforts to reach out to new people will be accepted but with reservation however you meet with success in foreign matters. On the finance front expenditure will be on the rise. You would be able to make an impact on business associates with hard work and creative ideas. Your creativity will assist in your output at work and help you gain recognition. You extend your hospitality to family.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

You are practical, hard-working and helpful in personal and professional matters this week. You would find it easier to express your unique individuality, even if this involves changing careers or jobs. Time is well spent on your hobby that reflects your unique personality. You are more willing to adapt to new circumstances, ideas, and unfamiliar situations. You are able to find creative solutions to problems now. Health remains good as you are filled with a positive energy.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

Responsibilities and workload are on the increase and the key to success is in adopting a realistic, practical and disciplined approach towards life. This week proves to be good for persons in finance, shares, law and management. Your ability to express yourself and to solve problems is enhanced. Students in creative fields and the performing arts will get success and good results. In money matters there are outflows as well as financial gains. There is active support from family members and business associates. If you've been off track on your exercise routine be kind to yourself, but make sure you re-commit to your personal goals.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

The desire for love, harmony and peaceful life will come to fore. You are powerful, transformative and energetic. You make a mark at your place of work and gain recognition from associates. This period brings for you socializing, romance and stability at work place. Love, friendship and relationship are emphasized. Students will need to work hard and put in the extra effort for forthcoming exams. You would make best use of your knowledge and skills but wisdom would influence more to the knowledge. You are likely to take your hobbies and talents more seriously. In fact, this is an excellent time for materializing a personal hobby; turning it into a business.

Photographers' delight

(Contd from P-VI) and passion is difficult to tell. All I the world that provides such a spectacular variety and



can say is that the Taj, under the seasonal hues of the sky enkindles my soul, gives wings to my imagination and meaning to my expression and creativity," Rajoria waxed eloquent while speaking to IANS.

Vijay Goyal, owner of the Speed Colour Lab, who spent 20-odd years at the Taj Mahal shooting pictures for tourists and VIPs, told IANS: "I recall the statement of a lady tourist long back. She reacted: 'Oh my god, this looks much better than the photograph I saw back home'."

Goyal said the Taj Mahal faces south. "The sun rises from the east on the left and traverses the whole distance to the right (west) providing different contrasts, shades and colours - never a dull moment. Each angle is different, its symmetry and geometry is perfect and flawless. There is a mix of colours - red sand-stone juxtaposed with white marble and a profusion of green vegetation, while the shades of blue and white. Rare is a man-made structure in

mind you, there is no artificial lighting anywhere as for the Eiffel Tower or many other monuments."

Vishal, a photographer and owner of the Nice Studio, one of Agra's oldest, told IANS: "Every day, every hour, every season is different. The white marble mausoleum reflects nature's varied moods. People see romance and poetry in it. The beauty of the Taj Mahal lies in its totality, not in parts. The framed portrait - like the view from the main entrance - has been compared to a veiled bride. The mystery of the Taj's beauty will never be fully explained. The colours of Jannat have been used to weave intricate patterns and layouts, the fountains, the green shrubs, the natural skyline...you look at it from any angle, it's a manifestation of beauty and no wonder many say it's a divine monument."

"Even the visitors in their thousands coming daily are part of the Taj Mahal, adding colours and flavours of a cosmopolitan nature, as if the whole world is represented here in a minuscule. The tranquility and the awe that one feels gives it a special status. The Taj is a living and breathing monument, you can feel it," 72-year-old Surendra Sharma, who is associated with the Fine Arts Studio, told IANS.

"Now, of course with advanced technology and camera-fitted mobile phones, everyone is a photographer, but there was a time when with primitive cameras and shooting in black and white, the real essence of photography was brought out and memorable pictures were taken," Sharma added. (The writer can be contacted at brij.k@ians.in)

“The only way you can sustain a permanent change is to create a new way of thinking, acting, and being.”

--- Jennifer Hudson

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 14 SHILLONG, MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2015

India-Pak talks short-circuited

THE proposed NSA level talks between India and Pakistan was aborted a day before the proposed meet. This was bound to happen since Pakistan was adamant on meeting the Hurriyat leaders and turning the talks on terror into a composite dialogue involving Kashmir. This is something that India was not ready to discuss. Pakistan is a slippery customer. Its civilian prime minister is not in control of things. The Pakistan army and the ISI take the final call on security matters. Hence it was only a matter of who would blink first. Finally it was Pakistan that finally called off the talks scheduled for Sunday. Their contention was that External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj had virtually given an ultimatum to Islamabad to give a commitment that it would not meet the Kashmiri separatists. Swaraj was reacting to Pakistan NSA Sartaj Aziz's remarks that he was willing to come to India for talks without any pre-conditions. India was also upset over Pakistan including Kashmir as part of the agenda for the NSA talks that was mainly scheduled to discuss terror.

The first-ever NSA-level talks was agreed upon in July this year in Ufa during a meeting between the prime ministers of India and Pakistan. On Saturday Swaraj clarified that what was agreed on at Ufa was not the resumption of the composite dialogue but only a decision to talk about terror to create an atmosphere conducive for dialogue on other issues. Pakistan responded by saying that terrorism was a part of the composite dialogue, discussed simultaneously with other issues. Pakistan's NSA Sartaj Aziz said it was unreasonable for India to decide unilaterally that other issues would be discussed after terrorism has been discussed and eliminated. India's problem is that it does not want Pakistan to meet the Hurriyat leaders who have been propagating Azaad Kashmir. Pakistan on the other hand see such meetings as a long-standing convention.

Interestingly both countries had prepared dossiers of acts of terror committed on their respective countries and this is what has generated much curiosity. The aborted talks therefore are a disappointment on several counts. Meanwhile, the US has expressed its disappointment at the aborted talks between the National Security Advisors of India and Pakistan but said that the two countries should try and resume formal talks soon. That is something we have to wait and watch!

LOOKING BACK

January 23, 1988

Buta's appeal to GNLF

Union Home Minister Mr. Buta Singh today appealed to the people of the Darjeeling District "not to resort to agitations to resolve their problems". Talking to newsmen here, he said "people's grievances could be redressed only through negotiations in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation and not through agitations or bandhs".

He was reacting to the GNLF's call for a 40 day bandh in the Darjeeling District from February 10 to press its demands. Mr. Singh expressed hope that the talks on the issue slated at New Delhi tomorrow would be "fruitful". Mr. Buta Singh said Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was "very keen" on implementing "every clause of the Assam Accord in the interest of the people of that state". He criticized Assam Chief Minister P.K. Mahanta for his "tirade against the centre" and advised him to concentrate on implementing programmes for the "uplift of the downtrodden".

It has become a "fashion" nowadays to make "false and vague" charges

against the Prime Minister and the Union Government, he added.

PM to begin tour on Jan 27

Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi is scheduled to arrive at Nongstoin at noon on Wednesday (Jan 27) to begin a two-day election campaign in Meghalaya, according to information's available here. Mr. Gandhi who is expected to land at Borjhar at 11 AM will take off in a helicopter for Nongstoin where he will address a public meeting. Later he will address the second Public meeting in West Khasi Hills at Mawkyrwat. He is scheduled to begin his election tour of Garo Hills at Betasing in Wednesday afternoon. After addressing a couple of meetings, he will halt for the night at Tura.

On Thursday, Mr. Gandhi will begin his second lap of the tour in Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills with a meeting at Bhoilymbong at 11 AM. The Prime Minister will address a public meeting at Garrison ground in Shillong in the afternoon. Later he will leave for Jowai for his last engagements in Meghalaya.

IBDLP: Attempt to improve livelihoods

By H H Mohrmen

Governments both state and central are livelihood providers; it is the duty of the government as enshrined in the Constitution to provide basic human needs to its citizens. And since independence the country has launched a series of programmes and schemes to fight against Poverty, Ignorance and Disease but the battle is not yet over. Schemes like MGNREGS etc., are targeted to achieve that goal. The State government too has launched several schemes to help improve the livelihoods of people.

Many schemes were initiated to eradicate poverty by targeting the poor and needy people of the state, but most of these schemes failed miserably because they were either not properly conceived or badly administered. Ultimately they had no impact on the livelihoods of people. Not only the State Government's schemes went down the drain but even centrally sponsored schemes aimed at improving the livelihoods of those living below the poverty line failed to reach the expected target. It was then that the State Government under the leadership of Dr Mukul Sangma came up with a new programme to tackle this most important problem of the state.

When the Government came up with the Integrated Basin Development and Livelihood Promotion Program (IBDLP), I was amongst those who publicly criticized the program and called it a non-starter. I questioned the effectiveness of a programme based on river basins when water in most of the rivers in the East and West Jaintia hills district are polluted. I predicted that the project would fail because in the case of Jaintia hills all the river basins are not conducive for any livelihood activities.

I took a small part in the IBDLP and was able to understand the concept and the approach of the programme. That helped me get a better idea of the programme. But there are also concerns lest this also fails if those involved in implementing the programme especially the officers do not understand the idea behind the IBDLP.

First of all I was able to understand that although river basins are the basis on which the programme was formulated, the larger objective is to improve the liv-

elihoods of people. IBDLP is not another Department of the Government but it is a programme that adopts a different approach to help improve livelihoods based on three important pillars; building entrepreneurship, improving governance, and natural resource management. The Government has also constituted and instituted various agencies like the Meghalaya Basin Development Agency, Meghalaya Institute of Entrepreneurship, Meghalaya Institute of Governance (MIG) and Meghalaya Institute of Natural Resources (MINR) to achieve this goal.

So how will IBDLP be able to improve the livelihoods of people when almost all programmes and schemes initiated by both the central and state governments have failed? IBDLP works on mission mode. The programme formulators have a clear concept of what they are going to do, when they replaced the word 'beneficiary' with the word 'partner' while referring to the target group. For some this may sound insignificant but this itself is an effort aimed at changing the mindset of the people from just being beneficiaries who always expect doles from the government to a partner in the project to improve their livelihoods and also help improve the economy of the state.

This programme is expected to bring change because it is based on partnership not only between the government and the citizen of the state, but a partnership between the different government departments, NGOs and other stakeholders. At the inter-departmental level, the word is 'convergence' and again this in itself is huge shift in the government approach to implementing schemes and projects. In the new approach the goal of the various government departments is to jointly create many successful stories of farmers becoming entrepreneurs and not merely successful stories of different government departments' achievements. In short, at the end of the day the goal is to produce people's success stories in partnership with the government.

IBDLP is also different because the programme intends to improve livelihoods of the people by striking at the root of the problem. Unlike previous government programmes, the staff in-

olved in the programme are trained to understand poverty and different aspects of poverty. The staff of Basin as the programme is commonly known by the people are also trained on different livelihood intervention tools and how to convert a partner to a successful entrepreneur. In the past, schemes and programmes were launched without the staff of the departments having any training to understand poverty and different livelihood intervention tools. In the IBDLP, however the implementers are clear about the concept and approach and they know what they are doing, so it is no longer a case of groping in the dark. The Government also understands that livelihood is not an issue that it can take lightly; hence it has involved Institutes like the Institute of Livelihood Research and Training (ILRT) of the BASIX group to conduct a series of training for people who are the driving force of the programme.

The staffs and partner NGOs are even trained to conduct surveys on livelihood activities or livelihood portfolio mapping of the villages before suggesting any livelihood intervention in the area. The Enterprise Resource Persons (ERPs) and staff of the Basin Development Units (BDUs) are also expected to conduct Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the community to be able to understand them before suggesting any interventions for improving their livelihoods. Previous government schemes and programmes failed because, though 'beneficiaries' (as they used to call them) were trained on the livelihoods that they were supported for but their competency was not assessed before making the intervention. In the IBDLP program, before suggesting any intervention a partner(s) has to undergo training on the livelihood activity that he or she wishes to pursue. After that a series of interviews and assessment tests like focus behaviour event interview (FBEI) are conducted to assess the capacity of the partner before he or she is supported.

A common problem that different line departments face in their livelihood promotion effort is market link-

age. Many a time after the intervention, farmers are able to scale up their production but the problem is marketing the excess products. The staff working in the programme and the NGOs are also trained to intervene at different levels of the production chain which includes market linkage. They are also trained to support the entrepreneurs to go for value addition if need be.

Water is not only the central idea on which the programme was formulated, but the 10 missions which include Livestock mission, Apiculture Mission, Energy Mission, Forestry Mission, Green Mission, Horticulture Mission, Sericulture and Weaving, Tourism, Water and Agriculture Mission, of the program are based on sustainable use of natural resources available in the state. At the inter-department level, convergence is the key word but it is also an area where the stakeholders need to put more effort to achieve their goals. In many cases convergence of different department schemes can be used to improve livelihoods. Different government departments have different schemes, but do not have the tools or know how to assess the competency of the partner(s) before any support is given. It is here that the Basin can come in because IBDLP staff and partner NGOs are also trained to help partners build and support their institutions like SHGs, Joint Liability Group (JLGs) and even Farmers' Producers' Organisation (FPOs).

In the brief period that our NGO has been partnering with MBDA, my observation is that if the government really wants IBDLP to have an impact on the livelihoods of people, there are many issues that need to be addressed immediately. There are cases where even nodal officers do not have the basic idea about the program; this has to be corrected. Convergence is also not happening as expected, because departments are reluctant to join the programme for fear of not getting due credit for the success of the project. IBDLP is not about which department gets the credit for the success of the project; rather it is about how departmental cooperation can help the people. It is about the success of the state government's effort to improve the livelihoods of the people. No wonder implementing the IBDLP is a challenge and the Chief Minister should be aware of this.

TO THE EDITOR

Rejoinder

Editor,

The Shillong Manipuri Students' Union condemns the letter captioned "NEIGRIHMS Seat Controversy" published in The Shillong Times, (ST Aug 22, 2015) and seeks an apology from the concerned writer, Partha Dasgupta. The Union views the contents of the letters with seriousness and considers it an insult to the community and State (Manipur) as a whole. Such statements attempt to vilify those students who have qualified for their Medical Entrance Examination through sheer hard work and dedication.

The Union believes that the authorities conducting the Medical Entrance Exam for the selection of the MBBS candidates in NEIGRIHMS are conducted fairly and no such backdoor entry is used. Hence, the exam results are also fair. MBBS Seats are allotted to students based on their performance in the entrance exams. The difference might lie in the method of preparations / Coaching, reference books and guidance by parents / guardians / teachers etc. Hence blaming the students / staff / other dignitaries of the NEIGRIHMS would be incorrect.

The Union further appeals to the people of Meghalaya and others residing in Meghalaya to stop such rumours that

would hurt the sentiments of the other communities or States.

Yours etc.,
Huidrom Sangba
President, SMSU
Shillong

Editor replies: The 'Letters to the Editor' column is a space provided for readers to express their concerns on different issues. This provides opportunity for the institutions named to introspect and see if there is merit in the allegations. Readers who have serious disagreements with a letter to the editor can send in a rejoinder which will be duly published. This is a civilized way of engaging in a democracy.

Misrepresentation of facts

Editor,

This is with reference to the letter to the editor - "NEIGRIHMS seat controversy" by Partha Dasgupta (ST Aug, 22, 2015) I was absolutely stunned at the poorly researched letter that Mr Dasgupta had e-mailed without going through the facts. The letter is a direct insult to the deserving candidates from Manipur. For the sake of Mr Dasgupta (and other minds alike) I'd like to point out a few facts. Firstly, NEIGRIHMS is a regional institute for the Northeast (NOTE: NE stands for North East). This simply means that all Science students from the Northeast (who have successfully

completed their higher secondary examinations) are eligible to write the examination. May you please clarify the question you've raised here, "What about being fair to the locals for a change?" Is Manipur not a part of Northeast?

Second, NEIGRIHMS is a prestigious institute and acquiring a seat is coveted among many students in Manipur. It has become an annual-affair for "special buses" to ply from Manipur to Shillong especially for the examinations. I'd like to therefore, raise a question for Mr. Dasgupta on whether he had done his research before making such allegations by visiting the exam centres to see for himself that there are in fact, more than 80 per cent candidates from Manipur in every centre?

Third, Manipur is a lot like Delhi in terms of coaching centres. Despite the regular bandhs and blockades, students in Manipur do not cease to attend their tuition classes. I wonder if he has ever visited the State. If he had, he would have noticed a plethora of coaching-centres there, a trend that other states are yet to catch up with. He would have also found the coaching-centres not only in the capital city but also in the outskirts. Hard-working students from Manipur start preparations from dawn for most competitive examinations; some even before their admissions to their respective higher sec-

ondary classes. For them, education is the way to the outside world.

Mr Dasgupta's letter not only hurts the sentiments of the deserving candidates from Manipur, but also the administration of NEIGRIHMS. How has he concluded that selections at the Institute are done via "Backdoor allotment" for a particular community? Does he have any proof? Further, his letter, sadly, seems like a racial target towards a particular community. His statement - "This problem needs to be addressed once and for all" is merely serving as a catalyst to ignite a communal divide between the communities in Shillong.

Yours etc.,
K Bharat Singh,
Via email

On the Law Syiem at Mawpat

Editor,

After reading about proposals of converting LAW SYIEM (Ri Syiem) belonging to the kur Syiem Mylliem into Law Adong, as a member of kur Syiem Mylliem, I would like to share some facts about Law Syiem and our land tenure system that is practiced by all the founding clans (kurs) of Hima Mylliem. LAW SYIEM cannot be converted into LAW ADONG and vice versa. LAW SYIEM is RI SYIEM. The Law Adong of Hima Mylliem which is about 500 acres is situated in Sangmeim presently know as Shillong

Indi-Pak dialogue short-circuited

By M J Akbar

The India-Pakistan dialogue has been comatose ever since it suffered a severe stroke at Ufa in 2001; will it sink into deeper relapse in 2015? The diagnosis has not changed. Ufa collapsed because Pakistan would not accept terrorism as a central problem, largely because to do so would be self-incriminating. Its equivocation is evident in the threat that always accompanies any dispute over the agenda: talk about Kashmir, or else!

We are hearing the same language today: Sartaj Aziz told a press conference in Pakistan that if India did not discuss Kashmir it would soon realise that the consequences would be. In other words, the tap of violence is controlled by Islamabad, and it can be turned on or off at its command. To an extent this is a game of "chicken": let's see who buckles first. But a "chicken run" can also have suicidal consequences. You can always fall off the cliff.

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's problem is a familiar trope of his country's hydra-headed approach towards India. The analogy bears attention. Hydra, in Greek mythology, was a water serpent with a unique propensity. Each time you cut its head off, two more appeared.

Hercules found the solution. The hero burnt the serpent's neck after cutting the head. There is no Hercules around capable of such a feat because the serpent saps milk supplied by powerful sections of Pakistan's army and sleeps in the sanctuary offered by the vast infrastructure of terrorist groups that conduct war by other means against India. When Nawaz Sharif, in an earlier incarnation, sought, sincerely, to improve relations through the Lahore summit with Atal Behari Vajpayee, Kargil followed. Today, the far less dramatic understanding at Ufa provoked the same lobby into stepping up cross-border terrorism and ceasefire violations.

In his attempts to appease Hydra, Sartaj Aziz, Nawaz Sharif's NSA, slipped into distortion when he asserted that Kashmir was mentioned on the agenda drawn up at Ufa for his discussions with India's NSA Ajit Doval. There is no mention of Kashmir in the text of the Ufa joint statement. Pakistan now says that if all issues connected to terrorism are on the table then Kashmir is implicitly there. Statements are not formulated to cover the implicit; every word is used, and fought over, because it has an explicit connotation. If Kashmir is not mentioned then it is not there. There is some confusion over the precise meaning of "talks" in the context

of India and Pakistan. Both sides are committed to what is known as a "composite" dialogue, and this indeed covers all issues, including Kashmir. The Narendra Modi government has never shied away from this commitment. But the Ajit Doval-Sartaj Aziz meeting is not part of a composite dialogue, but a by-product of a conversation between Modi and Sharif on the sidelines of an international conference, with a specific subject of high concern, terrorism. Delhi holds that Kashmir is a dispute between India and Pakistan, without reference to any third party, whether the third party be a foreign country or elements that do not consider themselves Indian.

The meeting between NSAs is designed to try and clear hurdles that block resumption of the composite dialogue. If Pakistan is honest about confronting terrorism, then it surely cannot send a signal of support to secessionists who promote or condone terrorism. An in-your-face policy is deliberately inflammatory, and hardly conducive to preparing public opinion for larger tasks ahead. Would Pakistan applaud if the Indian NSA or Foreign Secretary insisted on meeting Baloch separatists prior to talks in Islamabad?

At the moment of writing, doors have been banged, loudly, but not fully shut. Talking to Pakistan is always like walking on glass; you never know when it is going to crack. It is safer to hope for the best and expect the worst; and don't place any bets. Perhaps this may not be the best time to mention an inconvenient truth, but Islamabad has accepted this position of the Modi government before - on the day the Prime Minister took his oath of office.

This is an anxious swivel-point in relations between India and Pakistan. We have rather lost sight of an important fact: at Ufa, Sharif invited Narendra Modi to visit Pakistan for the Saarc conference next year, and our Prime Minister accepted. If that visit does take place, it could mark a very high point in the history of Saarc. The meeting between NSAs is the first step on that difficult ladder. Each rung will have to be negotiated with care. India will provide hard evidence on terrorists nurtured within Pakistan, including about a kingpin, Dawood Ibrahim. If Pakistan acts it will assuage not only India's concerns, but also those of the United States, which has been the Pakistan army's most consistent fund manager.

There will be many ways to slip between now and 2016, but to fall off the first rung is equivalent to sending a gilt-edged invitation to misfortune.

peak. Like all tribal societies, traditional customs are practiced within one's own family and are still the driving discipline of every home but the conversion to Christianity of almost every clan member led to the creation of great conflicts in our thinking, clouding our mind and our ability to sort out the mixture of culture and traditional beliefs from religion.

In Hima Mylliem, all founding clans have their own clan land. In order for a clan to exist there has to be a clan land so when the founding clans of Hima Mylliem created their own Syiem clan of Mylliem "ka kur Syiem", they gave us the land Law Syiem (Ri Syiem) and the title Syiem thus making us culturally and spiritually bound to this sacred forest. The Syiem of Mylliem and his Dorbar are not land owners. Even the Dorbar of the Syiem Mylliem at Mawpat was built on a plot of land purchased from the Synrem clan. "Modern-day chiefs/Syiems" shamelessly abuse all customs and traditions and act like Maharajas which they are not. One of the ruling Syiems even built his own house in LAW SYIEM by signing that plot of land by himself to himself and now the present Syiem and his myntris are proceeding with their plan to divide LAW SYIEM among themselves.

Though various people show personal interest in Law Syiem, the kur Syiem Mylliem still will not confront the reality in public; our elders still view all these actions with trepidation by falling back on our belief that the spirits of our ancestors that dwell in the forest will curse anyone who lays hand on this sacred forest with untold misfortunes. It is said that there is a stone (Mawniam Mawnam) where clan members would pay their obeisance to the spirits of our ancestors invoking divine protection. As children, we were taught about our land and forest (ka khyndew ka shiyap ki khlaw ki btap) saying never to cheat or steal even a handful lest the creator will curse on us. I still remember a song we would sing -

"Ko khynnah barit, wat juh tuh jong ki brieve/ la ei ba phi thied to da kynmaw ban siew/ Ban tuh tang khyndiat ruh ka long ka bymdei/ Ka long ka jing ioh-roit ia ka ktien jong u Blei". (Little children never steal what belongs to others/Remember to pay for whatever you buy/To steal even a little is wrong/It is like trampling on God's words)

This is the story which I will pass on to my children and they will do the same to theirs. It is our heritage.

Yours etc.,
Daphishisa Syiem,
Via email

"It's not that some people have willpower and some don't. It's that some people are ready to change and others are not."

--- James Gordon

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 15 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2015

Greek turmoil again

GREEK rebels have not yet been reconciled to the international bailout which has doubtless impaired the country's sovereignty. The rebels walked out of the leftist Syriza party at the end of last week. A split has occurred after leader Alexis Tsipras resigned as Prime Minister to pave the way for early elections. All this was only predictable. The anti-bailout Popular Unity Party formed by the extreme leftists is expected to wean away some anti-euro voters from Tsipras. Syriza moves closer to the political centre. That should make it easier for Tsipras to implement the bailout programme if he is re-elected. Greece's President had given the Conservative opposition a chance to form a new government. But the move proved abortive. So Greeks are now headed for a second election on September 20. Uncertainty prevails in the country though money started flowing from Greece's third bailout programme approved by EU countries led by Germany and France. The election may stand in the way of a review planned for October of Greece's progress under its new bailout programme.

Doubts are thick in the air about Greece's ability to honour its pledges as required by Eurozone countries. However, a majority of Greeks had become extremely tired of the prolonged turmoil caused by the country's economic chaos. There was a three week shutdown of banks and capital controls had to be imposed. On the other hand, the present state of uncertainty is not in the interest of the common people of the country. The outcome of the September poll will decide most of the issues. Meanwhile, how the US and the EU countries would respond to the unstable situation remains to be seen.

LOOKING BACK

January 23, 1988

7 of a family shot dead in Punjab

Fourteen people, including seven women and two terrorists, were killed in the past 24 hours in Punjab, while security forces nabbed 12 extremists.

Terrorists massacred seven members of a farmer's family at Deepsinghwal village under the Sadique police station in Faridkot district last night.

An Akali activist identified as Nirmal Singh at village Udhanangal under police station Chowk Mehta in Amritsar district late tonight was dragged out by extremists and shot dead.

Terrorists gunned down one Mohan Singh in Manochahal village under Jhabbal police station in Amritsar district this evening.

In an encounter, police shot dead two terrorists at Sindhra bridge under Sirhind police station in Patiala District last night. The dead terrorists are yet to be identified. A scooter and two 12-bore guns were recovered from the dead.

The Ropar district police found a body with blunt weapon injuries at Khanoli village in the district.

A partial to complete bandh was observed in many parts of the state in protests against the killings at Barnala and Ludhiana yesterday.

Gurkha youth front's charge

The Meghalaya Gurkha Youth Front has blamed a section of the Nepali leaders of Meghalaya for the holocaust of 1987 which left several thousand Nepalis fleeing the State.

In a press release issued here on Saturday, the President of the Front Mr. Amresh Thapa said that although the Nepalis wanted to live harmoniously with the tribals,

an adverse situation was created by these leaders for their "own selfish interest".

The press release said that since the largest concentration of Gurkha population was located in Mawprew constituency, the Front had decided to invite all the three candidates in the fray in the constituency to a common platform for enabling them to make up their mind about whom they should support.

Marxist MP's plea for supporting PDIC

Marxist Parliamentarian Mr. Amal Dutta has accused the Congress (I) leadership of winning the gap between tribal and non-tribal communities in Meghalaya.

Addressing an election meeting in behalf of the PDIC at Laban on Saturday, Mr. Dutta said that the Congress (I) had resorted to "divide and rule" policy in so far as allocation of tickets in the five general seats was concerned. He said the policy of granting tickets on ethnic considerations would aggravate the ethnic conflict in the State.

Meghalaya remained backward despite having high per capita allotment of Rs. 4000. He said the benefit of such high allocations did not filter down to the grass-roots. A small section of people prospered while the masses remained poor.

Mr. Dutta was all praise for Mr. G. G. Swell who, he said, invited him to address the meeting for defeating the Congress (I). Mr. Dutta said Mr. Swell was an "able" and "respected" parliamentarian of the country.

He called upon the people to rise above communal consideration and vote for the "fittest candidates".

Indo-Pak Ties

Caught in a time-warp

By Poonam I Kaushish

"One has to cultivate a certain amount of hypocrisy to be a peace-loving human being." Tomi Ungerer's observation seems to hit the nail on the head when it comes to Indo-Pak relations. It was a no brainer that the two National Security Advisors Ajit Doval-Sartaj Aziz talks, if one could call it that, would be called off on some pretext at the penultimate time. And they were. New Delhi wanted discussions on terror, Islamabad Kashmir.

Plainly, both were only interested in showcasing to the world at large, especially US that they were willing to talk, than in actually talking. Yet both played out the predictable cat and mouse game, reveling in talking at each other and playing to the gallery for the benefit of their respective domestic audiences. Quibbling over semantics, whether "outstanding issues" encompass Kashmir!

Besides, from New Delhi's perspective the NSAs were adept only for talking on their area of expertise, terror, certainly not Kashmir. After all, Aziz is a minor cog in the all-powerful troika: Army, ISI and Establishment and could serve as only a messenger. And Kashmir had been discussed between Modi-Sharif at Ufa last month.

Add to this, both sides are rigid about their respective positions. New Delhi refuses to budge on Kashmir and Islamabad has one vital national interest: Kashmir. Any novice who is adept in foreign policy manoeuvres would have told one a leopard never changes his spot!

As matters stand, there is nothing concrete to suggest that Islamabad is ready to address New Delhi's 'core' concerns on terrorism. Nor is there any indication that Pakistan has changed its antagonistic approach to India. On the contrary, Pakistan's army violated the ceasefire agreement along the Indo-Pak border over 91 times since the Modi-Sharif talks in Ufa last month.

Moreover, Pakistan has a history of living in denial.

Pakistan's two-track policy - clandestine operations to weaken India while simultaneously appearing to seek a durable peace. Each time India is attacked and it is established beyond doubt that the perpetrators were either directly or indirectly linked to Pakistan, the Pakistani State exercises the clause of plausible deniability saying these are non-state actors and the Pakistani State does not "support" such acts.

For the ruling troika seeped in military tradition along with its jihadist proxies, the 'core' issue of Kashmir is an article of faith. In fact, the very creation of Pakistan rests on the foundations of Kashmir. From Bhutto's "bleeding India with a 1000 cuts," down Kargil inclusions to Mumbai's 26/11 deep distrust and lack of confidence is apparent between the warring neighbours ravaged by history.

Islamabad would have us believe that non-State actors are at work in Kashmir, in the attack on Parliament, in the Mumbai and Delhi blasts, even in Kargil War and in Udhampur and Gurdaspur. After every attack our intelligence agencies and police collect evidence and send dossiers upon dossiers to Pakistan only to be told that the "evidence" is not enough.

In addition, insecure Pakistan faces twin dilemmas of international marginalization due its political and economic instability and India's political stability and growing economy. For Pakistani fed on the belief, that 'accepting the status quo with India is defeat', has resulted in a perceived ideological perspective that it has to be at war to stand up and be counted.

This is forcing the Pakistani army to take calculated military risks against the back drop of its nuclear capability as a manifestation of its continued struggle to hijack seats from the state pool in an underhand manner. Dasgupta's letter provides a new angle to the seat story which must be probed.

TO THE EDITOR

NEIGRIHMS can of worms opened

Editor

The flurry of letters from one community condemning Partha Dasgupta's comments on the touchy subject of Manipur's domination of seats and jobs at NEIGRIHMS over the years is quite understandable. But it also goes to show that the problem does exist. I don't buy the argument that Manipuri students are more studious than young people from other North-Eastern states. Nor do I believe the contention that students in Manipur study from dawn to dusk in coaching centers to clear NEIGRIHMS examinations despite daily rejections and agitations. Both rejoinders refer to MBBS students and are silent on the subject of Nurses and Doctors. It is difficult to believe that students, doctors and nurses from Manipur are intellectually superior and more hardworking than everyone else. That seems to be the basis of the arguments in both rejoinders. NEIGRIHMS is responsible for this mess and should come clean on this controversial issue.

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Syiem,
Shillong -14

Speak facts, not emotions

Editor,

The Shillong Manipuri Students Union (SMSU) has termed Partha Dasgupta's revelation of N E I G R I H M S demographics an "insult" (NEIGRIHMS seat contro-

versy, 23.8.2015). They should hold back their emotions and talk on facts instead. It is for NEIGRIHMS to provide clarifications if required, not SMSU or anyone else. If seats and jobs are being captured by one community at the cost of everyone else, then NEIGRIHMS has some serious explaining to do. We have already seen NEIGRIHMS staff attempting to hijack seats from the state pool in an underhand manner. Dasgupta's letter provides a new angle to the seat story which must be probed.

Yours etc.,
Andrew WK Langstieh
Chairman, Davodar
Valley Corporation,
Via email

Forgetting tradition?

Editor,

I wish to express my heartfelt concern with the feeling of Daphishisha Syiem in her Letter to the Editor, 'On the Law Syiem at

Establishment seeks to increase its prestige through spread of its ideology and religion in pursuit of its revisionist policies.

What then explains Indian leadership's penchant for extending the proverbial hand of friendship to Pakistan despite knowing well that they could be burning their fingers? Does somehow our leadership too believe that we have "limited options" when it comes to dealing with Pakistan?

Giving peace a chance is fine, but each time we ended up being betrayed. In today's geo-strategic political reality pragmatism dictate realpolitik. The Government and its security agencies need to remain ever vigilant, be one step ahead of Pakistan and its jihadis vis-à-vis terror attacks and cross-border terrorism. It needs to get a no-nonsense message across to Islamabad that ignoring New Delhi's concerns would be by at its own peril. About time we punished them.

Undeniably, the fog of war is a reality even during peace time along the troubled Indo-Pak border. Simply, because Islamabad does not share India's desire for friendly relations coupled with its reluctance to bring the Mumbai-attack masterminds to justice thereby emboldening it to commit acts of aggression and Hafiz Saeed, who continues to preach terrorism against India.

Islamabad needs to do a lot more than just generating artificial illusions. It has to match its words with deeds. At the same time, India must come to terms with the fact that Army and ISI are opposed to any normalisation of bilateral relationship based on a practical and pragmatic resolution of longstanding disputes.

Alongside, the jihadis too are against any reconciliation between India and Pakistan. Thus, even as the Prime Minister trudges the lonely peace

road he should realize that good intentions alone cannot transform ties.

Modi realizes only too well that so long as the hawkish Pakistan army continues to call the shots, peace with India would be a mirage. Yet in today's geo-strategic political reality pragmatism dictate realpolitik the bedrock of which is implementing a 'zero tolerance to provocations' policy.

As matter stands today, both sides continue to be wary of each other given the deep mistrust and lack of confidence. Yet the two have not rejected further dialogue. Even when it is and is no more than a repletion of known positions. Islamabad needs to do a lot more before the next round, instead of chasing a mirage.

The bottom line? India needs to be reassured on its terror concerns for the relationship to move to the next level. Islamabad must unravel the full conspiracy behind the Mumbai attack, deny sanctuary to all terrorist groups that operate from its soil, and handover Hafiz Saeed to India. The taste of the pudding is in the eating.

What next? For more than 50 years Indo-Pak ties are caught in a vicious time warp. Given the stakes the many players, the variety of acts and the shifting sands of geo-strategic political equations, there are many ifs and buts which do not make a whole. Plainly, both India-Pakistan need to understand the bitter reality that even as we have a choice for striking friendships, we cannot choose our neighbours.

New Delhi needs to stay engaged with those who rule Pakistan. Be it via political-security back channels or by high military levels contacts. India wants peace but will not bow down to provocations, come what may.

Ultimately, before anything else Islamabad has to come to terms with not only forgetting Kashmir but erasing its deeper malady - hatred of India. Clearly there is little scope for talking with a neighbour who is busy lobbing grenades at you. The ball remains in Pakistan's court. ---- INFA

The Ufa fiasco was predictable

By T P Sreenivasan

One did not have to be a rocket scientist, not even a Pakistan expert, to predict that the Ufa agreement between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was a non-starter. There is nothing that Pakistan has done which deserves a resumption of dialogue. The assurances made in Ufa contain no commitment except a whole range of talks. The only explanation for a change of heart was the familiar pattern of behaviour of India and Pakistan.

'Neither the previous government, nor the present one has been able to take a consistent stand on Pakistan. The Nobel Prize Syndrome, the urge to take credit for resolving an old and festering issue and thus gain recognition and fame seems to haunt Indian leaders, while the Pakistan establishment, whether civilian or military, remains committed to its core interests. For the Indian leaders, applause from the West becomes important and encouraging. The more concessions we make, the more the applause. But since concessions cannot be given beyond a point, the governments take hesitating steps towards concessions and then step back.'

No one should be surprised at the turn of events. It should have been clear to India that no government in Pakistan would send its national security adviser to India to receive the bulky dossiers on its misdeeds. It was equally clear for years that the Pakistan Army would not have any dialogue with India without Kashmir on the agenda. Pakistan had always linked terrorism, which it calls 'support for the liberation movement' to its Kashmir policy.

Since India has an inflexible position on Kashmir, an integral part of India, and Pakistan cannot expect to win a war on that account, Pakistan has virtually accepted that it is engaged in guerilla warfare to force India to change its position on Kashmir.

Nawaz Sharif did not overstep the Pakistani position when he agreed to the following formulation in Ufa: They agreed that India and Pakistan have a collective responsibility to ensure peace and promote development. To do so, they are prepared to discuss all outstanding issues. Both leaders condemned terrorism in all its forms and agreed to cooperate with each other to eliminate this menace from South Asia.

They also agreed on the following steps to be taken by the two sides: A meeting in New Delhi between the two NSAs to discuss all issues connected to terrorism. Pakistan clearly had no intention to discuss terrorism, only 'to discuss all issues connected to terrorism.' His motive to offer such a formulation was to secure Modi's attendance at the SAARC summit in Islamabad, which he succeeded to do. Both India and Pakistan believed that each had trapped the other.

The drama that followed, which ended at midnight of August 22, demonstrated that the more India-Pakistan relations had appeared to change, the more they remained constant. Pakistan took time to devise a credible strategy to wriggle out of the Ufa commitment and remained firm, while India harped on the claim that Pakistan had indeed agreed to have a one-item agenda for the NSAs talks.

The Hurriyat meeting, Pakistan knew, would be a sure way of sabotaging the talks as the Modi Government had cancelled the foreign secretaries level talks earlier for that reason.

Pakistan expected that India would promptly call

off the talks, but the surprise was that instead of cancelling the talks, India arrested the dissident leaders to avoid the meeting and still wanted to hold the talks. Pakistan, caught in a bind, went back to the argument that the dialogue would include Kashmir and, therefore, a meeting with Hurriyat was essential.

India would not cancel the talks and external affairs minister, reinvigorated by her survival in the trial of fire lit by Sonia and Rahul, got her chance to blast Pakistan at a press conference, virtually sealing the fate of the NSAs talks, but still leaving it to Pakistan to back out.

I have only a two-pointer message for them: please respect the Shimla Agreement and do not involve any third party; second, as agreed in Ufa, the talks should only be on terror. Pakistan has only till tonight to give an assurance that the talks will only be on terror. If Pakistan does not agree, the talks will not happen.'

The cancellation of the talks was a foregone conclusion, but the two sides engaged in shadow boxing till the very end to prove that the other side was responsible for the cancellation of the talks. This has aroused suspicion that both were keen on satisfying some third parties that prompted the Ufa arrangement in the first place. The prompt expression of disappointment by the State Department spokesman let the cat out of the transparent bag.

In their eyes, the arguments were irrelevant, but it was important that neither Pakistan nor India should be guilty of cancelling the talks. Both India and Pakistan tried to put the blame on the other, but the jury must have found them equally guilty. The match was played, after all, for a draw.

Since neither side lost the match, the search is on to figure out whether India or Pakistan gained anything from the latest bout of talks on terrorism. The defence on the part of the BJP was that the whole exercise was with good intentions and all was fair in love and war. But no country can afford to reveal the chinks in its own armour even with good intentions. Particularly serious is the evidence that we do not understand our adversary well enough.

Two other questions arise from the whole episode. How is it that the information in the dossier leaked out days before the talks were to be held? It was quite possible that Pakistan developed cold feet even more after they got wind of the evidence of the presence of Dawood Ibrahim in Karachi. Another question is whether External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj unwittingly gave a new interpretation of the Shimla Agreement when she described the Hurriyat as a 'third party'. Since the original intention was to keep other countries and the UN out of the bilateral negotiations, considering an organisation of Indian citizens as a third party has already raised eyebrows.

The entire Ufa fiasco was predictable and predicted. The situation on the diplomatic front as well as the ground is worse today than before Ufa. The Ufa venue had created international interest in the initiative and its failure may have implications for both Pakistan and India. What remains for Modi to do is to produce a prettier rabbit out of his hat next time to deal with the Pakistan imbroglio.

(The author is a former Ambassador of India and Governor for India at the IAEA; Executive Vice-Chairman, Kerala State Higher Education Council and Director General, Kerala International Centre).

Yours etc.,
Fabian Lyngdoh,
Via email

“Educationists should build the capacities of the spirit of inquiry, creativity, entrepreneurial and moral leadership among students and become their role model”.

– (Late) Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 16 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2015

Safe North- East

THE National Crime Records Bureau in its report for the year 2014 has revealed that women are far safer in the North-East than in West Bengal or Uttar Pradesh. Except Assam which contributed more than 5% of cases of violence against women nationally, the other seven states in the region accounted for only 0.9% of the total number of crimes against women last year. West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh accounted for 11% of such cases, together contributing over a fifth of such cases across the country. The North-East is also reported to be the safest region for children, accounting for 2.7% of the total number of cases of crime against them in the country. There have been no reported cases of child marriage or infanticide from the region. However, the eight states have collectively shown an increase in reported cases of crime against women and children. Those against women have gone up by 1,935 cases and those against children by 1,403.

The findings appear very strange in view of the prevailing militancy in the North-East. These are also in sharp contrast with violence against North-Eastern women in Delhi, Gurgaon and Bangalore. Skepticism is very much in the air about the validity of the statistics in the states themselves. Many cases of violence against women are apparently not reported. Most of the crimes against women are committed either in the form of domestic violence or by armed personnel. Such crimes tend to be hushed-up. Considering that the conviction rates in many states is less than 1% the highest being 4%, and the disinclination of the police to register FIRs it is no wonder that women who are raped or molested choose not to pursue the cases against their perpetrators. Even in a matrilineal society like Meghalaya, nearly every day there are cases of rape reported in the media. Now whether the victims actually report the case to the police is a different matter. Hence not all statistics can be construed as correct since the element of subjectivity cannot be ruled out.

LOOKING BACK

January 25, 1988

Hectic horse trading in Tamil Nadu

On the eve of the crucial session of the Tamil Nadu Assembly which will decide the fate of the 19-day-old AIADMK ministry headed by Mrs. Janaki Ramachandran, hectic political horse-trading is taking place here.

Former Industry Minister K. Rajaram, one of the foremost supporters of Ms. Jayalalitha, today defected to the ruling Janki faction. On the other hand, one of the deputy general secretaries, H. V. Hande, supporting Mrs. Ramachandran, resigned from the post, “disgusted” with the infighting in the AIADMK.

Two Forward Bloc members were divided in their loyalties to the two factions. While Mr. P.K. M. Muthuramalingam has announced his decision to support Ms. Jayalalitha, Mr. Muthulip pledged his support to the other faction.

Bangladesh police shot dead at least ten people today after opposition leader Sheikh Hasina led thousands of followers through the streets demanding President H. M. K. Ershad’s resignation, official said.

Sheikh Hasina was not hurt and shouted at police to hold their fire.

In four hours of hit-and-run street battles, police fired rifles and tear gas and led baton charges while demonstrations threw homemade bomb and set cars ablaze, witnesses

said.

Senior police officials and a high-level administrator, speaking in condition of anonymity, said at least ten people were killed.

Sheikh Hasina told a news conference eleven people died and more than 200 were injured.

TNV insurgents kill 6 non tribals

Six non-tribals, including two minors, were gunned down by tribal insurgents at Dhubichara village under Kamalpur sub-division in north Tripura tonight.

According to official sources her, the armed outlawed Tribal National Volunteers (TNV) raided a cluster of houses in the village and fired indiscriminately on the inmates all the victims were killed on the spot. High police officials from here and district headquarters of Udaipur rushed to the spot along with CRPF patrol and lunched a combing operation to nab the assailants.

This was the third major TNV operation against the non-tribals during the current month Raising the total number of person killed to 20.

Earlier, intelligence reports indicated that some groups of TNV guerrillas were seen moving in vulnerable areas.

Environmentalism to the fore

By K L Tariang

The Shillong Times recently published two articles relating to environmental concerns. The first article was, “Spare A Thought For The Environment Please”, where the title itself made the article sound like an entreaty which, however, has a touch of annoyance in it too. Perhaps the perception of what is an ambiguous stand of the government on the mining issue with its delay to formulate a proper mining policy and the impatience of the mining lobby to resume mining without such a policy in place irritated the author enough to come out with such an article. That he has seen that the mine owners made no effort to reclaim damaged areas and to promote conservation there in spite of being primarily responsible for the immense degradation of land and water in these areas added to the exasperation. For one who has a profound love for the environment all these are too hard to bear. In the second article “Umkhrah - A River Cries Foul” the author combined folklore with the real world in the distant past to reflect the mystery, the wonder and the divinity with which pre modern man saw the natural world while at the same time creating a visual of Umkhrah river when it was flowing freely in its pristine glory only to lament at its present desecrated condition because of inconsiderate incursions into its watery domain. The author fears an impending catastrophe that may arise because of this. Both these articles spell out human apathy towards environmental care from those placed in positions of responsibility. While these articles predominantly reflect the deterioration manifesting in our water bodies and their surroundings, their messages therein are enough to trigger concern for environmental deterioration elsewhere as well. These articles also indicate that environmentalism has significantly and in a compelling way come to the fore in the state.

It has always been understood that the security and well being of human lives depend to some degree on the strength and resilience of the natural world we live in. As such intellectual concerns for the protection and conservation of nature had been there all over the world long in the past. However, environmentalism surfaced only in the last decades of the eighteenth century when it was perceived that

the rapid economic growth then were not always sustainable. Subsequently wide ranging programs of environmental concerns were initiated. Modern environmentalism was subsequently ushered in after the publication of Rachel Carson’s book, “Silent Spring” in 1962. In a compelling way, the book highlighted the threat to human health and natural systems posed by unregulated economic growth and this started a major movement in environmental concerns across many western countries. Thereafter numerous social segments promoted environmental rights as a democratic movement which strived for the wise public use of natural resources and which are compatible with society’s collective concerns. They also sought to ensure access to essential public goods such as good quality water and air to guarantee decent living standards.

By the 1970s environmentalism had emerged as a worldwide movement calling for sustainable lifestyles, human understanding of rights and justice in environmental related issues and greater attention to the rights of nature with the growing realization that environmental problems have global effects and should be tackled globally. Major international conferences such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) were held where the general message brought forward was that nothing less than a transformation of our attitudes and behavior would bring about the necessary changes. However such environmentalism is most influential in developed western countries which have deep political democracy. The majority of the public there support strict environmental measures and will contribute for the cause. Large chunks of areas in the wild are protected to check the spread and threat of development and there is increased concentration to control air and water pollution in cities, to decrease the hazardous byproducts of industrialization and to reduce toxic waste though the people there are primarily responsible for these problems. However, in the developing countries where there are still hundreds of millions of under privileged people who continue to lack

the essential requirements for satisfactory living, environmentalism would hardly appeal to the masses. Therefore it is hard to generate and to sustain mass social movements here for environmental protection.

No doubt, the Chipko movement in some areas of the Himalayan region in India and the Chico Mendes’s rubber tappers movement in the Amazon areas in Brazil (both movements strived to promote social justice and sustainability), reflect the environmentalism of the poor. But while these movements attracted worldwide attention at that time and are still subjects of discourses by the intelligentsia in international environmental forum, they hardly caught the imagination of the masses within these two countries to generate sufficient movements elsewhere. However some of these developing countries including India have made substantial progress in the last few decades in addressing their environmental issues for improving environment quality. But without the larger involvement of people it will be difficult to attain environmental quality similar to those enjoyed in developed economies....

Environmental problems in Meghalaya too were not unknown in the past, but only in the recent past is there a perception of an environmental crisis. However, like everywhere else there is also the tendency here to consider that the government alone can have the continuity of purpose; that it is the one body which can take a long term view and to assume the responsibility for managing the natural resources particularly because of notoriously short sighted motives by some with less concern for the adverse effects of their motives. Therefore public participation on this aspect is very limited. The environmental concerns of most of those in government both in the past and present are diluted with other concerns and the future may not bring changes either. Therefore, it will be too optimistic perhaps to expect that favorable policies and regulations for the sake of the environment would be enthusiastically formulated here or would be religiously applied if brought forward. As of now existing laws are applied inconsistently

and most prohibitions that come out of these laws are short-lived resulting in the present predicament. This calls for deep environmentalism and activism to come from the people themselves, an environmentalism which seeks to protest against the degradation of valuable natural resources and to prescribe less destructive technologies and lifestyles. Such environmentalism is to be viewed as a social program that needs to steadily gain power, prestige and most importantly, public appeal.

Unfortunately environmental issues in the state are yet to be brought to centre-stage of attention in democratic politics. Hence environmentalism in all its varieties is still relegated to the margins of public life with the mass still considering environmental stewardship as a luxury and not the very basis of human and state survival. The perception of an environmental crisis is limited to a minuscule population that favours sustainable development while the less educated, the under-employed, the poor and the majority of the affluent want “more” development which is mostly predatory and does not universally benefit all. Talk about ecological constraints is considered as an interference to economic growth and a deviation from the quick development agenda with little understanding that caring for the environment need not undermine the commitment to development and the removal of poverty and deprivation. While it may not be difficult to evolve a long term rational strategy of development to enhance the resource access of those at the bottom, while checking such demand from those at the top, it will need a strong influence and commitment particularly from the political leadership to implement such a strategy. But such political leadership may not be always possible since environmentalism has not yet influenced the local and state elections here. Overall, it will be a challenging task for environmentalist in the state to make a dent enough to create ripples, not to speak of creating an upheaval. But environmentalist everywhere are die-hard activists and will adopt any form of activism possible to get their message across. Let us therefore hope that environmentalists in our state increase in number and strength and are persistent in their commitment so as to nurture a society that does not only look back at the past but which will ensure that the needs of the future are not endangered by the demands of the present.

TO THE EDITOR

The secular common denominator

Editor,

Daphishisha Syiem’s letter, “On the Law Syiem at Mawpat” (ST 24th Aug 2015) has been informative on the origin and status of *Ki Law Syiem*. She has quite emphatically and forcefully stated that *Ka Law Syiem* cannot be converted into *Law Adong* as this goes against tradition and our land tenure system. Somehow this seems to spring more out of emotional conviction rather than acceptance of existing reality. Traditional emotion also speaks of the existence of *Ka Ri Raid*. Existing reality is that 99% of *Ri Raid* has mysteriously been privatised. An asset of the poor appropriated by the rich! Traditional emotion speaks of Dorbar Hima Myllem and its stewardship role in preserving *Ki Law Adong* at Lum

Shillong. Existing reality shows that every single tree of that *khlaw* (forest) has been felled despite ethics of traditional stewardship. So either we live in a sublime make believe world or in a sleazy practical world.

As far as Mawpat is concerned, the issue is not over who owns the forest or the traditional nomenclature given to this prime woodland. Neither are we questioning the land tenure system of the Khasis. What worries people is the total absence of environmental governance over this forest from where Shillong derives its oxygen and drinking water for the villages of Mawlai, Mawpat, Mawroh, Mawkyntroh, Lumshyap and Pynthorunkhrah. That’s why the agreement with KHADC is so crucial. Public apprehension is over surreptitious and criminally suspicious moves by the Syiem and *Ki Bakhrav* to privatise *Law Mawpat* and then barter it away for personal gain. The outcry is

over abdication of *Ki Syiem* of their moral and social obligation to *Ki Khun Ki Hajar of Myllem Syiemship*.

To claim that conversion to Christianity is the prime cause for this decline of social responsibility in Khasi society is somewhat naive and child-like in its simplicity. It overlooks the fact that another God has now entered the scene whose name is Mammon and both Christians and non Christians alike scramble for his blessings. Mammon demands that his followers make money by hook or by crook with utter contempt for all social codes of conduct. It takes no rocket science to realise that this new cult has now penetrated our traditional institutions irrespective of the personal or individual faith of its members. A secular but sordid common denominator is on the loose in Khasi society!

Yours etc.,
Tokl Blah,
Viaemail

From drug peddler to poet

Editor,

I write to congratulate you for the write-up, “From drug peddling to poetry” (ST Aug 24, 2015) It is the story of a middle-aged drug-peddler who changed from death to life after spending time in prison. She eventually gave her life to poetry and storytelling. She herself said: The authorities can imprison my body but not my mind nor my freedom to think. I congratulate Lissi for her courage to change and you dear Editor for giving the event wide coverage for the benefit of the readers. Write-up of this type is very beneficial and teaches us that it is never too late to change. The time is NOW.

Your’s etc.,
J Cilia, S.D.B
Shillong

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

BJP may not benefit from Bihar package

Modi’s leadership under strain

By B. K. Chum

Two events made media headlines last week. One was Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s announcement of Rs.1.25 lakh crore package for Bihar. The other was the midnight arrest of five students of the Pune’s 54 year-old world-renowned Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) whose students have been on strike protesting against the appointment of RSS man Gajendra Chauhan as Institute’s Chairman.

On election-eve those in power make populist announcements and those seeking power make unachievable promises. The announcement of Rs.1.25 lakh crore package made by Modi at his last week’s election rally in Behar has, therefore, not come as a surprise for the longtime watchers of India’s political scene. But the vital question is: Will the mega package have any significant positive impact on the BJP’s electoral prospects in Bihar?

It is too hazardous to make predictions about elections outcome. Yet, there are factors which may not yield electoral dividends prime minister, BJP and RSS top brass, which is expected to push its cadres in full strength into the poll campaign, are trying to reap. There are reasons for the presumption.

Firstly, no timeline has been announced for delivery of the package. Given the formalities and red-tape that mar governance it may take long to implement the announced schemes. Secondly, the list Modi has announced does not contain many new schemes. A report by a national English Daily says that except the 1300-MW Buxor power plant, establishment of skill university and a new petrochemical plant, most of the populist announcements made by Modi are either planned outlays, or represent repackaging of the schemes already under implementation.

The announcement of the mega package reflects the realization by Modi and the BJP leadership of the high stakes they have in the outcome of the Behar polls. They seem to be conscious of the fact that if success eludes the Behar party in Bihar, it will make the Modi government and the saffron party more vulnerable. The party was almost wiped out in the Delhi assembly elections where it could secure only three of the 70 seats. Failure in Bihar would further erode Modi’s already dented image and would dampen the party’s future political and electoral fortunes. Besides, the BJP’s self-acclaimed title of being the “world’s largest party” based on its claim of having the “largest membership” any political party has in the world would also lose its credibility.

There are already signs of nervousness in the BJP over the challenge posed by the grand alliance of Nitish Kumar’s JD(U), Lalu Yadav’s RJD, Congress and others in Bihar. The top brass of the saffron party now seems to be trying to create a rift in the alliance.

Modi’s announcement of the mega package for Bihar is bound to create problems for him and BJP’s relations not only with the NDA allies but also with the non-NDA parties ruling some of the states the BJP is trying to woo. These parties are bound to demand Bihar-like mega financial package for their states. The Modi government which has

already been experiencing financial crunch may find it virtually impossible to grant Bihar-like packages for them.

The BJP’s staunchest ally Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal has already complained that the Centre has not been responding to his demand for ending “discrimination against Punjab as successive Congress governments had betrayed the state.” His charge would have acquired greater credibility had he backed it by data of help given to Punjab by the successive Central governments. Obviously for partisan reasons he has not identified the “successive governments” which include those headed by Atal Behari Vajpayee, I.K.Gujral, Manmohan Singh and now Narendra Modi. Badal must be feeling the “discrimination against Punjab by the Modi government” more agonizing as during his Gandhinagar visit in the first week of Sept. 2013 when Modi appeared to be destined to occupy prime minister’s chair, Badal had heaped praise on him describing him as the country’s “greatest leader” and a “Sardar”.

The Akali Dal-BJP’s relations are going to have testing times despite the frequent assertions made by the chief minister that the two ruling allies have “unbreakable ties”

The second event of midnight arrest of five students of the FTII exemplifies the disturbing trend that is overtaking India’s politics. The Institute’s students have been on strike for over two months in protest against the appointment of Gajendra Chauhan, an RSS nominee as the Institute’s Chairman for his only qualification of “having played the role of Yudhishtira in the TV’s Mahabharata serial.” The appointment indicates the trend of politicizing reputed institutions.

India’s Constitutional Institutions had become the victim of the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi in 1975. There is no Emergency now, nor is there any possibility of its being imposed in the country’s changed circumstances. But trends which will harm the multi-religious India’s plurality and its unified cultural heritage are increasingly becoming discernible. Such trends include the attempts to communally polarize the nation by the steps like appointing persons of indoctrinated communal minds in key governmental and constitutional positions. Among such appointments are those of the chief of the Film Censor Board and now the FTII. These ‘dignitaries’ are said to be the RSS-favourites. A national English Daily has now reported that the original list of FTII president and its members proposed by its then director D.J. Narain and sent to I & B Ministry on December 2, 2014 was ignored and the luminaries in cinema and art recommended as society members were replaced by other lesser-known names, all of them with known links to the RSS and the BJP.

Apart from the foregoing issues, what should be more worrisome for Modi is his own controversial style of functioning which is increasingly being questioned.

It is not only the Akali Dal-BJP’s relations which are going to have testing times, the coming period will also be testing for Modi as his stature as PM would be under strain if he does not take timely corrective steps. (IPA Service)

"The only sense that is common in the long run, is the sense of change-and we all instinctively avoid it."

--- E. B. White

The Shillong Times

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Clamour for backward status

THE agitation seeking reservations for the Patel community with leaders of the community going on a fast unto death at Ahmedabad, is a phenomenon peculiar to India. Anyone would think that the Patels are the most progressive community with footprints in every country of the world. They have an indomitable entrepreneurial spirit as a result of which they are doing very well for themselves. So what has suddenly prompted them to demand that they be given a special reserved status? The Patidars also known as the Patel community claim they have received no benefits since Indian became independent hence they are seeking reservation. They now want to be included amongst 'other backward castes'. At one point, the Patels were open to the idea of a Vikas Aayog (development commission) for the community but now seem set on the idea of reservations.

The Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti, which is spearheading the agitation, had claimed that the social, financial and educational conditions available to the community have been steadily deteriorating. The organisation also claims that the community is mainly engaged in seasonal occupations and needs reservations in education and government jobs to help them tide over difficult times. The prime reason for seeking reservation is because traditional sources of income are drying up and because other sections of the community have been given a category of reservation. Led by 22 years old Hardik Patel, a graduate in commerce whose family is in the business of supplying water, the movement has been gaining steam since July this year.

Meanwhile the Gujarat government is preparing a scheme to provide financial assistance to all non-reservation category students, including Patels. Under this scheme, the state government will bear various educational expenses, like tuition fees and hostel fees of these students. It is ironic that the Patels who are the BJP's strongest supporters should now seek to embarrass the Modi Government. But the Sangh Parivar believes that if the major castes in states demand reservations it brings the focus on realignment of caste reservation based on economic criteria and it would also help upper caste communities to avail of quotas in education and jobs. Apparently the RSS believes that the Patel stir helps "create an environment" across the country that will allow reservation policies to be altered. The Patels form only 12% of the population hence if the Government succumbs to their pressure it is possible that the BJP will not return in the 2017 Gujarat election and the 2019 national elections too. Modi's greatest challenge today is trying to keep his own flock in check. The RSS is asserting its exclusivist agenda!

LOOKING BACK

December 28, 1987

Finance Ministry clears Loan Mela for Meghalaya

The Union Finance Ministry has decided "in principle" to hold a "loan mela" in Meghalaya primarily to provide economic support to the farmers who have been general affected by the prolonged agitation in the state. Sources said that the proposed "loan mela" will take place sometime after the elections are over since otherwise it might be misconstrued as a vote catching device.

The Union Ministry took the decision recently following a memorandum submitted by the Meghalaya State Farmers' Union, a frontal wing of the Congress (I). The Union Minister of the State for Finance M. Janardhan Poojari examined the matter with senior state party leaders and top officials of the Ministry recently and decided to give green signal to the proposal.

It may be mentioned that

Mr. Poojari is scheduled to visit the state sometime in January to give the scheme a thrust.

Sources said that the potato growers of Khasi Hills who suffered due to the sudden slump in floor-price, would be one of the major beneficiaries of the project. Various other economically backward people would also receive loans on soft terms under the scheme.

Under the directive of the Union Finance Ministry, the Reserve Bank of India is expected to identify some banks which will dispose of the loan applications.

The loan applications forms will be issued from the banks and the Farmers' Union will also help the people in obtaining such forms. According to the statutory orders of the RBI, under the scheme a maximum of Rs 25,000 will be made available to the applicants.

When 'in-laws' and 'out-laws' rule the roost

By Fabian Lyngdoh

The present political system that governs us is by nature not perfectly just; but it is made all the more imperfect by a partisan Government. Besides the Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries, there are 102 Chairmen, Co-Chairmen, Vice Chairmen, etc., to run this small State of Meghalaya. Some of these political appointees draw all the benefits of a democratic set up but preach ideas discrediting constitutional democracy itself. This is the inner circle of which Dr. Mukul Sangma can assert, 'This is my Government'. It is a fact as Patricia Mukhim says, 'a government of the politicians, by the bureaucrats and for the contractor class' ("Roads: Our statement to the world", ST August 21, 2015). This is robbery as any other robbery in the society, but in the garb of legality which the poor have to bear for having elected their political representatives.

A number of so called NGOs in Meghalaya exist simply because of the persistent corruptions and disorder in the functioning of the Government. Some Ministers, MLAs and bureaucrats may be conspiring to siphon off crores of Rupees from the public treasury meant for various schemes and projects, and some NGO leaders may be waiting on the sly for their pound of flesh. It is a general rule that any casual witness to theft would not keep his mouth and eyes shut without a bullet to his head or without his fair share of the gold. The whole society right from the rulers, down to the unemployed youth in the villages are sniffing the sweet scent of black money floating in the air. It is in this kind of situation that one may not feel inclined to one-sidedly condemn the activities of questionable NGOs or even outlawed organisations like the HNLC or the ANVC because sociologically speaking, their activities are in some way inseparably inter-linked with questionable activities of the Government itself. It could be the same class of people which supports the politicians in power that also provides the life-line for the outlawed organisations. Questionable activities of the proscribed organisations are given a criminal tag, but

questionable activities of the Government's cohorts are shielded by a legal tag. There are legal and moral reasons to condemn the outlawed organisations for their violence and crimes, but aren't there reasons to condemn the Government's hidden involvement in corruptions even if shielded by the law? If there is no fertile ground in social situations by way of non-functioning government or politician-militant nexus, no such organisations can come up and survive with independence and dignity. I do not mean to say that I condone the activities of outlawed organisations, but I just want to state the plain facts as they are. Indeed it seems now that the surest way to success for the youth of Meghalaya is to first descend into the hell of an outlawed militant, then resurrect as a repentant gentleman, and then ascend into the chambers of power. If this trend persists, then the society is not on the way to development but to doom.

It is true as Patricia Mukhim says that there are many politicians and civil servants in Meghalaya who besides their official duty also function as contractors and use their family members (in-laws) to carry out different business, thus shutting out the entry of other young persons who may be more promising and more in need of such facilities of self employment. There are hundreds of young men and women who have passed their bachelor's degrees, and even master's degrees in various subjects at the heavy expenses of their poor parents but who are now without proper jobs. This writer knows of several young men and women graduates and some with Master's Degrees who have to work as casual employees in various institutions for as low a payment as Rs.6000 per month for the rest of their lives, and as teachers in private schools in remote areas for a salary of Rs.5000 per month or even less, out of sheer necessity. There is a glaring evidence of the irrelevance of the present educational system in the State with the real socio-economic conditions which majority of the students would have to face

in their real hard life out there in the world.

We have to be aware that a sense of alienation from the ideal of the rule of law is being continuously bred in the minds of thousands of educated unemployed youth in the villages, as in fact there seems to be no rule of law at all in Meghalaya. These alienated rural youth would surely let out their steam in any anti-government and anti-social activities in the streets of the State Capital. Indeed most of the NGO leaders are not bred from among the original settlers of Shillong (nongsor) but from the rural families (nongkyndong) who migrated to Shillong to seek their fortunes.

The rationale of the Government to exercise control over the members of the society is based on its responsibility to provide necessary conditions for every fulfilment of life in return for commanding obedience. The Government has to guarantee the safety of the individuals and the security of their means of living. It is for these services that men relinquish the sovereignty that resides in their persons and delegate the power that resides in their majorities to the Government. But people in Meghalaya seem to have lost trust in the capacity of the Government to ensure the safety of their lives and the security of their means of living. The monopoly of the legitimate use of force seems to have been distributed among various agencies, including outlawed organisations. For this reason people would not dare challenge the bandh calls of militant groups or other pressure groups even if these calls are conveyed only through mobile SMS. It is true that the Government cannot provide security personnel for everybody, but being the monopoly holder of institutionalized force it should be able to instil respect and fear in the minds of the would be perpetrators of violence in the society. No common citizen expects private security personnel like the politicians, but every citizen has the right to demand from the Gov-

ernment for a safe situation and necessary conditions for every fulfilment of life. But it seems that the Government had failed on every count. When the Government cannot provide safe situations and necessary conditions for the fulfilment of life, then theoretically, it loses its legitimacy to rule. Such a situation might tempt any light-minded individual to think that he has the right to provide himself with necessary arms and to employ them at his own command whenever he thinks that the situation is warranted; and dissident groups with ideology of any kind can come up and constitute a threat to order and stability and may finally endanger the peace of the whole society unless subjected to efficient ultimate control by the power of the state.

The solution lies in the morale of the political leadership and the bureaucracy that run the State. The bureaucracy gets its nourishment from the political environment and it is not independent of the political executive, hence its performance depends on the quality of the political leadership. A serious decline in the quality of political leadership leads to corrupt administration and a breakdown of democracy. The general population of the State have been suffering too much, and for too long when the 'in-laws' through the right hand of the Government, and the 'out-laws' through its left hand rule the roost; and bewildered youth rule the roads. I don't know of any other way on earth how to solve this problem other than a general awareness of the people on the reality of this malady, and the general awakening to uproot its causes through various means including the electoral process, through the leadership of sincere civil society organizations and the enlightened citizenry. It is not the will of the people at large to subject themselves to corrupt governance, but it is their fear of the powerful and ignorance of their rights that keep them content in docile submission to their fate. It is the joint responsibility of the Government and the enlightened citizenry to enlighten the general people about their democratic rights because the will of the people exercised in fear and ignorance is not democracy but slavery.

TO THE EDITOR

More on the Law Syiem

Editor,

I am truly overwhelmed by the knowledge of Mr Fabian Lyngdoh who has enlightened the readers with historical facts about what I had written as a kur Syiem Mylliem about Ri Syiem Lum Syiem Mawpat and also his knowledge about the fact that Hima Mylliem was created only in 1853.

Ma Fabian has highlighted the facts that Law Syiem cannot be converted into Law Adong without the consent of the Syiem clan and the Syiem clan cannot sell this land nor utilize it for any other purpose other than the maintenance of *ki jait Syiem*. Whenever families of our clan wanted to make houses, the most convenient procedure for them was to inform the ruling Syiem therefore the ruling Syiem coincidentally became the caretaker of LAW SYIEM. At present all families build concrete houses so the use of wood from Law Syiem has declined. Nevertheless Law Syiem still is an integral constituent that went into the creation of *ki kur Syiem Mylliem* - the two cannot be alienated.

Mr Fabian Lyngdoh in conclusion did seek answers from the District Council and the "Grand Council" on who will protect the customs and traditions of our people but let's not waste our time waiting for answers from people in politics who only looks over proposals put up by highest bidders to facilitate the election of "Modern-day chiefs" on the strength of how many feckless myntris he can garner to rob together the downtrodden. The "Grand Council" is a flock of sheep like Knights of the Round Table behind Merlin the Wizard in King Arthur's court.

It is also true that almost all Khasi Himas have forgotten their ancestral customs and traditions. Like all tribal societies, our customary law and traditional beliefs are unwritten but practicing laws handed down from generation to generation. Parents should consider it a moral duty to instill in the minds of the younger generation values of our culture like all indigenous tribal societies do. Culture authenticates a tribe's past history, guards the present and directs the future therefore inculcating and making one's children aware of their roots is an absolute necessity - their birthright, their inheritance and their identity. A tribal society which forgets

its own culture and tradition becomes a society without dignity or recognition and is as good as extinct. In our modern society we look to institutions outside the home for school education but if good traditional values becoming of a true Khasi is first instilled in us at home, even the most severe globalization which has now captured the whole world, building up social relations and linking all distant localities - (like now, all local happenings here in our small society is shaped by events and activities happening thousands of miles away), we will be culturally competent to survive such cross-cultural interactions unscathed, due to our innate knowledge of the local dominant culture that dictates our choice. Such cultural dynamics of modern society in transition can never eradicate our instinctive behavior. That is how our society will survive with our identity undiminished.

Yours etc.,
Daphishisha Syiem,
Via email

Deplorable road condition

Editor,

I am deeply concerned about the road condition from Mawryngkneng to Jowai which is deteriorating due to heavy traffic from Assam, Mizoram, Tripura and because of trucks coming from Guwahati via Shillong by-pass. I am a regular traveller on this road and I ask why the concerned department does not check the quality of work done by the contractors. Shillong to Jowai is not like Shillong to Tura. It's a small distance between two districts and yet the PWD has failed to offer travellers the best it can possibly deliver. I urge the PWD to inspect the road and correct it immediately so that passengers are not inconvenienced.

Yours etc.,
S Thapa,
Via email

Of IoA and Sixth Schedule

Editor,

The article titled "IoA and Sixth Schedule: A Layman's View", by Morning Star Sumer (ST Aug 22, 2015), the same day that the Meeting to discuss, "Ka Instrument of Accession, Ka Sixth Schedule bad Ka Jaidbyrniew Khasi", was held at the Durbar Hall, Mission Compound, Shillong where the author of the article also

Politics sinks lower in West Bengal Trinamool has to take the blame

By Ashis Biswas

The time has come for West Bengal politicians regardless of party affiliations, to stop plumb the depths of low, vulgar behaviour. On August 18, the State Congress had called a bandh, to protest against the breaking down of law and order and the economic stagnation under the Trinamool Congress (TMC)'s rule. An apparently insignificant incident and its aftermath once more exposed how low Bengal politicians could sink, a frequent occurrence in the state these days.

Nowadays, the Congress's strength is not what it used to be, before the TMC was formed following a split early in 1998. Its present share in the aggregate vote in Bengal is around 9-10 per cent only. Earlier it fluctuated between 35-40 per cent. Therefore, there was no possibility of the bandh having a state-wide effect. Life in greater Kolkata was only marginally affected. And it was not very different in the other districts as well. But there was good response in the strongholds of the party in Malda and Murshidabad districts, not to mention pockets of influence in north Bengal.

In Kolkata and elsewhere Congress supporters tried to stop trains and hold up city traffic by organising protest rallies which the police cleared up more or less peacefully, making routine arrests. There was no major violence, although the police arrangements were impressive. It was not as though Congress leaders were unaware of their limitations. State party President and MP Adhir Choudhury had given the call for a bandh largely to revive drooping cadre morale. "We are not in a position to enforce a state-wide bandh at present," he had admitted. And as with most other programmes of the state party, Choudhury did not get full support from other senior leaders like Abdul Mannan and Manas Bhuyan, even for this major initiative.

It was in his own stronghold, Murshidabad that Choudhury led a demonstration protesting police action against supporters including women, who were part of a procession. Even as the police were in the process of making token arrests, Choudhury suddenly took off his shirt and started gesticulating wildly, shouting at the men in uniform. "Shoot me if you dare," he said, as the police and Congress supporters began jostling with each other. It was difficult to see who or what had provoked Choudhury.

The melee broke up and nothing untoward happened. It was clear Choudhury was trying to "up the tempo" somewhat on an otherwise dull day and his followers certainly looked more lively for a while, following his histrionics.

For most people, Choudhury's body baring act was no more than a harm-

less par-for-the-course move, requiring neither explanation nor special comment. But Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee thought otherwise. She let her penchant for ridiculing her opponents full play, addressing a pre-scheduled gathering.

"These days, some people are seen taking off their clothes, doing a Sourav Ganguly (a reference to the great baring act by the former Indian cricket captain at Lord's some years ago, following a major one-day match victory against England). But while it suits Sourav, not everyone can pull it off. But yes, it ensures photographs in the media. You do something today, people take your pictures, you do something else tomorrow, again there will be pictures... but there will come a time when you yourself will become a picture (niji nachobi hoy jake, in Bengali)". Thus spake the Chief Minister of West Bengal.

Her remarks unleashed a controversy. Among TMC circles there was criticism of Choudhury for what was described as a "vulgar display", in addition to Ms Banerjee's ridicule. Media commentators also wondered at Choudhury's motive.

But there was a stronger negative reaction over Ms Banerjee's comments, made in extremely poor taste. The expression that someone will turn into a photo or picture in colloquial Bengali means someone will die soon. It is a phrase much in use in B-grade Bengali films, usually featuring violence and vulgarity. From political leaders to commentators to common people, everyone wondered publicly, what had made Ms Banerjee speak like that? There was no answer.

A few papers ran editorials during the days that followed, deploring the flagrant display of bad taste and cheapness among top level State politicians, a far cry from the earlier high standards of oratory and skilled debating set by the older generation of politicians. Choudhury capitalised on the Chief Minister's faux pas, challenging her to have him killed and turn him 'into a picture', as she said. She had done so with many of her other opponents in any case, he added.

Even as people of the state squirmed in embarrassment over what had happened, Ms Banerjee again lived up to her reputation as a bad loser. When reports last came, the state police had drawn up several non-bailable cases against Choudhury and some Congressmen, accusing them of attempting to murder policemen, destroying government property, interfering with official business and other misdeeds! "When it comes to meanness, it is truly hard to outdo to the TMC and its top leader," said an INTUC leader. (IPA Service)

spoke, is an eye opener. The Khasis, especially the members of the erstwhile Federation of Khasi States should never forget history. I have personally not witnessed such insights to these crucial issues from any (Khasi) intellectual before. From this single article and brief speech we have learnt now that the IoA is an issue for an international body to be involved. His introduction of the term "peripheral non-principally State" is a wake-up call for us to learn to appreciate our position in our relationship with the Federation of India that we now know as the Union of In-

We are also grateful to him for showing us the way forward to get whatever goodies the two instruments have to offer. We should now play our part in the practice of good governance. We hope the politicians are listening!

Yours etc,
Wanshan B Khardewsaw
Asst. Professor
Sankardev College
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.

*“Progress is a nice word.
But change is its motivator and
change has its enemies.”*

--- Robert F. Kennedy

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 18

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 2015

Crisis in Nepal

NEPAL is in turmoil. Violence erupted in the country over the demand for a separate province which has stalled the adoption of the country's Constitution. It was the worst spate of violence after the end of the Maoist insurgency in 2006. Prime Minister Narendra Modi who is keen on cementing ties with neighbours has expressed New Delhi's concerns about the continuing political instability in Nepal. He has offered advice to Nepal's Prime Minister Sushil Koirala urging him to sort out all outstanding issues through widespread consultations. It may sound ironic as his own government is now beset with problems.

The core issue is the adoption of a new Constitution by Nepal's Constituent Assembly. It has been hanging fire for a long time. There have been protests and allegations are thick in the air that Parliamentary debate and public opinion have been ignored in hammering out the vital issue of federalism. Peace came to Nepal as early as 2006 but the transition to Parliamentary democracy has been stumbling over a great many hurdles. Six Prime Ministers have come and gone. The adoption of the Constitution has missed many deadlines. Political conflict between parties has not been defused. Governance in Kathmandu is still an abstract concept. The sequel to the severe earthquake has exposed the vulnerability of the polity. India has agreed to invest only in a united, democratic and peaceful Nepal. However, it should not take a big brotherly attitude. Modi's advice is just a guide to action. Real action lies in the hands of the Koirala government.

LOOKING BACK

December 28, 1987

Assurance to non-tribal's

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assured the non-tribal minorities in Meghalaya that the Congress (I) would adequately safeguard their interest. Addressing a string of election meetings in the two districts of Garo Hills, Mr. Gandhi spoke without any ambiguity that his Government would remain committed to ensure their rights and privileges as citizens of the country. Mr. Gandhi took special care to drive home the message in the nontribal areas. He told his audience in the predominantly nontribal areas that only his party was capable of ensuring peace in the State. In the border areas like Baghmara, he said the he would take particular care to sort out the border areas problem which was legacy from the British days.

Mr. Gandhi told in Shillong that the tribal-non tribal amity as a basic prerequisite for rapid progress of the State. Small minorities need protection which only the Congress (I) can ensure.

Girl Killed in TNV assault

Armed Tribal National Volunteer insurgents killed a twelve-year-old non tribal girl and injured her brother at a North Mecharia under Kamalpur police station in North Tripura, last night.

According to reports, the guerillas, numbering ten armed with automatic weapons burst into the house of Brajendra Das. Das's daughter, identified as Rina, was caught in the volley of gunfire and died on the spot. Her ten-year old brother also suffered bullet injuries. However, other members of the family managed to escape. The boy was removed to hospital. With this the number of non-tribal's killed by outlawed TNV insurgents this month rose to 28. This was the sixth TNV operation this month. Senior police officials from the capital and other outposts have rushed to the spot to launch a combing operation.

Meanwhile officials here said the army, which recently

moved into the disturbed border areas, foiled on Republic Day an attempt by the insurgents to collect "taxes" amounting to Rs. 40,000 from residents of Sermun village South West Tripura. According to reports the village headman, on being served a notice, collected Rs. 25,000 but an army colonel which reached the spot on time forced the insurgents to abandon their plan and flee.

Dreaded Terrorist among 11 arrested

Wassan Singh, a close associate of "Khalistan Liberation Force" chief Avtar Singh Brahma, and the other terrorist were arrested in Punjab during the past 24 hours. Meanwhile "Khalistan flags", which were hoisted on the Republic Day, continued to flutter a top four buildings in the Golden Temple complex.

Punjab Internal Security and Police chief Mr. J. F. Ribeiro, who has been coming at Amritsar since last night, is reported to be holding discussions with district police and CRPF officials on the latest situation. Police said Wassan Singh, carried a reward of Rs. 50,000. Besides being involved in several killings, looting and snatching of arms and cash, Wassan Singh was one of the principal agents which has sent scores of Sikh youth to Pakistan, police said.

Russians storm into final

Champions for the last three years, Soviet Union stormed into the final defeating Poland by a brace in their penultimate match of the round robin league of seventh Jawaharlal Nehru memorial international gold cup football tournament at Kanchenjunga stadium here today. After a barren first half striker Stasis Baranauskas put Soviet Union in the lead just after the breather while compatriot Alexi Mikhailchenko made sure of their victory in the 58th minute.

Is landlessness in Meghalaya a non issue?

By Patricia Mukhim

The Socio-Economic & Caste Census (SECC) 2011 released in July this year gives a grim picture of the rural landlessness in North East India which stands at 60%. But what should worry the Government of Meghalaya and all those who call themselves the custodians of tradition here is that out of 4,85,913 households in Meghalaya only 1,16,723 (24 per cent) households own land, leaving as many as 76% or 3,69,190 households landless. Meghalaya is second only to Mizoram which has 1,11,626 households of which only 22,869 households own land while the rest 88,757 (80%) are landless.

The above statistics should have given sleepless nights to those who proclaim unabashedly that they are the sole custodians of culture and heritage (of which land is a critical element). But even after this shocking piece of news was published in The Telegraph (July 5, 2015) there has not been even a whimper from any of those who even go on a fast unto death to defend tradition. So what happened to the traditional practice of land holding among the so-called egalitarian Khasi-Jaintia community where privatization of community land today is the highest? Is this not a matter of concern for the District Councils? Is it not a matter of deep distress for the State Government which has been claiming to implement several poverty alleviation programmes? And it is not as if this is a new phenomenon. In 1996-97 this writer had done a joint study with IFAD on land-holdings in West Khasi Hills and found out even then that many people were not owners of the land they were farming on. IFAD programme staff found to their dismay that they were actually improving the farmland and crops of the affluent land owners who had given out their land on short leases. IFAD tried to facilitate a few landless people to buy back their land but since the defined project area is small, the impact is not widely felt. I had the experience of listening to villagers of Nonglang, West Khasi Hills narrating how they had managed to get back land with the help of the Project.

The question we refuse to pose to ourselves is how and why community land suddenly got privatized to the point that even water sources, rivers, forests and land from which coal and limestone is mined is privately owned. There are some who blame the British for commodifying land and putting a cost to it. The same people don't blame the custodians of culture (ki syiem, ki myntri ki bakhrw ki sordar raid etc) for allowing that to happen. Recently, the 'Movement for Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Livelihoods' (led by a lawyer who has been at the forefront in condemning the National Green Tribunal for its ban on coal mining), has called upon the State Government to intervene in Delhi's proposed amendments to the Sixth Schedule, 'in a way that will empower the tribals.' But the same spokesperson refuses to admit that coal mining as an activity has benefited only a section of the tribal elite and has disempowered the rest of the tribals because their fish farming activities on rivers and agricultural activities on land are affected by the poisoning of the primary rivers of Jaintia Hills. Not once have we heard Erwin K Sutnga, spokesperson MIPRL, speak of the degradation of the environment and how he and the coal lobby propose to rejuvenate the landscape.

Recently, Mr Phrang Roy who has been an active campaigner for indigenous peoples' rights had stated that culture, landscape and food are inter-related. In Jaintia Hills all three are completely disconnected. The culture of collective ownership of resources and a value system based on equity and righteousness which is the matrix for our claims to be indigenous peoples/tribals is no longer visible. The landscape of Jaintia Hills is so degraded that it will take decades to rejuvenate. Naturally food production is on the decline. But we don't talk about these things at our public gatherings and seminars because these are tough issues. The only way to redress this inequity is through redistribution of land and recasting the very idea of land ownership. This in turn would mean that the amount of land a person owns would be capped by the introduction of a Land Ceiling Act. Land reforms in the manner that they have happened in West Bengal and

Kerala are long overdue in Meghalaya.

On Saturday 22, last the Khasi Authors and Allied Publishers (KAAP) organized a seminar titled 'Ka Ioa, ka Sixth Schedule bad ka Jaitbynriew (Instrument of Accession, Sixth Schedule and the Khasi-Jaintia people)', at Mission Dorbar hall, Mawkhar. The organizers invited a select audience of which about 95% were male. The seminar generated a heated debate after the paper presenters had made their points. As expected Mr John F Kharshiing, spokesperson for the Grand Council of Chiefs waxed eloquent on the unfinished agenda of the Instrument of Accession in 1948 but never signed the Instrument of Merger, thereby leaving a loophole which the chieftains could revisit and wrest their pound of flesh from the Indian Government (which in this case is seen as the errant party). They could demand an upper house in the legislature where the chieftains can come in through a party-less system. Some enthusiasts even suggested that the Khasi chiefs under the umbrella of the Grand Council of Chiefs which now includes even the Dollois and Nokmas could approach the United Nations to renew their claims that the Khasi states never signed away their rights to be governed by the Indian Constitution. This is a broad hint that the Acts of Parliament including the supreme judiciary should not intrude into the affairs of Meghalaya. Rev OL Snaitang who presented a paper on the History of the Sixth Schedule, and a few others, believe that the Khasis have a case and should approach the UN to address past wrongs. I would say aye to that proposal if these patriarchs showed me a model of how they propose to devolve power to the lowest common denominator - that section which does not understand all the highfalutin discussions happening in seminar rooms but are groaning under the weight of poverty. Will those 76% of landless Khasi-Jaintia people who

have lost out to their more powerful brethren be re-empowered to claim what they have lost? Is that what the UN would confer on them should it take up their case? Will the likes of John Kharshiing speak on behalf of the ordinary, destitute Khasi man and woman who is not even remotely connected to the new-found royalty that he has propounded - the Grand Council of Chiefs? Is that why there is an uncanny bonhomie between the MIPRL and the GCC which was evident in the seminar?

Frankly this is a society of double standards. The Mexican Agro-ecologist, Dr Rosada May who addressed an audience in Shillong on Wednesday very implicitly stated that land alienation among indigenous peoples is a serious issue which needs to be addressed by governments, political parties, civil society groups and ACADEMICIANS! The reason I put the last group in capitals is because they are supposed to be advocates of society and not be confined to their laboratories. Dr Rosada May in fact pointed out that the education system often turns those who enter universities into misfits who cannot return to their societies. The fact that the learned economists and sociologists, (including those with a stake in Meghalaya because they are indigenous scholars) of the oldest University here - the North Eastern Hill University are not shocked and propelled into action by the Socio Economic Caste Census showing that 76% of the people of Meghalaya are landless, tells us how difficult it is for the tribal elite to come out of their comfort zones and ivory towers.

I spoke with a Government official yesterday and asked him what he thought of the latest SECC. His response was, "The 76% landless must take the bull by the horns. They must create a ripple effect that will ultimately affect the voting pattern. But will that happen or will we have another armed conflict? The latter seems a greater possibility. Injustice always breeds violence and those we have empowered to be the custodians of our land and assets have actually taken away what we owned by virtue of tradition. So what tradition are the Khasi elites like the GCC and the MIPLR talking about?"

With the PM holding such high standards of morality, one wonders at what all Vijay Chibber who is Secretary Ministry of Road Transport, and acting chairman NHAI, can get away with. Chibber is also the President of the high profile Delhi Gymkhana Club in the capital, and has used his office to further his post retirement benefits - He retires from the IAS in December and is keen to carry on being Chairperson of NHAI post retirement. To further his ambition, he has brought in a culture of favours to the club which has irked the other members such as giving out of turn membership in the eminent category to politicians such as Smirti Irani, Shatrughan Sinha, Members of Niti Ayog, IAS members like RP Singh, ex chairman of NHAI etc. He also invited Finance Minister Arun Jaitley to lay the foundation stone for a club house for which NDMC approval has yet not been received. Chibber is keen to see the tenders being cleared during his tenure as the Gymkhana Club President which, incidentally, expires next month. Members of the Club have written to President of Inida, Pranab Mukherjee who is

TO THE EDITOR

Clarification Needed

Editor,
This has reference to the speech of Mr. Morning Star Sumer in the seminar on the theme "The Instrument of Accession, the Sixth Schedule and the Khasi People" held on the 22nd August 2015 in Mission Dorbar Hall, Mission Compound, Shillong organized by the Khasi Publishers Allied Society. Through your esteemed daily may we request him to kindly substantiate his averment that the Khasi States are not the Princely States but the non-princely peripheral states. May he also state the source of reference for the interest of the general public! We also request him to clarify his claim that the Standstill Agreement and the Instrument of Accession signed between the Khasi States and the Government/Dominion of India in 1947-49 is an international agreement/treaty.

Yours etc.,
A. W. Rani
Shillong - 4

No double standards please

Editor,
Those who oppose implementation of the state laws in the Sixth Schedule areas are people whose mindsets are rigid and whose outlook is limited only to the Dorbar Shnong. They believe that the Rangbah Shnong is the ultimate administrator. Imagine personalities like Sanbor Shullai whose emotions cloud their judgment are now passing judgment on the merits and demerits of the laws of the state and whether or not to implement these laws and where. And people like Shullai claims to be the ones who will decide the future and well being of the people of Meghalaya! Is he ready to stop implementation of water supply schemes, fair price shops, power supply schemes, etc. in Sixth Schedule areas? Or perhaps he does not care because he himself is staying in a Municipal area and for the sake of cheap politics he can say things that are detrimental in the long run. His own building behind Sankardev College violates all the norms of MUDA!

Yours etc.,
Basuk L Nongpiur,
Shillong - 21

Wanted 'parking only space'

Editor,
I was reading a news item that appeared in your esteemed daily sometimes in July this year about the efforts being made by Urban Affairs Department of Meghalaya to construct some more parking lots in Shillong city for the interest of the motorists and the challenges that the department is facing in getting land for the purpose. I would humbly suggest that the land of the Legislative Assembly and the MLA hostel at Khyndai had been converted into a Parking lot since this is a huge area of about 10 acres. The Legislative Assembly office can be shifted to the wasteland of the Agriculture and the AH & Vety Department at Upper Shillong. Secondly, I would suggest that the State Government makes stringent laws to ban the use of parking space at parking lots for non parking purposes, as some ministers and chairmen of MUDA like Paul Lyngdoh, AL Hek and Ampareen Lyngdoh have done when

they allotted parking spaces at Mawlong Hat, Garikhana and MUDA parking lot at Khyndailad for non parking purposes. Why should we have flower stalls, food courts, tea stalls, ATM kiosks in a parking lot? This has reduced the area of the existing parking lots.

Your's etc.,
Barikupar Lyngdoh,
Shillong-2

Hawkers not a menace!

Editor,
Every so often people vent their frustrations in the local press about the "hawker menace". This is found in the print media and local TV news. Yet I find this term offensive and a sign of arrogance on the part of people who do their shopping far from the roadside. Hawkers, be they sellers of cigarettes, kwai, pani puri, vegetables or clothes, provide goods that people want. And what about the reliable cobblers or umbrella menders? They are often almost lifesavers! Our small, roadside entrepreneurs would not hawk their products or offer their services if the public did not want them or need them.

Whenever I come to

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

RAHUL GANDHI TAKING DICTATORIAL ATTITUDE ON PCC CHIEF CHANGES

Rahul Gandhi is once again under the scanner. After the split in Assam, the Congress can even split at the central level. Resentment is very high within the Congress after the split in Assam where the most powerful Himanta Biswal Sarma quit from the Congress to join the BJP after a prolonged unsuccessful tussle over the replacement of the Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi during which Rahul Gandhi threw his lot with the chief minister. This is not the first time that Rahul Gandhi has done this when he made it to be his prestige issue and in his bid to wield the iron rod. Rahul Gandhi has actually triggered a rebellion in the party where most top Congress leaders wanted a compromise. Just to satisfy his ego, Rahul is alleged to act like a monarch rather than a democratic leader. It is not the first time that the Congress has lost two states on the issue of changing the state leadership. The Congress lost Haryana and Maharashtra because Rahul refused to change Bhopinder Singh Hooda and Prithviraj Chavan. The top leaders who quit the Congress in other states were the then PCC chief G K Vasani in Tamil Nadu, Birender Singh Chowdhury and Rao Inderjit Singh both from Haryana). And now Congressmen are keeping their fingers crossed over Punjab. Captain Amarinder Singh has met Rahul and Sonia umpteenth number of times seeking the replacement of PCC chief PS Bajwa but as Rahul told Himanta Biswal Sarma take it or leave it, he has adopted the same attitude with the Captain also.

VIJAY CHIBBER DISTRIBUTING FAVOURS AS GYMKHANA CLUB PRESIDENT

With the PM holding such high standards of morality, one wonders at what all Vijay Chibber who is Secretary Ministry of Road Transport, and acting chairman NHAI, can get away with. Chibber is also the President of the high profile Delhi Gymkhana Club in the capital, and has used his office to further his post retirement benefits - He retires from the IAS in December and is keen to carry on being Chairperson of NHAI post retirement. To further his ambition, he has brought in a culture of favours to the club which has irked the other members such as giving out of turn membership in the eminent category to politicians such as Smirti Irani, Shatrughan Sinha, Members of Niti Ayog, IAS members like RP Singh, ex chairman of NHAI etc. He also invited Finance Minister Arun Jaitley to lay the foundation stone for a club house for which NDMC approval has yet not been received. Chibber is keen to see the tenders being cleared during his tenure as the Gymkhana Club President which, incidentally, expires next month. Members of the Club have written to President of Inida, Pranab Mukherjee who is

Shillong, I always make it a point to walk as much as I can. Shillong's small size makes this ideal. And I don't feel inconvenienced by the hawkers crowding the pavements of Polo, Khyndailad or Laban. Instead, it is the drivers that irk me. The prevailing feeling in Shillong seems to be that if one is driving a two or four-wheeler, one is allowed to consider pedestrians to be a lesser form of life. On the city's narrow roads (many of which don't have pavements at all) pedestrians are expected to leap out of the way of vehicles and if they don't they are subjected to a barrage of honking. I'd welcome hawkers over the average driver in Shillong

the official patron of the Club to intervene. A complaint about his conflict of interest in getting companies empanelled with the Ministry of Road to host parties for his Gymkhana Club presidential campaign has also been sent to the PMO. Are Modi and Gadkari listening?

CONGRESS LEADERS WORRIED AS BHARDWAJ GETS BUSY WITH HIS MEMOIRS

The former union minister for law, Hansraj Bhardwaj, is said to be hurriedly penning his memoirs. Bhardwaj, who was governor of Karnataka, is said to be unhappy with both Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. His autobiography is, therefore, much awaited not only by Congress leaders but also by the BJP. Given Bhardwaj's habit of calling a spade a spade, BJP leaders feel that the former law minister's account would bring them some political dividends too. The Congress, though, is worried about more skeletons tumbling out of its cupboard.

M L SHARMA NOT WILLING TO INVESTIGATE CBI DIRECTOR

Former special director of CBI M L Sharma seems to be reluctant to probe the former CBI director Ranjit Sinha. Sinha is alleged to have met several accused in the coal and 2 G scams at his home several times. When the investigations were going on, Supreme Court had frowned upon this conduct and had wanted that SIT to investigate. The petitioner Prashant Bhushan recommended Sharma's name but then gave a long list of staff, cars, and an office premises to the government to provide him. Lest the same gets approved Sharma has now asked for police power for SIT with search and seizure authority. He knows well enough that the government is unlikely to agree and create a precedence. This is a clever move by Sharma to avoid investigation

SENIOR UTTAR PRADESH CONGRESS LEADERS MISSING FROM MASS ACTION

Rahul Gandhi May be leading his party from the front but where were his leaders in Uttar Pradesh during the protests in the state last week. Despite the hectic lobbying is on for the post of the PCC, all the contenders were missing from the lathi charge. Congress workers in Uttar Pradesh are extremely upset over the conspicuous absence of all the top leaders of the state congress from the protests which ended in a lathi charge. Among the contenders are Jitin Prasad, RPN Singh, Imran Kidwai, Fazle Masood and even Pramod Tiwari who are in the race for the top post. But when it came to bear the lathis, all these contenders were nowhere to be seen. They were all missing. The absence of Pramod Tiwari who is known to be a Mulayam Singh man in the Congress was understandable, said a senior Congress leader but why did the others boycott the protest. Now the question being asked is that whether Mulayam Singh managed all of them or they were scared to get lathis. (IPA)

any day. But no one much talks about the "driver menace". I wonder why.

Yours etc.,
Jonathan Pariat
New Delhi (currently visiting Shillong)

Editor replies: Hawkers who have virtually taken over footpaths (Motphran to Paltan Bazar for instance) that are essentially meant for pedestrians cannot be glorified. Footpaths are created for pedestrians so that they are not endangered by walking on the roads meant for vehicular traffic. Perhaps if you lived here you would not be so generous with your observations. Visitors to Shillong tend to romanticize everything around them.

"Having a baby's sweet face so close to your own, for so long a time as it takes to nurse 'em, is a great tonic for a sad soul."

—Erica Eisdorfer

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 19 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 2015

Demographic factor

IT is good news that India's population growth rate has slowed down. The information comes from the recently published "Population by Religious Communities" report based on data furnished by the 2011 census. All this raises tricky questions. It questioned why the report has been published on the eve of the Bihar poll in which the Muslim vote counts significantly. Comparisons between Hindu and Muslim population growth figures naturally rear their head. What is encouraging to the majority community is that the rate of population growth among Muslims has dropped considerably in the last decade and is the lowest so far. It applies to other minority communities as well. This is presumably due to better health care and improved educational facilities. What is surprising is that the Hindu majority lags behind in education and health care.

The government has to prove that it will not turn the report to political advantage. No political party, state, community or fringe body should derive any mileage from it. Resources for education and health care should be equitably distributed among all religious communities. Such a report can serve a useful purpose only in an environment which encourages healthy discussion and debate. But it cannot be denied that the political and social ambience in India is far from so congenial. The Hindu fundamentalists will however be put off their recent campaign which is triggered by the spreading alarm that the Muslim community is growing larger and will in the near future put the Hindu majority on the back foot. This is particularly a tool in their hands in states like Assam, which is exposed to illegal Muslim immigration from across the border swelling the already 33% Muslim population in that state.

LOOKING BACK

December 30, 1988

Shivaji Ganesan resigns from Congress-I

Matinee idol Shivaji Ganesan today resigned from the Congress (I) in protest against the

"unjust" decision of the party high command to vote against the Janaki Ramchandran Government in Tamil Nadu.

Announcing this at a crowded press conference here he however, discounted reports that he was joining the Jan Morcha led by Mr. V. Singh or forming a separate party.

He said he would chalk out his future course of action in consultation with his supporters and after a tour of the state.

Mr. Ganesan is a member of the State Congress (I) executive committee and was a Rajya Sabha member.

He said it was against "Dharmam" (Justice) to try to exploit the division in the party of late Chief Minister M. G. Ramchandran so soon after his death.

The Congress (I) high command will try to persuade in film actor Shivaji Ganesan not to quit the party in Tamil Nadu, UNI reports from New Delhi.

Party general secretary Mr. K. N. Singh said here today that Mr. Ganesan would be invited to Delhi and explained the reasons for the party's decision to vote against Mrs. Janaki Ramchandran's Government.

Counting in Nazira to resume today

The Election Commission has ordered resumption of counting votes for the Nazira bye-election on Monday, according to reliable reports available here.

The decision was taken following reports submitted by the two observers of the Election Commission who studied the circumstances leading to the disruption of counting of votes.

It may be recalled the Congress (I) candidate, Mr. Rohiteswar Saikia, who is the brother of Mr. Hiteswar Saikia, was leading by some 1200 votes over his nearest AGP rival when the counting had to be stopped following clashes among rival supporters.

CWC concretises list of problems

The Congress Working Committee, at its meeting here yesterday, concretises a list of problems meriting serious and immediate attention of the party.

Party General Secretary Mr., Ghulam Nabi Azad told newsmen today that the items discussed at the meeting were : party building, mass contact, membership drive, farmers' problems and land reform., rising prices, unemployment, housing, communalism and national integration and problems of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Mr. Azad said no decisions were taken at the meeting. It was felt that the subjects identified for necessary action were so important that an in-depth study each of them by smaller groups was desirable before evolving effective action plans.

This will follow in due course of a further consideration of these subjects by the next working committee meeting which might take place in January or February next.

Structure: A key word in educational endeavour

By Isaac Padinjarekuttu

I share these reflections in the wake of a news item that came from the state of Kerala. Kerala is celebrating these days its harvest festival, Onam. In one of the colleges in the state, in the course of the campus celebrations of Onam, a girl student was killed after being hit by a speeding vehicle in spite of a ban on vehicles entering the campus. The scenes of the riotous revelry that were aired through television channels made one doubt whether it was an educational institution at all. Later, several such "celebrations" were reported from various parts of the state, a recent phenomenon. In the usual TV channel discussions that follow such incidents, the experts blamed each other, students, parents, teachers, management, politicians, police, etc. From the responses of the students who took part in the discussions, it appeared to me that for these young men and women, life has become a celebration and nothing else.

After a shooting incident at the Virginia Tech University in the United States in 2007, in which a student shot and killed more than thirty people, staff and students after which he shot and killed himself (one of several such incidents in that country), one American parent reflected on it and asked the question, how this got started, and gave the following answer. It is worth considering. "Once a parent complained, she didn't want any prayer in the schools, and all said yes. Then, someone said, you better not read the Bible in school: the Bible that says, 'Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal and love your neighbour as yourself.'" And all said, OK. Then a psychologist said: we shouldn't spank our children when they misbehave because their little personalities would be

warped and we might damage their self-esteem. And all said, an expert should know what he's talking about. So we won't spank them anymore. Then someone said: teachers and principals better not discipline our children when they misbehave. And the school administrators said: no faculty member in this school should touch a student when he/she misbehaves because we don't want any bad publicity, and we surely don't want to be sued. And we accepted their reasoning. Then an elected representative said: it doesn't matter what we do in private as long as we do our jobs. And we said: it doesn't matter what anybody does in private as long as we have jobs and our money. Then someone said: let our sons and daughters have all the fun they desire when they are young, and we said, that's a grand idea. And the entertainment industry said: Let's make TV shows and movies that promote profanity, violence, illicit sex, and let's record music that encourage drugs, murder, and satanic themes. And we said: it's just entertainment and it has no adverse effect and nobody takes it seriously anyway. So go right ahead. And now we are asking ourselves why our children have no conscience; why they don't know right from wrong, and why it doesn't bother them to kill strangers, classmates, or even themselves. Undoubtedly if we thought about it long and hard enough we could figure out the answer: "we reap what we sow."

In the United States, the center of the so-called western culture, where the population has increased by 41% since 1960 violent crimes have increased by 560%, single mothers by 419%, divorces by 300%, and children growing up in one-parent families by 300%. Shootings are the second most fre-

quent cause of death there after accidents (thousands of teenagers are shot dead every year). Are other western countries better? By no means! Some years ago, the murder of a two-year old child by two ten-year-olds in Liverpool, England, made a news paper cry in anguish about the "orientation jungle" and a lack of taboos unprecedented in cultural history. It said: "The youngest generation must cope with a confusion of values the extent of which is impossible to estimate. For their clear standards of right and wrong, good and evil, of the kind that were still being communicated by parents and schools, churches and sometimes even by politicians are hardly recognizable anymore."

If we do not take adequate measures, young people everywhere, including our own will find themselves in the same orientation jungle. All education has as its primary task to offer a meaningful structure, which allows for a creative use of the student's energies. Structure is the key word of formation and the criterion of any educational guideline. Structure is allowing one to judge which feelings to trust and which feelings to distrust, which ideas to follow and which to reject. Structure provides unity to the many seemingly disconnected emotions and ideas of the student. Structure helps to decide which plan is just a fancy and which contains the seed for a workable project. It is structure, which offers the possibility to organize the day, plan the year and steer the course of life. Our fundamental problems in education are not related to the fact that we are too modern, too liberal or too progressive but that we do not have meaningful structures

through which we can help our students give form to their many, as yet, undirected and unfocussed potentialities. Students are looking for a structure, clear, explicit, and articulated in which they can test themselves and be tested by others in order to allow the necessary decisions for their future life.

Who are responsible for these structures? Parents and teachers with whom the student daily relates and who are able to claim in a clear and defined way their role of authority. The source of this authority is one's competence, maturity and faith. One in authority should know his or her field, must be able to cope with the tensions of life and believe that he or she is called to do a meaningful job. Students want to be criticized, reprimanded, and even punished. They ask for it if you can hear their language but very often no one wants to do this job. Parents want the teachers to do it and teachers in turn want the parents to do it. But the authority by which this happens should be based not on subjective feelings and ideas, not on abstract rules and regulations, but on a critical, competent and objective understanding of the student's behaviour. Not to provide meaningful structures at home, in the school or college or university is to fail in parenting and educating. Blaming everyone else but oneself when things go wrong (and they do go terribly wrong often) is immature behavior and in the end fruitless. By leaving the task of education to the Internet or the social media, we will end up paying a heavy price, for we reap what we sow.

(Rev. Dr. Isaac Padinjarekuttu teaches at Oriens Theological College, Mawlai, Shillong, a seminary for training Catholic priests. Formerly, he was principal of St. Joseph's College, Jakhama, Nagaland. The views expressed are his own). Email: padinjarekuttu@gmail.com

TO THE EDITOR

Shillong needs smart communication

Editor,

Shillong has been chosen as one among 98 cities in India under 'smart cities' project. Urban Affairs Minister, Ms Ampareen Lyngdoh said that the next step is to prepare an innovative plan. So what kind of plan does the Minister have in mind? Government should not be in a hurry to hand over 100 % of the project to some outside agency like what the Minister stated. As the Minister Urban Affairs and also a resident of Shillong city she would have witnessed how congested some places like Laitumkhrah and the Civil Hospital areas is. The traffic clog in some places is unprecedented. Vehicles are on the rise and ply throughout the day. So much so that one day our school going children will have to walk to school because, at that time to reach school from Fire Brigade to Don Bosco Square will equal a travel to Sohra (over one hour). I don't want to know what the plans of the Urban Affairs are or what steps the Govt is planning to address congestion but I have one suggestion. Please spend all the 100 crore rupees only in 'fly over projects' like what we have seen in the city of Guwahati. Only after such flyovers are created will Shillong automatically become a 'smart city'. Other developmental programmes will emerge only after the problem of road connectivity is solved. Otherwise it is a futile exercise.

Yours etc.,
Lewis B. Lyngdoh
Shillong - 10

Holistic urban development!

Editor,

Shillong, till recently, was out of contention for a smart city tag. It was mainly due to the relentless effort and pursuance of Ampareen Lyngdoh, Minister Urban Affairs and her team that our city was included. The real challenge lies ahead. One cannot forget the ambitious mission - JNNURM which is left only with a modicum of success and impact - whether in implementation of Shillong Drainage Master Plan or Housing for the poor including sub mission - integrated development of five urban slums. A GOI undertaking which was entrusted to implement the works failed to deliver. It is expected that the concerned department and nodal agency has learnt some lessons from the past failures and implement this project with optimal commitment and accountability. The challenge is also for the different stake holders and residents of Shillong whose cooperation and support is vital. Localities within Greater Shillong planning area has to take a conscious decision as to whether they are willing partners to avail the benefits of a smart city; ranging from sanitation and solid waste management to water supply; housing for economically weaker sections to public transport including IT etc. It is another opportunity, probably the last within the next decade. We are already far behind many of the small cities which have reaped the benefits of JNNURM and other central projects on urban infrastructure.

A comprehensive urban infrastructure development, covering all areas is a prerequisite for holistic improvement in civic amenities. Intervention over few

selected areas is counter-productive. It is one aspect of such nature but a different ball game to implement it successfully with judicious utilization of funds in a transparent manner with accountability and making it open to public scrutiny and audit. We hope for the dawn of a new era in improvement of urban life so that we can attain the smart city status. Till now we have not been very smart in all our urban sector endeavours.

Yours etc
Naba Bhattacharjee
Shillong-4

Hawkers have rights too!

Editor,

To say that I have been really saddened by the nature of the reply to Jonathan Pariat's letter would be an understatement. But then I also must agree with the first sentence of the editor's reply about the proliferation of hawkers in the main market areas. It is true that we can see them spreading their wares on the footpaths that are meant for pedestrians. However, I have stayed in Shillong my whole life and I have never been inconvenienced by it. On the contrary, what would always bother me was the contemplation of the circumstances that has compelled them to eke out their living in such uncertain conditions. They are earning their livelihood in a situation that exposes them to the possibility of harassment (I hope people have not forgotten the case of a hawker being assaulted by a famous business establishment in Police Bazar) and disdain from policy makers. Why do they then persist? The simple answer is that they have no choice.

These are marginalized and financially depressed people who are putting all the meager capital into their small enterprise so that they can earn an honest living. But let it not be assumed that they are helpless. Instead of wallowing about the eternal job crisis they decided to create opportunities for themselves. And they did it without exploiting others but their own labour. So it is not about the services that they provide but also the lessons they provide, 'dignity of labour' and 'self-reliance'. Are these not important lessons for all of us?

But then again let us not make the mistake of romanticizing the situation of the hawkers/vendors. They come from the socio-economically disadvantaged background and many of them could be landless population that has been revealed by the Census. I have doubts about the more than 2/3rd landless population and I feel that figure is somewhere around 20%, which is still significant. Doing vending is perhaps the only option left for these people. We should be supporting these hawkers/vendors by creating an environment where they are given protection from undue harassment. I believe we already have a 'Street Vendor's Act'. I have gone not through the act but if it is about empowering them, I am all for it. Finally for me, the sight of hawkers/vendors humanizes the landscape of Shillong for it tells me there is a place for everyone in this beautiful city of ours - from the people who could send their children to foreign countries for studies as well as the people who would send their children to sell kwai in the football stadium.

Yours etc.,
Bhogtoram Mawroh
Research Scholar, Dept.
of Geography,
NEHU,
Shillong-22

Muslim Populace Rises Agenda in poll states?

By Insaaf

The increase in the Muslim population in the country may well stir up passion in the country, specially three States which are due to go to the polls. This is so as the timing of the release of the Census 2010 data on Religious Communities has raised many an eyebrow. Though it was all ready some seven months ago, it was released only close to the Bihar Assembly elections. Two other States, which have a sizeable increase in the Muslim population, Assam and West Bengal will be going to polls next year. The fall in Hindu population by 0.7 per cent or dipping below to 80 per cent of the population may further whip of sentiments in these days of 'ghar wapsi' and rise of Muslim political parties. For one, Assam would find it more difficult not to act upon the illegal migrants from across Bangladesh. Its share of Muslim population has increased from 30.9 per cent to 34.2 per cent and there are nine districts out of 27 that are Muslim majority. Likewise, in West Bengal the share went up from 25.2 per cent to 27 per cent and there are three districts where the Muslims outnumber the Hindus. In Bihar, the number is up by one per cent. While the story is the same in Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Karnataka, the three poll-bound States will provide a hint as to how our parties, well-known for indulging in crass vote-bank politics will seek to use the census to their advantage. The division, it is feared will unfortunately grow.

States' Onion Crisis

Onions are giving State governments a run for their money! Many are going out of their way to ensure that the shortage and skyrocketing prices does not affect their popularity with the aam admi. With heavy rains damaging the crops and traders/farmers hoarding the vegetable, the mainstay of Indian food, prices have shot up to Rs 70-80 per kg! While the Centre has started importing the vegetable, States have made special arrangements to offer onions at a special rate of Rs 20-50 a kg. A few examples are noteworthy: West Bengal is selling these at stalls for Rs 50 but only half a kg per person; Delhi has mobile vans selling at Rs 30; Maharashtra is selling through PDS. However, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh take the cake. They are selling onions at Rs 20 per kg at the farmers markets. But one has to show an ID card/Aadhar card/Voter ID to get no more than two kgs and the finger of the buyer is inked so he doesn't take more than his quota! At this time, the voter would be more than happy to get it done and not crib about the long queues.

Bengaluru Setback For Cong

Karnataka has given a tense BJP some relief in the run-up to Bihar Assembly elections. It is going to town over its victory in the civic polls--Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagare Palika, where it has ruled since the past five years. While it has got a clear majority, 100 seats of 195, its tally was better in 2010 (112 seats). And though its return is being celebrated with much gusto, the ruling Congress, obviously embarrassed, can find solace in the fact that it performed better this time-from 64 to 76 seats. However, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah would have to do some explaining to the party high command as this is the first time in 30 years that a ruling party has been defeated in a civic poll! Add to this, the Government running roughshod to trifurcate the Bengaluru Council, without

taking into account that people in the country's IT capital were not in favour of it. While he may say that the results cannot be considered a referendum against his government, he would need to put his house in order, as dissent would obviously be growing. Maharashtra's 'Criminal' Cops

Maharashtra needs to rein in its men in khaki. The State has the dubious distinction of having maximum number of policemen booked for criminal cases last year. Not only are they partners in crime but also sadly top the charts for having the highest rate of acquittals in criminal cases, thus putting a big question mark on their calibre. The disturbing picture is drawn not by Mumbai's Bollywood industry but by the National Crime Records Bureau. It so happens that every fifth policeman accused in a criminal case was from the State in the national tally. Of the 2398 cases reported nationally, 487 were recorded from Maharashtra, followed by Gujarat with 417 cases and Kerala in third position (117 cases). The State is also the worst in securing conviction of criminals and sending them to prison. It has the highest rate of acquittals in criminal cases, touching 91.8 per cent in 2011. Between 2011-13, the State police succeeded in convicting only 32,462 out of a total number of 3,13,111 cases whose trial was over, thus acquitting persons in 2,80,649 cases. Wonder whether Chief Minister has the men in Khaki in his anti-corruption agenda?

Gujarat On the Boil

Politics of caste-based reservations once again raises its ugly head. This time in Gujarat, throwing a big challenge to Chief Minister Anandiben Patel. The State is on the boil with the OBC quota agitation by Hardik Patel bringing Ahmedabad city to a grinding halt, as threatened. However, the situation went out of hand and 9 lives were lost in violence across the State and the Army called in. While Anandiben is putting up a tough posture and refuses to yield, the administration would need to tread cautiously. More so, as it failed miserably in its assessment of the mood that Hardik whipped up amongst the 'powerful' community. Importantly, the police must be restrained as in some places like Surat, Rajkot, Patan and Ahmedabad its brute force triggered violent reactions. Prime Minister Modi has had to step in. He has appealed for calm and peace in the State he had ruled. Will his charm work? Developments need to be closely watched.

Chhattisgarh's Peon Dilemma

Imagine graduates, post-graduates and engineers applying for a peon's job! While it does sound preposterous, such is the case in Chhattisgarh. It has left the directorate of economics and statistics dumbfounded as it received 75000 applications for 30 posts of peons advertised. While the requisite qualification was 'Class 5 Pass' for the Grade-D post which would fetch a monthly pay packet of Rs 14,000, the response surpassed expectations. Among the 70,000 applications received online and another 5000 by post, there were several from postgrads in science and arts and even engineers. The sheer numbers forced the directorate to cancel the test as it wasn't prepared for it. It now gets down to making arrangements to conduct the test in the next few months. Not only should this be an eye opener for Chief Minister Raman Singh, but New Delhi too. It underscores the national unemployment crisis. Prime Minister Modi's achhe din seem a far cry. --- INFA

Do you feel low and out while surrounded by a particular colour but feel uplifted by the cheerful yellow? Why does white denote peace and black oppression and evil? Colours have deeper meanings than just being a part of the décor or apparel, Anju Munshi discovers

Colour me right

Artists and therapists have long known how colours can dramatically affect the mood. Besides the age-old scientific explanation that as white light passes through a prism it separates into some visible colours, we do not know much about the formation or structure of colours. All we know is that some colours please us while some do not, though it must be admitted that colour preferences and prejudices depend on individual personalities too.

Why is colour such a powerful force in our lives? What effect can it have on us physically and psychologically?

In ancient China and Egypt, colours were extracted from flowers as they were believed to have magical properties to heal and even attract someone by casting a spell. Widely known as Chromo therapy it is still used in alternative or holistic treatment to heal or treat individuals suffering

from stress. recommend use of power colours like red and black. If they detect stress, they recommend cool shades.

Human emotion reacts to different colours instinctively. These days in schools corrections in exercise books, traditionally done in red ink, have now been replaced by green. "Red signifies danger and a child gets upset, breathless and causes stress," says Kirti



Kitsch art, in vogue today, also signifies changing times symbolising liberation. In the mid-50s when kitsch art made an appearance, it was seen as rebellion against a rigidly defined style or taste of the day. "This is an art where colours play riot and thereby balance all the senses," feels Shanta Duruvila, a consultant psychologist from Kerala.

create bright wall hanging as she believes that a combination of colours can cheer you up and encourage self-motivation. Students of art at the very outset are introduced to a colour chart i.e. the red area in the spectrum comprising red, orange and yellow is known as warm colour zone evoking emotions ranging from warmth and comfort to

anger and hostility. The blue area is 'cool', the colour of the ocean and sky, it is associated with tranquility and peace. This colour is believed to soothe illness and treat pain; neon lights are used especially at night for patients to soothe and induce sleep. But blue can also express sadness or indifference. Hence perhaps

that colours can determine the behaviour of people and can have an impact on the administrative aspects of an organization by way of impacting consumer satisfaction, labour productivity, road safety, obsessive and criminal inclinations in people. Research is still on to determine colour induced behaviour. (TWF)



Personal grooming institutes give a special place to colour. Image management centres and image consultants study a person's penchant for leadership and confidence

Agarwalla, a counsellor with a reputed school in south Kolkata. Coming to interiors, the story is similar. A bright splash of colour in a room signifies freedom from limited space because it



and if deficient in strong personality traits, they

stands for openness, liberation and spontaneity.

She loves using broken bangles, conch shells etc to

The mood creators

- Red stimulates and increases blood circulation but can also lead to sleeplessness. Children taking exams should avoid being exposed to red. It works better with sportspersons filling them with passion and energy.
- Yellow stimulates the nerves and purifies the body. A cheerful colour but too much of it can excite a person, especially smaller children
- Orange heals the lungs and increases energy levels. Saints wear orange robes and most of the vitamin pills come in orange colour.
- Blue, the tranquil colour, is often used in gyms. Blue in different shades is also extensively in bedrooms.
- Black symbolises authority and power.

- Wearing black is a style statement and makes a person look slimmer.
- White stands for purity and innocence. In western countries brides wear white to symbolise innocence and purity. However, white is a bad absorber of heat and is not recommended for winter wear.
- Green, colour of the nature, stands for relaxation and fertility. Hospitals use green extensively.
- Purple is the colour of royalty denoting luxury, wealth, and sophistication. Roman aristocracy preferred this colour for their clothes.
- Brown, the earth colour, means down-to-earth and being rooted.



Someone probably filming you reading this

ALL adults have a vital duty to tell young people about The Olden Days (a phrase which covers the period from the early Triassic era to about 2008). "In the past, people would go a whole day without taking a single picture of anything," I declared.

My Facebooking Snapchatting children were stunned. "So how did you have fun, dad," one asked. "We would look at clouds and see if we could find animal shapes." I told them. Yes, life was thrilling then. They have no idea.

But now family life is upside down! In my house, the only people who can open child-proof packaging are the children. The only people who can get past the net-nanny web filter are the children. The only people who can do online hedge-fund asset swaps that crash the Dow Jones are the children.

One friend said that this resourceful, hi-tech generation of youngsters would make great spies. No, I've met spies, and it's no fun: they get swallowed up by their cover jobs. I knew one agent who played the part of a hard-drinking, grizzled journalist so well that he drank himself to death.

Probably got an authenticity award from the espionage community.

What's more, read the news: the whole hi-tech spying thing has been outsourced to wildlife. A few days ago, a pigeon was arrested and charged with espionage on the Pakistan-India border - not a joke. The bird was detained for acting suspiciously, which probably means it was wearing a false moustache and taking snaps of military facilities.

Indian security officers discovered messages in a foreign language and a phone number written on its feathers, the news item said. Now spies don't usually share contact details, so this might just be the pigeon equivalent of when you write down your phone number on your hand because you're getting old. Pigeons get old too, right?

Just a week before the dramatic pigeon arrest, the Egyptian authorities detained a stork for espionage and readers may re-

call the still-earlier incident when the Iranian army arrested 14 squirrels for suspiciously hanging out in the woods near a nuclear enrichment facility. Smug officials proudly said they detained the creatures "before they were able to take any action", but did not say what the squirrels' expected actions were. I suspect the list would include "eating nuts", "hanging out in trees", and "stealing food from bird feeders", which



are things we've all done at some time, right? Or is that just me?

The night before writing this, this writer was strolling to a meeting and looked to the skies for animal-shaped clouds. Lo and behold, there was a camera drone hovering overhead! It stayed there for about two minutes, watching me walk and eat junk food. Either it was hungry, or (more likely) it had been sent to check up on me by my calorie-counting app. Or my kids.

But there's one good thing about technology: If it's time to summon people for dinner, I just turn off the Wi-Fi and watch the whole family come running.

The Funny side

By

Nury Vittachi

Change your password to "invalid". Every time you get it wrong, the computer will say: "Your password is invalid."

You're welcome. (The writer is an Asia-based frequent flier. Send ideas and comments via his Facebook page)

People now do not mind going under the knife for virtual 'likes', writes Prashant Kumar

You will scarcely believe this but there are people in India who are undergoing cosmetic surgery and skin treatment to post a perfect picture on Facebook.

"Facebook facelift", a term coined by the doctors, is a trend gaining pace in the country with people aiming for more 'likes' and 'comments' on their profile pictures.

Various doctors with whom this writer spoke said people these days don't mind spending lakhs of rupees and undergoing multiple surgeries to get a "perfect photogenic" face.

"Everyone wants to look young and, in the age of social media, there is a craze among the netizens to look better in profile photos and selfies, by opting for facelift procedures," Anup Dhir, MD, Cosmetic and Plastic Surgery at the Apollo Hospital here, said.

Asked who - men or women - seek these facelifts, Dhir said: "Both men and women come, but there are more females than men, although males are catching up fast."

This comes as a surprise in the country where, till a few years ago, people considered social networking



Facebook facelifts

sites like Facebook and Google+ a mere "time pass". Dhir said that for real change, patients have to undergo three interventions, with each procedure costing up to Rs 30,000. But he cautions that a facelift is

not suggested for all. Navin Taneja, director of The National Skin Centre, said that the trend is likely to see a major surge in the coming days with internet penetration (Contd on P-VII)

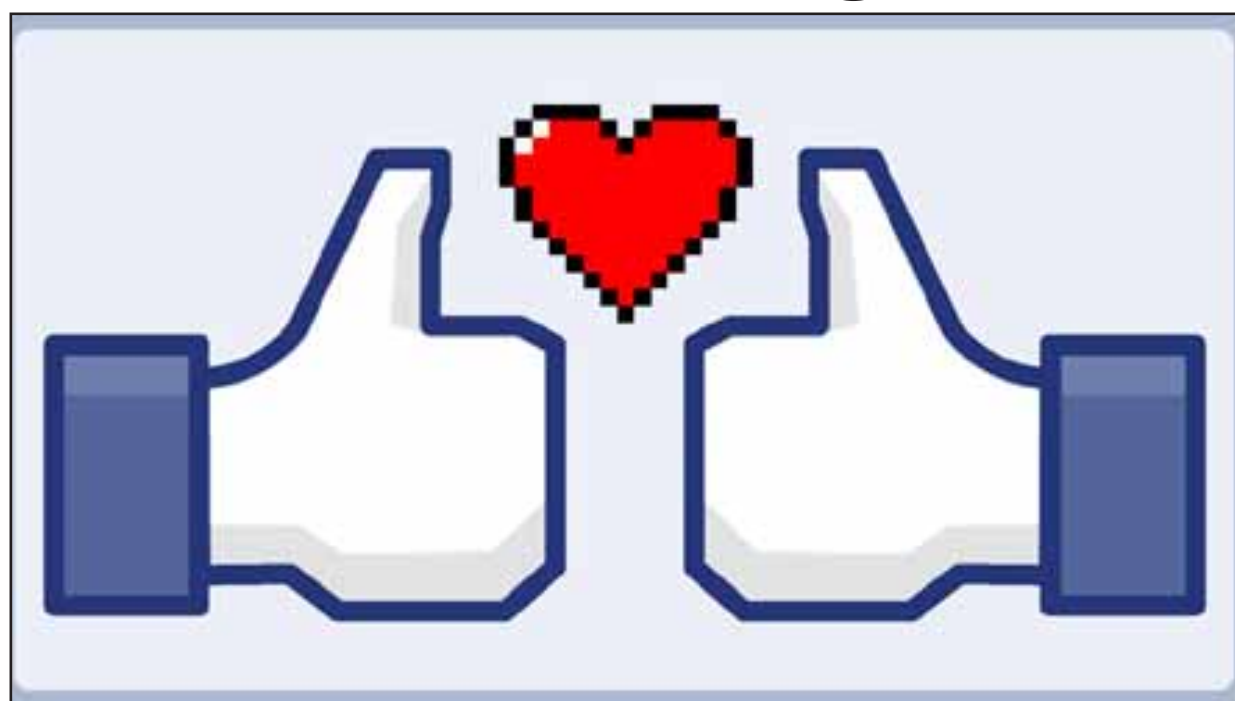
By Jyotshna Pandit

Rasika, a 16-year-old schoolgirl in Ahmedabad is in a relationship with a 21-year-old college boy. She is unhappy about the fact that her boyfriend frequently runs her down in front of their friends. The constant pressure to engage in sex is also making her anxious and uncomfortable. Although she wants to, she fears breaking up because her boyfriend has threatened to ruin her reputation in their social circle.

Replayed in schools across the country, Rasika's story mirrors the concerns and fears of adolescent girls today. Unaware of the meaning of healthy relationships, girls unwittingly suffer from emotional abuse and manipulation by their boyfriends. While there has been a lot of dialogue and debate on physical and sexual abuse on various fora, emotional and mental abuse has received scant attention so far.

The story also sheds light on the power differential in a relationship between a minor girl and an adult boy which can put the girl in an extremely vulnerable position. And finally, with the age of consent for sexual re-

Social networking and teenagers



lations fixed at 18, sexual intimacy between such couples can have serious legal implications. My re-

search and work with adolescents in urban India show that questions and doubts about sexuality are

not restricted to body anatomy, sex and contraceptives but cover topics that range from body image

and self-esteem to sexting, internet pornography, homophobia and slut shaming. (Contd on P-VII)

By
Vijay Satokar

Brits who did their bit for India

Did you know that as far back as the 1850s, a British engineer had chalked out a plan to link all the major rivers in India or that it was an Englishman who mastered Sanskrit and translated Kalidasa's work in English?

From laying the foundation of the Asiatic Society and fighting the dreaded "Thugee" system, some of the forgotten British gentlemen who were not necessarily administrators went well beyond their call of duty making valuable contributions, says a book.

The preface in "Beyond the Call of Duty" by academic, author and columnist V Raghunathan and Veena Prasad, says that it is difficult to say anything nice about the British who ruled over India unless one suffered from Stockholm syndrome.

Lost in the narrative that during their 200-year rule, the British plundered India, however, is the work of the scores of well-intentioned individuals who played a part in shaping modern India, the book says.

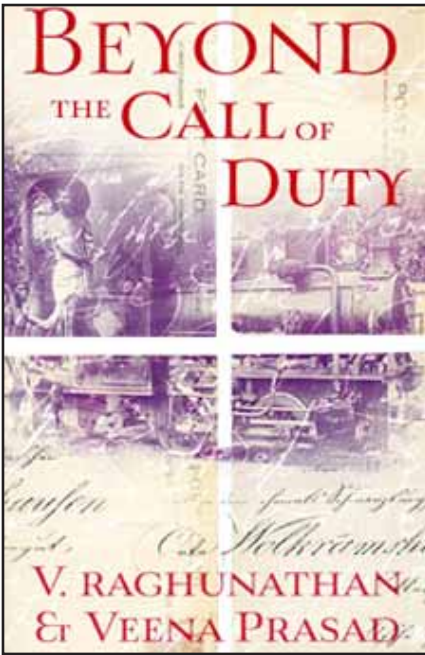
The authors say they have tried to be mere story tellers and told the stories of a dozen outstanding British gentlemen. These were the men who loved India and Indians and went way beyond their call of duty when doing in India and for India what they did.

Arther Thomas Cotton, considered all time great engineers of the British empire, in 1958 dared to dream of an ambitious project to link all the major Indian rivers to exploit the full irrigation and navigational potential in the country.

Cotton is the man known as 'Bhageeratha' in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and has more than 3000 statues of him installed all over East

and West Godavari districts for his work in the region, the book says.

Ask a hundred educated people who set up the Asiatic Society and chances are 99 will draw a blank. "And therein lies the need of telling these stories, which, in our view, are stories of sheer human spirit, stories of ex-



cellence, perseverance and application, stories that celebrate the satisfaction of a job well done", the authors say.

The book says few would imagine that an East India Company official well-versed in Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Chinese would turn Indologist mid-life, go on to Sanskrit and translate Kalidasa's Shantukalam, Ritusamhara and Manusamhita into English and then set up The

Asiatic Society.

It was Sir William Jones Jr. who in 1784 registered the Asiatic Society with objective of advancing Asiatic research.

India is home to some of the grandest and most ancient monuments in the world that have withstood the test of time, invasions and general apathy.

It was Alexander Cunningham of Bengal Engineers regiment who put a proposal for constitution of Archaeological Survey.

Perhaps his most important contribution is the restoration of the temple at Bodhi Gaya, the legendary site of Buddha's enlightenment.

When he first visited the site the only visible relic of an ancient empire was buried under centuries of sand, the book says.

William Henry Sleeman was the civil servant who rid India of dacoit gangs known as 'thugs'. One of his first official proclamations when posted in Jabalpur was regarding prohibition of 'Sati'.

When his soldiers began to fall prey to highway robberies, Sleeman went on to make series of arrests.

He built a special prison to hold the swelling number of prisoners. As a deterrent, the ones who had committed the most gruesome murders were publicly hanged, the book says. There is a village-Sleemanabad- in Madhya Pradesh, a tribute to the man's work, the book says.

By
Vikas Datta

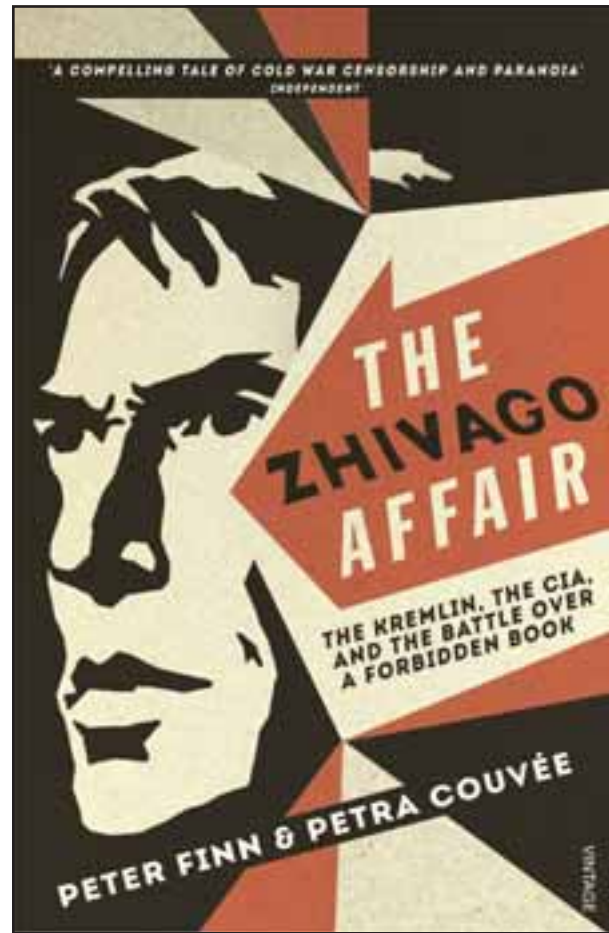
Title: **The Zhivago Affair: The Kremlin, the CIA, and the Battle Over a Forbidden Book**; Authors: **Peter Finn and Petra Couvee**; Publisher: **Vintage**; Pages: **368**; Price: **Rs.499**

Confined to his Beijing house's basement for over two years during the Cultural Revolution, Reuters correspondent Anthony Grey was only allowed sporadic visits upstairs under close supervision to collect approved necessities. His reading matter was restricted but he still contrived somehow to elude his guards for the few seconds he needed to deftly snatch up and conceal his copy of "Doctor Zhivago" they had rejected earlier. The incident seems apt for a book, born in strange circumstances, and going on to have its own chapter in Cold War history.

The sole (and faintly-autobiographical) novel by Russian poet Boris Pasternak (1890-1960), about an idealistic physician-poet during the Russian Revolution, fell afoul of the Soviet establishment due to its apparent seditious stance and contrarian view of seminal episodes of Soviet history and seemed fated to go unpublished - had it not been for a unique international collaboration.

An Italian journalist to whom Pasternak handed over the manuscript with the words "This is 'Dr Zhivago'. May it make its way around the world" in May 1956, an Italian aristocrat-turned-communist publisher, Russian emigre, American publishers and CIA operatives, Dutch intelligence officials, and Vatican priests got together to get it published and into the hands of its readers - especially in the author's country as well as other communist countries.

Meanwhile, the Swedish Academy's selection of Pasternak for the Nobel Prize in Literature (and his subsequent repudiation of the award under govern-



How a book sparked of a Cold War...

ment pressure) brought the book to world attention - and meant further trouble for Pasternak and his family until then Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru publicly weighed in.

This is the engrossing story that Peter Finn, the national security editor of The Washington Post and previously its bureau chief in Moscow, and Petra Couvee, a teacher at Saint Petersburg State University, bring out in their first book, based on information from declassified CIA files and interviews of various Europeans officials and activists involved in the events as well as Pasternak family members.

But their account does not only deal with the Cold War intrigues and the CIA-KGB conflict over Pasternak's novel, but also with Pasternak, his interestingly complicated love life (he virtually abandoned his first wife to marry a friend's wife, who slowly grew cantankerous, while he embarked on a long relationship with another much younger woman - who would suffer much for his and the book's sake), the Soviet Union's literary climate, especially the uncertain, lethal time during the Stalinist purges when several writes perished, the short-lived

Khrushchev thaw and the eventual return of political oversight, and the role of culture and ideology in both democracies and autocratic polities.

There is a varied supporting cast - Pasternak's literary colleagues - supportive, indifferent or virulently opposed, leading authors and other intellectuals, maverick publishers, sinister and devious government functionaries and literary bureaucrats, family members, clandestine operatives, and more.

Also figuring is the eventually tragic story of Giagiacom Feltrinelli, the Milan-based publisher (whose first publication was Nehru's autobiography) with an eye for commercial opportunity, who resisted all pressure to suppress it (he himself later became a violent ultra-left militant before being found dead in mysterious circumstances).

What is missing is the literary significance of "Dr Zhivago" with its sceptical

Facebook facelifts

(Contd from P-VI) in the country constantly increasing with every passing day.

"The trend has increased 200 percent in the past three years. It will keep growing with the time and advancement in technology," Taneja said, adding "people are getting more conscious about their looks and they want to look their best in each and every event."

He said it was not only the young who come for such a procedure, but people over 50 also opt for it.

"At our centre, the common requirement is of non-surgical facelift, wrinkle reduction, treatment for under-eye darkening, pigmentation, lip job, glowing and rejuvenating skin procedure," he added.

"There are a lot of men who want to look good and are willing to spend as much as they can to achieve this," he said.

Although no facelift recipient was willing to come on record, a photographer who shoots pictures for social media says that it has become an integral part of people's life.

"They easily agree to pay up to Rs.50, 000 for an album shoot to upload it on Facebook," Zubai Khan, founder of the Zubai Khan Studio in Delhi said. "We give around five to seven photos which they upload one by one as and when they feel like updating," he added.

Khan said the rate depends on the requirement of the clients which includes make up and location shoot as well. "College students are the most who come for such shoots," Khan said. (The writer can be contacted at prashant.k@ians.in)

'Star - Gazing'

By **Pt. Ajai Bhambani**

Sunday, August 30, 2015

Prospects for development of your ideas and projects look bright as Moon conjunct Neptune on your solar return chart. Change is the only constant so embrace change and rid yourself of your preconceived notions. Actions taken with conviction and confidence would enable you to forge ahead with greater ease. Finances will stabilize. There would be spending on the family and the home. Personal relationships respond to the extra effort to move out of the current state of inertia. The health of someone in the family could give you some anxious moments. You would be in good health overall.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

The planetary configuration brings love, harmony and entertainment in family and personal relations. A romantic short trip may be undertaken for pleasure. People look upon you with more respect, tolerance, and acceptance. You don't feel the need to prove yourself, and that feels good. You have the chance to shine, largely because you are projecting yourself with self-respect as well as modesty. Opportunities both personal and professional are likely to present themselves as a result. You may enjoy the challenge of tackling a variety of subjects. This is a very self-expressive time when you have lots of energy, but not necessarily self-discipline to match.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

Activities related to communications such as journalism, literature, public speaking, debates are highlighted and would figure more prominently. You feel touchy and sensitive; the attitude should be more accommodating and compassionate in relationships and you should not to take things personally. Friendships, cooperation and synergy are available to you. You would work creatively in your field of activity. This brings success and good fortune at work and opens new horizons for expansion. You find yourself in a whirlwind of activities and need to slow down a bit and not neglect your health.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You would have positive results from marketing, communications and public relations. This is a favorable time to go for higher learning and joining new courses such as beauty culture, computers, fine arts and in fields related to show business. Be sure you consider all the factors prior to putting forth your ideas. Do not go on instinct alone; take the opinion of someone close to you. You may modernize your work place and home and give it a new look. You may change your hairstyle, buy new clothes and spend on luxury items. Also spend some time alone to recharge and revitalize yourself.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

After dealing with tough people and complicated issues you feel much stronger and clearer about your priorities. It might be hard for you to work with others in a harmonious manner, and disputes with co-workers are possible. You may feel a bit defeated by situations at home and work. Allow space and time for things to change on their own. Awkward pauses and false starts do happen; the issue is how you handle them. Use information from the data at hand and your charisma to get back on track. Take care of your health and adopt a routine of regular walk and exercise.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

You are more inclined to take pride in your intellectual accomplishments. Find activities and things to do so that you can channel excess energy constructively. You have mental clarity and a logical approach to resolve matters. Communications and business associates from overseas bring good news. Your heart and head pull you in different direction when domestic and family related decisions are to be taken. Personal relationships may be dreamy and transitory and commitments are to be made and promises are to be honored. A marriage proposal is worth considering. Health needs care and old habits of excesses need to be abandoned.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

As your confidence gets a boost, you attempt difficult tasks, resolve complicated issues and handle a multitude of activity. Be careful when expressing feelings and emotions as others can misunderstand you. You handle business seminars and express yourself more specifically about the subject. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering. You might spend time in short frequent trips,

communicating with people and visiting friends and relatives. You tend to entertain others with your sense of humor. Talking, writing, and studying can be good ways to handle stress. You interact with people in position of power and authority with grace and diplomacy. Health and energy need to be conserved through a busy time at home and work.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

This period brings good-luck for love and romance. Your thoughts turn to children, pleasure and romance. You focus on having fun, enjoying sports and expressing yourself. As you recall nostalgic trips, you also maintain a balance of the head and heart in professional and personal matters. You turn things around in business dealings in your favor. You are noble and generous in family situations but have a tendency to worry about those close to you. Monetary transaction brings gains in property related issues. An overseas or long distance journey with includes pilgrimage is on the cards.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

Mixed results are foretold this week. You achieve success as you are brilliant and there is good fortune attending professional, personal and material aspects. You interact with people in position of power and authority with tact and grace. You will be able to make good use of your talents, work experience for your work and projects in hand. You have more opportunities to improve relations with relatives and friends in your immediate environment. You can trust your intuition about people and situations when called upon to mediate in conflicts and collaborations. A new work opportunity can change the way you work and relate with people professionally.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

New associations and beginnings in work areas will come up as new opportunities and changes may arise. You would improve your romantic and love life by bringing more sincerity, cooperation and humanity as unusual attractions and dreams could feature at this time. Domestic members would be more supportive as this is the best time to bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships and feel more comfortable. You tend to entertain others with your conversation. Some nagging issues and details will demand your attention.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

This phase brings more stability in relations and professional life. You enjoy being in control but many times it is not possible. When you let go you discover that many aspects can be viewed more objectively. This objectivity lends a new edge and adds to your passion at work. This also opens new vistas in romantic relationships and helps you communicate better. Your subconscious and intuitive abilities help you forge professional associations with the larger picture in mind. Having fun that too when relaxed adds an extra element in your life.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

The ability to build on financial and monetary pursuits and good returns from overseas business are on cards. As you rid yourself of your inner critic you find that concepts flow and you are able to give shape to them. You or someone close to you may finalize a marriage proposal. Sharing your interests and communications with loved ones may be especially appealing to you. You might spend a lot of time in meeting friends and beloved ones. You could be stressed while meeting people's expectations and approval. Health food, yoga and meditation are recommended as it would help to overcome health problems.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

This is a phase that brings wisdom, knowledge and creativity in your efforts. Your methods prove to be effective but you need to be circumspect as far as your interaction with colleagues is concerned. People are in awe of you for your intelligent mind. Your social life is enviable as are your interactions. You resolve an important domestic issue that has been causing a rift in relations for some time. Centering within and witnessing inner truth and reflection is the best meditation. You are strong and masterful while turning things around in a positive direction at work.

Social networking and teenagers

(Contd from P-VI) Take the case of Anjum, a college girl in Mumbai who is deeply insecure about her body. In her attempt to understand the root cause of her insecurity, she recalls witnessing her mother's discomfort and insecurities. Her comment is telling: 'I wish my mother was comfortable undressing in front of me when I was a child. If she had been comfortable about her body, I would have grown up feeling more comfortable about mine'. Shame about the body is learnt in many ways and from many sources but clearly the role of the mother is crucial. As the noted American feminist Naomi Wolf beautifully puts it, "A mother who radiates self-love and self-acceptance vaccinates her daughter against low self-esteem."

Like Anjum, countless schoolgirls are ridden with doubts and insecurities about their own appearance. Numerous writers have pointed out that media images and messages which promote a narrow definition of beauty (read tall, fair and slim) aggravate these fears. Such messages and images are known to have a debilitating effect on the self-esteem of young girls.

More worryingly, they perpetuate a narrow and damaging idea that 'your looks are the most important thing about you'. It is perhaps not surprising then to find both young boys and girls in schools obsessing over their sex appeal and appearance. These messages also play a part in reinforcing notions of racism and fat-shaming in schools and colleges. Remarks like 'She is so dark! How did he choose her?' or 'My boyfriend calls me fat and ugly. What should I do?' are not uncommon in school and college campuses. While a negative body image can become a source of anxiety and depression, it can also directly impact one's capacity for love, connection and healthy relationships well into adulthood. In fact, a negative body image might also lead girls to enter and continue to stay in emotionally and verbally abusive and unhealthy relationships.

Mary Jane Kehily, a UK-based scholar specialising in gender and sexuality dynamics in school spaces, has observed that within the context of the school, much informal learning takes place concerning issues of gender and sexuality, the homophobia of young men and the sexual reputations of young women. In India, schools are undoubtedly a hotbed of prejudice and discrimination based on gender, colour and sexual orientation. Children and

adolescents pick up sexist attitudes through the official curriculum, pedagogic practices and informal pupil cultures. Sexism in school spaces is most evident in the ubiquitous use of the term 'slut'. A girl could be labelled as a slut for 'flirtatious' behaviour or 'provocative' walk, talk or speech. Unaware of the inherent sexism and misogyny in this term, both boys and girls use it loosely in everyday conversations. What is disturbing is that this term is often used to justify sexual and physical harassment of girls. Now, with the popularity of social media among both pre-teens and teens, this term has become a part of cyber bullying.

Another interesting and less-explored phenomenon is that labels are also applied to those schoolboys and girls who choose to stay away from flirting and romantic relationships. Termed as weird, uncool and abnormal, these girls and boys face relentless ridicule and criticism from their peers. In the words of one schoolgirl in Baroda, "a boy who does not have a girl friend is labelled as gay by his classmates." Girls and boys at the receiving end of these jibes often end up battling hurt, anger and shame all alone.

Several research scholars have noted that effective and appropriate sex education can be developed only if we are aware about adolescent sexuality and the perspectives which young people bring to sex education. Crucially, sex education in India should seek to address sexist language and attitudes that are responsible for creating an environment where all kinds of abuse is tolerated. Another important purpose of sexuality education is to instil high self-esteem and confidence in children and adolescents. There is no place like home to begin a dialogue on healthy body image and respectful and healthy relationships. If parents open up the lines of communication around issues of body and sexuality early on, children and adolescents will not shy away from approaching them when they are faced with difficult and embarrassing situations. Adolescents who feel free to discuss their desires, fears and insecurities with their parents are more likely to resist negative labelling and stereotyping in schools and colleges. They will also feel more confident about making unconventional choices and decisions in their personal lives. INAV

