

“There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow men. True nobility lies in being superior to your former self.”
— Ernest Hemingway

The Shillong Times
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Goa Festival

THE 46th International Film Festival (IFFI) which was held in Goa showed unusual intolerance towards a section of film students. Some of Film Institute of India students had organised a prolonged strike against the head of the institute chosen by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The organisers mainly comprising IIB officials cancelled a section on films produced by FII students. Most of them were not given passes to attend the festival. When two students demonstrated at an inauguration, the police tracked down on them and filed cases against them. Delegates wearing badges to show their solidarity with the protestors were told to remove them. The Film fraternity at the festival was dismayed by such action.

Since its inception in 1952, the IFFI has been a function organised by film artistes and film buffs. Films shown every in the past celebrated the highest kind of creative freedom. Dissent was always encouraged. Some of those who attended the function were marked by their eccentricity as spirit of rebellion which added vibrancy to the film festival. Young film makers with high hopes learnt from the classics from different countries screened at the festival interacted with established actors and got a taste of avant garde developments. Parallel cinema received a boost from the festival and film societies sprang up with inspirations derived from it. In the past, the state may have sometimes tried to discipline snickering viewers but only that. But now it seems that the freedom of expression at film festivals like the IFFI is being crushed. The IFFI has as a result lost its vitality and turned into a film emporium opening up marketing prospects. It is forgotten that cinema is an art form, not merchandise. The Censors are now busy with their scissors and the festivals are giving way to bureaucratic thralldom.

LOOKING BACK

March 28, 1988

Faleiro opens loan mela in Tripura

Union Minister of State for Finance Eduard Faleiro today formally inaugurated the much publicized loan mela here.

Speaking on the occasion Mr. Faleiro said the mela aimed at uplifting the economic status of the weaker section.

He said loan worth Rs. seven crores were distributed among 16,000 beneficiaries living below the line in the first phase. The mela was launched by the United Bank of India in collaboration with other nationalized banks.

Mr. Faleiro announced that every family living below the poverty line would be gradually covered by the credit distribution programme.

He said all the banks operating in the state had been instructed to go to rural areas at least once on a week to acquaint the people with the developmental programmes, taken by the banks. They have also been instructed to identify the viable projects suited to them and offer bank loans to them.

He said the government's policy was to make bank facilities available to the poorer section of the society as they are not used to coming to the banks.

Mr. Faleiro urged the beneficiaries to make proper use of their loan and try their best to repay it by the stipulated time which he said, would help the banks to extend further loan to others.

Tripura Chief Minister Mr. Sudhir Ranjan Majumdar speaking on the occasion thanked Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi

for organizing the loan distribution programme and said the Government had decided to buy back the producers of the beneficiaries.

He appealed to the people to cooperate with the Government in implementing the developmental programme launched by the Government to improve economy of the State.

UBI chairman Mr. K. D. Nayar said all viable schemes should be examined by banks without fear or favour strictly within the framework of guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India.

4 Union Ministers involved in 59 Rajya Sabha election today

Four Union Ministers are among the candidates in the fray for tomorrow's biennial elections to fill 59 Rajya Sabha seats.

Union Ministers Motilal Vohra and Hansraj Bhardwaj, Deputy Minister Radhakrishna Malaviya and Minister of State for public Health Saroj Khaparde are among those contesting the polls, to be held in 12 States.

Mr. Mohinder Singh and Ms. Prativa Singh of the Congress (I) have been declared elected unopposed from Haryana and Bihar respectively.

Mr. Dharam Paul (Cong I) and Mr. G. R. Mattoo (National Conference) were declared elected in Jammu and Kashmir.

Prominent opposition leaders contesting include BJP President L.K. Advan, Janata Party General Secretary Subramaniam Swamy, former U.P. Chief Minister Ram Naresh Yadav and Mr. Hanumantha Rao of the CPI (M).

More than four weeks have passed since the curtains went down on the International Terra Madre (ITM) at Mawphlang on the evening of the 7th Nov 2015. The first such International event for this Hill State where more than 600 foreign delegates participated! A lot of water since has passed under the Mawlai bridge together with a lot of words, opinions, comments written and spoken about the event itself. From the point of view of the foreign delegates, the consensus was one of general satisfaction. Most of them came to confabulate on the issue of Indigenous Partnerships for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty. For the first time in the history of International meets all 600 foreign delegates, comprising of experts on food production, matriliney and indigenous cultures went out on a field visit and interacted with villagers of Meghalaya. They apparently returned highly impressed with whatever indigenous demeanour they encountered.

On the other hand going by what has appeared on print and the local social media network, it would appear that there exists a general feeling of resentment that the ITM on its concluding day had not been able to meet expectations of the local people. Apparently there were two major expectations from the locals. The pleasant anticipation of driving at leisure to Mawphlang, enjoy oneself at the festival and then return at an equally leisure manner back home. Traffic conditions on the entire Shillong – Mawphlang stretch that day, were so horrible; so chaotic; so unmanageable that this hope was dashed to pieces the moment it was born. Motorists to the festival got stuck for hours without food, drink or the ability to relieve themselves. Mass indignation on this count is justified. The second expectation of many was to enjoy international food and cuisine at the ITM. Mouth watering Italian pastas, Irish stews, Tiramisù et al were definitely on the anticipated menu. How this expectation came about is unclear. It, however, was simply not there and local food too, whatever there was, soon disappeared. Many went home hungry and this must have really hurt. Thus the 2nd count of disappointment and chagrin is also understandable.

TO THE EDITOR

Govt building misused

Editor,

It has been noticed that the Assam type building next to the District Transport Office (DTO) Shillong which was once the Office of the Director of Supply has now become an abandoned, dilapidated building after the office shifted to another place. Though the building was under lock and key, we have noticed that all the locks have been broken and the building remains open 24 hours. Hence miscreants are misusing the building for nefarious purposes. It is also noticed now when we go to DTO's office that the drivers of Govt vehicles spend their time playing cards while some even use the building like a liquor stall. This is highly objectionable.

Since DTO, PWD, Tourism, etc offices are located there and nowadays no private vehicles are allowed to enter inside the office premises, all the contractors, visitors and other person who have to go to DTO for registrations, etc and members of the public have to park their cars on the roadside, leading to traffic jams. I therefore suggest that the old Supply office should be dismantled and used as a temporary parking lot until the Govt proceeds to build a new office complex. There many offices such as

By Toki Blah

Before one begins to delve into what really happened that day at Mawphlang, one has to first understand two basic issues. Firstly the 7th was simply the finale to a weeklong event of seminars, workshops and panel discussions, of International standard at an international level, about the whole ideology of Indigenous Partnerships for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty; the fundamental relationship between indigenous people and their food systems and the imperative but oft forgotten impact that food has on the culture and value systems of indigenous people like us. The extravagant display of cultural dances and songs on the 7th Nov at Mawphlang was choreographed to showcase that sense of wellbeing, contentment and community cohesion that, indigenous people the world over display, over their relationship with the food they grow. During sowing time and harvesting time, indigenous tribes the world over, often burst into an overindulgence of exuberance usually expressed through dance and song. Spring and Autumn festivities linked to successful agriculture is a trademark of all mountain people. Ka Behdeinkhlam and Shad Nongkrem and other similar dances symbolise the Hynniewtrep portrayal of the above. Sadly it's something the critics of the ITM, most of whom are urban indigenous people themselves, chose to ignore and forget.

The second basic issue one should keep in mind while discussing about the ITM and its programme is a paradox of sorts. No doubt the event was launched from the slow food platform but the term slow food is not so much about decorous eating of food; chewing/cooking it slowly or otherwise. ITM and its slow food movement is, instead, about indigenous food systems. It's about refocusing attention on how indigenous people sow the grains that feed them; how the food (usually grain of different variety depending on the continent, locale and ter-

rain it is grown) is harvested; how seeds for the next sowing season are selected, stored and preserved; and eventually how this food itself is cooked. The concern of our ancestors over each activity mentioned above formed the core of what we now call our culture and our tradition. Specific value systems relating to food developed out of it. An indigenous person's world view has always been influenced by his environment and the type of food he grows, for it ultimately decides the very survival of his clan and the tribe itself. Food is therefore revered. Food is essentially the DNA of our identity as indigenous people. That exactly is what the ITM is all about. It's not about international dishes or their availability at Mawphlang on the 7th of November 2015. Instead it was all about sensible indigenous partnerships to bring about a healthier paradigm in holistic food production.

One has already made mention of the two major expectations that the ITM generated. These expectations were however strictly focused on the events of the 7th at Mawphlang. One feels sorry for those who braved the elements to reach Mawphlang on the 7th only to find that their expectations were nowhere to be found. For their dashed gastro-colic hopes let us attempt to illustrate a culturally satisfying aspect of the ITM that took place during the first 3 days at NEHU. First were the blessings bestowed upon the event by U Kynsaimanik Syiem, an elder of the Hima Khyrim, when he inaugurated the opening ceremony on the 3rd. (The Syiem of Khyrim was unable to attend because the ITM coincided with the Pomblang Festival at Smit). Illustrative of how an egalitarian indigenous society traditionally turns to its wise elders for guidance on any auspicious occasion.

Something else also happened in one of the Thematic Panel discussions. It was a discussion on Food Sovereignty. Bah HH Mohrmen and I were panellists to that particular discussion. Others included international experts on indigenous food sys-

tems; experts on indigenous belief systems and indigenous participants from other parts of the world. When the Khasi Pnar reverence for rice was narrated; how it is taboo for Khasis to do anything that lowers the eminence and dignity of cooked rice (lehbein, leh khlem akor ia u sohkhaw ja); how grains of rice are carried by Khasi travellers to protect themselves from evil, the audience was viscerally enthralled by this cultural veneration given by our community to the principal food grain cultivated on these hills. It's so illustrative of the indigenous respect given to the food systems that sustain us as a people. Our beliefs, culture and tradition so intertwined with our food habits and Terra Madre (Mother Earth) is central to it all!

Speaking of the Earth, the foremost concern of every thinking person today is how to save it. The Earth as we know it may not survive for long unless mankind can come about with workable and sensible solutions on how to overcome his own agents of destruction- Climate Change and Global Warming. One of the greatest challenges in coming up with feasible and practical solutions to the problem, is mankind's belief that Climate Change is something new; something unique which in turn demands novel undiscovered solutions. But is this so? Is Climate Change something mankind has never encountered before? The Khasis as an ancient indigenous people believe otherwise. They feel they already possess a practical traditional answer on carbon sequestering; on how to minimise Global warming; on how to save this planet from Climate Change. It has been done before; no reason why it should not happen again. The answer lies in the concept and idea behind our sacred groves. How our ancestors came about this answer lies perhaps somewhere in the folklore about the Diengrie tree. It's a story and in it the universal answer that the world is looking for. What better way to tell it to the world than orally through an International festival on Indigenous Partnerships for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty held in the Mawphlang Sacred Grove of the Khasi Hills!

This is not to under-rate his government's efforts in the direction of making business-doing easier and freeing up large areas for foreign direct investment, to the extent of almost making India too dependent on externally financed growth. But it is in key game-changing reforms, its record has been patchy and in some agreed areas, even halting as in tax policy clarity, despite a lot of verbiage from policymakers. And, lastly, the Modi Government has found its Achilles heel in GST it had touted as one becoming effective in April 2016. Finding no other viable options, the Modi Government had to begin making conciliatory approaches to its sworn adversary, the Congress led by Ms. Sonia Gandhi, which has hitherto blocked the GST playing obstruction to perfection. However, Ms/Sonia Gandhi had thrown an olive branch which seems to be working. The Congress says, GST being originally its own creation, it would vote for it subject to three changes it had been putting across, though till now firmly rejected by Finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley. Also it is hurt by the "disrespect" by Mr Modi towards the principal opposition, according to vice-president Mr Rahul Gandhi.

Wherever the elections, Mr Modi takes the stage to make his no-holds-barred attacks on Congress, blaming it as the fount of all evils of the post-independence era. Now egged on by developments, he realises discretion seems better part of valour at this stage. Mr Modi invited the leader of opposition Ms Sonia Gandhi and former PM Dr Manmohan Singh for tea at his residence on November 27. A conciliatory PM sounded them on GST and was told about the party's known demands. Agreeably he has kept the door open for a further exchange by this weekend, when he is back from Paris Climate Summit. Can a deal get clinched?

A nagging question remains whether all this is only for GST just to get over a jam or a consensus if arrived at would be a pointer for a less confrontational approach in future for the success of our parliamentary democracy. What has emerged in this 'cease fire' holds out some promise for an end to seemingly controversies over 'secularism' and certain other misguided perceptions relating to the basic provisions of India's Constitution. For once, the Prime Minister Mr Modi, with his strong backing of RSS, has declared that Constitution is a "holy book" and impliedly ruled out any review of it. He also conceded that "consensus is more important than majority rule". Mr Modi's remarks could potentially alter the dynamics of future political discourse and set the stage for a more enlightened approach by both major parties, even as they battle out in the upcoming state elections more on basis of programmes rather than on hateful rhetoric.

In a sense, Mr Modi's intervention in the two-day debate on the Constitution, focused on the 125th birthday of Dr B R Ambedkar, one of the principal makers of the Constitution, helped to clarify where he really stood on serious issues of the Republic, he had always skirted around. A casual approach had marked Mr Modi's appearances and interventions in Parliament so far. Nor at any time was he seen to set great store by the precedents and values of parties working together in our Constitutional set-up on major national issues of internal governance and external security. With all his antipathy for Jawaharlal Nehru, universally acknowledged as the architect of Modern India, Modi had belittled his role in the framing of the Constitution even while Dr Ambedkar is rightly acknowledged and celebrated by all parties for his acumen in Constitution-making and setting guidance posts. In the Lok Sabha speech, Mr Modi preferred to merely note the contributions of previous Prime Ministers and others to the building of India. There were more of bland statements short of firm commitments though the speech was littered with plenty of epithets and platitudes. Overall, Mr Modi's remarks seemingly conciliatory tone was also designed to remove any irritants left behind by his Home Minister Rajnath Singh, describing 'secularism' in the Constitution as the "most misused", obviously a remark aimed at the Congress. It remains to be seen whether a durable change has set in for Modi governance. (IPA Service)

A welcome interlude in Modi's outlook

By S. Sethuraman

For the first time after a full 18 months of political bitterness carried to absurd lengths, the Modi Government has realised, belatedly though, that whatever the power at its command, the path of consensus-building in parliamentary democracy cannot be shunned altogether.

This had become inevitable when the Modi Government's own vital (reform) interests are at stake, especially at a time of diminishing credibility on his ability to implement the promised key reforms, which are being increasingly viewed as desideratum for investments, domestic or foreign

Apart from the confrontation with opposition over the Congress party's objections to GST, played down so far as an insuperable obstacle by his Government, the Prime Minister's political image has also taken a hit in the aftermath of the Modi-led BJP's defeat in Bihar and reverses in a couple of byelections.

And all this against a wider background of grievance among liberals and writers, many returning awards, over Mr Modi's enigmatic silence on condemnable actions and killings by bands of Hindutva outfits. Such groups, being not disassociated with RSS ideology to which the Prime Minister himself adheres, made his position invidious.

Nor the deserved denunciations had been forthcoming from any of the senior Ministers who are all the time sedulously protecting the image of their supreme leader, and instead have been rigging the past for indulging in blame game to turn tables against political rivals.

Finally, it caught up with Mr Modi himself as he could come across in his peregrinations how the recent social and political developments in the country have begun to attract undesirable attention in some of the other major democracies as well.

In effect, the law of diminishing returns seems to have set in for Mr Modi to retain the halo with which he made a grand debut on the world stage in 2014. Nevertheless, he retains his charisma and nations still look to him as leader of the largest democracy committed to transform the economy through structural reforms.

While he may still be lionised by the dispora as a new messiah to take on India's age-old problems of poverty and social backwardness, the tasks of turning India more investor-friendly and easier to do business with, is no less intractable as experience of his first 18 months of office has shown.

This is not to under-rate his government's efforts in the direction of making business-doing easier and freeing up large areas for foreign direct investment, to the extent of almost making India too dependent on externally financed growth.

But it is in key game-changing reforms, its record has been patchy and in some agreed areas, even halting as in tax policy clarity, despite a lot of verbiage from policymakers. And, lastly, the Modi Government has found its Achilles heel in GST it had touted as one becoming effective in April 2016.

Finding no other viable options, the Modi Government had to begin making conciliatory approaches to its sworn adversary, the Congress led by Ms. Sonia Gandhi, which has hitherto blocked the GST playing obstruction to perfection. However, Ms/Sonia Gandhi had thrown an olive branch which seems to be working. The Congress says, GST being originally its own creation, it would vote for it subject to three changes it had been putting across, though till now firmly rejected by Finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley. Also it is hurt by the "disrespect" by Mr Modi towards the principal opposition, according to vice-president Mr Rahul Gandhi.

Wherever the elections, Mr Modi takes the stage to make his no-holds-barred attacks on Congress, blaming it as the fount of all evils of the post-independence era. Now egged on by developments, he realises discretion seems better part of valour at this stage. Mr Modi invited the leader of opposition Ms Sonia Gandhi and former PM Dr Manmohan Singh for tea at his residence on November 27. A conciliatory PM sounded them on GST and was told about the party's known demands. Agreeably he has kept the door open for a further exchange by this weekend, when he is back from Paris Climate Summit. Can a deal get clinched?

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In a sense, Mr Modi's intervention in the two-day debate on the Constitution, focused on the 125th birthday of Dr B R Ambedkar, one of the principal makers of the Constitution, helped to clarify where he really stood on serious issues of the Republic, he had always skirted around. A casual approach had marked Mr Modi's appearances and interventions in Parliament so far. Nor at any time was he seen to set great store by the precedents and values of parties working together in our Constitutional set-up on major national issues of internal governance and external security. With all his antipathy for Jawaharlal Nehru, universally acknowledged as the architect of Modern India, Modi had belittled his role in the framing of the Constitution even while Dr Ambedkar is rightly acknowledged and celebrated by all parties for his acumen in Constitution-making and setting guidance posts. In the Lok Sabha speech, Mr Modi preferred to merely note the contributions of previous Prime Ministers and others to the building of India. There were more of bland statements short of firm commitments though the speech was littered with plenty of epithets and platitudes. Overall, Mr Modi's remarks seemingly conciliatory tone was also designed to remove any irritants left behind by his Home Minister Rajnath Singh, describing 'secularism' in the Constitution as the "most misused", obviously a remark aimed at the Congress. It remains to be seen whether a durable change has set in for Modi governance. (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.

“*You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.*”

—Maya Angelou

The Shillong Times

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The National Anthem controversy

NOT a day passes without some controversy or the other diverting our attention from more important issues. That there is an insidious ferment centred around religion and a certain rigid posturing by a dominant section of this country is not in doubt. Call it coincidence or a grand plan but that section has become more assertive after May 2014 with the installation of the NDA Government. One of the things that this new assertive constituency does is to measure the patriotism of their fellow citizens against their own rigid mindsets. Nowhere in the world is the national anthem played in a cinema hall, except in India. The irony is that the anthem is not played inside Parliament when the House is in session. If patriotism is to be measured only by symbolisms then the worthy Members of Parliament are most in need of reminders that they owe special allegiance to this country by virtue of being public representatives. Hence the national anthem should be played in Parliament before each session begins. The MPs are often most inclined to divide this country on the basis of caste, creed, community and even communal riots. Their conduct inside the August House is raucous and unbecoming of leaders. If they can be exempted from singing the national anthem then why impose it on cinema goers? Why are citizens being coerced to physically express their patriotism inside a cinema hall only to come out and get back into their regressive mindsets?

A patriotic Indian has some intrinsic qualities which is manifested in his/her conduct such as diligence in the performance of civic duties whether or not someone is monitoring those actions. Merely singing the national anthem does not necessarily turn a rogue or an anti-national rebel into a saint. In fact such impositions can turn this whole exercise infructuous and render the national anthem just another state-imposed duty. Patriotism cannot be enforced. It is a value cultivated over a period of time. It begins in the home and is strengthened within educational institutions. It is an emotion that is nurtured and develops over time. Sometimes it can become problematic in a country like India with multiple histories where every ethnic group has its own anthem. The understanding is that the national anthem cannot be privileged over their own anthems. The two can exist mutually and have done so over decades. The problem today is that there are too many moral policemen trying to enforce their own brand of morals. These cannot be allowed to enforce an emotion they feel strongly about on others who are not ignited by the same fervour. Let and let live should be the code of behaviour in India. That’s the only way to hold a country of diverse races, religions, communities, castes and thought processes together. Capturing these diversities and pushing them into a single silo will only break this country.

LOOKING BACK

March 30, 1988

Rajiv raps rightist forces

Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi said today that the Congress (I) cannot and shall not be thwarted by any rightist combination, no matter what company it keeps. Inaugurating the silver jubilee celebrations of the daily newspaper “Patriot” here, Mr. Gandhi said in a hard hitting speech that his party was the strong-est national forces for India’s unity and integrity and purposeful and determined advance towards socialism.

He wondered how he could describe those who have obtained the copy-right to progressive ideol-ogy but have forgotten in 1988 the lessons of 1977, when the right dressed up in the crab of democracy and freedom to hide the stark reality of reactions. Mr. Gandhi noted that these rightist warriors had reappeared and their motiva-tion and commitment to re-actionary ends have not changed. In this situation, neutrality can neither be, understood nor forgive, he added. He said systematic efforts were being made to shape the morale of the peo-ple by resorting to the well-tried devices of disinfor-mation and character assassination. He said it was important to realize the chal-lenges faced by the country, since there were forces who wanted to see the country flatter and be mired in inter-nal squabbles and therefore, actively encouraged terror-ism.

Debate on the Secular aspect of the Constitution

The Home Minister’s comments about secularism on the 125th birth Anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar has created an uproar in Parliament. But it was an undoubtedly an interesting statement for many like us who are willing to further understand the nature and background of the environment at the time of framing the Constitution. As someone from the present generation born and brought up at this juncture where the Book of Justice has already been established firmly and has become part of our life knowingly or unknowingly, should we feel insecure or is there any justification to feel isolated even if the word ‘secular’ is not incorporated in the preamble? I believe the answer is no. It is here that every citizen should carefully understand and take recourse to the protection and provisions guaranteed in our Constitution.

The framers of the Constitution intended it to be so - a constitution for everyone born within its territory. As far as the secular nature of the Constitution is concerned, in Part III of Articles 25-28, the solid structure and nature of secularism stands and cannot be removed or altered. Therefore, these articles in Part III of the Constitution will definitely guide the government, the legislature, the judiciary and those attempting to influence decisions at any level of governance to be cautious. Dr. Ambedkar in his reply to a query during the Constituent Assembly debates in 1948 said “the Constitution is merely a mechanism for the purpose of regulating the work of the various organs of the State. It is not a mechanism whereby particular members of particular parties are installed in office” and If Mr. Acharya (Governor of Assam) thinks that Hindustan is for Hindus only, then he is making a mockery of Dr. Ambedkar’s intention and the Constituent Assembly as a whole.

The idea that ‘Socialist, Secular’ has not been defined in the original text of the preamble of the Constitution is purposely is to give the people a space to decide how to define themselves. Ambedkar refused to accept the amendment moved by Prof K.T Shah on defining the type of soci-

ety India should be. In his argument Ambedkar said, “What should be the policy of the State, how the Society should be organised in its social and economic side are matters, which must be decided by the people themselves according to time and circumstances. It cannot be laid down in the Constitution itself, because that is destroying democracy altogether. If you state in the Constitution that the social organisation of the State shall take a particular form, you are, in my judgement, taking away the liberty of the people to decide what should be the social organisation in which they wish to live. It is perfectly possible today, for the majority people to hold that the Socialist organisation of society is better than the Capitalist organisation. But it would be perfectly possible for thinking people to devise some other form of social organisation which might be better than the socialist organisation of today or of tomorrow”.

But when the freedom of religion is part of the Fundamental Rights guaranteed in the Constitution, then I feel this is sufficient for every citizen born before or after the establishment of the Constitution to stake claim and enjoy that liberty. Mr. Jagdish Bhagwati eminent economist is of the opinion that Fundamental Rights are obligations whereby Government should make an effort to fulfil its realization and in doing so it is also the duty of the government to raise funds to finance that obligation. If there is a delay in the process of acquiring funds to meet the demands enforced, such situation will create economic constraints and pave the way for inflation and rising costs. To further support this argument, Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that apart from Fundamental Rights, the Executive as well as the Legislature have been placed by this Constitution under certain definite obligations as to

the form of their policies by the insertion of various Articles such as directive principles of state policy contained in Part IV. These principles are very socialistic in their direction and content. Therefore, in defining the true nature of the Constitution of the country and the type of society, one must carefully look into the mechanism that is in actual operation within the system. In this case the Right to Freedom of Religion being incorporated as fundamental right of a citizen is the system in active operation and under it hangs many other activities to promote and develop in accordance with the law of the land.

Most of the members of the Constituent Assembly including Rev.JJM Nichols Roy who participated actively in the debate for other issues as well, also understood that the basic nature of secularism lies in the realization of Fundamental Rights guaranteed in Articles 25-28 of the Constitution, thereby giving equal importance to every religion and the opportunity for every person or groups to profess and propagate their beliefs within the territory covered by this Constitution. Such was the broad mindedness of the makers of this Constitution so why should there exist a feeling that this country belongs to a particular religion or sect. It is very unfortunate for any public figure to dismiss outright the spirit that the founders of modern India have shown. Let us not forget that all the representatives of the Constituent Assembly have agreed and accepted that India is a secular state. Lokanath Mishra from Orissa said, “It has been repeated in our ears that ours is a secular state”. In this context a secular state implies the indifference to any religion by the State and the fact that the right to profess, practice and propagate religion is a Fundamental Right is basically to complement the spirit of secularism that the state wishes to pursue and not to restrict the individual from pursuing his

well-being in life.

The purpose of the Constitution is primarily to secure the well-being of every citizen, therefore, Fundamental Rights occupy a very distinct and prominent place in the Constitution. For various judgments as well and when a person or group of people out of their deepest understanding and conviction, in order to satisfy themselves, feel that their well-being in life is by converting to another faith or religion of their choice, they can do so without fear or under coercion and the state should not in any way attempt to suppress this effort. KM Munshi from Bombay in support of Dr Ambedkar’s motion to retain the word ‘propagate’ said, “So long as religion is religion, conversion by free exercise of the conscience has to be recognized”. Lest we forget, India is the only country in the world where Right to Freedom of Religion is a Fundamental Right.

On the contrary any attempt to change and disrupt the spirit of this article on Fundamental Rights will violate the ethics of humanity and the generosity of the makers of this Constitution. Such a move clearly evolves from evil conception. Secular has two dimensions; the first is to be secular but religious while the other is to be secular but irreligious or atheistic. India is known throughout history as a religious country and in this context the Fundamental Rights are granted to people to propagate their thoughts and beliefs if they think that will serve and cater to their well-being or that of their community.

The Khasi community is an ideal example of the outcome of this Fundamental Right when majority of the people have embraced Christianity out of their free consciences without hurting the sentiments of anyone, knowing that their well-being is better off by embracing a new faith and discharging blind and meaning-less attachments or practices. But more needs to be modified and shaped in order to emerge into a society that professes the True Living God.

TO THE EDITOR

A selfish world

Editor,

The word selfie sounds like selfish. In fact this new craze fans our narcissism and makes us oblivious of our surrounding which is getting away from mother nature day by day. At a time when the world leaders are meeting in Paris for climate change conference, we should now abandon clicking selfies for good and click nature-pics instead. It will do us a world of good. It will certainly highlight endangered species, ponds, water bodies and trees and makes us conscious about how important they are for our own existence. If this snowballs into a movement then it is bound to check global warming. Newspapers and magazines should rise to the occasion and invite nature-pics instead of printing meaningless selfies of celebrities. Celebrities on the other hand need to stop indulging the mania of being enamoured of their own beauty and ponder over ways on how they can contribute to keep our Mother Earth cool.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Via email

Modi pitch for what?

Editor,

Apropos the editorial titled “Modi’s pitch” (November 28, 2015), what’s the utility of mere words unless it gets translated in action? And when words and deeds do not match, the former automatically gets relegated to pure

rhetoric. It is very easy to announce that “India first” and the Constitution are the “only religion” and “only holy book” respectively! It is also “nationalist” to utter that diversities of India need to be nurtured! But what are we viewing practically? Nothing but the exact contrary. Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar of Narendra Modi’s own party BJP is acting as the self-appointed guardian of India and deciding who will live in this country or not! Yes, thanks to Khattar, we have come to the realization that if one desires to eat beef, he/she would not be allowed to live in India! When will the dark mindset of BJP, RSS and saffron brigade become enlightened of the fact that this secular, democratic, heterogeneous, multi-lingual multi-religious coun-try is not the paternal property of any particular linguistic or religious group? It is a matter of utmost shame that those who cannot uplift themselves from the chauvinist divisive philosophy of “Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan” are presently calling the shots in New Delhi and different states and are hell bent on creating mayhem by exploiting religious sentiments despite holding Constitutional posts.

The saffron brigade religiously draws political oxygen by zealously assailing the sentiments of non-Hindi speakers and non-Hindus. While the earlier days had witnessed Ram Jannabhoomi move-

ment, Babri Masjid demolition, subsequent communal riots throughout the country, Gujarat pogrom, Amit Shah's call of “revenge” while campaigning in Muzaffarnagar prior to 2014 Lok Sabha polls and Giriraj Singh's roar of sending the “anti-Modis” to Pakistan; the “Good Days” are viewing unique concepts of “love jihad”, “religious re-conversion”, “All Indians are Hindus” and “Gita is the national book”! Forcing Muslim canteen employee of New Delhi's Maharashtra Bhavan to eat food during his fast, cold-blooded murders of rationalists, death threats to authors criticising the saffronisation of India or blackening their faces, murder of innocent individuals on suspicion of beef consumption, barbaric imposition of Hindi in all spheres and celebration of ‘International Hindi Conference’ through State money are indeed brilliant specimens of ‘nurturing of diversities’! It seems that “Good Days” and “Hindu First-Hindi First” are synonymous terms!

Thanks to the communal ideology and minority bashing of the saffron brigade, this whole secular multi-religious country has got Talibanised to such a horrific extent that the Hindutva fanatics are not only killing innocent persons for his alleged “sin” of consuming beef; they are chasing the “cattle smugglers” and even brutally beating them to death in Himachal Pradesh by taking law in their own hands. Yes, when parties based on communal

ideology are scandalously voted to power in a secular diverse heterogeneous land; bringing the country to the brink of a civil war indeed heralds the arrival of “Good Days”!

Instead of indulging in shrill rhetoric, why does the preaching not getting translated into practice? Sack Khattar from the post of Chief Ministership, announce that henceforth the party would refrain itself from infringing upon the dietary habits of different religious communities and work for the welfare of the society instead of imposing Hindutva and Hinditva in this diverse land. If BJP or NDA indeed bats for India's diversity, then how could it justify the presence of outright communal Sakshi Maharaj, Yogi Adityanath, Sangeet Som, Mahesh Sharma or Sanjeev Baliyan in the party or the Union Ministry? They will continue to enjoy a field day and the secular nationalists of this country would have to believe that the party or the Government does not share their views! BJP should at first sack these rabid elements from the party whose antics have posed a severe assault on all democratic and secular ethos of this country before delivering pious statements. But prior to that, the party would have to turn nationalist enough to award all languages and religions of this diverse nation on an equal pedestal by rising above the shallow well of all things Hindi and Hindu.

Yours etc.,
Kajal Chatterjee,
Kolkata

Bitter political fight holds economic reforms, development

By Nantoo Banerjee

The government of India did not shrink in keeping with a promise by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during the last Lok Sabha election which it won with a thumping majority, in the 18 months that the party along with its allies is in power. Instead, the government is expanding. Departments have increased. With around 65 ministers and 100 departments, the size of the Narendra Modi government is among the largest in democratic India. Functions of many departments have vastly increased or spread in recent times without much impact on economic growth though they may have improved financial inclusion and social environment. Barring the old Planning Commission, which is given a new name, NITI Aayog, and new identity, nothing much has changed in the government. The 2014 Lok Sabha election verdict provided the prime minister a great opportunity to cut the ministry and government to size and improve governance through better performance of the five Raisina Hills ministries and their adjuncts.

The huge size of the government will soon become a matter of some concern as it gears up to implement the awards of the new pay commission that vastly raised the basic earnings of union government employees – from Rs. 18,000 per month at the bottom to Rs.2,50,000 at the top. In more well managed economies, the wage disparity between the bottom and the top is nowhere near India. The pay commission may have overlooked the aspect. The award will put the government into more hardship leaving less investible funds on economic and social development. The government could have handled the wage or salary payout burden better by cutting its size.

Nearly, 24 years ago, the Narasimha Rao government did make an attempt by abolishing a few government departments, but failed to sustain the effort under pressure from the bureaucracy and colleagues in the Congress party. It seems Narendra Modi too has lost the initial enthusiasm about reducing the size of the government. As a result, the pledge of better governance continues to suffocate under a large, unwieldy government. The Modi government has done little to improve the lot of the country's majority poor who continue to suffer under severe rise in the prices of food articles and daily dire necessities. But, it has done a lot to meet the never ending desire of the rich to hoard gold and precious metals by repeatedly reducing the import levies to help India wear the crown as the world's largest gold importer. Gold and the government shine on.

Ironically, the ‘more’ of the Modi government had forced ban on Maggie instant noodles, manufactured by Swiss global leader Nestle’, on health grounds while junk noodles prepared on the makeshift dirty footpath food stalls to feed the poor and the labour class go unchecked,

unabated. After several months of legal battle, the Maggie ban has been vacated by the Bombay High Court following clearance by government accredited labs. But, food inspectors are not convinced. They have the scope of action now against Nestle’s pasta. The Modi government seems to stay a helpless spectator of the spectacle of his government inspectors going after the generally-believed best and sparing the worst.

On the contrary, governance is increasingly becoming a victim of an unpleasant, if not unnecessary, political dogfight between the government and its opposition even on issues that are entirely economic or, at best, little political. The case of the GST Bill, already passed by Lok Sabha, is the best case in question. A comprehensive indirect tax regime on manufacture, sale and consumption of goods and services, replacing the multi-point taxes levied by central and state government, should have been part of the country’s first major economic agenda initiated by the Narasimha Rao-Manmohan Singh government in 1991-92. Instead, India allowed itself to lose 24 years to reform one of its most important tax structures for the benefit of its people and economy. The economic think tank of the Congress party under the leadership of Manmohan Singh did prepare the ground for introduction of such a national value-added tax in the form of goods and services tax (GST). But, it could not be done in a hurry since it could be achieved only through the amendment of the Constitution.

Had the Congress party return to power in 2014 Lok Sabha election, the GST would have hopefully been in place by now or by the next financial year. Unfortunately, the country’s economic interest has always been the first victim of its petty party politics. The original authors of GST now want to have it fractured and factored to suit their political agenda at the cost of the national economy and the public who they ostensibly pledge to serve. This also explains why a less industrialized China in 1950, than India, is now the world’s second largest economy and India holding on to a 10th position behind some of the countries which are smaller than some of its states with its political parties hell bent to stop or delay economic and social reforms. The reports are that the government is willing to accommodate by the principal opposition in Rajya Sabha, Congress, and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, a BJP ally in NDA, by reshaping the GST bill to meet their demands. So much for the governance! If India has lived and grown without GST for so many years, it can probably continue for some more years with the historically imperfect taxation system until political parties agree on a comprehensive system. (IPA Service)

Mockery of democracy

Editor,

We are witnessing a water-logged debate about the rising “intolerance” in the country. Most recently when a celebrity like Amir Khan spoke his heart out, brickbats were thrown at him and whoever is associated with him; even brands he endorses were not spared. Somehow, all the negative responses that Mr. Khan received certainly proved a point about how intolerant our country has become. On the one hand we talk about the “freedom of speech”, on the other we act like despots. When someone criticizes the Government, his views are taken to have been directed at the country as a whole. In mature democracies such as the

US, celebrities have not shied away from criticizing their own governments over issues such as Iraq war and the Vietnam war, but their patriotism is never questioned on account of their critique, something we witness in India today. A celebrity speaking out on social issues is a good thing as opposed to the silence they have maintained thus far. While people have every right to disagree with Khan, the severity of the backlash and language used against him virtually proves the point he was making. When a citizen of the country cannot criticize his government anymore, it sure is not a healthy sign for a democracy set up like ours.

Yours etc.,
Lawrence Pherliam
Sumer,
Via email

“*The ultimate value of life depends upon awareness and the power of contemplation rather than upon mere survival.*”
— Aristotle

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 114 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2015

IS on the Warpath
THE Islamic State has issued its latest manifesto to expand beyond Iraq and Syria and into India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and several other countries. There is something odd about it as most of these countries have Islamic regimes. India is of course a prime target. The IS knows that a Hindu movement is growing in India to kill Muslims who eat beef. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is alleged to be a Hindu nationalist engaged in an arms race for its nuclear war against Muslims. The IS is capitalising on a state of intolerance sweeping India. But such terror on Muslims is spread only by lunatic fringe. People in India have little to do with such fanaticism. The Indian Parliament has just concluded a debate on intolerance. Narendra Modi has put the emphasis on national unity. India is a democracy and opposition forces have joined hands to condemn intolerance. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was especially articulate. Muslims in India have not shown any panic or alarm. The Indian state can cope with enemies within without the Islamic State interfering with its insensate violence.

The fundamentalist sound and fury shown in the IS’s called for a new World Order reeks of Islamic belligerence in the Dark Ages. It has nothing to do with temporary hiccups in any country. However, India should not underestimate the striking power of these terrorists. It has to guard its loins along with neighbouring countries-Islamic or otherwise-and beef up its security. Pakistan must do its best to insulate its ISI from the IS in its own interest. But the final blow against the blood thirsty terrorists can come only from the UN commitment to war on terrorism.

LOOKING BACK
March 31, 1988

Illicit trading in explosives

The opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly was legitimately furious over a case of illegal trading of explosives narrated in the House last week by the State’s Home Minister himself in a detailed statement. Since the supply of explosives in question was meant for insurgents in the north-east, we are tempted to quote from the Minister’s statement to get an idea of the kind of illicit inter-state trading which help insurgency to thrive and encourage other anti-socials vices also on January 11 this year, one Jalal Khan was arrested with two boxes full of explosives materials like gelatin and safety fuses. He disclosed during interrogation that these were being sent to Nagaland from Beawar (a small town in Rajasthan). A few more arrested followed, which revealed smuggling of ganja as well this is the reverse direction to Beawar from Dimapur. An investigation team was promptly dispatched to Dimapur and the Police thereafter registered six cases and arrested seven persons under the Explosives Act while another six cases were registered with seven arrestees for unauthorized possession of ganja. The Minister said that the government was determined to book the culprits and had formed a special investigating team under the leadership of a C.I.D. superintendent. The minimum that the agitated members asked for was the cancellation of the trade licenses of the two persons named who, they alleged, had high connection in New Delhi, a fact which they feared may insulate them against any action for the criminal offences of misusing the license. The opposition succeeded ultimately in extracting the assurance that

Bureaucrats: a self serving class

A retired IAS officer in Delhi who is quite a popular guy among his peers, juniors and the crème de la creme of the national media once asked in dismay why his class is being labelled “bureaucrats.” He wanted them to be called by the more respectable moniker of ‘career civil servants.’ The very word ‘servant’ here is misplaced. How can servants enjoy pay and perks that are phenomenally over the top, move around in well secured swanky vehicles, live in plush bungalows with a retinue of servants; travel the world on the pretext of gaining more knowledge but never demonstrating that knowledge where it matters and enjoy all the creature comforts when their ‘masters’ the citizens of this country continue to suffer from shabby services and many slip below poverty line. If we have a class system in this country then the bureaucracy are a super class of their own. They are the elite of the community they belong to. Once a person gets into the civil service he is made for life irrespective of whether or not he delivers the goods. And those goods actually include implementation of schemes which they are supposed to articulate after having measured the pulse of the people they are supposed to serve.

Imagine a service that pays itself every few years without any rationale. After the 6th Pay Commission which will be effective from January 2016, a babu of the rank of Secretary to the Government of India (all chief secretaries, additional chief secretaries, principal secretaries and DGP rank officers) would be getting close to Rs 3 lakh remuneration per month complete with perks et al. Of course the non-tribal officers would end up paying a substantial amount (approx Rs 80,000 a month) as taxes but that is still a lot of money. The question to ask is how can a class that is meant to serve the poor of this country pay themselves such a huge pay packet? Why should tax payers’ money be expended on this class? Its time for the people of this country to start asking hard questions.

On an average day an IAS officer spends time flitting from one meeting to the next and adding to the bulk of their paper files (e-governance is just a fancy word in Meghalaya). The lower rung officers and clerks while away their time playing solitaire or computer games, because, al-

By Patricia Mukhim

most about 60% of them are underworked and are appointed for all the wrong reasons. Try visiting any Government office at 10 am. You will find only the sweepers and cleaners. At 11am, a few good souls saunter in. Many walk in at 11.30- 12.00 noon. And no apologies about that! It’s their birthright. The Government has to keep shelling out salaries without assessing their performance or work output because that is something the ‘babudom’ has learnt to push into a deep hole each time the point is made by respective administrative reforms commissions. While the IAS types are normally punctual the very fact that they are not able to discipline their subordinates is, to me, a major administrative flaw. They should be held answerable for not being able to monitor what their underlings are doing because that results in huge revenue leakage. The Government is actually paying people for not doing anything.

When Narendra Modi was running Gujarat he had kept the bureaucracy on their toes. That is why whatever happened in Gujarat then became a good governance model. But when he entered the Delhi Durbar that model of accountability could not be imported. The bureaucracy in this country is a well entrenched web of corruption, racism, casteism, expediency, lethargy, and delay tactics. Dismantling this deeply rooted evil is well nigh impossible unless someone at the helm of this country takes a conscious decision to do so. The people of this country were naïve enough to believe that Narendra Modi would bring about this transformation in the bureaucracy. He has not yet shown the inclination to do so although there has been a lot of juggling around of officers. Juggling people around without correcting the deeply flawed architecture of governance is unlikely to achieve anything substantial.

Just look at our own state of Meghalaya. Some months ago we saw some activity along the Shillong-Guwahati road from Ryndang Brier to

Barapani. It looked like the road was going to be widened hence one side of it was being flattened out by bulldozers. But this activity suddenly stopped. When enquiries were made it was learnt that the portion of the road which was being bulldozed belonged to the MeECL and that the Corporation honchos had objected to it’s dismantling. The PWD stopped work after being ordered to do so. Now the peculiar situation here is that the Chairman MeECL is also the Chief Secretary of the State. He therefore could have sorted out this mess without any delay. Or the matter could have been resolved before the bulldozing began. But that did not happen! The controversy therefore led to unnecessary delay in the road widening project. The knotty problem was only sorted out when a top politician of the state intervened. This is just one example of how inter-departmental issues are so badly addressed. And we talk of convergence! Convergence how, when every top and middle level official is virtually the king of his department? Do these bureaucrats care if people continue to experience governance lapses and vacuums? No they don’t because they are not held accountable. They will abort any system that seeks to measure their work output because they are in a comfort zone.

Take the case of the Corporation of the infamous MeSEB which is now called the MeECL. Do we really believe that anything has changed in this monstrous organisation? Sorry nothing has changed except that as a Corporation the MeECL can access loans from financial institutions. Otherwise it functions like a Government department. There are far too many employees at the clerical level. If a private company were to take over the MeECL after due valuation, at least 75% of the staff including the non-performing, corrupt, lethargic, self serving engineers would have been sacked because they are the reason why the Corporation is so sick. And I am not saying this without evidence. There are localities in this city which are within the Greater Shillong

Political delicacies

By Nora Chopra

INDIRA GANDHI ADVISED RAJIV AGAINST INDUCTING SCINDIA AS MINISTER

The former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had warned Rajiv Gandhi against giving a ticket to Amitabh Bachchan and inducting Madhav Rao Scindia into the cabinet, says ML Fotedar in his book “Chinar Leaves According to Fotedar.” In the course of a conversation regarding parliamentary elections, Indira Gandhi categorically told her son two things he should never do. ‘Do not ever bring Teji’s son in electoral politics and do not induct Madhav Rao Scindia in your cabinet if you ever become the prime minister.’ However after her death, Rajiv forgot his mother’s advice and he asked Amitabh to contest from Allahabad and inducted Scindia in his cabinet. Fotedar reveals that in 1999 Sonia wanted Manmohan Singh to become the PM. Dr Singh was the first preference of Sonia Gandhi. This irked some of the ambitious leaders and Madhav Rao Scindia who had prime ministerial ambitions, used his friend Amar Singh to make Mulayam Singh Yadav change his mind about supporting the Congress led coalition government.

CONGRESS ON A COME BACK TRAIL IN ELECTIONS IN ALL STATES

While the Congress is on a comeback trail the Narendra Modi magic seems to have evaporated. The chants in the Lok Sabha elections were Namo Namo but those very chants appear to have changed. First it was Delhi assembly elections, and then came Bihar assembly results which were followed by Uttar Pradesh panchayat elections and then came the Jhabua by-election results in Madhya Pradesh where the BJP was wiped out and now the latest is the nagar panchayat results in Vidharba region. In the Vidharba region, the Congress has made a triumphant come back. It won 13 out of 17 seats. Two have gone to Shiv Sena and two to BJP. The Congress victory in Madhya Pradesh and now in the nagar panchayat elections in Vidharba is being seen as the defeat of Prime Minister Modi; that the Modi magic has disappeared and that the voters in the rural area have become disenchanted. Maximum farmer suicides have taken place in that region. With the Congress victory in Vidharba, chants of dissent can be heard in the party against the PCC chief Ashok Chavan. Chavan had not canvassed in these elections. He had held a meeting just a few weeks back in Nagpur but most top leaders of the party in Vidharba had boycotted his meeting. Chavan aware of the demand for his removal has convened a luncheon meeting of all those leaders who had boycotted him earlier. The central leadership has asked him to patch up with these leaders. And last but not the least important news are the results of the Narendra Modi bastion of Gujarat. In Gujarat the results of local elections are mixed. While the BJP has succeeded in the urban areas by retaining power in 6 zila panchayats, the Congress has made a major dent in the rural areas. In district panchayats, the BJP got just 122 and the Congress got 205, independents got 6 while others got just 5. In taluk panchayat the total seats are 4784 where the BJP has bagged 674 and Congress 850, independents 52 and others 6. In the urban municipalities, the total number of seats are 2088, BJP got 472, Congress 267, independents 68 while others could manage only 7 seats.

VETERAN CONGRESS LEADERS BUSY WRITING MEMOIRS

With Congress out of power and Rahul Gandhi’s writ running in the party, senior and veteran Congress leaders have been relegated to nobodys. With no work on hand most of the Congress leaders these days are busy writing their memoirs. ML Fotedar’s controversial book Chinar Leaves has already left the Congress leadership extremely embarrassed. The latest however to join the bandwagon is Mohsina Kidwai, Rajya Sabha MP. Kidwai’s memoir which is being published by Harper Collins is likely to be non controversial. It is only a simple narration of her experience and her proximity to Indira Gandhi as well as Rajiv Gandhi. Mohsina is one of the most respected Congress leaders in the party. She served as Indira Gandhi’s companion also. Kidwai’s book may not be controversial but her decision to write her memoirs has already started to give jitters to Congress leadership. Ever since Fotedar’s book has hit the market, the Congress leaders have become suspicious about all the memoir writers and are keeping a check on them. . Among the others who are busy narrating their experiences are RK Dhawan and HR Bhardwaj. Recently Mohsina got a call from Ahmad Patel, the political secretary of Sonia Gandhi, and Mohsina assured him that her memoirs will be positive towards the Congress president.

MAMATA DESPERATE TO BRING IN TATAS IN HER INDUSTRY CON-CLAVE

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is very keen to organize a high decibel Biswa Banga Sammelan in Kolkata in January. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and industrialist Mukesh Ambani will participate. Mamata is trying her best to rope in Tata Group chief Mistry or Ratan Tata to come to Kolkata on this occasion. But her Singur past is acting as a damper. She even has approached the Bengali diplomat who is a Tata Sons Board member to put in a word to Mistry. Mamata needs Tata sons for image makeover before the assembly elections in May 2016.

CONGRESS MAY TRY FOR AN ALLIANCE AGAINST BJP IN ASSAM ELECTIONS

Buoyed by the Bihar results, Rahul Gandhi is said to be reluctant to go to polls in alliance in the next round of elections due in 2016 and 2017. Bihar results have made him so confident that he wants to go alone but Assam is a different story where the Congress is in a dilemma as the leadership is not sure of returning back to power .So a different strategy can be adopted In Assam. . The thinking in the Congress leadership is that Assam is the most difficult state as there is a strong anti incumbency against the ologenarian chief minister Tarun Gogoi, whereas the BJP has mastered the art of polarising the voters on communal lines. After the Bihar results, efforts are on that the Congress can have an alliance with Badruddin Ajmal’s AIUFD. Though the talks had failed early last month but after the Bihar results, efforts have been once again renewed. The JD (U) leaders like KC Tyagi and Sharad Yadav are mediating between the Congress and Badruddin Ajmal and Tyagi is trying for a knot even between the Congress, Ajmal and Prafulla Mahanta. If this works out then the Congress will not have much to worry. (IPA)

TO THE EDITOR

MBOSE clean up your act!

Editor,
It is such a shame that the Meghalaya Board of School Education has utterly failed to control the menace of question paper leakage yet again. Though media reports earlier and again on December 3 confirmed that question papers for Mathematics, Science & Technology and Khasi (IL) for the Class IX Internal Assessment Examination have been leaked, word on the street is that question papers for each and every subject was leaked.
It is common sense that students are not in a position to lay their hands on the question papers unless the same has been provided to them by either the head of institution of the designated deposit centres or by the teachers or office staff, or, possibly even MBOSE staffers.
Why did MBOSE not take action in 2014 when the Class IX question papers for all subjects had leaked? This is a question that defies all logic. Had the MBOSE taken recourse to exemplary action like blacklisting the errant school and suspending the teachers and heads of institutions involved in the crime, the incident would not have recurred in 2015.
I also fail to understand the necessity for MBOSE to get involved in conducting the

Class IX examination as individual schools are capable of doing it on their own. Since the time the Board took over the conduct of Class IX examinations, leakage has become the order of the day. In my observation, the Board should resort to either of the two options to save its depleting reputation from being dented further – allow schools to conduct the Class IX examinations on their own from the 2016 academic session or do away with the system of deposit centres and route the question papers through police stations (banks may not be a hundred per cent foolproof).
Either way, the MBOSE should own up responsibility for the Himalayan blunder and apologize to the thousands of sincere and meritorious students and their parents who have been burning the midnight oil to prepare for the Class IX examination and also show through deeds that the system can indeed be cleaned up.

Yours’ etc.,
Sanjay Kar
Shillong-2

Awards wapsi misses heartbeat of humanity

Editor,
If you think that educa-

tion makes one wise, truthful, compassionate, tolerant and forgiving then you’re totally wrong. The educated in India are outrageously more dangerous than the illiterate. Uneducated fools could have far more sense of wisdom and integrity than the so-called educated who espouse the most bizarre ideas. They artfully move about with agendas, often orchestrated by a certain political party that lusts after power than the country that nourishes them. Evidently filled with the poison of prejudice, the literary cabal is vehemently against some while fervently in favour of the certain others. The recent spurt of “award wapsi” has clearly exposed how selectively biased those intellectuals are and how willfully they go astray from the path of integrity and values. Well, these intellectuals drugged with opium of favoritism had maintained a deafening silence while over 5 lakh Kashmiri Pandits were deported from their native land which witnessed their brutal massacre. The heart-wrenching carnage of 1984 never prompted such intellectuals to return the awards presented by the blood-stained hand of the then Government. Again, innumerable frequent inhuman bombings and blasts during UPA regimes by a certain section of terror modules targeting others never stirred

the sensibility of the literary brigand. They never raised any voice of anger against such inhuman intolerance. Were their hearts so insensitive and their intellectual nerves so numb when *blast after blast* convulsed the nation and killed countless innocent people?

Killings, murders or any kind of criminal acts by any one must be condemned and thus the fitting punishment is awarded irrespective of the caste, creed or race of the perpetrators. But in India some cases are over-hyped and discussed ad nauseum while others are mercilessly undermined and muted.

Why are we so choosy in expressing human emotions and compassion towards the hapless? Is this not totally unethical and unpardonable and also unconstitutional in any civil society? I’m afraid, such selective sympathy and tolerance and open aversion to the others will break the country into pieces. Let’s learn first to feel the heart-beat of humanity than the literature of hypocrisy.

Yours etc.,
Salil Grewal
Shillong-2

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

“I must take issue with the term 'a mere child,' for it has been my invariable experience that the company of a mere child is infinitely preferable to that of a mere adult.”
--- Fran Lebowitz

The Shillong Times
Vol No: LVIII No. 115 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2015

The unbeatable spirit of Chennai

CHENNAI is in the midst of a deluge. But what is encouraging is that many of the citizens have shown that they have what it takes, one helping the other. Doctors have offered free service, public transport workers have willingly faced hazards and many have provided hot meals and shelter. The spirit of Chennai should be highly applauded. Only that can battle the rains. DMK parliamentarian Kanimozhi has appealed to all political parties to stand together. It is not an occasion to trade allegations. Thousands of people have been deprived of basic services. Water from surrounding lakes have flowed over and piled on the agony of citizens. Admittedly, Chennai's distress cannot be whisked away. The water will recede but public health will suffer a setback. Water borne and vector borne diseases will spread. Dengue is one of the worst threats. Tamil Nadu undoubtedly has to overcome all political discord to meet these challenges.

The Centre has a special role to play in such calamitous circumstances. It is good that not only Prime Minister Narendra Modi but also the climate conference in Paris are disturbed. A gap between the expectations of the state and the Centre's assistance may of course arise. But supplies should not be held up by bumbling bureaucrats. Disaster management is still just a concept in Delhi though much talk has been bandied about it in recent years. The legislators and the executive in Delhi would do well to take a cue from the people of Chennai. National unity should be the guiding principle in coping with such natural calamities and it should be borne in mind that no state is an island unto itself.

LOOKING BACK
March 31, 1988

An astounding disclosure

Giani Zail Singh, former President of India, has stirred up a veritable hornet's nest recently by disclosing that he had been offered Rs 30 to Rs 40 crores if he had agreed to contest for a second term as President. The nation has naturally been taken by surprise not only for the enormity of the amount quoted, but for the offer itself which thereby sought to debase this high office by degrading it to the level of market-place transactions. It would therefore be ranked as the worst type of corruption, suggestive of a dangerous trend hitherto entirely unknown. It is right that the Prime Minister has ordered an enquiry into the whole affair and it is right also in a way that it is the Giani himself who has made it possible by his astounding disclosure. Having done this, it is doubtful if he can now desist from proceeding further in the case and not identify those who came to him with this offer having been made, even after he had known that a probe, on the basis of his first statement on the subject, had already been made a distinct possibility.

Having made the disclosure and them insisting that he would not identify the leaders making the offer raises the very pertinent question as to what could them be the motive behind his volunteering this information. The Presidential election and the issues and controversies raised on it had long been over already. There was, therefore, no compulsion on his part to revert to it. In fact, he did not issue a formal statement on the subject, what came out was only in course of an exclusive interview given to a particular news-magazine of the same newspaper group. Even so, it would be wrong to suppose that the disclosure could be a casual one and not so much of a deliberate effort. He has persisted with it even after the knowledge that his earlier statement had already been taken serious note of at the highest official and public levels and as such was destined to take a whole course of serious investigation into the pros and cons of several issues involved.

The mystery has been made all the deeper by dropping the subtle hint that the persons involved in offering the bait could as well be some Congressmen of the rank impliedly of Ministers. But, having gone so far, he retraces and refuses to name them since he says he wanted to protect his friends. This is the worst part of the episode, he should not have made the disclosure at all or, having made this should not be taking up the position that he can disclose only a part and not any more. If he does so, he would be guilty of having moved with a vicious intent, which would further suggested his involvement in current politics a former President was expected to desist from. This is against all canons of morality, not to speak of the infringement of the laws, rules, regulations and conventions guiding an ex-President's life in retirement after stepping down from office. The nation has undertaken to pay for all the expenses of a retired President; he thereby enters into a reciprocal obligation to continue with honour above all controversies for the rest of his life as he had done while holding this office. It would indeed he dishonorable for him now not to do or say all that the investigation about to be launched demands of him. It is up to him to calm the waters which have so deliberately been ruffled.

Who is the enemy here?

“We have met the enemy and he is us” says Pogo the famous character created by Walt Kelly. This quote is above all a rallying cry for a generation of conservationists. Let me use this in a different context.

I am an “outsider”. To all the faux NGOs, many empty suits masquerading as leaders, and fake intellectuals... I am an “outsider”. To them, I will never be a fellow human being, a neighbour, a friend, a person who can effect a change in this city. I will never be one of their own. I am a second generation Shillong'ite; yet, I am an “outsider” and will, probably, always be an “outsider” to them.

This experience of living as a second-class citizen is mentally depressing and emotionally sapping; however, not all is lost and there is some hope for us “outsiders”, as there are many good folks around. To all our Khasi brethren and sisters who do not consider us as “outsiders”, who stand by us, who understand our plight... I thank you, and I offer you my sincerest gratitude for embracing the most powerful emotion we transient beings can experience—Love. Love can conquer everything, and I hope that the mindless drones and the self-proclaimed leaders who have anointed themselves as the guardians of the community, clan, and society can understand this elementary fact, too. They need to realize that their penchant for jingoism and bellicose rhetoric, their manic obsession with violence will only lead to loss of innocent lives and destruction of property, both personal and public. Leo Tolstoy, in one of his letters to Mahatma Gandhi, had written—*“Love is the only way to rescue humanity from all ills.”*; and, it seems that humanity is indeed ill, 'tis suffering, mired in hate, lost in the wilderness of despair and crying out in angst... deprived of love.

I grew up in Shillong and have, over the years, noticed the city's facade, landscape and ethos change... some for the good and some for the bad. A few things, though, have remained the same—incompetent politicians, lackadaisical attitude of the citizens, armed strife, and gutless insurgents “sniping” innocent folks. The rich have gotten richer, and the poor, poorer. We are lusting for earthly possessions that are

By Dolorem Ipsum

fleeting and ephemeral—cars, phones, houses, stature, etc.; yet, at the same time, we are losing everything that are cardinal in life—family, friends, community, habitat and health. Our coterie of corrupt politicians, inept “leaders” and NGOs engage in platitudes, hackneyed slogans and rabble-rousing, while most citizens are satiated and somnolent after drinking the Kool-Aid served or they cower in fear.

The more I observe the human behavior, the more it seems that we are, indeed, consumed with the seven deadly sins—wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy and gluttony. Like an addict, we need our fix regularly; we seek instant gratification, believe in the microwave culture, and worship the deity of consumption. We have become malevolent while pretending to be benevolent. We over-promise and under-deliver. We cannot provide clean drinking water to our populace, but want to replicate The Times Square. Our hillsides are dotted with concrete tenements that have flouted all zoning guidelines, building laws and construction standards. We are one cloudburst or a seismic event away from a major human catastrophe. We struggle to adhere to basic traffic rules, err with traffic management, but are quite competent in road rage. The cities are bursting at the seams, the infrastructure is crumbling, and the riverfront is disappearing; we cannot collect and recycle waste efficiently, and continue to litter the land and the waterways with non-biodegradable products. We blame others for our woes and are not averse to killing a person who does not look or behave like us. We forget to introspect and identify mistakes we may have made and those we continue to make. We are quick to call our countrymen foreigners, but are eager to kowtow to the distorted version of the western modus vivendi that is projected on television and movies, and call it our own. I am saddened by the realization that the potential of this city has been laid waste by compro-

mised politicians, corrupt power brokers, and a lethargic populace. While countries around the world are opening their markets to talented outsiders, we are intent on closing our doors to those who are ours. We want to create barriers to entry, while, at the same time, we desire investments, jobs, growth and development. Irony?

I am left bewildered by our lack of empathy and wonder if many of us are full of spite for those who are not like us—do many of us support the faceless extremists because they publicly voice what we secretly wish; how Many of us are xenophobic and only pretend to be welcoming and tolerant? I wonder how many of us love to hate and hate to love, because loving someone takes understanding, empathy, compassion, and effort. If, however, the majority of us are kind-hearted, then, why do we allow a scant few to dictate our lives? Why don't we all speak up in unison, march hand in hand and flush out those goons who pretend to be looking out for the weary and the down-trodden, but end up gaming the system and enriching themselves? Why do so many of us seem to be so few, while those soulless, gutless, faceless, hateful few, seem to be so many? Where are the so-called “leaders” of the community? Why aren't they leading from the front? Are they cowering in fear, or are they in cahoots with the faceless cowards and want to perpetuate this environment of hatred and fear for their own interests, gains, and self-aggrandizement?

I believe we all share the ideal—*live and let live*; however, because of the conniving ways of the manipulative few, we are constantly at loggerheads with each other. As commoners, we may feel that the slyboots have an iron grip over our lives; however, we do have the power to thumb our noses at them. We, the people—the commoners—control their destiny, their reach, their power. They “control” us because they have hoodwinked us into believing they are all-powerful, and we are at their mercy and need to be subservient to their needs or face their wrath. The fact that

we do not band together speaks volumes about how successful they have been in creating fissures between us.

We all need to understand that the world is changing, societies are evolving, and businesses are in a state of constant flux. The only way you can beat your nearest competitor is by continuously improving and innovating. In this globalized marketplace, we have to lead, or we will be forced to follow or get out-of-the-way. If the incompetent politicians were running a private company the way they are running their administration, then, they would have been fired from their jobs, a long time ago. The politicians get away with it because we allow them to get away with their misdeeds. We elect them and re-elect them based on their hollow promises and divisive agendas. We, mistakenly, empower them and entrust them with the responsibility of changing our future, and they betray us, stab us in the back, and we exclaim aloud—*“Et tu, Brute”*. Then, in the next election, we re-elect them by displaying the same lack of judgment.

Many famous personalities have been credited with the maxim—*“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”* Well, based on that quote, we are all insane. We are asleep at the wheels, and we are approaching the edge of a cliff rapidly. We either make course corrections now or risk going over the precipice, shortly. Today, more than ever, we need visionaries, we need pioneers, and we need people who are willing to sacrifice their today for a better tomorrow for the future generations. If we cannot make this transition now, we will, one day, awaken from our slumber of short-sighted beliefs to realize that the quagmire of despondency we are in is entirely our fault. We will then look around in befuddlement, will be unable to recognize the desolate landscape that surrounds us, realize that the magnificent valley is long gone, and rue the chances of self-correction that we had missed and murmur to ourselves—we have met the enemy and he is us.

TO THE EDITOR

Of pseudo-secularists

Editor,
On 15th August, 1947.....why India was divided ? Pakistan was declared as a Muslim country , but India adopted " SECULARISM" by 42nd Amendment for the people of this country .Now, a section of pseudo-secularists are encashing on the very tolerant nature of the Indian people . A high class travesty ! These brand of intellectuals are not realizing the rapid changing scenario in world politics . If India has to play a part of a group to fight global terrorism and more specifically the ISIS , then the same breed of intellectuals will say , " INDIA IS INTOLERANT."

Yours etc.,
Anjan Kr Das
Shillong-6

The Art of Giving

Editor,
Kudos to Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan for their pledge of giving 99 per cent of their Facebook shares currently worth more than \$ 45 billion to charitable purposes to make a better world for their daughter's generation. This should be a lesson or two for those haves who shamelessly show off their wealth by spending an astronomical sum of money in marriage ceremonies, pujas and parties in the land which is still alarmingly lowly placed in Global Hunger Index as well as Human Development Index. This greedy creamy layer is so myopic that they do not want to bother about

the environment they are making for their children. It is time for all of us to learn from Bill Gates and Zuckerberg and think about the ways in which we can contribute towards ushering in a pollution free, egalitarian and tolerant world.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata.

Anomaly in Vodafone Service

Editor,
I would like to highlight the plight of Vodafone subscribers, who like me have gone through this ordeal while opening m-pesa account of Vodafone. In the first week of November 2015 I have opened my m-pesa account through mobile phone Self Registration Service by dialing *400# and the option comes accordingly whereby they asked to give my first name, initial, last name, initial and initials of mother's maiden name. So I give all the details and the registration was done. They then gave a Start key number through SMS to set the new PIN and the m-pesa account was activated. Next day I deposited Rs. 500 in my mobile phone m-pesa account hoping to recharge my phone, DTH, etc. I recharged my phone successfully for Rs.97. But after 1 to 2 hours I got a SMS that my m-pesa account has been closed due to mismatch of data. Then hoping for re-activation I have again done self-registration through phone

following the same process. But when I checked my account balance it was zero and the account was subsequently closed citing data mismatch.

Here my contention is that, I have completed the registration process as per their direction/instructions but when I contacted Customer Care through a phone number they have cited the same problem of mismatched data was cited. I was asked why I had given initials instead of names. I clarified that I was only following directions. But to my utter dismay they refused to correct their errors and refused to refund the balance amount. While I was interacting with the Customer Care Executive over phone I expected to be guided properly. If the initial is not acceptable then why did they give such directions during the time of registration. Recently, I have completed the registration process again through phone on Nov 19, 2015 and found that they have changed the pattern of registration and are asking for the first name, last name and mother's maiden name, instead of initials for the first name, last name and mother's maiden name.

I would therefore request the concerned authorities/ TRAI to monitor such anomalies and correct the shortcomings that cause undue harassment to the consumers.

Yours etc.,
H. Sangma
Shillong-19.

Open Butcher Road for two-way traffic

Editor,
You are aware that the traffic jam at Shillong has reached unprecedented heights especially at Civil Hospital Point and Anjalee Cinema Point. The residents staying at Laban, Kenches trace areas while going to Police Bazar or Motphran have to take the main road through Police Bazar. That road is choc-a-bloc with vehicles and it sometimes takes hours to reach Police Bazar. Similarly if vehicles coming from Police Bazaar, Motphran, Umsohsun etc and going towards Laban or Garikhanay take the butcher road it hardly takes 5 - 10 minutes to reach to their destination.

So, to minimize the traffic jam, I suggest that the Butcher Road which is wide enough to be a two-lane road should be used as a two-way lane. The road narrows down only at the entry behind Sani Mandir, but it is not so narrow that two vehicles cannot cross. The Police have already cleared the area by towing all the damaged vehicles for which we the public are grateful to the Police Department. The Police have already given a statement that this would be a 2-laned road as published in your esteemed paper but, that was open only for a day and then suddenly stopped. I request the officials of the Police Department to take a quick decision to open up the Butcher Road at the earliest so as to make it convenient for the public. This would reduce the traffic jam considerably.

Yours etc.,
BK Khongsar,
Via email

Paris climate talks reach critical stage
Rich nations still unreconciled to India's demands

By G. Srinivasan

As the United Nations (UN)-mandated climate change talks got under way and crossed the midpoint of its two-week marathon session of 195 countries across the globe wrestling to craft a legally binding agreement on emissions standards, plenty of hot air to further muddy the planetary balance is evident. It is little wonder that Lord Stern of Brentford, author of the UK government report on the economics of climate change, said that the Paris agreement, due to be signed up most probably in the absence of last-minute glitches, could commit nations to new emission targets but would not require governments to stick to them.

Without mincing words, Lord Stern, a venerable votary of planetary stability, deplored that there were no credible sanctions for countries which reneged on their targets, implying that there was little point in making them legally binding in a global treaty. It needs to be noted that while the United States, the number two polluter after China, did not sign the last global warming treaty of 1997 famously called the Kyoto Protocol, major countries such as Canada, Russia and Japan, relinquished their commitments midway without suffering either contrition or sanctions. The US is also in an invidious spot as it cannot cotton on the whole deal being legally binding because it would be well-nigh impossible to get it through the Republican controlled Congress which has a corporate constituency to boot.

The twenty-first Conference of the Parties (COP-21) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has a fixed objective of limiting global warming to two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels of 1900. One need not stretch one's wits to know the altering carbon content of the global blanket we consider as the atmosphere is the crux of this warming. Without carbon dioxide to treat heat, average temperature would centre on minus 10C. With an extra 30 billion tonne of carbon dioxide each year compared to 1900, scientific models prognosticate a further average increase between 1.5 and 4.5 degrees by the end of the century. Interestingly, despite all tall talks of ushering in green energy and de-carbonized drive for development, fossil fuel carbon-laden coal continues to provide 41 per cent of the world's electricity.

In 2012, India's annual per capita carbon dioxide emissions were just 1.6 times per person compared with 16.4 tonnes per person for the US and 7.1 tonnes per person for China. By 2030, India's emissions would still amount to only about 5 tonnes per person per year. New Delhi is in no denial mode about the obvious fact that its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would escalate dramatically in absolute terms—from the 1.48 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide already in 2005 to more than 7 billion tones in 2030—but contends that this is owing to a burgeoning population and the need to provide electricity to the 300 million Indians lacking it now and the requirement for new coal-fired power plants to supplement other sources of electricity. Half of India's extra emissions are likely to supervene from dirty-coal even as the country is struggling to switch over to alternatives like clean coal, renewable, nuclear and natural gas energy, even as the latter releases half as much carbon per unit of energy as coal. But the harsh fact remains the alternative to cheaper coal is costly sources of both conventional and non-conventional energy which a country of

India's competing demands on slender resources finds difficulty to fix.

It does not therefore challenge the intelligence of even the naive when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote in an op-ed piece in the prestigious London-daily Financial Times on November 30 thus: "Justice demands that, with what little carbon we can still safely burn, developing countries are allowed to grow. The life styles of a few must not crowd out opportunities for the many still on the first steps of the development ladder". India's repeated pleas for invoking Article 3 of the Convention that alludes to "the common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) are either silenced or sidetracked by the US and a few influential leaders in Europe, with the focus now shifting to asking all countries to develop bottom-up commitments to cut their emissions.

This way, any differentiation among countries-be it rich or poor-is eliminated. In spite of this direct assault on the developing world for being late-comers to the league of progress, the COP-16 in Cancun (Mexico) six years ago devised a financial mechanism for developing countries on projects related to climate change, mainly for mitigation and adaptation. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) with a corpus of \$100 billion annually by 2020 is implicitly understood as an unrequited onus of the rich world and part of the process through which they would pay for and underpin developing world to cut their emissions and better adapt to grueling climate change that has now become new normal year after year.

Meanwhile, the inter-governmental think tank of rich countries' club, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released a report recently putting that \$62 billion had been marshaled last year from private and public sources, up from the \$52 billion in 2013. New Delhi and other countries took objections to this estimate, contending that funding purported for development assistance to various countries has also been included in these numbers, depriving the GCF as a stand-alone fund for exclusive use in climate change related cases.

Like any other global gatherings, where the divide and hiatus between the haves and have-not get sharper as each one refuses to budge from its steadfast stance, the Paris talks too witnessed the blast of verbal artillery from the developing world. On the fourth day of the Conference, the developing country bloc of G77 and China launched a blistering attack on the rich world for trying to amend the Convention by tying conditionalities to the financing in the draft agreement.

With the meandering talks getting past the midway, the resources to be marshaled for keeping the GCF afloat after 2020 has become a raging controversy with rich world demanding the pound from even major emitters such as emerging economies and other developing nations. Interestingly, the US President Barack Obama confirmed at a press conference that the US was happy for one critical part of the deal to be legally binding—the need for each country's reduction target to be periodically reviewed. It is another issue whether countries like India would let itself be subject to review its emission standards performance by outside agencies. (IPA Service)

By Shweta Patwardhan

The gap between real beauty and a painted doll does not seem to exist at all on the pages of many women's magazines today. Despite their declared intentions to reflect the changes brought in by second wave feminism and some laudable attempts to include data and information really useful and empowering to a wider cross-section of readers, the main focus is still a schizoid emphasis on "beauty" and sexuality bordering on porn (what else would you call such kissing-advice as melting chocolate in your mouth and retaining it on your tongue and then transferring it to your partner's, in the new-found and legitimate freedom to talk about sexuality?) Swarovski crystals are described as "show-ers" of glamour and accent and "the look" is one of unabashed sexuality and appeal to the opposite sex rather than good grooming or positive personality enhancement. They don't seem to be even recognised as two different things any more, let alone editor or advertiser -- even reader -- selecting fashion stories appropriately.

The "packaging" of the user is as callously, and inanimately, conceived as the products -- the perfume container is described as an art collector's item, the user a scalp-collector's dream, if not worse. Fragrance for men is described as "cool, aquatic, sporty or spicy", for women as "exotic and sensual". Your toiletry bag, of course, must be trendy, branded and cost the earth. And to keep up with the times, you have "action fashion" and "multi-tasking makeup".... Whether it is because "badalte hai Bharat ki awaaz (India's voice is different/changing)" or "dil maange more", it is necessary to spend a little time in introspection and discretion before going on (or advocating) fashion "safaris" and "image statements" that clothe, or unclothe, the body and package style, stultifying the mind and wounding the feelings of those who do no "measure up" or cannot conform for financial reasons. The matter is not one of self-expression as some radical feminists, advertising gurus or making pundits project it, or breaking free of parental restrictions or social norms as adolescents would have it, but far more serious. It is misdirecting a whole generation of youth and future parents and teachers in an already complex, and confusing world of agonising frustrations and sharp disparities.

That these are just a couple of examples from a widely-circulated women's magazine awedly catering to the middle classes -- one



Fashion, frills and feminine farce

rous of how to handle the situations that college, and then career and adult life, are going to throw them into. This same magazine has started a foundation to help the girl child around the



same time as a free supplement for girls, consisting mostly of fuss and fizz -- celebrity news, fashion tips and couture. One recent example: "...Inspired by the hip-hop culture.... Grunge meets couture, and funk is da way to go." Where, is my most pertinent question besides querying the commerce of "beauty" destroying true values even while tokenism drives a few "empowering" pieces in many popular women's magazines.



need not elaborate on how diverse a group this is -- read not only by "women of substance" (pray what is Generation-W?) but adolescents not yet sure of how to handle the changes their bodies are going through and more than a little timor-

Mary Pijher, Ph.D., author of Reviving Ophelia, uses "Hamlet's" Ophelia -- who was mentally sound till she fell in love but then grows confused, depressed and finally kills herself because she is torn between her father's expectations of her

and her lover's -- as a metaphor for what happens to many girls in early adolescence. "They become confused by others' expectations of them and their true selves are lost." The delirious celebration of beauty and the body and the tendency to keep women constantly captive in a state of "becoming beautiful" at great expense of time and money, is a direct contradiction of all the gains of the women's movement. The ridiculous procession of anorexic, semi-nude bodies on the ramp, all with the same comic gait of gambolling, knock-kneed colts (Madhu Kishwar put it rather pithily on TV when she said "you'd whack your kid if she walked that way") is yet another societal ritual from where Generation Next sometimes picks its impossible role models. The tyranny of the slim body has led to physical and psychological trauma and death and one can imagine how recent discoveries like hormone infusion -- which "sort

of simulates a fake meal, fooling the brain into thinking it has already eaten" -- and an American company's weight-reducing device -- implanted near the nerves in the stomach wall to send electric shocks as an alternative to stomach-stapling -- can be mis-used. Even health news is a lot about building the perfect body or toning muscles to perfection rather than achieving true well-being. Good grooming and healthy bodies are goals to achieve but they are given undue importance to the detriment of self-esteem and the realisation of one's true potential. Nutrition advice



(in one issue) to those on the fast track, really takes and advertisements (Contd on P-VII)

Vandana Gopikumar and her organization, 'The Banyan', help those dealing with homelessness, mental illness and poverty. SPAN magazine writer Michael Gallant meets Gopikumar to discuss her ideas and work field

Whether they live on the streets of San Francisco, New Delhi or anywhere else in the world, homeless and mentally ill people can be among the most vulnerable members of society. That's a problem Vandana Gopikumar works hard to fix.

Gopikumar is the co-founder of 'The Banyan', a Chennai-based organization that offers comprehensive aid for poor and homeless people living with mental illness.

Founded in 1993, the organization has touched the lives of thousands of homeless women dealing with mental health issues, while The Banyan's youth-oriented outreach programs have helped hundreds of children.

Two decades ago, Gopikumar was selected to participate in an International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) exchange trip, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, which focused on the development of non-governmental organizations like hers.

Excerpts from an interview

What inspired you to start The Banyan?

During my college days, my friend, who then went on to become my partner in

founding The Banyan, and I had a chance encounter with a woman who was homeless and extremely distressed. She was similar to us in age, and we were struck by how different our life trajectories were. While we had the freedom and luxury of dreaming big and endless choices, she seemed trapped, stuck and unable to free herself from a cycle of distress, trauma and pain. In combination with this, I felt the need to be entrepreneurial, to start something new, and the excitement of taking on a challenge with my friend was exciting.

Why did you choose the name "Banyan?"

The banyan tree, indigenous to India, has long been associated with being a safe haven, shelter and open space accessible to all. It is with this same philosophy, of wanting to be open and accepting, and wanting to reach out, that the name was chosen.

What's one of the most valuable things you learned during your travels?

That suffering, loss and resilience are universal concepts. Only the extent varies. I saw that homelessness in the US was as bad as in India, and the extent of mental health issues was also similar. What was different

the cake, or salad if you will. A Diet file says: "in your food bag you must carry two small cartons of fruit juice, one small box of fruit salad, one small box of veg salad -- with your dip of course." And in your desk drawer, a small container with mixed nuts and raisins, a small packet of plain crackers, a packet of low-fat, instant vegetable soup. It gives you the recipe for a yoghurt dip too, just in case. You the harried working girl, who has no time for breakfast, but obviously all the time in the world for cleansing, toning, chemical peeling, and other time -- devouring beauty rituals and to transform yourself into a mobile grocery store/food joint -- is exhorted on the way back from work, on the train, to chew on your fruit salad or munch on your carrot sticks with yoghurt dip. Anyone familiar with Mumbai and its packed rush-hour trains will know how impractical and snooty this sounds, not to mention the treatment meted out recently to a deaf and dumb 12-year-old, and others, preventing what should rightly be what those interested in empowerment of the vulnerable could more fruitfully be engaged in.

Betty Friedan (The Feminine Mystique) in the 1960s, and Naomi Wolf (The Beauty Myth) in 1990, have brilliantly explored the myths surrounding beauty, female obsession with outward appearance and the factors contributing to it, in which they have included insightful analyses of the role of women's magazines

I think people would not complain about GM stuff if genetically modified people did useful things like give noisy kids "airplane mode" buttons on their foreheads. "Vibrate only" during scheduled hours would also be helpful.

And if my wife is not reading this, can you kindly make a "Skip to end and agree" button appear somewhere whenever she says: "We need to talk?" Thank you.

Your narrator was thinking about air travel and technology after being told a recent true story about a pilot who was hand-cranking the propeller of his plane only to see the engine fire up and the empty aircraft take off without him. No one was hurt when it landed some hours later, because this happened in Canada, a country the size of the Jupiter, but with only about 100 inhabitants, mostly centenarian moose-herders.

Of course, the diametric opposite of Canada is Macau, which is so small and crowded that if you throw a glass of water out of the window, 65 people will complain that their clothes are wet. You don't need to use the ground floor lobby of central Macau hotels; you just crowd-surf in and out of your guestroom window.

The report about the plane flying itself popped up in a conversation I had at an airport, but was topped by a Sri Lankan who told a tale of a ghost train which travelled 12 kilometres with no one driving two years ago. That story was aced in turn by one about a mysterious train which went on a 45-km

journey from Bogor, Indonesia, a few years earlier, with the empty drivers' cabin locked from inside. I remember railway officials scoffing at the theory that a ghost had commandeered the train, preferring the more scientific line that a god had temporarily materialized in the cabin.

A frequent flier in our group told us about a fighter pilot in East Germany in 1989 who thought

My head was in airplane mode

his engine didn't sound right and so used the ejector seat to leave. The plane recovered and flew on for about 700 km, crossing East and then West Germany. Air traffic controllers were asked to work out where it would land so that the place could be evacuated. They answered "Belgium". It's hard to evacuate a whole country. Unless it's Canada, in which case you can just put the population into a bus to a remote bar to spend the evening drinking Molson, which is what they do anyway.



Travellers need not fear pilotless planes. A pilot once told me that big passenger planes have so much technology now they can land themselves. I believe it. I bought a car recently and it's so hi-tech that the only people who can operate it are my children. "Press the red thingy and turn the wheel," they

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

often poorly thought through. Take digital clocks. How am I supposed to resist pressing the snooze button if it doesn't give me an electric shock? Oh well, next time I'm late, I'll blind my boss with technology. "Sorry, I messed up; my head was in airplane mode."

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



(From left) Vaishnavi Jayakumar, Ashok, Vandana Gopikumar and Kamala Easwaran. Jayakumar

Like a banyan tree

was the nature of responses to these problems and the extent of societal engagement.

Structural barriers that are pronounced in India weren't so in the US. There seemed to be a greater sense of balance and equity, as a result of which human life felt more valued. Many inequities in India are somewhat accepted, which widens the chasm between the privileged and those who live

experiencing scarcity. On the other hand, family structures, particularly in rural India, seemed stronger than in the US. As a result, the dominant trend was to support people with different abilities, or the elderly, in their homes, or in other non-institutional settings.

Did the exchange programme have a significant impact on how you lead The Banyan?

I first felt the need to

adopt a trans-disciplinary approach to our work during the exchange. Mental health isn't a health issue alone; it's also a deprivation, inequity, discrimination and structural violence issue. Thus, the responses have to be equally robust, particularly in a country like India.

Why is that?

I feel we work under difficult circumstances in India, in terms of the diversity of language, culture and iden-

tity. The uniformity in the US, in some ways, meant greater equity and sameness. Problems seemed less persistent in nature, even if they were complex. Also, I felt that social innovations were far more valued in the US. But things have changed since then. The Indian government and the corporate sector are now opening up to welcome civil society organizations that are doing development work. (TWf) (Courtesy SPAN magazine)

By Ranjan K Baruah

There are many Para military forces in the country and one such is Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). The ITBP was conceived on October 24, 1962.ITBP was initially raised under the CRPF Act, however in 1992, the parliament enacted the ITBPF Act and rules there under were framed in 1994. ITBP is a multi-dimensional force. Presently Battalions of ITBP deployed on Border Guarding Duties from Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh covering 3488 KM of India China Border are manning Border out posts at an altitude ranging from 9000' to 18500' in the Western, Middle & Eastern Sector of India China Border. ITBP is basically a mountain trained Force and most of the officers & men are professionally trained Mountaineers and Skiers to maintain optimum operational efficiency of troops, periodical tactical exercises are conducted independently as well as jointly with Army.

There are many career opportunity related to ITBP. Aspirants may join ITBP and serve the nation and people. Advertisements appear in different newspapers from time to time when there is vacancy or for new recruitment. Assistant Commandants are recruited by the Combined Special Selection Board constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs through UPSC. Written examination for Assistant Commandant is in two papers viz. - Intelligence test & General Knowledge and Essay Writing. Thereafter, the Special Selection Board conducts a Physical Efficiency Test, medical examination and an interview for selecting the candidates.

Direct Recruitment of Sub-Inspectors for Central Para Military Forces including the Indo-Tibetan Border Police is done by the Staff Selection Commission by conducting a common examination annually. The mode of conducting examination

Veterinary, Motor Transport, Education, Clerical, Stenography, Hindi Translator & Tailor etc. Pay scales and perks of various ranks in these cadres are identical to that of General Duty Cadre. People who are committed for their work and wants to serve the nation may choose ITBP or similar services. Aspirants may

Pharmacy (4 Years after 10+2 including lateral entry candidates) and those who are in the final year of B. Pharmacy course are eligible for appearing in GPAT 2016 examination. Last date for applying is 30th November and exam would be held on 17th January.

CMAT: AICTE has launched the National level Management Admission Test (CMAT) for facilitating institutions to select suitable students for admission in all management programmes approved by AICTE. Common Management Admission Test (CMAT) is a national Level entrance exam. The CMAT is a three hour computer based online test which is conducted in a single session to evaluate the candidate's ability across various segments like Quantitative Technique, Logical Reasoning, Language Comprehension and General Awareness. Graduates in any discipline or Final year students of Graduate Courses (10+2+3) whose result will be declared before commencement of admission can apply for CMAT online. Last date for applying is 30th November and exam would be held on 17th January.

(With direct inputs from ITBP websites, the writer is a associated with North East Youth Foundation and he may be reached at 98640 55558 or youngmatters@gmail.com for career planning and further details)



nation for Sub-Inspectors is in two parts, Part-I has written tests in General Intelligence, Reasoning, General Awareness, Numerical Ability and English language and Part-II has the Physical Efficiency Test, medical examination and interview.

Indo-Tibetan Border Police conducts recruitment rallies in different parts of the country for enlisting constables. In the written test question paper will be set to assess the general knowledge, elementary mathematics, ability to observe and distinguish patterns, followed by the Physical Efficiency Test, medical examination & interview.

There are a numbers of Technical Cadres viz., Medical, Telecommunication, Para-medical, Engineering,

visit the website of ITBP for further details.

Exam/Entrance Update:

GPAT: AICTE has launched the National level Graduate Pharmacy Aptitude Test (GPAT) for facilitating institutions to select suitable students for admission in all pharmacy programs approved by AICTE. Graduate Pharmacy Aptitude Test (GPAT) is a national Level entrance exam. The test will be conducted in different states and cities. The GPAT is a three hour computer based online test which is conducted in a single session. The GPAT score is accepted by all AICTE-Approved Institutions/University Departments/Constituent Colleges/Affiliated Colleges. Bachelor's degree holders in

By Dipankar Jakharia

My dear old friend Dr Arindom has settled in Dibrugarh with his wife and daughter. Every Puja and Bihu he pays a visit to his home town Guwahati and religiously drops in for a chit-chat. While his daughter Megha was playing with my daughter and both our better halfwere busy in the kitchen exchanging the latest microwave recipe, Arindom began abruptly:

"You know what, I don't believe in insurance. What is the point of getting money when you die?"

Arindom again asserted, "I've already purchased a three bedroom flat in Guwahatiand after all, whom does it belong to? Ultimately it is for my daughter! "

Getting no response from me, he continued....

"But I also have done mysmartest thing! I've invested in a ULIP Child Education policy. Now I'm at peace that the future of my child is secure. Have I done the right thing?"

I began my answer with, "my friend, you are not the only one!"

There is a huge pool of parents who have chosen a child ULIPs that promise continuity in the funding of the child's education, in the event of the parent's death. These schemes have been best sellers for most life insurance companies. It is easier to sale to parents by talking about their children's future from any unwanted events.

Many parents, thus, are completely taken in by the idea of achieving their dream of their child being able to complete his/her education in their absence.

In addition to the sum assured, that is paid in case of the policyholder's demise, future premiums are waived off and the fund value is made available to the child on maturity. Riders providing for loss of income arising out of the parent's (the insured) death or disability are also taken care-of as one of the reasons why child plans sales more. Most companies also offer waiver of premium riders, which ensures that the company continues to pay the premium if the parent passes away.

Similar to ULIP many mutual fund housesalso offer schemes dedicated for children. Anyone can invest in the name of his/



Securing Megha's future

her child below the age of 15 years. When the child turns 18, she/he has the option of withdrawing the money completely or doing so in a phased manner.

What you need to understand:Most investment experts are of the view that these funds are not

may be popular, but they are complex in nature, moreover an analysis of their performance is adifficult task.

Despite the cap on ULIP charges, the costs cannot be termed reasonable. Also, one don't see them generating superior

equity diversified fund should be combined with a term insurance cover to safeguard your child's future. Though buying a term insurance, there is nothing to be gained in monetary terms if you survive the tenure of the policy, but you would

have ensured a large sum for your child in your absence at a fraction of a ULIP's cost. All the attractiveness of death cover, disability cover and so on can be obtained by pure term insurance plans. This will make sure that your child's future remains secure no matter what happens to the parents. But make sure that you have a life cover that is

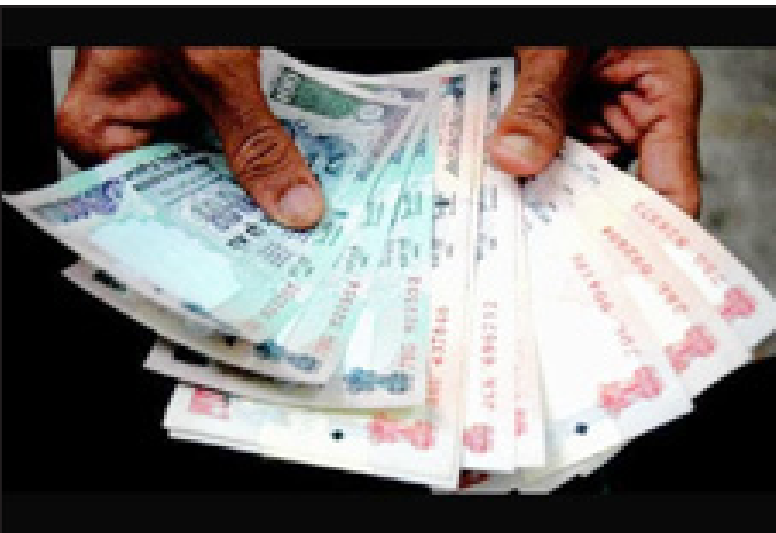
adequate.

The last line while explaining to Arindom was "What must be kept in mind is that investing for a child is no different than investing for your-self. The principles remain the same".

After dinner and before departureMegha came and patted a kiss on my chick.

"Thank you Uncle" said the little angel, waving her hand, before boarding the back sit of her father's car.

(The writer is a Guwahati based independent financial adviser. Follow ?the writer? on twitter @d.jakharia. He may be reached at 9954139393)



necessarily meant for children. They are more of a marketing gimmick which fund houses and insurance companies adopt to woo investors. After all, even a simple equity diversified fund is capable of generating similar performance.

Child ULIPAre Expensive: While it is convenient

returns to justify the huge charges levied. Child ULIPs are, in fact, costlier than even regular ULIPs, owing to features such as waiver-of-premium and loss-of-income riders.

The Ideal Approach: The best way is by investing in diversified equity mutual funds with a good track record, as they are flexible instruments that offer the optimum mix of return, liquidity and tax-efficiency and with a combination of a term insurance. A SIP in a large-cap,

Money Matters

to invest in insurance plans, it is an expensive proposition. One should never buy an insurance policy with an investment objective in mind. They

Fashion, frills and feminine farce

(Contd from P-VI) in keeping women avid consumers. Friedan demonstrated that advertisers made a "religion of domesticity" to make women buy domestic gadgets and now, "the Beauty Myth in its modern form, arose to take the place of the Feminine Mystique, to save magazines and advertisers from the economic fallout of the women's revolution," is one of the points of departure from which Naomi Wolf moves to build her case that, now, beauty takes the place of domesticity and replaces the myths of motherhood, domesticity, chastity and passivity which are no longer able to keep women controlled in society, and quotes Germaine Greer describing the Stereotype -- "To her belongs all that is beautiful, even the very word beauty itself... she is a doll... I'm sick of the masquerade."

"Behaviour that is essential for economic reasons is transformed into a social virtue," says John Kenneth Galbraith, explaining the reasons behind trapping women in the Feminine Mystique. Before the Industrial Revolution, when cottage industries thrived and the family was a productive unit, women's work complemented men's and "work skills, economic shrewdness, physical strength and fertility" were important requisites, argues Wolf, and "beauty as we understand it was not for ordinary women, a serious issue in the marriage marketplace" till the Industrial Revolution created literate, idle women, family sizes shrank, the middle class expanded and capitalism exploited women to keep them submissive, first by enforced domesticity and then by the beauty myth. She goes so far as to argue that every time women won rights or liberties for themselves, patriarchy resorted to devising new ways of controlling them. "To paraphrase Friedan," says Naomi Wolf, "why is it never said that the really crucial function that women serve as aspiring beauties is to buy more things for the body? Somehow, somewhere, someone must have figured out that they will buy more things if they are kept in the self-hating, ever-failing, hungry and sexually insecure state of being aspiring beauties."

The Channel 4 website traces 100- years of make-up, with its slyly tongue-in-cheek L'Oreal-like title "Because You're Worth It". In the early 1900s, suffragettes wore red

lipstick as a mark of defiance as they struggled to win the vote, and when Selfridge's decided to sell powder and rouge openly it pleased the women but not the men; in the 1940s (wartime), make-up was seen as an affordable morale-boosters and instant feminiser, red lipstick as defying hardship by maintaining appearances; then denouncing make-up became a feminist statement with the publication of Germaine Greer's The Female Eunuch and the backlash against the concept of prettifying oneself to please men; moving to the materialism of the 1980s and expertly-groomed trophy-wives but paradoxically, around the same time, ecological values also emphasise avoiding cruelty to animals and using natural ingredients. But into the 21st century, the obsession is at fever-pitch. As the population ages, anti-ageing creams, cosmetic surgery, quick fix treatments like collagen implants and "Botox" anti-wrinkle injections that can be taken over a lunch break vie with facial skinpeels and electric wave therapy.

Makeup, they say, generates more money than armament sales. The exploitation of the willing consumer will increase with expanding markets and increasing choice. But when magazines catering to widely differing readerships project expensive clothes, holidays and lifestyles to keep the beauty myth alive in a developing country -- whose priorities should be different and value scales not so skewed by commercial propaganda, they are perpetuating a grave disproportion, widening the rift between the haves and the have-nots. What is worse in the pursuit of outward perfection emphasis is placed on the fleeting and the ephemeral to the detriment of self-confidence and the realisation of true individual potential. As Wolf says, "over the ruined barricades" of the women's movement, "a revolution has come upon us and changed everything in its path; enough time has passed since then for babies to have grown into women, but there still remains a final right not fully claimed." It is a secret "under life poisoning our freedom". Because women continue to be vulnerable to outside approval instead of banking on their inner resources. Surely, there are greater crusades in life than fighting acne in adolescence and wrinkles in old age. INAV

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambhani

Sunday, December 6, 2015

You develop new areas of interest which could bring you in the limelight as Moon sextile Sun on your solar return chart. Your image would enhance and you gain recognition in professional and social circles. Restructuring financial decisions and dealings would be productive and favorable. You will draw on your experience and use the information at your disposal to resolve the delays and obstacles. Wedding bells could ring for those in a relationship. You will be drawn to research and writing. Travel will be focused and rewarding. Health matters and diet would need attention. Anything you do behind the scenes to help friends and family will be to your benefit.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

This phase brings excellent results. You would express your views, terms and conditions without hesitation and deal with many issues bravely and successfully. You attempt difficult tasks, resolve complicated issues and connect with people. In your interactions make sure that you avoid conflicts. Your social life may be restricted to work and family obligations. Look at present situations from a higher perspective to realize what is happening around you. You need to conserve health and energy and deal with practical details and finances. Chances of a pilgrimage as you realize that you cannot control or plan too much as the unexpected is expected. Give yourself a fitness routine and healthy diet program.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

An established business concern flourishes and partnership may expand into triangular collaborations. Success and good fortune at work open new horizons for expansion. Look at the present situations from a higher perspective to realize what is happening around you and act accordingly. Your domestic life takes on top priority and you support family members and feel comfortable and secure this week. You have every chance to boost your feeling of stability and support with family. You may visit and spend a lot of time in company of your beloved one. Intimacy and warmth are powerful stimulants for you at this time.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

This period brings a phase where you can win the trust of people in authority. This is the right time to participate in current events and share views, ideas and feelings with people around you to feel a part of the whole, as this brings new opportunities and monetary gains. Avoid making compromises with your own truths, values and priorities. Your strong spirit supports you through the changes. You can improve your love life by bringing more affection, love and a feeling of togetherness. Unusual attractions and dreams could feature now as you spend time with your beloved.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

This week brings mixed results. On the professional front, it would be better to let go of the past and make a new beginning as something greater awaits you. You may feel professionally unstable and emotionally insecure. Avoid indulging in any arguments and confrontations especially with people in authority. Financially a good week, you earn well and your communication skills are impressive. Communicate listen to others, express yourself, and get everything done in your favor. Talk to your beloved one and don't keep yourself away from people, enjoy the feeling of togetherness.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

New horizons open up for you and this boosts your self-confidence and you meet difficult tasks and resolve work related issues confidently and bravely. Take advantage of your courage and go ahead to achieve desired goals. You may be able to finalize a property related issue and this brings financial gains. Also you have been highly motivated to make money and this brings positive results if you use your communications skills. You might spend time in making short trips meeting friends and loved ones. You may feel restless at times; eat health food, yoga and meditation recommended.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

This is going to be an exciting time. You are most likely to express your views in an intellectual and unconventional manner. This brings success and reward in overseas related matters. You will get success in overseas projects and earn well from these associations. You enjoy good moments with your beloved, your romantic affair and pleasure-seeking

activities gives you big boost of confidence. Your communication abilities will largely be applied to further professional ambitions where knowledge and education are pursued. Brisk walk and timely eating would be helpful.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)



This period brings mixed results for you. You will face obstacles at work and could get embroiled in controversies. Be wary of those who entice you with seemingly attractive ideas. The desire for some form of recognition is strong. Financial success on the other hand is enhanced now. You may have a difference of opinion with spouse and health of some of the family member may suffer. Try to give moral support and help. However, people in love will have a great time as they listen to the inner feelings for each other.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)



The planetary configuration brings good results particularly at the work place. You may explore new technology and improve office infrastructure as this brings more efficiency and creativity in your work. There are chances of new associations and beginnings as new opportunities and changes are on cards. This is an excellent time to make some financial investments and speculations and adopt new strategies in financial matters. Your association with like-minded people favorably turns things around. Your loved one would be supportive as this is the best time to bring more harmony to your relationships and feel more comfortable.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)



You will be able to make best use of your talents, work experience and would add creativity to your work and projects in hand. This is the best time to use your higher education and skills to promote your career prospects. Strong chances of up-gradation and new responsibilities could come up. Concentrate on the work at hand and you may need to work more and put in extra hours. Avoid confrontations and arguments at the work place, as this would spoil time and energy and brings no results. Listen to your heart and express your feelings to your beloved.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)



The planetary configuration promotes your luck. New ideas and attitude to resolve issues would be beneficial. You will meet with appreciation even from unexpected quarters. Your professional prospects improve as you communicate well and interact in more positive way. You exhibit leadership qualities as you lead from the front. On the domestic front, try to compromise in family related matters. Change your priorities and support your spouse with love and affection. You will be in demand on the social front. You may visit religious places.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)



This phase brings good luck and appreciation in property and land related matters. This is the best time to resolve land and property related issues as this brings good returns. On the professional front, you have to be careful to meet desired success. Express your views and conditions clearly when it comes to business and financial dealings. Avoid any conflicts and confrontations. Children do you proud as they make progress in their chosen field. You can improve your love life by being more proactive. Some of you may fall in love with an intellectual person of a much younger age. Give yourself a new fitness routine and healthy diet programme to rejuvenate energy.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)



You tackle work related issues and handle all legal matters successfully. People in law, justice and related fields will have great time as they use their talents and skills to meet desired success. Sports, competitive exams and fighting spirit come to the fore. You will have the ability to build up financial and monetary pursuits and good returns from overseas business are on cards. Differences and discordant tendencies between people you love could crop up. You have to be very careful and try to be friendly, cooperative and helpful to resolve the issues. You may find frequent changes and mood variation in your loved ones. Your style of communication boosts your magnetic powers and this brings favorable results in your romantic life. You need to conserve health and energy.

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

–John F. Kennedy

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 117 SHILLONG, MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2015

PM’s optimism

IN recent months, the NDA government at the Centre faced the criticism that reforms were not proceeding apace. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that there is no one way to economic progress. Unconventional methods may yield results. The work done by the Centre may not have made waves but some progress has been made towards breaking prolonged impasse. Modi mentioned the Rs 45,000 crore potential saving made by replacing existing bulbs by LEDs. The devolution of power under the federal structure has got a new meaning. New Delhi does not just dole out funds to the states. How they spend their money is to be decided by the states themselves. Besides, people have participated in the country’s growth story. For instance, 4 million people have voluntarily given up their gas subsidy. The savings go to the benefit of people in general. The tumult in Parliament caused by constant fighting between the treasury and opposition benches has died down and so far the winter session has been smooth going.

It is encouraging that India’s growth figures are outstripping those of other countries. The world economy in contrast is slowing down. Narendra Modi emphasized the need for Corporatization. Subsidies have been cut on various items. Taxes have been rationalized. Public spending has been curtailed. Regrettably, the GST bill is still log jammed. While the Centre faces heavy odds, several far reaching initiatives are under way. The Prime Minster is optimistic that the prevailing disillusionment will soon give way to confidence in the economy and generate happiness. He seems to have no doubt that the Indian economy is moving in the right direction.

LOOKING BACK

March 31, 1988

Tayeng refutes lawyers' charge

The Deputy Commissioner of East Khasi Hills, Mr J. Tayeng has reacted sharply to the criticism of lawyers over the shifting of the Executive Courts to Laitumkhrah.

Talking to this reporter, Mr Tayeng remarked that the Bar Library should be located near the Bar. "If the lawyers can attend courts in Jowai, Nongpoh and other places, can they not also come to Laitumkhrah," he asked.

Justifying the decision to shift, Mr Tayeng pointed out that under the new dispensation, all the appendages of the DC's office were brought under one complex. This, he said, was of great advantage to the public, especially those coming from the interior places who would be able to complete all their works in the same place and within a short time. Hitherto the different branches of the DC's office were scattered far and wide giving little scope to the DC to exercise his administrative control over all the branches.

Mr Tayeng admitted that the new location was slightly out of the way. The approach road was narrow, but steps were underway to widen the road and also to construct a new road to serve as an outlet. Some parking space was also provided.

Meanwhile, the Home Minister, Mr D D Lapang blessed the new set up of the DC's Offices complex. Speaking at a function on July 17 what turned out to be a house-warming get-

together, Mr Lapang congratulated the DC for the speedy shifting. He hoped that the public would bear with the administration for the inconveniences caused.

Bid to put Greater Shillong Water Scheme back on rails

Concerned over the tardy progress of the Greater Shillong Water Supply Scheme, the Meghalaya Home Minister Mr D D Lapang, made an on the spot verification of the project site at Mawphlang on July 19.

Mr Lapang, who also holds the Municipal Administration portfolio, acquainted himself with factors inhibiting its completion.

He has decided to convene a meeting of all the concerned agencies, including officials connected with it as well as the contractors, for sorting out all their problems.

The Greater Shillong Water Shillong Scheme, which has suffered a series of setback since the time it was conceived a decade ago, is already running behind schedule by several years.

The First Phase of the project was to have been commissioned sometime in April this year. Official sources said that some 70% of the works have since been completed involving an expenditure of Rs. 9.72 crore. Owing to inordinate delay in its completion, the Govt has been completed to revise the budget estimate by adding another Rs. 30.08 lakhs, sources said.

Declaring Narpuh as eco sensitive zone is good news

By H H Mohrmen

The declaration by Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, that Nokrek and Narpuh would be designated as eco- sensitive zones is music to the ears of everyone. This will go a long way in protecting the environment and the eco-system in the state. The proposal which will hopefully see the light of the day soon will also help mitigate climate change in whatever small way it can. This is one very important step in the right direction for the state of Meghalaya in particular because we have already lost a large swathes of forest cover (what was known as un-classed forest) near the Narpuh sanctuary to land sharks. The proposal to declare it as an eco-sensitive zone will help protect the remaining dense forests for posterity. It may also not be out of place to mention that Narpuh is the only remaining sub-tropical forest a large part of which is still intact and untouched by human activity.

It is a well known fact that Narpuh is one of the famous reserved forests with huge reserves of biodiversity and wildlife in the state. It was recorded that Jaintia hills district has a high biodiversity of wildlife. More than 400 species of birds, at least 120 species of mammals which includes 37 species of bats, 30 species of carnivores, 7 species of ungulates and 30 species of rodents (Dr A. Chowdhury, 1999) are endemic to this forest. It is also the source of the three major rivers of Jaintia hills, ka Kupli, ka Apha and ka Lukha two of which are victims of coal mining activities and Apha is a store house of aquatic life and a fishermen's paradise. The proposed eco-sensitive zone which is also connected with the Boraille reserve of Assam is home to the Slow Loris, and hundreds of species of birds and mammals. In one of my trips to the area I chanced to see a baby turtle and the back of a deer and many birds and butterflies as well.

Narpuh forest is the only remaining sub-tropical forest in the Khasi and Jaintia hills

area of Meghalaya. It is also the only forest area which is under the jurisdiction of the State Government Forest Department. It is also important to note that of all the forests in Meghalaya only less than five percent is controlled by the Government; the rest are owned by private parties, clans and communities. Therefore protecting and preserving Narpuh is imperative for the state and its people. Narpuh also connects with the Borail reserved forest of Assam, so by declaring the area as eco sensitive it is going to benefit both the forests in the two neighbouring states.

We have seen with our own eyes the pollution that is going even in the area adjacent to the Narpuh forest. The news about the loss of aquatic lives in the river Lukha to pollution is one of the major concerns of the Government and the community. If there is still hope to reclaim Kupli and Lukha, protecting and preserving the Narpuh forest which is the source of these two dead rivers is one of the answers. Narpuh forest is the source and the store house of clean and fresh water; hence if the forest is protected it will help replenish fresh and pure water to the Lukha and Kupli at source. The effect of fresh water which is being discharged from Narpuh can be seen even to the naked eye every year in the annual cycle that is going on in the river Lukha. Now since 2007, at the onset of every winter Lukha changes its colour to sky blue every year and people wonder why this strange phenomenon happens. We do not have the answer because we were asking the wrong question. Perhaps the right question is why did the polluted Lukha change to its natu-

ral colour every summer? And why do we sometimes see even fishes from the valley in Bangladesh swimming upstream towards the river Lukha during summer in spite of the fact that the river is polluted and no aquatic lives can be sustained during winter?

The simple answer that even a layman in the village can comprehend is that during the summer fresh water from Narpuh is playing the trick. At the onset of every summer the rain-fed Narpuh forest discharges fresh water to the river, thereby making it clean again and at times even fishes from downstream and from the tributaries of Lukha which are not affected by pollution swim in the river again. The fishes disappear before the autumn starts and it may not be out of place to mention that not only does the Lukha change its colour to sky blue but on Wednesday 2, December last on a visit to Kupli, even this river has changed into an azure blue colour.

Narpuh eleka is also being affected by pollution from the many cement plants in the area, therefore the forest will be of help to the people who live close to the eco- sensitive zone because it will help absorb the dust and smoke produced by the cement plants. Even now the villages in the area receive their supply of fresh clean water from the sources in the forest as well as from providing them with wild edible food, herbs and plants for medicines and honey.

The villages in the fringes of the forest will also benefit if Narpuh is declared an eco-sensitive zone. The Government can make the people who live in the villages partners in the protection and preservation of the forest and the wild life in the area. Perhaps Government can assist the local people particularly the young edu-

cated youths of the area to venture and promote ecotourism in the area. There are many cases where conservation creates livelihood opportunities for the people in the fringes of the forest. The huge forest can also be an avenue for people to upscale their apiculture business and simultaneously earn livelihoods while protecting the forest.

The conservation program can also address the issue of underdevelopment of the villages surrounding the forests. Various conservation programs can be implemented alongside developmental activities for the villages in the fringes of the proposed eco-sensitive zone.

Climate change is no longer just a subject of debate by experts and leaders of the different countries of the world. Unseasonal and intensive rainfall like those that occurred in Meghalaya in the last summer and which is still happening right now in Tamil Nadu, are realities that are staring us right in our faces. We can no longer pretend and ignore what is happening. It is about time we act. Big talks about climate change in Paris or anywhere else depends on small conservation efforts like this. The proposal to declare these two forests as eco- sensitive zones is a testimony to the saying 'think globally act locally'.

This is a great move made by the Government of India and we hope that by declaring the wild life sanctuary an eco-sensitive area we will be able to protect this one last tropical forest in the Khasi and Jaintia hills. By protecting the area we will be able to conserve for the future generations at least a semblance of the thick forests that used to cover the sub-tropical area of Meghalaya. On a positive note, there is also the fact that forests are our best carbon sinks. This will help the state and the country in the long run.

on Proper Disposal of Waste, made me reflect on the pitiable attitude of the public at large. In addition, the concerned authorities have not been able to deliver because of their lackadaisical attitude. I've been associated with the organisation NEEDS which conducted studies and awareness programmes on the two 'rivers' from 2004-10. One of the basic findings is that the people have not been able to distinguish 'drainage' from 'sewage' and vice versa. The drains from different households of the city continue to flow unabatedly into the two 'drainage systems'. If this is allowed to continue, then the talk of reviving the two rivers will be a far cry. Any initiative be it the District Council Initiatives or the proposed project under Ministry of Water Resources or any other will just flow along the 'two designated drains'. We see Shillong as a ' NO RULES' city where all rules have been flouted. A walk to Motphran (Bara Bazar) will witness the utter chaos there where public roads have been converted to vegetable stalls and there you encounter multiple obstacles when you walk across the road. You will have to dodge the ever honking vehicles, get pushed by the pedestrians while struggling to avoid stepping on the vegetables.

Dumping of garbage at different undesignated places all over the city has added more woes to the civic authorities. Non municipal areas have not been able to come up with substantial and viable solution to manage waste from their respective localities. This is what these different ' Dorbars' need to initiate with a workable solution to stop the

Yours etc.,
Jonty Rhodes Sangma
Tura

Breakdown of civic responsibility

Editor,

The news items appearing in 'The Shillong Times' on November 30, 2015 and December 3, 2015, one relating to Wah Umkhrah and Umshyri and the other on The Shillong Municipal Board's Public Notification

Future of cricket might lie in hockey

By M. J. Akbar

There is only one sensible solution to the festering stalemate swamping India-Pakistan cricket: make the game so utterly boring that no one cares. We have a precedent. Hockey.

Once upon a time, long, long ago the subcontinent would be in thrall when India competed with Pakistan for an Olympic or Asian hockey gold. All passion got punctured when the two began to scramble for last place, instead of first. Right now, when debate about cricket is back in first gear and social media is bristling with comments that can only be described as anti-social, India and Pakistan play hockey and not a whisper is heard. Mention cricket, and there is turbulence.

The problem, then, is not sport but response. Kill interest, and controversy dies. The trouble is that India and Pakistan have cricket teams that refuse to be boring. Both are good enough to defeat any other side in the world on their day. Naturally, neither nation performs with any consistency; that would be foreign to the subcontinent's temperament. Our fatal charm is that we are unpredictable. That breeds tension. Tension is not good for national nerves.

Think about the practical difficulties that hamper an India-Pak Test series, and weep. You can wrap up a hockey game, including time out for bad behaviour by a couple of Pakistani players, in about two hours. A cricket Test can linger for five days. If the series was in India our groundsman would of course do their bit to maintain public order and get matches over in less than three days, but even 18 playing hours can add up to an eternity when India play Pakistan.

The management of emotions amid the peaceful citizenry may, in fact, be the least of these problems. Pakistan cannot play in Pakistan because no one can guarantee security. Its "home ground" has now been outsourced to sweltering UAE. But do you think the terrorists who make cricket impossible in Pakistan will go on holiday if India play Pakistan anywhere? What do we do if there is an attack, not just at the venue of the game but anywhere else? Do we call everything off as media ratchets up hysteria and governments are accused of appeasement? There was talk recently of a series being played in England. After Paris, I wonder how much appetite MCC and MI6 [the British security agency] might have for taking this parade to Lord's.

Look in any corner, and you will discover an unsuspected problem lurking, waiting to pounce. I am re-

minded, for instance, of the television advertising that preceded the last T20 World Cup in Bangladesh. One of the more disruptive realities of modern cricket is the hype manufactured to draw in viewers and pump up revenue. Many advertisements shown on Indian television before that tournament were provocative, offensive, tasteless, jingoist. They generated enough animosity to make innumerable spectators hostile to India. The damage still reverberates. BCCI, the alleged guardian of Indian cricket, did not care then and is unlikely to care in the future. All BCCI cares about is the tinkle of silver and thud of gold.

Turn towards that historically contentious subject, umpiring. India is still Luddite about technology, on the grounds that if an error has to be made let it be human. This, one gathers, is part of former captain M.S. Dhoni's legacy. Why can't the brainiacs who run our cricket get a simple thing straight? People will forgive a machine but not a man. You cannot bribe a machine. The fetid odour of corruption infects the air above cash-loaded cricket and the betting tamasha that follows in its wake. This is certainly not to allege that umpires are dishonest. Far from it. They are under intense scrutiny themselves, all the time. But suspicion and gossip are not interested in facts. If and when we do play Pakistan, it must only be after we have joined the rest of the world in referring doubt to a camera.

I love cricket, even when it gets boring. It is the only serious reason, along with English Premier League football, for buying a television set. There is little one would want more than a triumphant India-Pakistan series. But if cricket cannot be a celebration, is it worth the risk? Sport is about joy, or it is about nothing. Sport is not a substitute for war. It is a performance art of sublime beauty, theatre at its finest, played at the highest level by men and women of great talent, some of them touched by the magic of genius. There is rivalry in sport, and may it long continue, for it lifts the quality of drama. But no sensible sportsperson permits rivalry to descend into the pit of enmity. That is degradation of the basic principles of sport. If we cannot enjoy what we are witnessing, then it is not sport.

Should India play Pakistan this winter? My sincere sympathies lie with those who have to answer that question.

menace of ' plastic bags dumping' in corners of the city as reported by this newspaper. Commercial areas like Laitumkhrah, Polo, Jail Road, Khyndai Lad (Police Bazar) and Jewduh (Bara Bazar) witness large scale generation of different categories of waste. If proper segregation is done at source and regulated collection is done, the situation would not have been as bad as what we see now. Shops and establishments have to have a separate categorization of waste management altogether because these institutions produce so much waste ranging from food waste, organic waste, plastics, cardboard, papers etc. The civic authorities have to initiate a separate drive for such areas at specific timings when such establishments close for the day. Sometimes when we

travel late at night or early in the morning, we would come across heaps of garbage dumped by people all over the city. Is there any mechanism to curb such menace? If one is determined, there are all possibilities. I understand that people's mindsets and attitudes have to change for cleaner surroundings. However, a watchful and dynamic civic body armored with stringent punishment against the defaulters can bring about the desired change. I hope good sense prevails.

Yours etc.,
Gideon Kharkongor
Director, NEEDS

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

“*My mother loved children -- she would have given anything if I had been one.*”

--- Groucho Marx

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 118 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2015

Kejriwal’s proposal: quixotic or pragmatic

DELHI Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal has mooted a plan of action where vehicles with odd and even registration numbers would ply on alternate days. This decision comes at a time when the judiciary has virtually pushed the Delhi Government to come up with an action plan to curb vehicular pollution. Kejriwal’s proposal has been received with much criticism and cynicism. Some think it is a quixotic proposal that will lead to much heartburn since most families with one vehicle would have to commute on public transport or pool cars with their colleagues and neighbours every alternate day. But car pooling will not work if two people have to go to two very different directions. Others say that every car owner with an even registration number would not strive to buy another vehicle and register it with an odd number. Should this happen Delhi’s woes would only mount. Yet pollution levels in Delhi have reached alarming levels and desperate measures are needed to tackle this. The more affluent citizens of Delhi have left the city to migrate elsewhere to more healthy climes. But the majority Delhiites will have to grin and bear and suffer the consequences of their own actions.

Indeed anthropogenic sources of pollution are highest across the globe. The current Global Climate Change Conference in Paris is deliberating on these very issues, but the discourse is somehow deadlocked between how much the developed countries can commit to reducing carbon footprints and what the developing countries should be doing to balance development with pollution control and also who is going to fund the climate change reversals. In fact this latter issue has been the most intransigent. In the light of these pressing environmental problems that stare us in the face, many of which have reached dangerous and often irreversible proportions, it would be educative to know what actions the Government of Meghalaya is proposing to take to reverse the impact of anthropogenic activities on our water bodies and pristine hills? Can we still salvage the poisoned rivers of Jaintia Hills?

LOOKING BACK

March 31, 1988

Bharat bandh

The Bharat bandh organised yesterday by opposition parties except the BJP and Lok Dal (B) is the latest opposition political confrontation with the ruling party at the Centre. The issues besides what have been described as retrograde economic policies of the Central Government, its seeking adjustment with communal elements, corruption, violence, black money and kickbacks among other things on which the left and secular democratic parties have taken to this populist step are to press their demand for resignation of the Rajiv Gandhi Government and a mid-term election for a new Government at the Centre capable of doing away with these ills.

The bandh as a political instrument is an Indian innovation which is unknown in other democracies of the world and has come to stay as a part of Indian democratic system. Hardly a day passes without a bandh being observed in some corner of the country, sometimes confined to as small an area as a city street on issues as insignificant as a death in an automobile accident called by a party or even a local group of people. The success of such bandhs mainly rests on the element of mischief the organisers might pose to the concerned section of the public. Yesterday’s Bharat bandh, however, was different in the sense that it had behind it sus-

tained mobilisation for weeks by responsible opposition parties and involved a large number of party workers, trade union bodies controlled by these parties besides the support of a latest four State Governments, West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra, which in itself assured a fair measure of success to the bandh specially in these States despite the Congress(I)’s resolve to counteract the bandh. Not that the organisers were not aware of the colossal national loss in terms of industrial production, commercial transactions and man days lost in a day’s nation-wide bandh apart from the unaccountable inconveniences caused to the public in general due to disruption of normal goings-on, let alone the daily wage earner, but the people willy nilly were presumed to take these in their stride.

The issue on which the bandh was called have been discussed and debated in different democratic forums including the Parliament earlier. The objective of the bandh clearly was not only to involve the public at large with these issues but also to gain some political mileage out of the movement. This is well accepted part of a political game in the country’s democratic tradition, but to expect that a day’s bandh, whatever its dimension, will force a well settled government to resign is beyond the reach of any calculation.

Dead and dying rivers of Meghalaya- The Myntdu and Lukha

By Jonathan Donald Syiemlieh

Assam feeding on water from catchment areas in coal mining areas in Meghalaya. This was later confirmed by Central Agencies such as the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), Central Water Commission (CWC) and the Central Soil and Material Research Station (CSMRS) in 2008-09. The run of the river power projects of the Meghalaya Electricity Corporation Ltd (MeECL), at Leshka confluence, has also reported that high acidic content of the water in the river is constantly corroding their machinery.

Interactions with village residents of these affected areas and fellow researchers at Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)

tions etc. The study articulates that the direct contact of wastewater from the cement plants coupled with the unsustainable open cast mining has an adverse impact on the physico-chemical characteristics of the waters of the region. The water samples that were collected particularly from the areas where the cement plants were located were found to be highly polluted.

Another recent study by NEHU highlights the horrendous and highly deteriorating quality of water in the Myntdu river. The Ecology Research

Laboratory under the aegis of the Centre for Advanced Studies in Botany at NEHU conducted an analysis of the water quality of the Myntdu river in

The disturbing aspect here is the fact that the results indicated pH values that exceeded the permissible limits as per the World Health Organization (WHO).

in 2012 highlighted the challenging plight of the locals and how they have been forced to adapt to a degraded quality of life. According to the villagers intensive mining of limestone and coal and unsustainable practices adopted by the cement companies have destroyed the ecology and biodiversity of the environment. Villagers mentioned that the Lukha river use to be a lively river full of fish and aquatic life and the major source of potable drinking water and irrigation as well as subsistence for the local fishing industry but all life forms started disappearing from the year 2007 onwards when most cement plants started production. The water bodies have been contaminated by wastewater released from the cement plants and therefore unfit not only for drinking but also for other domestic purposes.

A study undertaken by the Department of Environmental Studies, North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in 2013 analyzed water samples from the surroundings around which the limestone quarries and cement plants operate in East Jaintia Hills. The results of the study exhibited elevated levels of pH, conductivity (EC), total dissolved solids (TDS), hardness, alkalinity, calcium and sulphate concentra-

2015 where the study attributed that one of the major causes of deteriorating water quality was the acid mine drainage (AMD) from multiple drains to the tributaries of the river. The results of the analysis revealed that high concentrations of metals were obtained from the tributaries as compared to the original source of the river. The disturbing aspect here is the fact that the results indicated pH values that exceeded the permissible limits as per the World Health Organization (WHO). There is also critical water shortage since abandoned coal mines pits and crevices percolate the surface water.

The State Government has promised intervention year after year ever since the rivers first changed colour which was almost a decade ago, but neither the Government nor any civic bodies are attempting to improve the quality of life for these affected residents. Mere inclusion of the river in the National Water Monitoring Program to undertake tests and so called visits to the affected regions time and again will not help in addressing the predicament. Half-baked attempts by the Government will only end up biting the government in the foot. Ad hoc measures such as those extended by the Public Health Engineering Department in providing water connections which are at most times dry, especially

in the winter months are pointless. These water tankers when available are also very limited in number in contrast to the density of residents in these affected regions.

It is high time that the State Government intervenes and begins to comprehensively investigate the change of colour of the two rivers and take the assistance of competent third parties and relevant experts including inputs from the affected residents to conduct a detailed scrutiny of the contamination of the water bodies. An assessment to identify the major point sources of contamination and to understand the short term, medium term and long term behaviour of these point sources should be undertaken. This will help in aiding environmental management of the affected regions. The State Government should also engage regular consultations with the concerned stakeholders especially those affected directly and indirectly so as to ensure optimum exchange of knowledge which will aid in accelerating corrective measures that could bring about an improvement in the environmental conditions.

A comprehensive and detailed river water quality assessment should also be undertaken across the entire state so as to safeguard both public health and vulnerable water resources. The state government should also direct the cement companies to treat all the wastage before dumping it into the rivers. The State Government should direct the coal owners to undertake reclamation and sustainable closure of erstwhile coal mines and pits so as to restore the land either via backfilling, plantations, social forestry etc on the lines of coal mine reclamation practices undertaken by subsidiaries of Coal India Limited (CIL). In addition to the social responsibilities, cement companies should as a part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) address the environmental concerns in their business operations so as to achieve a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives. The cement companies should try to incorporate integrated sustainable development plans into their business strategies and operations with an equally strong commitment to social and environmental responsibility on the lines of the Cement Sustainability Initiative (CSI) which is an initiative of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) as two cement companies from India are part of the initiative.

Delhi Choking, Chennai Drowning Disaster management, what's that?

By Poonam I Kaushish

Delhi is choking due to pollution and Chennai is drowning under unprecedented devastating floods. Both standing mute testimony to a callous, heartless and selfish polity and administration bereft of cure and consolation. After all the aam aadmi translates only into mere sterile statistics to be manipulated at will. All cursing the Government!

Whoever said when it rains, it pours miseries, was dead on! Chennai resembles a disaster zone as water seeps into homes, marooning thousands sans food, water and electricity causing massive destruction and death, breaking a 100 years record. Schools and colleges remain shut, flights and trains cancelled and the airport shut till Sunday leaving thousands stranded.

As Chennai battles hard to pick up the pieces of its life grappling with shortage of boats, shelters, food and medicines, stickers showcasing Chief Minister Amma Jayalalithaa ‘single-handedly’ saving the city from drowning appear on relief materials fueling outrage and her bête noire DMK’s Karunanidhi yelling blue murder.

Notwithstanding, the credit for rescue and reprieve goes to the Army, IAF and people across the country who use Twitter, Face book and various apps to communicate and provide succor and support.

In Delhi, Chief Minister Kejriwal’s remedy to alleviate his janata from living in a gas chamber is to have alternate days of exclusively even/odd numbered cars on roads. Clearly, seems aimed at only earning brownie points. No matter it would create more harm than good. One, he has not espoused how he will implement this as the police is under the Centre, not him.

Two, there is not enough public transport to cater to millions of additional commuters. Three, by adding another 5000 buses, how will it bring pollution levels down? Four, how will he cry a halt to VVIPs traversing across the city in cavalcades of a minimum of 6 cars?

Raising a moot point: Does anyone really care? Why do our netagan prioritise something as crucial as floods only at crises time? Why is so little done to develop a long-term response to what is an annual predictable problem in various States, wherein many die, lakhs are rendered homeless and property worth crores is lost.

Who will be held accountable? And which head will roll? Remember, similar floods struck Mumbai in 2005, Delhi 2013, Uttarakhand 2014 and Srinagar last year. Millions of words have been written and millions more will continue to be written. But it’s like water off a duck’s back.

Shockingly, Chennai’s floods is not a natural disaster but solely man-made! The problem lies with the city’s original terrain consisting of many lakes and marshes being covered with innumerable buildings, illegal construction, industries, and rampant encroachment of river banks due to unplanned and improper development. Thereby, leaving little space for flood-rain water to drain which in turn settles on the road. Worse, over 300 water bodies have disappeared due to this.

Why only Chennai, the story is the same in every large metropolises. Heavy development had destroyed green spaces and mangrove forests, its natural flood protection resulting in inadequate drainage system as no amount of man-made storm water drains can make up for natural drains.

Undeniably, the Government’s approach is one of criminal casualness. It only reacts after people have either lost their lives or stranded. Why can’t the

powers-that-be implement basic suggestions? Why do they not develop long-term responses?

Think. Around 76 per cent of India’s coastline is prone to floods and cyclones, 59 per cent of the country is vulnerable to earthquakes, 10 per cent to floods and river erosion and 68 per cent to droughts.

Moreover, why do politicians feel that mere sanctioning of hundreds of crores will solve the problem? Little do they realize that funds doled out instead of helping the people, are used by most State Governments for purposes other than disaster management. Bluntly, neither the Central Disaster Management Authority nor the State Disaster Boards implemented any project properly.

Primarily because flood policies are based on the assumption that flood disasters result from nature’s actions and are not man-made. Whereas, in actual fact the damage and misery are mostly caused by human error. Mainly, poor land management and myopic flood-control strategies. Said an expert, “The only way to tackle the growing menace of floods is to control deforestation, denudation and soil erosion in the watersheds of rivers.”

Shockingly, the Comptroller and Auditor General’s (CAG) report some years ago had lamented the country’s disaster management preparedness and warned of impending disasters including severe natural ecology hazards. Resulting from de-forestation, construction on river-beds etc.

Sadly, in a nation natured on short-cuts and quick-fix solutions, none is willing to learn the ABC of disaster management or finding lasting solutions. Importantly, words like preparedness, mitigation and rehabilitation do not exist in our netas dictionary. Preparedness entails focusing on the most vulnerable areas, educating the people how to handle a flood, setting up an effective communication network and carrying out a safety drill from time to time.

Mitigation involves construction of safe shelters and houses to reduce the effect of the impending disaster. Also, villagers should be made to undergo training at centres about safe building procedures. Rehabilitation work entails replacing implements and tools to carry on with their life post-disaster.

Experts aver that thanks to global warming more frequent and intense extreme weather events means India must improve their planning and reduce the potential impact of disasters before they occur. Till date urban planning has excluded or remained oblivious to hydrological concerns of coastal cities they need to learn its water management. What next? The Government has grand designs to build 100 futuristic ‘smart’ cities in India, but as this week’s devastating flooding in Chennai shows, fixing today’s accident-prone metropolises appears to be the more pressing task.

There are no short-cuts possible. It is now imperative to re-think our strategies and approaches to safeguard our environment, plan infrastructure keeping in mind local realities, improve service delivery, establish close links between policy, research and service with the aam aadmi at the centre of development. Towards that end, the powers-that-be need to emphasis on national priorities, take into account local realities and involve experts and environmentalists with a genuine track record of research and policy making. Who would evaluate the ecological problems, study its context and be involved in decision and policy-making. --- INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Unfair blame!

Editor,

Through your esteem daily newspaper I want to clarify about the news published in some local dailies about the leakage of class IX ongoing examination question papers. In the report published on the November 25, 2015 the name of Nongtalang has appeared and blamed to be the source of leakage of the question paper on Mathematics and Science & Technology. I was extremely shocked by such news. Actually being a non-Khasi I asked one of my Khasi colleagues to explain to me the contents of the news on the said subject in the front page of a vernacular daily. After hearing the explanation, I wish

to clarify that as the Centre in charge, the source of leakage is not our centre. I have been adhering to the instructions of MBOSE, Shillong cell, right from the date of collection and distribution of question papers to the schools concerned. In addition to the Board’s instructions, as a safety measure, I asked the collector of heads of the schools clubbed to our centre to check the bundles for any sign of distortion and tampering and to append their signature in the paper mentioned for that purpose which they did accordingly.

So I have a clear answer that the leakage of question papers from our collection centre does not arise. Furthermore, I agree

with some social organizations who fight for the welfare of the student community that the matter is very serious. It needs early and thorough investigation to detect the real culprit for necessary punishment. Also I request the media not to publish news by citing from unreliable sources and without adequate proof since it tarnishes the name and fame of the Centre.

Yours etc.,
Centre In charge,
Nongtalang Secondary School,

Where is the prize money?

Editor, ,
Kudos to the NEHU Alumni Association for or-

ganising the Eco Challenge 2015 to Rngain.

However, we would like to know why even after completion of the challenge within the stipulated time, we are in the dark about the distribution of the prize money of Rs 2 lakhs. Please enlighten the public as to whom, when and how was the amount given since we have not even got a token of certificate in spite of completing the challenge.

Yours etc.,
PM Syiem,
Viaemail

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

“Let us make a special effort to stop communicating with each other, so we can have some conversation.”
— Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

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The new Chief Justice

The appointment of T.S. Thakur as Chief Justice of India has raised high hopes. Chief Justice Thakur has emphasized the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. This is in an atmosphere of growing intolerance in the country. Even if one institution fails, other institutions and a system of checks and balances should provide protection of the rights of citizens. The increasing encroachment on the rights of the judiciary is aiding and abetting acts of intolerance. India is a society of diverse religious faiths and only mutual respect can foster unity of the nation. Justice Thakur has guaranteed constitutional rights not merely for citizens but also for non-citizens. Admittedly the statements of the Chief Justice do not ensure the elimination of intolerance. But it goes a long way at a time when rationalists are murdered, a man was lynched at Dadri supposedly for eating beef and people in high position spew communal hatred. Even the top political leaders at the Centre have not removed the sense of insecurity among common people. The debate in Parliament on intolerance petered out into a trading of allegations among different political parties. Justice T.S. Thakur has now created some confidence.

Justice Thakur has also said that all is not well in Delhi and asked for steps to be taken to control air pollution in the city. He has offered to go for car pooling himself with a colleague living near his residence which will cut carbon emission. He has to be congratulated for making this noble gesture.

LOOKING BACK
March 31, 1988

Ghising incognito visits

Sometimes ago it was reported that the Assam Chief Minister had asked the police to inquire as to why the Gorkha National Liberation Front President Mr. Subhas Ghising was visiting that State so frequently and that too under the cover of false names. In February alone he has reportedly visited that State on as many as three occasions. It is a known fact, even if somewhat intriguing, that Mr. Ghising spends more time in place outside Darjeeling even as leading the violent movement let loose in that highly disturbed district. What is more, the movement gets violent the more also is his stay outside rendered mysterious.

A negative aspect of the strategy may be that there he wants to avoid police surveillance on his movements and make the diverse intelligence reports from New Delhi, Patna, Gangtok etc all the more confusing. Assam is a later addition to the list of placed covered in his itinerary and therefore it is natural that suspicion should be raised in Dispur about it.

There is obviously not much to suspect that Assam may be directly helpful to the movement for a separate Gorkhaland, the average citizen not being very much interested in it either for or against.

The large Nepali population that inhabit Assam are not involved seriously in it except possibly at most only psychologically in some cases, which means nothing in terms of any material assistance or use.

The movement in Darjeeling originally initiated for a separate state in that region for the Nepali, however raises occasionally other issues too which are not confined to the Darjeeling hills areas alone. Quite often Mr. Ghising has been known to talk about

the status as citizens of the large Nepali population in the rest of the country, a fair part of whom inhabit Assam and adjoining areas of the north eastern region and huge numbers of them in large concentrations too in some pockets. Whether Mr. Ghising has an plan right now to extend the scope of his movement at a practical level in anybody's guess.

Assam has therefore to be alert. That all the visits of Mr. Ghising are not entirely private can be a fair guess. In one of the latest of these, the GNLF President was accompanied by some of his top aides including two General Secretaries of the organization and this is what makes the authorities in Dispur somewhat anxious to find out the motive behind these visits Mr. Ghising is reportedly to have expressed concern of the identity of India to justify his demand for a Gorkhaland and this is how the current movement may incidentally get expanded in scope and execution. But to do this he would need to settle some of the points on which some others in the expanded in scope and extended areas are not quite in accord with his view.

The Assam Gorkha Sammelan, a fairly representative organization and active too, has its own perception about a cut off year for the genuine Indian Nepalese residing in Assam Mr. Ghising would need to come to terms with this body before he can hope to get needed wider support for the current movement which has been forced to enter a blind alley already. Intelligence people would have their hand full for quite some time to figure out all that is in the offing. Mr. Ghising's incognito visits well call for a probe since his entry in Assam was not banned nor it was likely to be his movement was not restricted even in West Bengal itself. All this makes his frequent Assam visit incognito all the more mysterious.

National Anthem: To Sing or Not to Sing

Not many countries in the world allow their national anthem to become a tool for divisive politics. But in India any and every issue is used for partisan political agenda. Our national anthem is no exception. The latest controversy over the national anthem erupted on 29 November, 2015, when five members of a family were asked to leave a cinema hall in Mumbai because they rudely rebuffed fellow cine viewers who asked them to stand up as the national anthem was being played before the start of the movie.

A video clip of the event went viral on social media and consequently provoked heated debates in mainstream media, including prime time television, because the concerned family happened to be Muslim. Had the same incident involved a Hindu family, it is not likely to have excited such passion on either side of the political divide. Even though the collective upset of the audience over deliberate “disrespect” shown towards the national anthem was a spontaneous reaction and not engineered by any political party, the mainstream media at once attributed it to the “rising wave of intolerance” due to BJP’s Hindutva agenda which in the worldview of Stalinist left liberals is synonymous with “fascism.” This twist was given despite the fact that no one from the Modi government stepped-in to take a position on that incident one way or the other. In the ensuing Hindutva bashing by the self-styled liberals, little attention was paid to the fact that originally the ill advised farmaan to make it mandatory for cinema halls to play the national anthem before every movie show was issued by a Congress government in 1960s after the Indo-China war to restore people’s shaken faith in India’s leadership because of the humiliating defeat at the hands of the Chinese.

Even in the relatively innocent 1960s, most people weren’t impressed with the compulsory dose of patriotism being inflicted on them at such an inappropriate venue. Even those who favoured the singing of the national anthem to mark important national events, found it annoying when they had to compulsorily show respect to it in cinema halls. In those days it was played after each movie show. It was a common sight to see people walking out instead of standing in attention as required by protocol. Seeing signs of mass disobedience, good sense prevailed and the practice was slowly discontinued.

However, for inexplicable reasons the Congress-NCP government in Maharashtra reissued in 2003 the failed farmaan of 1960s. It is doubtful that the audience uniformly showed due respect to the national anthem in Mumbai theatres. But mercifully no major confrontation

By Madhu Kishwar

was reported on its account before the November 29, 2015 incident.

However, it was not in Maharashtra but in the avant-garde state of Kerala where a major controversy erupted around the national anthem. At that time, Rajiv Gandhi was Prime Minister.

In July 1985, a member of Kerala Legislative Assembly discovered that some children belonging to a Christian sect had refused to sing the national anthem in the school assembly. He thought this act of defiance was “unpatriotic” and raised the matter in the Assembly following which a Commission was appointed to inquire and report on the alleged offence. The Commission reported that the children – Bijoe, Binu Mol and Bindu Emmanuel, were otherwise well behaved and had always stood respectfully when others sang the national anthem. But as per the tenets of their religious faith, Jehovah’s Witnesses are forbidden from singing the national anthem because they consider it a form of idolatry and, therefore, an act of unfaithfulness to their God Jehovah.

Given the charged atmosphere in the state then under Congress rule and under instructions of the Deputy Inspector of Schools, directed the Head Mistress to expel the children from the school on July 26, 1985. The children’s father appealed to the school authorities and education department to revoke the decision. When they refused to pay heed to his appeal, the hapless man approached the Kerala High Court seeking an order to restrain the authorities from preventing his kids from attending school. First a single judge bench and then a Division Bench of Kerala High Court rejected the prayer of the children.

Thereafter, the case reached the Supreme Court of India under Article 136 of the Constitution. The judgment in this case was delivered on August 11, 1986 by Justice Chinnappa Reddy J. The Apex court reversed the high court decision and ordered the school to readmit the children taking note of the fact that Jehovah’s Witnesses do not sing national anthem of any country, be it England or Canada, as a matter of conscience and commitment to their faith. The court also observed that “the right of free speech and expression also includes the right to remain silent”, and since the children had only refused to sing the anthem in keeping with the de-

mands of their religion while showing due respect to it by standing up with all other children, the High Court order needed to be reversed. (Bijoe Emmanuel Vs State of Kerala)

Having snubbed the Supreme Court in the Shah Bano case, a few months prior to this judgment, Rajiv Gandhi decided to show the judges of the Apex Court that the will of the Gandhian like that of his mother stood supreme and was above any court of law. On September 12, 1986 he defiantly declared that his “Government would suitably amend the Constitution to make the singing of the national anthem compulsory if the Supreme Court did not correct its decision.” (The Times of India, 13 September, 1986). In this contempt for court orders Rajiv was following in his mother’s footsteps. The context of this jingoistic statement openly challenging the wisdom of the Supreme Court has to be kept in mind. After having become the darling of Muslim Mullahs over the Shah Bano case, Rajiv had tried to also become the Hindu Hriday Samrat by ordering the reopening of the Ram Lalla Mandir in February 1986. It had been kept under lock by Court’s order following the century-old dispute between claimants of the Babri Masjid and Ram Janmabhoomi. The row over the national anthem gave Rajiv Gandhi an opportunity to prove his “secular and nationalist” credentials because the Shah Bano Case and opening of Ram Lalla Mandir made him vulnerable to the charge of placating both Hindu and Muslim religious extremists.

Rajiv Gandhi’s flunkeys joined in chorus to reverse the Supreme Court verdict. Lifelong Gandhi family loyalist Mohammad Yunus arrogantly declared that those who gave the verdict in the national anthem case were “neither Indian nor judges.” This was not only a brazen insult of the Supreme Court but also amounted to smearing legal luminaries like Justice Chinnappa Reddy as anti-national. A contempt of court case was filed against Yunus by some public spirited citizens but they were soon forced to withdraw it.

Mine was among the few voices to challenge this “liberal” audacity by the Rajiv Gandhi government through an article in The Illustrated Weekly of India (March 1987). But none among the current guardians of “tolerance” and “liberalism” protested the open declaration of contempt for Supreme Court despite repeated assertions by Rajiv Gandhi that his Government

would not accept the Apex Court Order.

This cavalier attitude was in line with the trend started by Indira Gandhi of holding the Constitution of India and the Supreme Court judges as virtual hostages and tampering with the basic structure of the Constitution as often as she pleased to camouflage her illegal and unconstitutional actions. Far from being criticized, Rajiv Gandhi was widely applauded for undermining a key pillar of democracy, namely an independent judiciary whose writ ought not to be arbitrarily trampled over by the political establishment or the executive.

The Rajiv Gandhi Government soon got into trouble over the Bofors scam and lost the nerve to enact a new law declaring refusal to sing the national anthem an act of sedition and a cognizable offence. Had he done that, the Muslim family that was made to leave the cinema hall, might well have spent the rest of their life in jail for their anti-national, seditious conduct.

Imagine the left, liberal furore if Narendra Modi had unleashed such jingoistic belligerence towards a Supreme Court order or made the singing of national anthem a key litmus test of a citizen’s patriotism, or, if a BJP minister had made a Mohammad Yunus type declaration against Supreme Court judges saying they deserved to be neither judges nor qualified to be Indians!

Likewise, if a BJP government had issued the diktat making it compulsory to play Jana, Gana, Mana before or after every movie show, the self-styled liberals would have raised hell and declared it as proof of “anti-minority intent of Hindutva.” We would have then witnessed a well orchestrated smear campaign in national and international media against imposing “majoritarian” norms on religious minorities as they did over introduction of yoga in schools. Modi bashers would have invented 1001 reasons to prove why Jana Gana Mana with its Sanskrit vocabulary militates against the religious beliefs of Christians and Muslims as they did for surya namaskar.

By contrast, there was not even a whimper of protest when the Congress government in Maharashtra mandated the singing of the national anthem in cinema halls.

Fortunately, this time around no one in BJP responded to the spontaneous outrage against the family that refused to stand up as a mark of respect for the Rashtra Geet. Or else we would have been subjected to another round of award wapsi along with another wave of hysteria against “growing intolerance” in India.

Pay Panel Report & After Performance criteria vital

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

There is much discussion after the much awaited 7th Pay Commission submitted its report regarding revision of pay for Central government employees. The recommendations are now in government hands and it is expected that a decision may be taken at the time of presentation of the Budget for 2016-17. Though this revision may be necessary after every 10 years, the question that remains in everybody’s mind is the level of efficiency in government departments, organizations and attached offices. It is difficult to believe that the upgradation of pay scales from the time market has simultaneously resulted in more professionalism in government.

As is known by now, the Pay Commission recommended an increase between 23.55 per cent from January 2016 for both serving and pensioners of Central government, thus impacting 47 lakh serving employees and 52 lakh pensioners, including defence personnel. The financial impact of implementing the recommendations will be a whopping Rs 1.02 lakh crore – Rs 73,650 crore to be borne by the Central Budget and Rs 28,450 crore by the Railway Budget – which would be anything around 0.7 to 0.7 per cent of the GDP. Odd as it may sound, the increase may not be to the satisfaction of the employees as it has not been up to expected levels, the last time this being around 35 per cent. It is significant that the biggest gainers from the Pay Commission recommendations would be pensioners, who are expected to get over 24 per cent increase in benefits. A rough calculation shows that a pensioner would get an average Rs 65,000 more a year – an amount the person is likely to spend rather than save, which in turn is expected to fuel demand of a large number of goods.

However, the acceptance of these recommendations would set a chain reaction in public sector companies (PSUs) and specially the various State governments, where employees would also clamour for similar upgradation. As is well known, most State governments are facing debt and it would indeed be very difficult for them to upgrade the pay scales of its employees.

In fact, both the Central and State governments are facing financial crunch and the implementation of up-graded pay scales would obviously be a burden on the exchequer. The implementation of the recommendations may result in the fiscal deficit increasing and obviously this would affect development expenditure. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley’s commitment of reducing the fiscal deficit, from 3.9 per cent of GDP this year to 3.5 per cent next year and 3.0 per cent the year after may not succeed. There is a nagging feeling that the Government may delay the increase in allowances if there is pressure on the fiscal deficit. In such a situation, pensioners would be the biggest gainers from the Pay Commission.

An important point that needs to be mentioned is the introduction of the Performance Related Pay (PRP) for all categories of Central government employees. The Commission has been quite bold in recommending that employees should not be allowed to earn annual increments if they fail to meet performance criterion though it has sought upgradation of performance benchmark to “very good” from “good” level.

Though one cannot deny the fact that there has been some improvement in the efficiency index of most Central government organizations, the professional approach is still missing. Computerization has, no doubt,

helped in gearing up the pace of work in most organizations but still a lot remains to be accomplished. Many would tend to agree that there continues to be a lack of accountability as also transparency in the Government. The most vital point which has not been touched by the Commission – possibly this did not fall under its terms of reference -- is regarding restructuring of the Central Services. One cannot say that it is over-staffed as retirement of the last five years or so, with recruitment being very low, has made it compact. In fact, there are many divisions and/or organizations where there is genuine shortage of staff and work has been suffering on this account.

Thus, restructuring is the need of the hour to ensure that the right man is positioned at the right place. While this would take time to complete the process, it should be started immediately with specialists for some of the specialized jobs. The Government has already made a beginning with the banking sector, where one private sector executive has been hired to run a public sector bank. Moreover, areas where there is genuine shortage should be looked into while the administration should not be made unnecessarily top heavy. Departments such as commerce, environment etc. requires strengthening and need to be seriously considered.

The challenge now before the Government is to ensure that the Central Services, specially at the lower levels – Group B and Group C employees -- become tech-savvy and sincere in their work. Promptness and dedication are called for and to equip the officials the concerned departments and related offices should undertake training, including on-the-job training, at periodic intervals, preferably with experts drawn from academic bodies and private sector.

One may mention here that government officials dealing with RTI and/or grievance redressal are not properly equipped to handle these areas as a result of which people suffer. The grievance redressal mechanism in the government is quite poor and there is no attempt to follow the guidelines of the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievance (DARPG) in this matter. Thus, proper training is required which certain departments prefer to ignore for reasons not quite discernible.

Another problem that has been witnessed is the reluctance of a section of officials to go out to the field for survey/scientific work or undertake transfers. The opposite sex mainly comprises this section. This attitude should not be allowed to continue as with increase in salaries and emoluments a professional approach and better work culture is the need of the day to take the country forward.

In the present scenario, a lot remains to be done to ensure that the Government is professionally geared and capable of giving the best results. Adoption of policies geared to good governance and adherence to citizen centric attitude in implementation of plans and programmes need to be adhered to, specially with reference to various welfare programmes of the government meant for poor and impoverished sections of society. While better emoluments are definitely needed, there is simultaneously a need to gear up the administrative process and make it an agent of change. Both should go hand in hand. ---INFA

TO THE EDITOR

An anguished Class IX student

Editor,
I write this in the wake of the recent reports in your esteemed daily about MBOSE question paper leakage pertaining to class IX (nine) promotion examination. As a student myself, I am anguished by the actions of those people who may be involved in this cheap act, bringing shame to a section of honest, persevering and self-respecting teachers, students and parent community of Meghalaya! The question paper leakages have greatly challenged my hope for a secured future and that believe I had entrusted in the education system which would fulfil my aspirations.

The class IX (nine) promotion examination was the beginning of my preparations for the final SSLC examination. I and some of my peers have put so much of effort into the preparation which at this point seems useless. Coupled with my distress I feel betrayed thanks to certain institutions/teachers who for a few fast cash have sold their reputation, their self-respect and guiding moral values on which their profession stands. Because of these few criminal-minded individuals with vested interests, the student community from all over the state have been affected where some even had to cancel their holiday plans and have to stay back at their boardings to complete

their examinations. If such things continue to persist how am I expected to walk the honourable path that my parents have continuously tried to mould into me? How does anyone then expect militancy and extortion to end when education is not regarded as respectable by those who were supposed to protect the interests of the community and shape the future of our children? What kinds of parents entertain their kids to resort to such unfair means by not reporting such actions?

These few people have not only denied right to security but rather taken away our sense of being by putting themselves at par with extortionists who will do anything for a menial

amount of rupees hundred! It is not only a breakdown of law and order but the degradation of morals and values, principles and ethics in the so-called Abode of Clouds! The biggest question now in my mind is: Who do I trust? My teachers, elders or MBOSE? Who will answer me now? I hope and pray that the powers that be will lead us all to the light at the end of this dark tunnel. May God save us all!

Yours etc.,
Kyllabamut Nongrum
Shillong -14

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

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

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 120 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2015

The US Reaction

THERE was an attack in San Bernadino, California in which two terrorists shot and killed 14 people. It seemed that what was highly improbable had happened. The US Administration thinks that the outrage was inspired by the Islamic state (IS). The terrorist youth legally purchased semi-automatic rifles. How they did it is a mystery. President Barack Obama has advised caution against spewing venom and an outcry for a war between America and Islam. The US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has taken an aggressive stand saying that the US will be tough, mean and nasty and should impose a total ban on Muslims entering the country. His rhetoric should not be lightly dismissed. He has likened the situation to the policy of President Roosevelt during World War II. France has already indicated that the terrorist attack in Paris may trigger a backlash against Muslims. The mounting apprehension about Islam was seen in the US after the 9/11 strategy. The success of the IS has caused its recurrence. American Muslims are in the line of fire because of their religion even if they are harmless US citizens. President Obama has rightly said that the Muslim communities can be the strongest allies in combating IS and Al Qaida terrorism. He had allowed some Syrian refugees to come to the US.

The US people would decide whether to listen to Obama's sane counsel or his republican critic who are indulging in rhetoric and venting hatred. So far the terrorist menace in the US has not assumed Syria's proportion but the US Presidential election is drawing near and the Republicans will no doubt try to cash in on the communal feelings of the average American.

LOOKING BACK
March 31, 1988

New research station for Jorhat

The oil and natural gas commission had decided to establish two research institutes, out of the Seventh Plan provision of Rs 248 crores, for research and development. It is a thoroughly welcome move since it is too long that we have been dependent mostly on imported technology. It is time that India gets up to stand on its own feet, which is only very natural expectation and is inevitable because of India' ranging role as one of the premier petroleum producing countries of the world. The north-eastern region stands out prominently in this context in the Indian map which is why it is eminently befitting that one of these two institutes is proposed to be located at Jorhat, the other to be located being at Goa. The Goa institutes is to deal with problem relating to what it described as Petroleum Safety and Environment Management but Jorhat one's role will be the more vital dealing as it will with petroleum bio-technology and geotectonic. This institute is proposed to be the first of its kind in South Asia and this only underscores its importance as undertaking intensive research in these emerging technologies with special emphasis on and application to petroleum exploration and exploitation in the north eastern region. Jorhat has been an ideal

SME sector to play a big role in jobs creation
Modi government must boost skill development

By K.R. Sudhaman

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced from the ramparts of Red Fort on the Independence Day that the two mantras of his government's economic strategy would be job creation and to tackle farmers' woes. In a country, where 10-12 million enter job market every year, no government can ignore this fact and rightly Modi from the day he assumed office in May 2014, has been laying emphasis on job creation. This is all the more important as 65 per cent of the vast 1.25 billion population in the country are below the age of 35.

If India were to cash-in on this demographic dividend, it needed to give a fillip to labour intensive technology, infrastructure and micro, small and medium enterprises. The make-in-India campaign, the digital India coupled with Skill India launched by Modi is aimed at creating the much needed employment in the country.

The make in India campaign launched last year is aimed at India becoming a global manufacturing hub, particularly that of labour-intensive production like textiles, garments and small and medium enterprises. SME sector accounted for nearly 40 per cent of India's GDP and 45 per cent of exports. Sectors like handlooms, handicrafts too had huge potential for job creation apart from IT and IT enabled services.

But if these sectors were to flourish, the youth should possess necessary skills so as to be absorbed in for production activity. The education provided by Indian schools and colleges do not make them properly employable and hence required to be skilled. It is precisely for this reason Modi had decided to lay emphasis on skill development. The target is to provide skill development to at least 500 million people in 5-10 years, which is nearly half the population.

The government has also made it clear that here on all public and private investments that required its clearance or assistance, will have to make a commitment on the number of jobs that the investment would create. Modi followed it up with a meeting

with Indian businessmen in October last in which he emphasised the need for pushing investment in private sector and job creation would be the thrust of such investments. He nudged the businessmen to invest in labour-intensive areas that included textiles. Government's decision to encourage electronics industry in the country is also expected to boost job creation. Government proposed to encourage \$400 billion in electronics, IT software and hardware, mobile manufacture and so on. His visits to Middle East, US, UK, Japan, Canada, France, South Korea, Germany, China and more recently to South East Asia have set the stage for attracting more foreign investment into India.

At the moment, India is the only attractive investment destination with growth slowing down in many advanced countries. The growth has slowed down in China as well. With no growth potential in advanced nations, the large global companies see opportunity only in India for investment with ever growing middle class and young population. India is the only country that can witness consumer demand pick up in the coming years and decades.

This is also the time when India could step up infrastructure development. India had huge infrastructure deficit and with global commodity prices of crude oil, steel, coal, cement and other materials falling, investment in infrastructure will yield better outcome with costs coming down. This will also push up jobs in construction industry.

The Indian Railways is investing over Rs one lakh crore this financial year and proposed invest Rs 8.5 lakh crore in the next five years in modernisation of railways. This would create substantial jobs besides creating much needed rail infrastructure. Government proposed

to invest \$1 trillion in infrastructure development in the next five years. These investments in ports, airports, highways, rural roads, housing, telecom and power will not only kick-start the sagging economy but also create employment. The proposal to create 100 smart cities in the country, promotions industrial clusters and food parks in the country too would generate additional employment.

The emphasis on renewable energy and raising the target of solar power generation to one lakh Mw and wind power to 60,000 Mw in the next five years entailing investment of \$150 billion. Both solar and wind power generation is labour intensive particularly at the time of installation. Off grid applications are spread all over the country.

If India were to shine and growth has to become inclusive, rural India comprising six lakh villages will have to develop. The fruits of development have to percolate down to village level This will happen only if there are jobs in small towns. In this context government's proposal to encourage industrial clusters will half employment generation.

Urban development initiatives - AMRUT, Smart Cities Mission and Housing for all unveiled by Modi recently are expected to help create additional 34 lakh jobs. The initiative to build 100 smart cities across the country is a "decisive step" and will create a significant multiplier effect for over 250 core and ancillary sectors including infrastructure, logistics and modern retail.

Weak external demand means growth in labour-intensive sectors like textiles and gems and jewellery that are dependent on exports for growth will not see a pick up in the near term. So government would have to focus on newer areas like food processing, urban and rural infrastructure, highway development for job creation. The kick-starting

of stalled projects is another area, which is receiving great attention. At one point of time there were Rs 18 lakh crore worth of stalled projects. The previous UPA government cleared Rs six lakh crore of projects and the NDA government has cleared close to that amount in the last one and half years.

There is opportunity for the economy to reach a new high but this required big push to economic reforms to take advantage of foreign investors queueing up to invest in India. The rollout of Good and Services tax, a game changing indirect tax reform will push India's GDP by 1.5-2 per cent by creating free movement of good and services in the country besides a uniform tax rate. Also ease of doing business, stability in tax laws are some the issues, which are a source of irritation to foreign investors.

Government has already taking steps to improve ease of doing business by simplification rules and states have started competing with each other to promote single window clearance to attract foreign investment. All these augur well for the economy and it has to be constant endeavour to improve the situation on the ground, which government and states have started working on.

The business confidence is returning, the feel good factor among foreign investors is visible but the government needs hasten reforms to fully win back the trust of investors. India is set to achieve economic growth rate between 7.5-8 per cent this year. The improvement in the ease of doing business coupled with rollout of GST will push the growth rate to 9-10 per cent, which will close to India's growth potential. Also with inflation moderating, fiscal deficit and current account deficit under control, surging foreign exchange reserves and falling interest rates, the investment would pick up with consumer demand surging in the country. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Abrupt halt to IGNOU educational programme

Editor,

It is regrettable to state that the educational programmes broadcast by IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University) through the radio FM channel of 103 Megahertz or thereabouts on myriad subjects of educational interests twice a day, prime time being 7AM to 9AM and the next being scheduled from 6PM to 8PM had abruptly stopped forthwith now for more than one year to my utter chagrin. I am at a loss to understand why such value based transmission which immensely aided me a lay person and to which I passionately listened to draw invaluable nuances on themes pertaining to Economics, Political Science, Law, Literature, Correct usage of English language, etc have been discontinued. Listening to discussions, deliberations and instructions imparted by erudite scholars and eminent teachers has made me become more humble to come to terms with how hollow my insights of such assorted subjects on earth, actually is. Palpably, this loss might also have been felt by the mainstream students. And what is less well understood is why the IGNOU authorities had stopped this programme indefinitely without citing any reasons?

In fine, I only hope that IGNOU would resume this knowledge oriented relay sooner rather than later.

Yours etc.,
Jerome Diengdoh
Shillong – 2

Clarification

Editor,

This is a rejoinder in response to the letter by Mr. P.M Syiem with regard to the Eco Challenge published today the 8th of December 2015,in Letters to the Editor, Shillong Times. It may be mentioned that the organisers of the Eco Challenge had categorically announced before the flag off of the race on 21st November, that only the prizes for the Top Finishers (Men & Women) would be distributed at the end of the race. Due to the large number of participants, it was announced that the certificates would be handed to all at the NEHU Old Guest House on 23rd November 2015, 11 AM. Prizes and Certificates to the Winners (Male & Female)were distributed by the Sordar, Nongblai Elaka & Director NSS, NEHU, at the Madan Wahlyngkhat after the Eco Challenge on the same day i.e 21st November 2015. The rest of the participants collected their Certificates from NEHU Old Guest House on 23rd November including participants from

far flung places like Pynter, Pynursla, Jowai, Nongpoh.

The participants from NEIGRIHMS, Lady Keane College, St Anthony's College, St Edmunds College, Umshyrypi College to name a few collected their Certificates from NEHU and their respective colleges.

Further, the Organisers would like to inform the participants that they should collect their certificates from the NEHU Alumni Office in NEHU Mawlai Umshing campus on any working day between 11am and 4pm.

For any information please call the numbers - 9863109538/9436103736

Yours etc.,
I.A.Khongmen
Organising Committee,
Eco Challenge

Domino's outlet minus swipe machine

Editor,

On December 6, 2015 we went to the newly decorated, well furnished Domino's Pizza outlet at Laitumkhrah and ordered pizza. The bill came to Rs 800, so we paid using our debit card. But to our surprise, the manager refused to accept cards and insisted that we pay in cash. As we did not carry cash we forfeited the pleasure of having the pizza and the newly pizza outlet too lost its charm. We wonder how

What reservation does

By Benjamin Lyngdoh

Reservation is a hot potato. Interestingly still, somehow we all want to hold on to it. That way it's a case of getting one's fingers burnt, sometimes to the extent that our knowledge and skills level do not seem to fit any productive field in the market. This discourse is not confined only to the issue of Khasis, Jaintias and Garos or the job reservation policy of Meghalaya. Rather it is general in scope and concerns the cognitive makeup of our communities and students in particular. As such, I place the following pointers -

Firstly, we all like to talk about reservation. In most cases, the talk is discreet. It's like the analogy 'we want to have all the milk, but we don't want to own the container'. As such, we want to reap all the benefits flowing from reservation but normally do not want to be seen as beneficiaries of such. Reservation is seen as a white elephant and a comfort zone. As much as it divides communities, it unites them as well. As a case in point, when it comes to the state government jobs, it divides the three communities and when it comes to central government jobs, it unites these very communities. It is a pretty complex subject-matter and the complexities multiply when people realize that reservation can be counter-productive as well. In general, the output is matched by the quality and make of the input.

Secondly, we are having a skewed view on reservation. Reservation per se is not meant to be confined to the prism of jobs and education. It must not be viewed in perpetuity. Rather it is a broad term that has far reaching consequences for communities as a whole. The inherent nature and objective of reservation is to help communities come 'at par' with all others. It is a means to ensure adequate representation in jobs and education with the ultimate intention of helping that particular section scale up in the economy. That means it has a time frame. However, it has turned into a political vote bank card. In the process, it is now a juggernaut with no indication of a logical end. No political party has the guts and gumption to appropriately structure and redefine its framework. To this end, the most recent census figures and socio-economic census data can be the starting point.

Thirdly, arguably the hammer of reservation falls the hardest on the students. If the students are affected, then it will undoubtedly impact upon the nature and progress of our state for the next 30-35 years. After all, macro-economic development is a matter of moving

from one generation to another. In general, reservation seems to work in an inverted manner as far as our students are concerned. Contemporarily, the cognitive processes of this valuable lot called 'students' are pretty disturbing. In recent times, if we ask our students, 'What do we need to do to find a job?' The most common refrain would be, 'We need money or we need to pay a bribe or we need to know people (earthly gods)'. Well cherished and valued words/thoughts like 'we need to study/work hard/sincerity/dedication/determination' and so forth are somehow lost in the wilderness of crooked governance. Further, this cognition is built on the comfort of reservation. As such, our students seem to be planning and implementing their study and professional approaches by having reservation on the back of their minds. This is dire counter-productiveness. This is because instead of motivating students to reach for the highest levels, sometimes the reservation cut-offs seem to be the stimulus and deciding factor for the degree of effort in studies and work culture. Clearly, if this is what reservation does then governance needs a good hard look and decoding and revisiting this entire framework.

Fourthly and relation to the above, students are the real building blocks of any community. If reservation negatively impacts upon their 'achievement motivation', then it ultimately reflects in the vibrancy and dynamism of our communities. It reflects on our outlook towards competition and progress. It disturbingly impacts upon our work ethics and culture. All of these are contributory factors towards determining the growth and development of our state. 'What do we need to do to move forward as communities?' are the more important issues that require real attention. That way, bickering over reservation must take a back seat.

Lastly, it's not all doom and gloom. As communities we are progressing and refreshingly there is a shift in the thinking on reservation. There is a change on the deliberations concerning its merits and demerits. Gradually, reservation is starting to lose traction (albeit slowly) in the jobs and education milieu. Nonetheless, there is a long way to go as far as it's percolation into something meaningful is concerned. To this end, all educational organizations at all levels have a leading role to play.

(The writer teaches in NEHU)

his protein needs with dal has to take at least 1 kg of dal a day. This is quite impossible.

Meghalaya happens to be the highest beef eating state in the country with 58pc of its people consuming this protein. Still its price is not cheap and hardly anyone can take 300 gms a day to keep fit and healthy. And if we want to produce more sportspersons and footballers then this amount of protein needs to increase not decrease. I am sure Mary Kom, Leander Paes and MS Dhoni (he is a Rajput) are not vegetarians. Even Saina Nehwal who used to be a vegetarian turned into a non-vegetarian in 2005. If I want to build my body, my role model can never be the thin, shriveled Baba Ram Dev the Yoga expert. I'd rather take the Undertaker of WWF fame who has been reigning for last 25years.

In Meghalaya, nutrition is never part of any major Govt Department (not even

health).So my appeal to Dr Mukul Sangma is to seriously take up this issue and if necessary cow meat should be the staple food of the state and not endorse the so-called indigenous food without scientific evidence. And as for our PM, I would suggest he change his diet to bring him at par with Obama or Angela Merkel whom he wants to impress. Instead of the oil pipeline from Iran, we should seriously consider a protein pipeline from Russia or Mongolia. Only then we can start dreaming of being a superpower. Make beef cheap; don't ban it.

Yours etc.,
Rasputin Bismarck
Manners
Kolkata

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

“To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child.”

--- Orator

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 121 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2015

Report on Gender parity

MIZORAM and Meghalaya have been reported to be the top two Indian states with the least gender gap in McKinsey Global Institute's (MGI), "The Power of Parity: Advancing Women Equality in India" report. The gender parity in the two northeastern states along with three states of Kerala, Goa, and Sikkim have been rated to be roughly in line with Argentina, China, or Indonesia. In contrast Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh have been grouped as India's bottom five states on gender parity by MGI, which is similar to the situation in Chad and Yemen.

Ironically the Report also states that the top five states account for just four per cent of India's female working-age population, while the bottom five comprise a much larger 32 per cent. The MGI Report states that Indian women face extremely high inequality on two of three dimensions associated with physical security and autonomy (sex ratio at birth and intimate partner violence) and high inequality on the third which relates to child marriage. Perhaps the Report has glossed over the fact that teenage pregnancies which occur outside of the institution of marriage in Meghalaya and which can be equated to child marriage without the strings attached as in the latter are very high. This is one of the reasons cited for Meghalaya's high fertility rate. And considering that rape cases, including the rape of girl children are reported nearly every day one wonders how the Report did not find this a reason for listing women's physical insecurity as a problematic area in Meghalaya.

The gender gap in politics is still very high in Meghalaya and highest in Mizoram which has only one woman MLA in a House of 40. Out of 60 MLAs in Meghalaya only 5 are women. The gender gap in politics plays out in the kind of interventions which are critical to women's health and nutrition. The McKinsey Report gives a false sense of comfort to the states of Mizoram and Meghalaya and needs to be critiqued by scholars and civil society.

LOOKING BACK

March 31, 1988

Champions trophy tournament still open

The tenth Champion Trophy Hockey Tournament remained wide open after Pakistan defeated West Germany 2-1 and Australia were held to a 1-1 draw by the USSR on the tournament's fifth day here today. Pakistan's chances of regaining the title brightened a bit following their impressive victory over formidable rivals West Germany still the defending champions have two matches, and on present form should beat Spain and England both. That would fetch them eight points which can make their task faster. On the other hand, Pakistan has to beat England in tomorrow's match. And though they occupy top position on the points table, they will have to work hard against Australia on the last day.

Australia with five points in four matches, will have no option but to beat Pakistan by a convincing margin for their goal difference (five for and three against) has dimmed their chances considerably. Today's outstanding victory places the hosts on top of the table with five points in three matches. The Germans, tasting their first defeat on the tournament share the second position with world champions Australia. Both have four points from three matches.

waved yellow cards to skipper Nasir Ali and his right full back Khalid to Bashir for hitting Germany's Stefan Bo'cher in the stomach. Still, the Pakistanis, despite begin reduce to nine, maintained the tempo keeping rivals under pressure.

Soon after the half time, the Germans effected a double chance replacing Carsted Fishcher and Dirk Prinkmann by Stefan Saliger and Hanns Fastricher Later, they withdrew captain Hiener Dopp and sent in Michael Hilger. The Pakistanis changed their off colour centre forward Irfan and brought in reserve Qamar Ibrahim That provided a sharper edge to the attack. Later the Pakistani coach Major Mudassar Asghar criticised Umpier Deo for his judgment.

NEHU workshop on Folkloristic

The NEHU Centre for Literary and Cultural Studies is holding a Workshop on Folkloristic at the Mayurbhanj Seminar Hall from March 30 to April 9 in collaboration with the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore.

There will be a panel discussion on Trends and Techniques of Folkloristic on the inaugural day of the Workshop. Dr. Jawaharlal Handoo, Dr. Birendranath Datta, Dr. A.P. Sinha and Dr. Soumen Sen will take part in the Panel discussion. Prof J.B. Bhattacharjee Dean, NEHU School of Sciences, will preside.

Khasi society: matriliney, matriarchy or what?

There is a tendency by western scholars today to conflate the meaning of matriliney/matrilineality with matriarchy. According to the Oxford English Dictionary matriarchy is a form of social organization in which the mother or oldest female is the head of the family, and descent and relationship are reckoned through the female line. It also means government or rule by a woman or women. The there is the definition by James Peoples and Garrick Bailey which defines matriarchy as female dominance. Within the academic discipline of cultural anthropology matriarchy is a culture or community in which a family, society, organization is dominated by women. According to anthropologist William A Haviland matriarchy is rule by women. In fine a matriarchy is a society in which females, especially mothers, have the central roles of political leadership, moral authority and control of property.

A matrilineal society is defined as one in which descent is traced through the female line. Scholars like Peggy Sanday and Heide Abendroth Goettner have now suggested that matriliney needs to be re-defined and the word matriarchy be used especially for contemporary matrilineal societies such as the Minangkabau of Sumatra islands. By extension the Khasi matrilineal society also appears to be listed amongst those that fa-it this paradigm. Hence the recent discourse during the International Terra Madre conference at NEHU titled, "Matriarchies as Societies of Peace," managed to confuse many of us who have internalized our matrilineality and who enjoy no special powers other than that our children carry the mother's clan name. These scholars also believe that matriarchal societies existed on account of the hereditary nature of economic and social power through kinship lines. They feel therefore that in a matrilineal society all power would be channeled through women and that although women may not have retained all power and authority in such societies they would have been in a position to control and dispense power. Hence matriarchy is the correct nomenclature for such societies. But is that the correct position as far as Khasi society is concerned? And should we be

By Patricia Mukhim

defined by Eurocentric imaginations and conclusions from the societies they have studied? This is not to trivialize the great scholarship that Abendroth-Goettner or Peggy Sanday have invested in, and the kind of opprobrium that the former had to suffer on account of her single-minded pursuit into the study of matriarchies across the world. This is only to caution our own scholars to interrogate whether the Khasi society is a matriliney or a matriarchy or neither.

Going by legends the Khasis seem to place great emphasis on their umbilical tradition of having descended from women such as Ka Li Dohkha (a mermaid) who later married a human and gave birth to the Syiem Sutnga clan and Ka Pahsyntiew the daughter of U Lei Shyllong who emerged from a cave and was later captured by a man who married her. She went on to give birth to very good looking children, then disappeared again. But the tradition of respect for women seems to end just there. Women are seen as progenitors of the race. But the fact that both Ka Li Dohkha and Ka Pahsyntiew disappeared into their original habitats one in water and the other inside the cave after having given birth to children would suggest that they might have been unhappy with their earthly existence or the treatment meted out to them.

Monica N Laloo in her paper, "Political Structure of the Khasis: With special reference to the Nongthymmai Dorbar Pyllun," says the folklorist traditions of Khasi-Jaintia such 'Ka Li Dohkha and Ka Pah Syntiew,' indicates that the origin of some clan and Syiem or chief of the Sutnga and of the Shillong Syiems respectively (Bareh, 1997: 44-68) was traced back in the past and the identity in essence is embodied in a woman. But there is nothing to suggest that women had any kind of control over resources within the family or outside it. Political control right from the early times was with the male.

Hence when people carelessly point to Khasi society as being democratic they seem to conveniently forget that half the population (women) has no voice in that carefully constructed political system which is, till date, a male-centric system. The current controversy over the Village Administration Bill revolves around this issue. Although the Bill in English says every Khasi person who has attained the age of 18 years is a member of the Dorbar, the Khasi word used in the Bill to denote that person is 'Rangbah'. Most of us understand the word 'Rangbah' to mean an adult male. Hence the word Rangbah Shnong for the Headman! There are some who try to defend the VAB by suggesting that Rangbah in the Bill means all adults. This attempt to play with words is misleading.

The irony of the Khasi matrilineal society is that on proper analysis women really have no power to decide things for themselves. They do not even have reproductive rights. My own research has shown that the average rural woman has no control over her body. Even if she is nutritionally deficient she still gets pregnant every year or every alternate year. The average family size in rural Meghalaya is between 7-8. Maternal Mortality Rate in here is 291 per one lakh live births. This is a very high figure second only to Assam at 398/100,000. And these figures may not even be correct since only those women figure who give birth in hospitals (institutional births) are tracked. MMR is calculated by tracking women who die during childbirth or in the first 42 days after they have given birth. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is higher than in most other states at 49 per 1000 live births. All these suggest that women are at the fringes of the economic ladder and have poor access to health. They suffer anemia and malnutrition. The children suffer Vitamin A and D deficiencies.

There is therefore a huge disconnect between matriliney as it is perceived and romanticized by western scholars and how it actually pans out in Meghalaya. The

female workforce participation is only 4% of the population, which is very low. This was the finding of the McKinsey Global Institute's study, "The Power of Parity: Advancing Women Equality in India, which was quoted by Maneka Gandhi in the Rajya Sabha when a question was raised by MP Wansuk Syiem about the status of women in Meghalaya. Yet the Report ironically states that Mizoram and Meghalaya score high points on gender equality at the workplace. MGI further states that gender inequality in India is high or extremely high on three dimensions - gender equality in work, legal protection and political voice, and physical security and autonomy - and medium to high on the fourth dimension of essential services and enablers of economic opportunity. On the basis of the above indicators one wonders how Meghalaya and a very patriarchal Mizoram have been touted as the states which score points on any of the indicators.

Statistics mined by such international consultants can often be very troubling because their questionnaires are not nuanced. You cannot get the same answers when questioning women in Uttar Pradesh as you would when interviewing a woman here. There is the question of 'voice' which is often muted and the manner in which the questionnaires are administered which is problematic.

On the whole it is very disconcerting for a matrilineal society when its women are quickly losing voice and hold over land. When the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) says that 76 % of rural Meghalaya is landless it means that women are landless since it is assumed that women own the land. I find it ironic that no one speaks about this rapid descent in women's status and that the state does not have any specific intervention strategies to address this serious gap. Alas! All these troubling statistics did not find voice in the ITM discussions on matriliney/matriarchy since there was no woman on the dais to speak for herself.

That is the reality of matriliney in Meghalaya! Does it make any difference if you call this social system a matriliney or matriarchy?

TO THE EDITOR

KHADC opposes development

Editor,

When we travel through the length & breadth of Khasi Hills, we are filled with awe & wonder at its natural beauty which is simply breathtaking. But sad to say, the journey through these places is back breaking due to the pathetic road conditions. On getting back home we tend to think of the people who have to use these roads daily for all purposes. How do they travel to their work places, to the market, to the Health Center, to the capital town of Shillong or for that matter to their respective Headquarters for work which need to be done there? Have we or more so, the KHADC members ever given a thought to their problems? I doubt since I very well know that the KHADC which claims to be the saviour of the Khasi Community are in fact a stumbling block to the development of their own people. This can be proven by their dilly dallying tactics when it comes to land acquisition for construction & improvement of roads.

It is a fact that the Govt. of India through the Ministry of Surface Transport has released an amount of Rs 3000 Crore for various Projects related to construction & improvement of roads to the NHIDCL. The roads included in the projects are:-

- 1) Western By-Pass 2 laning.
- 2) Nongstoin - Rambrai - Kyrshai 2 laning.
- 3) Shillong & Dawki (including Bridge & improvement)
- 4) Dalu to Bagmara
- 5) Tura to Dalu.
- 6) Mawshynrit - Hahim interstate road.
- 7) Wakhaji - Phlangdiloin - Ranikor.
- 8) Nongstoin Domiasiat via Wakhaji
- 9) Ranikor - Nonghyllam - Maheshkhola- Bagmara Road.

But the fact remains that the KHADC prefers to leave the far flung areas as they are, for reasons best known to them. It is only during elections that promises are made. However when development is offered to their constituencies in a golden platter they place obstacles which to us common people seem dubious. Is it because they are afraid that the roads built by the companies will last for too long a time compared to the roads built by our state government through their appointed contractors and that money will stop flowing to their pockets? It is up to them to answer these questions as leaders and defenders of the jaibynriew. Let us hope that they still have their conscience intact & that they will not deprive the villagers of their

rights to development as roads are the top most priorities in the development of a place or a region.

Yours etc.,
Vernon Kharhujon

Hearty charity of Facebook's Zuckerberg

Editor,

Some people are immensely rich but filthy poor in generosity while very few are truly rich and large-hearted. They can liberally loosen their purse string to exercise their benevolence. They can prove what they are --- true human beings who feel for humanity. Others chase after the riches but miss the basic rhythms of life --- too tempted to be deviated from the righteous path. Yes, the inner peace and harmony merrily elude them. They are utterly poor souls!

Well, two exciting news has just broken. It must have lifted the heart and soul of countless people. It's an announcement of an act of philanthropy by none other than Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook. Being sensible he chose the most joyful occasion - the birth of his beloved daughter Max, to make public a ground-breaking announcement of donating 99% of his total share of wealth towards charity. Of course, it needs tremendous

courage and inner awakening to take such a decision. Mark wants that the next generation should not face the menace of poverty and the worry of ill-health as we have now. He believes that man's inner potentialities must not be shrunken by other external shortcomings and the lack of education. He wishes that all be equally empowered to express themselves in every possible manner.

Very understandably, Mark knows how to control the money and how best to use it instead of being controlled, or even consumed by it. He perhaps does not want to cling to that which will never make him a good human being.

Yes, what is quite clear is that Zuckerberg owns the wealth but it did not own him. That is truly admirable and inspiring for the world to know. It's an example worth emulating by other tycoons as well. So that they can at least stop losing their sleep guarding their stacks of dollars. Some philosopher has rightly said that tonnes of money of a tycoon is far less meaningful than the golden mountain or the beauty of streams in a green landscape that never fails to make every one joyful and merry. The open scenery, a pleasant feast for the eyes, soothes the pangs of everyone's heart while the huge piles of dollars make

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

PRIYANKA MAY BE PROJECTED AS FUTURE CM CANDIDATE IN UTTAR PRADESH

Priyanka Gandhi is likely to be the chief ministerial candidate of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh in 2017. The thinking in the Congress that unless the Congress returns to power in UP, it cannot revive nationally. Again there is consensus within the party that if the party goes without a face in the election, then it would be difficult to revive itself in the party particularly when you have a young sitting chief minister like Akhilesh Yadav and a former dalit CM like Mayawati. After losing the Bihar elections, the BJP too has started the exercise of shortlisting the candidates. But the Congress I party is once again at a loss. They don't have a leader in Uttar Pradesh who can match up the stature of both these UP leaders nor does Rahul have the stature of Narendra Modi or Rajnath Singh who can canvass in any state. The Congress leaders feel that by projecting Priyanka Gandhi as the CM before assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, the Congress Party can be revived leading to a big contest.

SONIA OPTING FOR INDIRA STRATEGY TO REJUVENATE CONGRESS PARTY

When the Congress president Sonia Gandhi said on Tuesday "I am the daughter in law of Indira Gandhi. I am not scared of anything or anyone," it was not the off the cuff statement. It was a well thought out remark with a message to the BJP leadership that she would be following in the footsteps of her mother in law and was willing to go to jail. If the bBJP leadership that was in power at that time can recollect that her mother in law when out of power after losing the Lok ASabha elections in 1977, was sent to jail. She succeeded in converting her jail yatra into a sympathy wave in her favour. From then on she could build a mass movement and led the Congress back to power. Taking cue from Indira Gandhi, Sonia is under tremendous pressure to do a Indira Gandhi or else the party does not see much hope in Rahul to bring the party to power.. The leaders in the BJP have been heard saying that Sonia is no match to Indira Gandhi who was a mass leader. Besides there were no corruption charges against her whereas the present Gandhi family is reeling under corruption charges. However, reports are that the Congress is bargaining with the BJP over the GST and the National Herald case and the case against Robert Vadra. This week a meeting was held at 10 Janpath on the issue of GST. While Kamal Nath and Jyotiraditya Scindhia opposed supporting the GST bill, it was Sonia Gandhi who shocked everyone by saying we should not stop the GST. It is believed that Priyanka is hell bent on allowing the passage of the GST bill.

MAMATA BENT ON WINNING 2016 ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

The West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee is working overtime to ensure her victory in 2016 Assembly elections. She is not leaving any stone unturned and has suddenly turned very congenial and is willing to shake hands with everyone.. left, right and centre. Last week Mamata joined a rally of the radical Muslims outfit Jamaite Hind of one Siddiquallah. It was basically to counter the rise of the BJP and to assuage the feelings of the Muslims. Soon after that, her party extended sup-

port to the GST bill of the bBJP And very recently her MPs Derek o Brien and Sudip Bandopadhyaya were spotted in central hall of Parliament having soup pe charcha with the tainted Mukul Roy who was banished from the party by Mamata. Roy is trying to come back and he met Mamata over dinner on Wednesday. He had managed the 2011 assembly election for Mamata. And the speculation in the party is that with the rise of the BJP and the opposition splintered two ways between Congress and the Left, Mamata is trying hard to secure her position. Besides she is even working on an economic agenda. Mamata is very keen to organize a high profile Biswa Banga Sammelan in Kolkata in January Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and industrialist Mukesh Ambani will participate in it. The chief minister is trying her best to rope in Tata group chief Mistry or Ratan Tats to come to Kolkata on this occasion. But her Singur past is acting as the road block. She has even approached a Bengali ex diplomat who is a Tata Sons Board member to put in a word to Mistry. The talk in the Bengali political circle is Mamata needs Tata group for image makeover before the assembly elections.

SANJAY JOSHI MAY BE BJP'S UTTAR PRADESH IN CHARGE FOR ELECTIONS

Sanjay Joshi, more famous as bete-noire of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is likely to bounce back to power after the Bihar defeat. The thinking in the RSS and the BJP is that this is the time that Joshi known for his organizational skills should make a comeback before the next round of elections. The RSS has started a reconciliatory move between Modi and Joshi. Efforts are on to bring them closer. Already two meetings between Joshi and Modi's man Friday Amit Shah have taken place. A reluctant Shah had no option but to shake hands with Joshi particularly in view of the Bihar verdict. Though there is pressure from within the BJP -- and the RSS that Joshi should be made the BJP president in place of Shah in December but for the time being the RSS wants him to take charge of Uttar Pradesh. When Modi had ensured his exit from the BJP, he was in charge of UP. Shah finally agreed to talk to Joshi in view of the growing popularity of Joshi. His friends have formed Joshi Mitra parivar that works for his promotion and welfare. These friends have now put him on twitter..Soon after he joined the twitter, he got a following of 1500 people.

SCINDIA IS TOP CONTENDER FOR DEPUTY LENDER'S POST IN LOK SABHA

Since Captain Amarinder Singh who had been boycotting the Parliament despite being the deputy leader in Lok Sabha, has been packed off to Punjab as PCC chief. The race for his successor has begun. Hectic lobbying is on but the race has narrowed down to Kamalnath and Jyotirditya Scindia. Kamalnath is the senior most member of the Congress in Lok Sabha and was a serious contender for the post of leader of the Congress Party. but after he lost the job to a dalit Mallikarjun Kharge, he has been upset. Kamalnath is one of the few Congress leaders who has been winning elections for the last several decades and that too from Chhindwara parliamentary constituency of Madhya Pradesh where the Congress does not exist for the last 30 plus years. The other name making round is of Jyotiraditya Scindia. (IPA)

the owner's greed more concrete and the mind more confused and heart less cheerful. Not even .001% of the total wealth has any lucky magnate ever used personally in his life time. Is it not a huge paradox?

What an inevitable truth

Yours etc.,
Safil Gewali
Vie email

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

--- Harold Wilson

The Shillong Times

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WTO Prospects

THE World Trade Organization (WTO) which was formed 20 years ago will have its 10th ministerial conference in Nairobi next week. Director General Roberto Azevedo does not hold out high hopes about the outcome of the deliberations. But as an orderly multilateral trading system, the WTO has considerable importance and a successful summit will be very much in India’s interest. The last summit held at Bali led to the Trade Facilitation Agreement. It was the first multilateral trade agreement signed under its aegis. The importance of the agreement is evident from the fact that WTO claims it may result in a cut in trade costs by about 14%. It has a greater potential than even the removal of all global tariffs. At Bali, India also secured indefinite protection for its existing PDS programme. But India has reason to be unhappy about the lukewarm interest of the major players at the WTO in agenda items beyond the Trade Facilitation Agreement. The US plays a major role in being proactive about cobbling together regional trade agreements. This shows that interest in a multilateral trade agreement is not all that much at the WTO.

This attitude augurs ill for India. India is majorly interested in the WTO’s multilateral agenda. Recent regional trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership are not very much in India’s interest. At the Nairobi summit, India has to ensure that a balance is achieved between protecting the country’s interest and the feasibility of a durable agreement. Union commerce minister Nirmala Sitharaman has made her stand clear. India will fight for multilateral trade agreements at the Nairobi summit as best it can.

LOOKING BACK

March 31, 1988

NEC’s help to Meghalaya for power development

The North Eastern Council has agreed to take up the preliminary investigation of Kynshi Hydel Project in the South Western Meghalaya at a cost of Rs. 98.8 lakhs. The scheme which will be implemented by the Meghalaya State Electricity Board has already been cleared by Electricity Authority, Central Water Commission, Planning Commission and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The first phase of investigation is likely to be completed within 2 ½ years while the complete investigation will take about 6 years. The project report will be prepared after the detailed investigation is completed. An amount of Rs. 10 lakhs has been provided by North Eastern Council for the current year.

The Report on Preliminary Investigation for Kynshi Basin as prepared by the Meghalaya State Electricity Board reveals that the project will generate 500 MW of power in different stages. The projected production in the first stage will be 170 MW while construction cost for Stage-I will be Rs. 113 crores. The cost of generation of per unit of power will be 20 paise which is described MSEB as quite cheap. It may be mentioned here that Meghalaya which is endowed with an estimated power potential of about 1800 MW at 60% load factor concentrated mainly in the river Basin of Khasi and Jaintia Hills has been able to harness so far only 10% of the total potential. The estimate of the potential as worked out by

the Central water and power Commission during the early part of 50s shows about 750 MW hydel power at 60% load factor from the basins of the North Umtu Khreih, Umkhen and Kopili while another 1050 MW of power at 60% load factor from the basins would be available from the South flowing rivers of Kynshi Umiew and Umlrelong.

Because of the available facilities of communication in the basins of the North flowing rivers investigation works for Umiām-Umtu basin was taken at the beginning of 1950 and till now development of 4 stage in this basin has been completed and another stage in now under execution by the Meghalaya State Electricity Board. The development of the Kopili basin is under execution by NEEPCO.

Although the South flowing rivers of Khasi and Jaintia Hills have tremendous power potential, barring the river Myntdu no other river has been gauged resulting in absence of hydro metrological date. The present investigation as agreed by North Eastern Council would, therefore, go a long way in providing important information about the prospects of further power development in Meghalaya.

The Meghalaya State Electricity Board is of the view that with the taking up of investigation work of some of the south flowing rivers of Meghalaya in a phased manner the power position in the North-Eastern Region as well as in the adjoining eastern region could be improved considerably.

The nexus is complete

By Albert Thyrniang

"Lifting the veil off Garo Hills conundrum" that appeared in "The Shillong Times" on November 12, 2015 tells us that militants in Garo Hills have links with persons that matter - politicians, bureaucrats and even with the police. This is the crux of the insurgency menace in Garo Hills. This is 'the' reason why militants are not only surviving but thriving. This is the main reason why outlaw gunmen have not been defeated. The finding is scary but true. Even the affected Chokpot BDO, Jude Sangma did not issue any denial.

The story says that truth behind the BDO kidnap was that the MCS officer had a clandestine deal with Sacheng, a GNLA commander in the Chokpot area. The BDO would allot developmental contracts to Sacheng R Marak's men. In turn Sacheng promised safety for the BDO in the territory. So the perceived brave BDO refused police security even in militant infested areas. However, the secret pact went horribly wrong. The BDO could not please another GNLA area commander, Hedeo Ch Momin. He denied contract works to contractors close to Hadeo thus inviting the wrath of the latter.

The general public believes to be a fact the nexus between politicians and militants. Clinging instances can be cited. Last year in January the then ANVC-B Political Secretary, Ajaju R Marak sensationally divulged the link the Chief Minister, Dr. Mukul Sangma had with the outfit. The group's officer disclosed that cadres had ensured victory of the Congress in the 2013 election and post-election garnered support of all Garo MLAs for the Chief Minister paving the way for his return to power. Mysteriously Ajaju was gunned down by the police in an encounter, purportedly by orders from the higher ups to prevent further spilling of beans. An enquiry was instituted but the case is conveniently forgotten. In August the General Secretary underground organization, Rangra Jaging S Marak reiterated the outfit's unholy nexus with the Chief Minister claiming his organization was responsible for installation of the Chief Minister for a record second time. The 'Commander-in-Chief' of the Rimpu N Marak led splinter group, Mukost Marak further embarrassed the CM declaring that the nexus was between the CM and the parent organization, ANVC.

The next high profile politician to face allegations of

link with militants is the Social Welfare Minister Deborah Marak. An FIR was filed against her following a complaint by Jonathon N Sangma, that Marak took support from militants to triumph in the 2013 election. The police charge-sheeted her and subsequently the Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) Court in East Garo Hills summoned the minister in August last. The Social Welfare Minister had to appear in court in Williamnagar over her alleged connection with the GNLA.

Opposition parties protested and demanded for a CBI inquiry and half-heartedly reached the national capital but had to back track as politico-militant cosiness cuts across political parties. Politicians have fought elections banking on militants' blessings. At least this is the overwhelming public perception in Garo Hills. To clear the air a credible investigation is a must but for obvious reasons no CBI/NIA probe will ever take place.

There are no allegations against PA Sangma, but the veteran used the law and order issue to his advantage in last year's parliamentary election. The former Lok Sabha Speaker blamed the state government for militancy in Garo Hills. Though knowing fully well that law and order is a state subject, yet the MP promised to bring normalcy in his constituency if people voted for him. He even made assurance that he would take up the demand for Garo Hills statehood to presumably strike a chord with militants who outwardly fight for the same cause. He also knows that militancy will not necessarily end with statehood.

Militancy has survived in this tiny terrain with support of the political class. So the politico-militant nexus is not new. However, the Chokpot BDO's abduction episode has revealed that bureaucrats too are hands in glove with the outlawed. This has serious implications. It means rebels end up being beneficiaries of government developmental projects. Public money ends up in wrong hands. Government's money is used for anti-government and anti-state activities. Government's money is

used to purchase guns and ammunitions to fight against the government itself. Militants amass wealth from the tax payers' money.

The nexus does not end here. Some police and security personnel certainly have understanding with proscribed gun toting men. The abduction of the young officer of the Intelligence Bureau, Vikash Kumar Singh, in September raised doubts. A Shillong based NGO even suspected that it was an inside job. The intelligence official knew a thing or two about inter-border illegal trade. Before the officer could reach the higher authorities the kidnap and the subsequent murders were arranged. It is also alleged that insiders provided information to the kidnappers about the movement of constable Khomraj Bhattarai, who remains untraced till date. It is well known that police personnel have relatives in the different militant groups. It is against human feeling to see one's kith and kin dead. So information is passed on to friends and relatives before operation. High ranking officers readily confess that all cannot be trusted in the force.

THE ARMED FORCES (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) deserves a mention. The 1972 amended law was recommended to be imposed in the Garo Hills by the Meghalaya High Court while hearing a case related to bandh calls in Garo Hills. It sounds strange that the judiciary should recommend the imposition of the so-called draconian law. However, one can sense the anguish of the Court. The Court might have felt that short of bringing in AFSPA the situation in Garo Hills will not improve. It is a slap on the face of the Government and Police.

No sooner had the court's recommendation disseminated when protests against its imposition broke out. Rally after rally was organized throughout Garo Hills by NGOs. They point to the fact that the army has not ended rebellion in places where it operates under AFSPA. This might be true but the irony is that if the army pulls out of those places the situation will be worse. NGOs argue that the law gives sweeping powers to the armed forces without ac-

countability. This would lead to undue harassment of the innocent public. Their point is valid. But innocent poor people, especially in villages, have been facing untold harassment, threats and extortion from militants for a very long time. Very few NGOs have vehemently spoken up for them. Even brutal and cold blooded murders of civilians and security men have met with negligible condemnation leave alone rallies and protests. Not even the chilling, barbaric, gruesome, ghastly, cowardly, inhuman murder of Josbina Sangma in Chokpot evoked hard hitting condemnation and widespread protests. The peace rallies are mainly to urge militants to rejoin the 'mainstream' and government to receive back the prodigal children with open arms.

Both the Central and State Government gave in to the pressure of the NGOs. Military action can't bring a solution to insurgency is the convergent view. Even the Union Minister for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijiju, who earlier had viewed the situation in Garo Hills as disturbing had to take back his words.

Shaken by the High Court's observation, the police made added efforts against militants resulting in a spurt of surrenders including the top leader of AMEF. A couple of hard core cadres were killed. Arrests were made. One of the arrested was the close aide of the feared GNLA boss, Sohan D Shira who revealed to the police that Sohan has amassed huge wealth and invested his ill-gotten cash in rubber plantation and fisheries. Cash is with his relatives. This is no new revelation. Everyone knows that militant leaders, both active and surrendered have amassed wealth and assets. However, they are not alone in this business. Politicians, bureaucrats and police officers have done it before militants. The genesis of militancy may well be corruption in the system. Do not palatial buildings, properties and assets of the aforementioned, inside and outside the state show disproportionate earning through corrupt means? Banks accounts are in the name of spouses and children. There is a lot in common among militants, politicians, bureaucrats and some in the police. This is bad news for Garo Hills. The whole system is criminalized.

TO THE EDITOR

Kudos PWD

Editor,

I wish to thank and compliment the entire NH-44 Footpath Tiling works team with a special mention of the PWD Executive Engineer, Junior Engineer and the Contractor for not only taking cognizance of the suggestions made in my letter to your esteemed daily (ST Sep 26, 2015) but for also doing a very neat job. As we are aware, this tiling work could well be once in our lifetime, so it was imperative that a near perfect job was done out of the taxpayer's money. All commercial encroachments have been meticulously removed, dangerous guard railing projections chopped off or straightened out. Even a new little footpath has been carved out along Fish Dale and some extra space has also been taken into the footpath area by earth filling & tiling near Dhankheti. All this in stark contrast to the shoddy work being done by the NH-40 PWD team along Kacheri Point & Police Bazar areas.

Yours etc,
Gagan Jain,
Via email

Blue Waters of the Myntdu and Lukha Rivers

Editor,

Coal mining in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills was started when the British were the rulers. From then till 2007, nothing happened to the rivers. Enter the Cement Plants and the river waters turn blue every winter. (Coal however is also responsible). The various Agencies, Pollution Control Boards, NGT, etc, squarely blame coal and limestone seepage. None of these have given the reason for the change in colour of the rivers. Are they hiding something? Obviously. Its obvious that the blue colour of the river water is due to copper sulphate (CuSO4) (Tutia in local language), which is lethal to aquatic life even in small amounts. In years gone by, unscrupulous fishermen poison the rivers with Copper Sulphate to make a quick catch. From where does Copper come in? The process of cement manufacture in-

volves the use of Copper Slag as catalyst. Once a year the slag is cleaned out, dumped outside and into the river tributaries. This mixes with coal seepage which is the source of Sulphate (Sulphur) and forms Copper Sulphate, which dissolves in water and turns it blue. This is all theory. However, if the various agencies or individuals have some other explanation then let everybody know. If this theory is correct, will the NGT take action and close down the cement plants? The cement factories should find ways to dispose off the copper slag safely. Until then, close them down. The dumped coal and especially coal dust should be removed far away from water bodies, stream and rivers.

Yours etc.,
D. Rangad,
Viaemail

Silent MLAs

Editor,

Whenever the Assembly is in session much of the discourse, debate and verbal duels come from MLAs'

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

Rural India not happy with Modi rule

Gujarat result a rude jolt to BJP

By Arun Srivastava

There is one common element in the peoples’ mandates of Bihar and Gujarat. In Bihar elections were for the assembly while in Gujarat it was electing the peoples’ representatives for the local bodies and municipalities. The common element in both the elections was the rural people decisively rejected Narendra Modi and his government. After its battering in Bihar, BJP's loss in rural local bodies in Gujarat comes a year after Narendra Modi, who ruled the state for 12 years, shifted to Delhi.

The rural Gujarat rejecting Modi is most glaring as he had been systematically boasting for launching the Gujarat model of growth. In Bihar elections Modi initially had juxtaposed his model to Nitish's Bihar model and claimed that it was inclusive and superior. Intriguingly the rural poor of Gujarat outright rejected his model. The verdict made it explicit that the model simply helped the junkers and kulaks of the state. The backwards and dalits of the state were not willing to accept the model which was more based on the principles of reforms and neo liberal policies. The Gujarat model miserably failed to entice the rural poor people.

Just 18 months after the BJP swept all 26 Lok Sabha seats in Gujarat, the party has now been able to just manage to retain its urban sway, losing the rural Gujarat to the Congress, according to the final results to 323 local government bodies. In fact leaving aside the rich, elite and middle class dominated areas in the cities and towns the poor people residing on the peripheries and quasi urban areas voted against him.

The BJP bagged the 72-member Rajkot Corporation but managed only 38 seats as against 34 of the Congress. In 2010, the BJP won 49 and the Congress got 10 in the then house of 59. In all, out of the total 572 corporation seats, the Congress won 175 seats in 2015, up from 103 in 2010. Within cities, the BJP bagged 42 municipalities and the Congress 10, out of a total of 56 municipalities, leaving four for others. This is also five less than the earlier figure of 47. The BJP lost its grip in the rural and semi-urban areas.

Gujarat’s social indicators contrast starkly with its growth rate. Gujarat has slipped in the human development index from 10th in 1999-2000 to 11th in 2011. The primary reason for this has been the failure of the Gujarat government to boost the agriculture production. The rural people nurse the impression that the government was uncaring. Gujarat’s farmers are selling their cotton for Rs 820 per 20 kg, much lower than the Rs 900 MSP that the Gujarat government has asked the central government for.

The fact is the Gujarat model never appealed to the common people who have been its casualties for years. The government has failed to ameliorate the condition of three groups: Adivasis (15 per cent), Dalits (7 per cent) and Muslims (9 per cent). Earlier the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has reproached the state government for failing to ensure that the development funds allocated to Adivasis and Dalits were in proportion to their population. An indication of the socio-economic backwardness of Adivasis and Dalits in Gujarat is their indebtedness. While the proportion of indebted rural households has increased from 35.7 per cent in 1999-2000 to 56 per

cent in 2004-05, it has risen from 44.80 per cent to 62.95 per cent among Dalits, and 32.9 per cent to 60.1 per cent among Adivasis.

Though the BJP nominated a significant number of Muslims as its candidates in the elections, it failed to move the community. Muslims in Gujarat face specific problems. According to the Sachar Committee report, they are under-represented in most state government departments. Twenty-four per cent of urban Muslims in the state lived below the poverty line, against 17 per cent of SCs/ STs, 18 per cent of OBCs and 3 per cent of other urban-dwellers.

The process of creation of neo middle class is comparatively not well defined. The government has failed to create enough jobs. If the social indicators are any pointer the state may soon witness a Raj Thackeray type movement. Already a feeling is creeping in amongst the youths that they are being deprived of proper job avenues and scope.

Farmers have been aggrieved and highly critical of the government approach to the agriculture. More than the Patidar effect it is the fall in the prices of cotton and non availability of irrigation water that has hit most the BJP. Gujarat’s farmers are selling their cotton for Rs 820 per 20 kg, much lower than the Rs 900 MSP that the Gujarat government has asked the central government for. The state government’s passive attitude towards the need of irrigation water has angered the farmers.

The farmers are hard hit by erratic weather and sliding prices for the cotton, soybean and rubber they produce. But it is irony that the government did not try to mitigate their sufferings notwithstanding the fact that Modi has been projecting his Gujarat model as the ultimate solution to the agrarian crisis. It's not just the weather gods and capricious markets that are to be blamed a shift in government spending ordered by Modi has also hit rural economy.

The Gujarat farmers are also conscious of the fact that the policies pursued by Modi have simply helped the urban middle class and corporate sector. Since they have been getting a poor return on their returns their spending abilities have also declined. As a result of this the rural Gujarat has been witnessing a comparative slowdown. Trends show a striking divergence between town and country sales of two-wheelers: motorcycles - more popular in the countryside - fell 3.5 per cent in December while scooters, ridden mainly by city dwellers, leapt 24 per cent from a year earlier, industry figures show. The government's ability to ramp up spending on roads, railways and irrigation projects that would benefit rural India is, meanwhile, hobbled by budget constraints.

One thing is absolutely clear that with more 80 per cent of India's 1.26 billion people living in villages the Modi government would have to redraw its priorities. Instead of listening to the dictates of Sangh and its leaders he has to evolve a new mechanism to fulfill the aspirations and needs of the rural poor. Simply showcasing the strong stance at World Trade Organization in Geneva is not sufficient. The government has to strive to safeguard the interest of the rural India. (IPA Service)

By Nirendra Dev

Good Samaritan initiatives from the governments especially in the context of North East India are often not publicized well in the national media. Generally, the debate ends up either about violence in the north east or about certain ‘Developmental and Peace’ initiatives undertaken by the government departments and official agencies from time to time. But many good things keep happening. Mizoram has left behind the troubled days of insurgency way back in 1986. Mizos are known for their hard working qualities and pragmatism in undertaking developmental works and education.

In fact, it would not be erroneous to say that to the natives of Mizoram, ‘development and peace’ are not mere philosophical or ideological concepts. These are no mere wishful thinking too. Leaving bad old days of insurgency behind, the Mizos believe these two traits suit their society today and are key stepping stones to a good life.

On 25th October 2015 ‘Mann-ki-Baat’ radio programme through All India Radio, when the Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the name of the hitherto little known Mizoram’s Khawalailung village from the remote Champai district, most Mizos were impressed. Almost the entire state echoed in one tone ‘kalaw mein’ (Thank You in Mizo language) to the Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi for his radio talk.

Most Mizo villages are



Khawalailung village: A role model of peace and development

village frequently, butchering of animals and selling meat on roadsides are banned and animals are

undertaken under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. It’s a national campaign launched by the Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi on October 2, 2014. Speaking on the solemn occasion, it is worthwhile to recall that the Prime Minister had said the best memorial to Mahatma Gandhi would be to achieve a ‘Clean India’ by 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation. Certainly it is India’s biggest ever cleanliness drive and 3 million government employees and school and college students of India participated in the event.

The ambitious Swachh Bharat Abhiyan also called Clean India Mission incorporates a few structured objectives like – Elimination of open defecation by constructing toilets for households and communities, Eradicating manual scavenging, Introducing modern and scientific municipal solid waste management practices, and importantly enabling private sector participation in the sanitation sector and also changing people’s attitudes to sanitation and create awareness. The program was envisaged with plans to

construct at least 12 crore toilets in rural India including for girl students in schools by October 2019 at a projected cost of Rs 1.96 lakh crore or US\$ 30 billion.

Now the village Khawalailung will be perhaps in a position to be showcased as a model

Ruala under Adarsh Gram Yojana. The new Adarsh Gram Yojana is a Rural Development programme, broadly focusing upon the development in the villages which includes social development, cultural development and spread motivation among the people on social

To start with, one vital statistics about the village Khawalailung is that the hamlet has higher literacy rate compared to the state’s (Mizoram) own records. In 2011, literacy rate of Khawalailung village was 95.05 per cent compared to



community maintained, disciplined and clean. Visitors are often stunned to witness the kind of self-governing mechanism, even symbolism and perfectionist methods are maintained on the movement of dogs, cattle and chickens in these villages. Community and voluntary works are held to clean the

slaughtered only in an appointed slaughter house and meat -- staple food of the natives are sold only in a designated meat market. There are also segregated areas for selling fish.

Cleanliness of villages across Mizoram, across northeastern India and the rest of India is also part of an ambitious national programme



village under both National Clean Mission and also Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana. The village was adopted by Mizoram’s only Lok Sabha member C L

mobilization of the village community. This programme was also launched by the on the birth anniversary of Jayaprakash Narayan on 11 October, 2014.

91.33 per cent of Mizoram. In Khawalailung Male literacy stood at 97.01 per cent while female (Contd on P-VII)

By Veturi Srivatsa

Ask any genuine sports enthusiast whether India beating Holland in the bronze medal match in the Hockey World League (HWL) Final was more exciting or India winning the cricket Test series against a low-key South Africa - and the vote will be for the sticks!

It is not to belittle the achievement of cricketers, who won the four-Tests series 3-0, yet even a diehard cricket fan will agree that there is nothing to beat a rousing 60-minute game of hockey compared to a five-

day match, which invariably ends in three days, for different reasons.

Can there be a more thrilling sight than raining goals, ten in all shared equally in the scheduled time, six of these coming in

the last ten minutes, five in the space of six minutes? Mind you, the goals came in the match against the Netherlands.

Then the shoot-out! Surely, everyone must have bet all the savings on India pulling it off, they all knew the man in the goal Parattu Raveendran Sreejesh will get them the returns as he did more often than not in the past. More recently, last year at Incheon, his saves saw India dump Pakistan and fetch them a direct berth in the Rio Olympics as continental champions.

Battered and bruised limbs with multiple injuries, it was a miracle he was in a position to stand up in his goalkeeper’s gear. Come to think of it, the same man let in five Dutch goals, but they faded into insignificance because the Indians knocked in as many at the other end.



Sreejesh is not one to brood or let his failures affect him or his work. He apparently took pain-killers to keep India alive. He did make

the shoot-out look totally different and, no trace of what happened during the 60 minutes.

He stood his ground as

he faced the Dutch onslaught, this time one on one. He gave everything he had, unmindful of his sore body. His two priceless

Child (sniffing at kitchen door: "What's for dinner? I hope it's not turkey. I hate turkey." Me: "Big chicken." Child: "Yay!"

Ha ha: that was a sneaky dad trick that worked. Cunning often solves problems. Did you read about the guy in New Zealand who was upset that the government refused to pay for his weight reduction operation? Officials so angered him that he went on a hunger strike. True story.

But I do have sympathy for folk trying to shed weight, having seen the price of a gym membership these days. Forget it! What's to stop me stripping to my boxer shorts and walking up the down escalator at the mall for an hour a day? Other than the fact that I look eminently arrestable when stripped to my underwear?

It's really hard to stay slim now, since it's clear that the food industry is united in a massive global conspiracy to make us literally explode. (I don't want to sound like a conspiracy nut, but I suspect they're in cahoots with the house redecoration people.)

One bit of solid evidence came from reader Sunita Chau, who sent me an article about the latest US taste-sensation: A low-calorie snack called a Slim-Fast bar which is now served, coated in batter, deep fried, and topped with chocolate sauce. I can see why this sounds like a ridiculous way to serve a low-calorie snack, but on the other hand, the only way to get us Real Men to eat one would be to serve it that way or with a side order of T-bone steaks.

Fast food firms are at the centre of the debate. The news wires inform me that the Chinese arm of the world's biggest fried chicken chain took

out a lawsuit against several internet companies for spreading the news that they developed a Superchicken with five or more legs. I'm not sure why they think this is bad as people love anything techy these days, especially with superhero associations.

I'd eat Superchicken just on the off chance that I might get Superchicken powers.

Why I'm chicken about cooking poultry

Although maybe not if that included having five legs. On purely artistic grounds, five legs would be visually awkward compared to a four-, six- or eight-legged Superchicken design. But having said that, I often eat toasted cheese before bed, and eight-legged chickens would be the least weird part of my dreams.

But wait. Do you remember, from the same country, there was that news story about a guy who had grown ‘man-boobs’ (to use the medical term) after eating too many portions of hormone-filled chicken portions? At first, I thought this was an urban legend, as man-boobs are sprouting everywhere in these high-calorie times. A guy only has to eat two-to-four American meals to develop a significant pair.

Yet his doctors confirmed the theory and showed pictures of his torso, parts of which have swollen to an extent which would cause definite confusion in the mind of any male. I bet

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

tantly, people saving up for gender-reassignment operations might save a small fortune by simply switching their diet to what this guy ate.

Brother. Now I don't feel like eating the ‘big chicken’ I just cooked.

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

For once Indian hockey triumphs over cricket

The victory is all the more resounding after being beaten by the Dutch 1-3 at the pool stage and in arrears 0-2 in the third place game. India moved two places up to sixth in the last four months and from double-digit ranking last year, leaving their other continental powerhouses Korea at eighth and Pakistan in 10th spot.

Oltmans is right, by all means celebrate the Raipur bronze, but in the euphoria don't forget the team has a long way to go to be among the top six at Rio, the booster notwithstanding. For that consistency is a must.

How does one explain sharing a three-match series with world's top team Australia in the run up to the HWL and lose to Argentina in the first match of the finals. Lose to the Dutch and fight back to outshoot them. Yes, there are problems upfront and right at the back as well, the holes have to be plugged.

In a team game and that, too, in a high-voltage tournament it is not easy to pick the stars. Remove Sreejesh and skipper Sardar Singh from the line-up the team may not be able to stand up to the rigours of an international match-up. The two were outstanding.

With Sreejesh in goal, coach Roelant Oltmans could even push Sardar up in the attacking mix from the midfield. To have an all-rounder like Sardar makes life easy (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career option in Life Science

As the name suggests life science is a filed which is related to life. It may be plants or animals or human being. The life sciences comprise the fields of science that involve the scientific study of living organisms - such as microorganisms, plants, animals, and human beings . While biology remains the centerpiece of the life sciences, technological advances in molecular biology and biotechnology have led to a burgeoning of specializations and interdisciplinary fields. It has moved beyond zoology and botany with the advancement of technology.

Some life sciences focus on a specific type of life. For example, zoology is the study of animals, while botany is the study of plants. Other life sciences focus on aspects common to all or many life forms, such as anatomy and genetics. The life sciences are helpful in improving the quality and standard of life. They have applications in health, agriculture, medicine, and the pharmaceutical and food science industries. We are publishing details related to botany and zoology. We have also introduced about conservation as it brings scopes for our young people in Assam and north eastern region of the country. Courses related to botany and zoology are available in different universities and many colleges in the state and other parts of the country.

Botany: There are many living being on earth. Apart from human beings and animals' one of the other living species are the plants. Tress and other plant special always fascinate us; there are varieties of plant species which are found different parts of the world. We know about 'biology' which has two main

branches namely zoology and botany. Botany is a branch of biological science which deals with the study of plants.

Botany, also called plant science(s) or plant biology, is the science of plant life and a branch of biology. Traditionally, botany has included the study of fungi and algae, studied by mycologists, respectively, with the study of plants and these three groups of organisms remain within the sphere of interest of the International Botanical Congress. Scientific disciplines such as agricultural sciences and forestry are based on the basic science of botany. Botany studies the structure, growth, reproduction, metabolism, development, diseases and chemical properties and evolutionary relationships between different groups of plants. It encompasses the study of more than three hundred thousand species of plants ranging from ground-hugging mosses to giant redwood trees.

The Botanical Survey of India (BSI) is the apex research organization under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India for carrying out taxonomic and floristic studies on wild plant resources of the country. It was established on 13th February, 1890 with the basic objective to explore the plant resources of the country and to identify the plants species with economic virtues. The Botanical Survey of India has the nine regional circles situated at different regions of the country.

It can be a career option for the aspirants who love nature and forest and trees. A person qualified in botany is called a Botanist.

Botanists play an important part in modern science and industry. Their work affects agriculture, agronomy (soil and crop science), conservation, forestry, and horticulture. In general, Botanists study the development and life processes of plants. One can study the subjects after passing out senior secondary examination or at graduate level. There is courses at masters level and beyond for higher studies.

There are specializations like Plant Taxonomy (classification of plants); Plant Pathology (study of plant diseases); Plant Morphology (study of plant structures and organs); Plant Physiology (study of the life processes of plants); Plant Genetics (study of heredity in plants); Plant Ecology (study of the relationship between plants and their environment), etc. Successful students after pursuing the subject may join various jobs which include government jobs and jobs in private sectors. Many prefer to join teaching or in research category as there are fellowships and scholarships for the research scholars related to the subject. There is more demand for the people who choose to take up research related activities. Some can work in the field of conservation of the plants and other similar species. We shall publish more related to life science and zoology in forthcoming editions.

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

In Kolkata after 27 years for the Sabhaghar Theatre Festival by Centre Stage Creations, the Filter Theatre in association with the Royal Shakespeare Company staged a production of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. One of the enthralled audience, IBNS correspondent Sudipto Maity caught up with Simon Reade, the



producer of the play for a brief chat.

So what did you make of the Indian Audience? Did you find them noisy?

Each audience is different in each city, whether they are school children, or students, or adults. If they are noisy it is because we have encouraged them to be so - they are having fun!

Have you watched any Indian production of the Twelfth Night or any other Shakespearean play? If yes, can we please have your thoughts on them?

We would have loved to see an Indian Shakespeare, but we have been so busy on the road. A few years ago we loved seeing the variety of Indian performance styles in Tim Supple's A Midsummer Night's Dream and we are looking forward to watching the Bollywood versions of Shakespeare plays we have heard about.

As someone involved with theatre, how do you plan to inspire kids to take up the stage, given the fact



'Thoughts of money should never trounce artistic aspiration'

that screen actors enjoy a lot more fame and money.

Acting requires the same inspiration,

even the same skills, in theatre, television and film. Filter actors work across all media and there's no reason why they shouldn't in India. Many performers find theatre the most rewarding - emotionally, if not financially. But thoughts of money should never trounce artistic aspiration.

You have been performing or have performed in a few Indian cities by now, so if you are to choose one venue out of these, what would that be. Also tell us

why.

Each venue has been idiosyncratic - but the Kolkata venue was espe-

cially dear to us as it was a secular space in the cellar of a holy temple, and because it was a proper theatre with a controlled environment.

In a stage production, is it difficult to work with too

many known/popular faces?

Not if it's a commercial production whose objectives are to attract as many people to see it as possible.

Now that you visited India, can we expect an Indo-Brit stage production any time soon?

Let's hope so - we would like to return and do more workshops with fellow practitioners. That could lead to a collaboration.

If you have to choose a playwright from India, who would that person be?

A young, new contem-

porary writer who has a fresh perspective on their country and a hunger to produce a successful Broadway show?

Any recent play/production that caught your fancy?

We see lots of good work in the UK - we really want to see more across the world.

Do you think awards are important in terms of recognition?

When you win them, yes! Otherwise they are mere baubles.

Having been in India, do you think we can ever produce a successful Broadway show?

Absolutely! You have a can-do attitude, can create works of great scale and have the vision to make a splash on Broadway or the West End. Go for it. (IBNS/Trans World Features)



By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

'Star - Gazing'

Sunday, December 13, 2015

Moon square Uranus on your solar return chart indicates some mixed results this year. You may get caught up in non-essential activities. Getting your priorities right could produce some impressive results. There would be opportunities to establish new contacts however don't let emotions guide professional interactions. Gather your strength and do not lose perspective; draw strength from the family nucleus to enable you to re-strategize. Restructuring financial decisions and dealings would be productive as expenses are set to rise. Draw on your experience to overcome delays. Good news in the family will bring joy.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)



Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)



Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)



Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)



Leo: (July 23 - August 23)



Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)



improve your romantic and love life by bringing more sincerity, cooperation and humanity as unusual attractions and dreams could feature at this time. Health and energy need to be conserved through a busy time at home and work.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)



Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)



Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)



Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)



Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)



Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)



This phase brings good-luck, love and romance. Personal relationships are dreamy and transitory and commitments are made and promises are honored. You would maintain balance in the head and heart also in professional and personal matters. Its right time to concentrate on your career prospects and professionals skills as a promotion or up-gradation in work area is likely to present itself. You have more energy for work and your daily routines tend to speed up now. Perhaps you have a larger workload than usual. You turn things around in the business dealings in your favor. It's a fabulous time for joining a gym or stepping up exercise and health routines.

You spend a lot of time in short frequent trips with your family and children, communicating with people and visiting relatives and friends. You tend to entertain others with your conversation and your sense of humor is especially strong. Your thoughts turn to children, pleasures, or romance during this expressive period. You might enjoy researching speculative ventures now. You attempt difficult tasks, resolve complicated issues and connect with unapproachable people in higher position. You might just find that this is a period when you are at your most gracious-as long as you are truly listening instead of reacting. An overseas or long distance journey is on cards.

You express your views, terms and conditions without hesitation and deal many issues bravely and successfully. You may bring in changes in your lifestyle eve making small changes such as your hair-style, buy new attire etc. and spend time and money on entertainment and things that please you. You focus on having fun, enjoying sports and connecting with people. You may feel a bit defeated by situations at home and work. Allow space and time for things to change on their own. You may visit religious places. You are full of energy and indulge in sports and other physical activities.

The planetary configuration is indicative of more stability in personal relations and professional life. You have the tendency to compromise and adjust and take a softer approach while dealing with people at work and home. You may explore new equipment and improve working space as this brings more efficiency in your work. Family 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. The desire for some form of recognition is going to be fulfilled. Financial success is stronger than any other time enhanced now. You maintain a fitness routine and healthy diet program. Brisk walk and timely eating would be helpful.

You would share your interests and communicate beautifully with people around you. You might spend a lot of time in meeting friends and loved ones. Sometimes, it might be hard for you to work with others in a team work, if you feel disappointed, frustrated or restless, it would be better to find little more work to keep you busy. You may be especially focused on your family. It's a passionate time, although you are unlikely to be displaying a whole lot of self-discipline. You could be stressed while meeting people's expectations and approval. It's a great time to make improvements to your regular routines.

Cordial relations in professional and personal relations are highlighted. Cultural and spiritual awareness increases. Close friends and family members would notice you for your more tolerant and broadminded nature. You would attract people with your intelligent mind. You would show your love to your family and children. You resolve an important domestic issue that has been causing problems in relations for some time. Cooperation and a focus on harmony and understanding benefit you professionally and enhance your reputation and public standing. You are strong and masterful while turning things around in a positive direction at work.

For once Indian hockey triumphs over cricket

(Contd from P-VI) for the team, a player who can make the power of total hockey meaningful.

From hockey's synthetic turf to cricket's natural surroundings. The word pitch has unpleasant connotations in cricket today. In every Test in the series skipper Virat Kohli had to face a question on the quality of pitch and he parroted the same answer: Players job is to play in the conditions they get whatever the media thinks and writes.

After the series ended in his home town Delhi, he went a step further to say that much of what was written attributing victories to the poor pitches was unfair and undermined the efforts of the players. Obviously, he could not have commented on Match Referee Jeff Crowe describing Nagpur pitch as "poor," he could only take it out on the media, having a dig at the reporters for delaying in bringing up the subject.

Indian captains from Sourav Ganguly onwards seem to have been handed a template of replies to disarm the media, articulation being the difference. Like his predecessors, Kohli announced triumphantly after winning a home series that the team is ready to take anyone at any place.

He justifiably pointed to the quality and consistency

of the top four batsmen and the contribution of spinners as well as pace men. What he didn't say is that spinners

took 63 wickets and the pacers six in the series. Surprisingly, he didn't buttress his argument that the pitches were not all that spin friendly, saying that he dropped his third spinner Amit Mishra in two Tests!

He was all praise for Ajinkya Rahane, though he didn't talk much of the top-order failure, pointing out that 200-odd runs in four matches by his top batsmen was good enough in a low-scoring series. For change, the media did not seem to ask about Rohit Sharma's continued misery.

Like all its predecessor teams, this one also looked great after winning at home. It's time to celebrate, don't crib is what Kohli wanted to say, but didn't.

Australia's great opener Matthew Hayden had the last word on pitches when Ravi Shastri hit back at him on being critical of the Nagpur track: "I deserve a voice for the betterment of cricket" after playing 103 Test matches.

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



Khawalailing village: A role model of

(Contd from P-VI) literacy rate was 93.10 per cent.

Under the 'model village' or Adarsh Gram programme, Khawalailing village with a population of 520 villagers has already taken important initiatives, like a Joint Action Committee (JAC) was constituted in the village to check the menace of drugs and alcohol-related problems. Seminars on importance of cleanliness were held many times in the village and many sanitation groups were formed to undertake practical work.

For projects under the aegis of Agriculture sector, the village was also benefited with the grant of machines for juicing sugarcane for 22 families engaged in manufacture of molasses/raw sugar (gur) at a highly subsidised rate.

Similarly, beneficiaries were identified and assistance provided under the Integrated Wasteland Development Project (IWDP) for construction of farm pond and terrace. Under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yozana (RKVY) families were also identified and provided with one piglet each. In fact, the list of good works in the tiny village can go on.

But what needs to be appreciated and in fact emulated

is the pragmatic and inherently hard working nature of the Mizo people. If the villagers in other northeastern states and more so in rural areas in states like Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh can emulate the Mizo people, things can change a lot.

Originally a primordial economy, Mizoram today represents a modern society with higher rate of literacy, good knowledge bank of English education and quality works in cane works, handloom and agriculture. Satisfied with the series of developmental works carried out in his state, the Late Laldenga, a former insurgent leader and a former Chief Minister, had said once that a climate of peace and stability in the state can bring in magical results.

Truly, going by the spirit of the statement, it is high time for the people of the region to mobilise wider public opinion against all sorts of violence and bring about lasting peace in the north east region.

(The Author is a Special Representative with The Statesman in New Delhi)

“If A is success in life, then A equals x plus y plus z. Work is x; y is play; and z is keeping your mouth shut.”

—Albert Einstein

The Shillong Times

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Disrupting parliament

THE Congress has used every trick of the trade to ensure that the Goods and Services Tax (GST) is not passed during this parliament session too. The Congress Vice President, Rahul Gandhi speaks without a sense of history. He randomly picks up issues related to the Modi Government and makes rhetorical comments that fail to ignite the minds of the average citizen. If this is Rahul Gandhi’s roadmap for reclaiming the Congress Party’s lost space then it certainly is a lost cause. This time Parliament is stalled because of the National Herald case where Congress President Sonia Gandhi and her Deputy, Rahul Gandhi have been asked to appear before the Delhi High Court. On December 7, 2015, the Delhi High Court dismissed the appeals of Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and five others which included Motilal Vora, Oscar Fernandes Suman Dubey and Sam Pitroda and ordered them to appear in person before the trial court on December 9.

The Delhi High Court in its 7 December judgment says, "After having considered the entire case in its proper perspective, this Court finds no hesitation to put it on record that the modus operandi adopted by petitioners in taking control of AJL via Special Purpose Vehicle, i.e., Y.I., particularly, when the main persons in Congress Party, AJL and Y.I. are the same, evidences a criminal intent. Whether it is cheating, criminal misappropriation or criminal breach of trust is not required to be spelt out at this nascent stage. In any case, by no stretch of imagination, it can be said that no case for summoning petitioners as accused in the complaint in question is made out. Questionable conduct of petitioners needs to be properly examined at the charge stage to find out the truth and so these criminal proceedings cannot be thwarted at this initial stage.” The National Herald was a newspaper set up by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1938 and closed down in 2008 due to financial crisis. Jawaharlal Nehru was the first editor of the newspaper and until his appointment as Prime Minister was Chairman of Herald’s Board of Directors. At the time of closing, the newspaper was in debt to the tune of Rs 90 crore.

After closing down of National Herald, Associated Journals Limited(AJL), a public limited company, which published the National Herald became a real estate firm with buildings in New Delhi, Lucknow, Mumbai and Bhopal. In November 2010, AJL with both its assets and liabilities was taken over by a newly floated company called Young India Limited. Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi both have shares of 38% in Young India Limited (YIL) and the remaining shares held by Congressmen Motilal Vora, Oscar Fernandes, Sam Pitroda and Suman Dubey. Congress party gave Young India Limited an interest free loan of Rs 90.25 crore for YIL to acquire AJL and wrote off the loan given to AJL as unrecoverable in subsequent years.

It is evident that a legal matter has been used by the Congress Party to derail Parliament and by extension mocking the court of the people of this country. The GST has been hanging fire and is affecting trade and commerce. At this rate the Congress Party will have to be held responsible for causing a national loss. The people of this country need to take to task their representatives who enter parliament to serve only the cause of party politics.

LOOKING BACK

March 31, 1988

Youth parliament in Shillong

The Meghalaya unit of the Bharat Scouts & Guides organized a youth parliament at State Central Library hall on May 13. The Department of Law and Parliamentary Affairs of the Govt of Meghalaya sponsored the programme. Meghalaya Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr G

Myliemngap stressed the importance of exposing the youth to the parliamentary practices. The State Law Secretary Mr S N Phukan explained the idea behind holding such a programme, Mr J P Singh, Education Secretary presided over the function. Mrs E N Shullai offered vote of thanks.

Food crops are not mere plants that help feeds one’s hunger. In the context of indigenous peoples although all crops and plants are equally important, yet there is one crop that is central to their lives. This special connection that people have with crops and plants is an indication that food also has a spiritual essence in the life of the indigenous people of the world. More importantly almost all the indigenous communities have certain crops that are unique or those which are considered to be a fundamental part of their lives.

The other important lesson that one learned from the recently concluded ITM 2015 is that every indigenous peoples’ group have their own crops that they are deeply associated with. For example, for the Maya community it is maize that they had lived with for more than five thousand years. Maize is the essential part of their lives and their stories revolve around this crop whereas different African communities weave their stories around certain tubers and for the herder community in the different parts of the world, their animals form an important part of their lives.

At the ITM 2015, an untiring fighter for Native American rights, economist and activist Dr. Winona La Duke spoke of the battle that the Anishinaabeg have won in protecting their ancestral wild rice from genetic manipulation. While sharing the story with those who attended the plenary session, Dr Winona La Duke held in her hand some of these grains she considered sacred and narrated the story about the fight to protect the crop and the land or rather the lake where the rice grows. She mentioned about the amazing ability of the seed to wait patiently at the bottom of a lake until the conditions are just right, and only then will it rise to the surface and grow once more, providing life for the Anishinaabeg who protect the waters where it grows. For the Anishinaabeg this wild rice is not just crop that feeds them but it is something more than food that sustains their lives, because it also defines the people in more ways than one.

Perhaps, amongst the Khasi-Pnar people rice fits

that category of a crop which the community has a special connection with because it not only feeds our hunger but we also use it for different purposes. In fact as we all know lives of the Khasi-Pnar community revolves around rice. Toki Blah reminded us of the primary lesson we were taught when we were kids which is not to waste rice and even if we happen to drop morsels of rice from our plate, we are taught to collect the precious food.

Among the Pnar people rice is considered to be the king of food and is also called ‘U Syiem Sakho’ and perhaps this is the only community that grows more than 120 varieties of rice in different parts of the district. Mere presence of the large varieties of rice indicate that we have been living with this crop for thousands of years and we have been able to collect the largest varieties available. One pertinent question that needs asking is how come such a huge variety of rice came into the custody of the Khasi-Pnar people? Where did this large variety of rice that we have in our custody come from? Having more than 120 varieties of rice is not only a record but perhaps the truth could very well be that we were the first people to start farming rice and experiment with different varieties of rice. The fact that the community has a rich agrarian culture is also an indication that the people have been doing farming a long time ago and they have been living and experimenting with the crops since time immemorial.

Khaw/khoo is not only a staple food of the Khasi-Pnar but they also create different food items from rice. In fact most of our snacks are rice-based. Take for example pumaloi/tpu-langdong, putharo/tpuwasein, and in Jaintia hills we have many more snacks made of rice like tpupynche, tpusuwe/tpusuwa, tpuniawhali, tpu-naï, tpu-myngkruid/twewpuri, tपुरusi, tpu

iala, tpudoh, tpungiar, tpupnah, tputadong, shira/khooner, handoo etc. These are some of the common traditional snacks that are made of rice and are still available in the markets of Jaintia hills. The other reason to buy these snacks is also because they are still traditionally packed in biodegradable ‘lamet’ or plantain leaves.

One of the common drinks that the Khasi-Pnar use is rice beer (kyiad)and it remains so till the Brits introduced distilleries. In some cases rice beer is still being used till today. Rice is also used in many rituals in the traditional indigenous religion. It is used in egg divination without which the ritual cannot be performed and it also forms a major part of the ritual in the dead person’s last rites.

People still practice the tradition that whenever a person dies in the family, they would keep doors ajar for three consecutive nights and also keep some rice in the pot so that the spirit of the dead can come and consume the rice. Elders in the community would always remind us that in the evening after we have had our dinner we should never wash the rice pot and care is taken to see that it contains some rice and should never be kept empty. The reason that we should keep some boiled rice in the pots in the evening is because we believe that the spirit will come and consume the food.

The concept of ‘khawrng or khoo mein is one tradition that proves how profoundly connected the people are with rice. It is a tradition among the Khasi-Pnar people that before embarking on a journey, the mother, grandmother, wife or sister would take a little bit of rice, put it in a small pack and hand it to the person before he or she starts the journey so as to ward off any evil. In the preparation for the ITM while we were discussing about some of the track meetings which has food as one the theme, we reminded ourselves about the concept of Khawrngeng/khoornein.

A member of the Committee, Phrang Roy, who is perhaps the person who had travelled the most in the group, with a smile on his face pointed to his wallet and said, “I still have Khawrngeng my mother gave me and I carry it with me everywhere I go”. While bah PR shared the story with the group, my brain started to play tricks and I thought to myself perhaps that must be one Khawrngeng that had travelled the most. But on a serious note, I realized how Khawrngeng which is part of the tradition to wish a traveler a safe journey, also bonds the traveler spiritually with his mother. After the enlightened experience, before I embarked on my recent journey I decided to visit my mother and now I have with me khoornein with my mother’s blessings. I am sure that even if my mother passes away the khoornein which she gave will be the everlasting bond that will connect me with her even when she is no more.

Khawrngeng/khoornein is not only a tradition to wish a traveler a bon voyage, but it has deeper meaning than just to wish people save journey. Khawrngeng is also associated with the lifespan of the person. It is believed that before a man or a woman is born he or she already carries the spiritual share of rice which is bequeathed with the share of khawrngeng/khoornein when the person dies. When a person dies we say that the person has exhausted his/her share of khawrngeng. And if a person dies young it is commonly believed that he or she had not carried enough rice to last her a life time.

Many people I know would not consider that they had a meal or that the meal is complete if rice is not part of the meal. Lunch or dinner for the Khasi-Pnar will only be complete if rice is part of the menu. Hence the Khasi-Pnar people’s relationship with rice is unique. It is clear therefore that rice is not merely food for us but an intrinsic part of our culture and psyche and that rice defines who we are.

Bluff is not course correction

By M J Akbar

The bizarre is not as distant from our political discourse as we might wish it to be. There are times, however, when a party’s defense-offense explanation becomes so overstretched that it can only be considered contempt — not of the court, but of the people.

This morning [I write this column on Saturdays] the Times of India carried an extraordinary story on its front page. It quoted two heavyweight Congress leaders as saying that the continuous disruption of both Houses of Parliament for four days had nothing to do with the fact that the courts had served notice for the trial of Mrs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi for alleged manipulation of funds in order to acquire properties currently in the possession of a defunct newspaper, the

conference, the government had not sent a single notice on this case to anyone. It was the court that had seen merit in a private complaint by Dr Subramanian Swamy, and indeed made some sharp remarks in the process. It should be noted that the courts have not always responded to Dr Swamy’s complaints with equal force. They deal, as they should, with each case on its merits. For Rahul Gandhi to imply that the courts are biased, as he has done repeatedly, is to challenge the integrity of the judicial system.

Congress should have understood that it would be isolated on what is a straightforward corruption allegation from the very first day on which it used vocal bullying to stall Parliament.

Naturally he has not bothered to explain how, because there is no explanation. As Finance Minister Arun Jaitley pointed out in a blog, as well as at a press conference, the government had not sent a single notice on this case to anyone. It was the court that had seen merit in a private complaint by Dr Subramanian Swamy, and indeed made some sharp remarks in the process. It should be noted that the courts have not always responded to Dr Swamy’s complaints with equal force.

National Herald, worth an estimated Rs 2,000 crore for the rather paltry sum of Rs 50 lakh. They had, they claimed, permitted their MPs to warble and hoot [earning rebuke upon rebuke from the Chair] because of much older issues.

I do not mention the names of these senior Congress leaders out of sympathy for their plight. They cannot possibly actually believe what they said. They were speaking on orders from the palace. They know as well as anyone else that there was order in Parliament before a judge in the National Herald case deemed the case worthy of trial and summoned the principal accused to appear before court. In fact there was an excellent debate in the Rajya Sabha on Nepal which made the House nostalgic for what it should be doing as a matter of course. The opposition stung with all the force at its command, and External Affairs Minister Mrs Sushma Swaraj’s reply not only answered each point but set at rest speculation about our position on a crucial problem. This is what Parliament is meant for. This is democracy as it should be practised. The Congress participated in this debate.

The bold headline in Goa’s newspapers this morning said all that needed to be said: “National Herald: Cong stalls RS for 4th day”. The man who has repeatedly made it clear that his party’s problem was the newspaper case was none other than Rahul Gandhi, who has repeatedly accused the government of playing “100% vendetta” politics, jabbing the air with anger each time he used the immortal phrase.

Naturally he has not bothered to explain how, because there is no explanation. As Finance Minister Arun Jaitley pointed out in a blog, as well as at a press

Not a single Opposition party came to its support. Even its allies in Bihar, JD(U) and RJD, kept their distance. The Trinamool Congress, which is at the moment trying to win brownie points in the hope that Congress will not enter into an alliance with the Left parties in the forthcoming Bengal Assembly elections, kept its ears open and head down. No one is going to be seen defending apparent or alleged corruption.

Political parties succeed when they gauge public response accurately. Everyone realised that the people were not buying the Congress argument. Congress took longer to recognise this because it is trapped in dynasty loyalty. A week, as has been famously noted, is a long time in politics. In this week Congress took the national debate back to highest-level corruption and subversion of a national party to the whims and needs of dynasty.

One has no idea how Congress will behave when Parliament resumes on Monday. It is possible that hardliners will argue that Parliament disruption should continue, this time over other older charges. But the age of Alice in Wonderland politics is long gone: you cannot, like the Queen in that brilliant fable, make words mean only what you want them to mean. The court of public opinion is the most powerful judiciary in a democracy, and Congress has lost the argument there. Voters know that the party has sabotaged important bills that would help the poor, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and the salaried because it has taken an untenable position on a matter that is best left to the legal system, rather than the political class.

Bluff is not course correction.

TO THE EDITOR

Menace of public smoking

Editor, Signboards such as ‘No Smoking’ are a mockery of the law and to those who are to enforce the law. The law on smoking is specific. It is illegal to smoke in public places. But in every nook and corner of the city, you can see people smoking in public. What is disgusting is that even inside crowded buses and taxis insensitive compulsive smokers puff away without a care for those sitting alongside.

It has been scientifically proven that passive smokers are the worst victims of this menace. Inhaling someone else’s cigarette smoke can increase the risk of cancer and other lung ailments. Second hand smoke contains more than 4000 chemicals, 69 of which are known to cause cancer. Smoke that burns off the end of a cigarette (called side stream smoke) may be more toxic than the mainstream smoke that a smoker would inhale.

So what right do the smokers have to impose their smoke on us and push us non smokers into the cancer zone? And who gave them this right? The obvious answer is the non-enforcement of existing laws. It is a very

sorry sight to witness the non-implementation of the law against smoking in our State. Why is the Government not paying attention to this menace and turning a blind eye to it? It is true that the elite hardly face the smoking evil since the travel in their private cars. It is we the common folks who have to go through this ordeal. Each and every day, on our way to work, school, college or anywhere else there is a smoker walking in front, beside, behind or even with us, increasing our chances of cancer and seizing our right to breathe a little fresh air (if that even exists). And when, at all, you dare to speak against them, all they have to say is, “The law has no problem with me smoking, so who are you to stop me?”

Thus, you keep quiet and become part of the ‘Passive Smoker’s Class’, increasing your chances of cancer and reducing your life expectancy just because your State Government does not care about the health of the citizens of Meghalaya. I wonder what crime the innocent children have committed that they are subjected to passive smoking all the time. I call upon the concerned au-

thorities to realize the urgency of the matter. It’s a shame that no steps have been taken thus far to penalize those who smoke in public.

Yours etc,
Shweta Raj Kanwar
Shillong- 7

Tainted Pastor

Editor, The attempted kidnapping by a Pastor who is also the Principal of KJP Synod Mihngi H. S. School Jowai, which appeared in many local dailies, is no surprise at all to many who know this particular Pastor. He is a rude and uncouth, a businessman who smokes openly in public, and if the news item is true he even carries a pistol wherever he goes. We as Christians look up to the Pastors of our church who are supposed to be the shepherd of all the Christian flock. But the recent incident sets a bad precedence for the post he's occupying. I hope and pray that the higher authority of the church i.e. ‘The Synod’ will take the case seriously and action should be taken against this tainted Pastor. Or should it be just an ordinary incident where life goes on and people will easily forgive and forget. Is the

Synod listening?
Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request
Jowai

Kudos Meghalaya Police!

Editor, Through your esteemed daily I like to congratulate the State Police for successfully nabbing a gang of culprits and rescuing a girl child belonging to a poor and backward family in a recent case of abduction and child trafficking.

In the instant case prompt and proper action taken by the police department and the role played by Police officers and their staff viz. S.P. (E.K. Hills), S.P. (City.) DSP (Hqtrs.), Officer-in-Charge of Jhalupara Police Station, Lumdingjiri Police Station and Phulbari Police Station is highly appreciable. The police team has very tactfully utilized their resources in rescuing the victim. One hopes the police department would continue to work with the same spirit of sincerity, hard work and dedication in future too.

Yours etc.,
C.S. Singh
Shillong-2

“If you want change, you have to make it. If we want progress we have to drive it.”

--- Susan Rice

The Shillong Times

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The Paris Agreement

WHAT looked like discord for days ended up in accord. The 21st Conference of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris finally produced an agreement unlike the previous attempt in Copenhagen in 2009. Governance of the participating countries are now acutely aware of the need for dealing with climate change. They have agreed in Paris to hold the rise of global temperature to “well below” 2 degrees C above pre-industrial levels and later to reduce it to 1.5 degrees C. It was a great achievement as the 196 countries at the Conference had competing interests although a certain amount of vagueness is still there. Unlike the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the Paris accord does not set specific legally binding requirements for emission cuts to be made by developed nations. But there has been an agreement to arrive at "net zero emission"between 2050 and 2100. Every nation, rich or poor, will have to come up with its proposals towards this end from 2020. A review mechanism will evaluate each country's climate plans and ask it to increase its pledges over the years. The first such evaluation is due in 2023. Besides, wealthy nations will be called upon to provide more climate funds to poorer nations. But there has been no accord on how much, or on technology sharing and transfer.

Indian environment Minister Prakash Javadekar considered the Paris accord is victory for India. In the past, the country was accused of scuttling such talks. The Paris accord does not fulfil the great expectations raised at the inauguration of the summit but the concern that was shown generates enormous confidence in the prospects ahead.

LOOKING BACK

March 31, 1988

New thrust for food production

A mid-term appraisal of the Seventh Plan which was held in New Delhi recently concluded that agricultural production in the country was lagging behind and that the highest priority needs to be given to the agricultural sector to boost production in the balance years of the plan. In view of this, an action plan has been drawn up and this has since been endorsed by the National Conference on Special Food Production. The plan aims at achieving food grains production of 166 million tonnes in 1988-89 and 175 million tonnes in the terminal year of the Seventh Plan. The Conference also approved the selection of 169 districts in 14 states for concerned efforts to raise food production. Among these, Assam is the only one picked up from the north-eastern region. A few more districts, it is stated, could be added to the list as a separate category where special efforts could continue with resources provided by the State governments.

The districts chosen in the first category is presumably those which are already distinguished as high food crop yielding areas. There are many more in the country which holds out promise of rich yields if the necessary incentives by way of monetary aid and infrastructural support of various kinds are provided, which seems actually to be the thrust of the new action plan. This support, so very welcome as it is more needed for the areas which at present may not be surplus producers but holds the promise of at least balancing its own local or regional food consumption and production. Meghalaya, for instance, may be a deficit taking the state as a whole, but district wise, the one comprising the bulk of the plains portion of the Garo Hills could be brought on the credit side with enough incentives provided. There could even be a welcome move towards converting the cash crop yielding jute areas in this district into food crop producing alone: agricultural produce like mustard-seed are equally in short supply and the deficit in this respect can be made good by areas hitherto concentrating on non-food agricultural production.

Manipur also was once a famous rice-granary of this region and its decline in this field over the years is another story. An action plan as the one now undertaken under Central initiative can with profit include a few more districts from this state and at least one district from each of the north-eastern states now left out of the compass of the action plan as reported above. Even a chronically deficit State like Mizoram could raise its food production to 4300 tonnes last year and it may he said that state effort would get a big boost if some of its areas are brought under special care and assistance as envisaged in the Centre's action plan.

The way things are going, we columnists are going to be out of business. Not out of the business, as in making money though, because most of us don't make any by our writing. We will be out of the writing business itself. You see the festive season might be good for love, harmony, brotherhood, parties and exchanging gifts, but it is period of drought, as far as issues are concerned. As if on cue, with the dip in temperature, everything else also calms down. All agitations come to an end abruptly. Just when one thinks, that the agitation business is really starting to get going, with the Rangbahs also joining the youth on the rebellion bandwagon, everything suddenly goes phut. The headmen issue loses steam faster than it started, the dual post agitation fizzles out, the ILP issue recedes from public memory, and the foreigner problem starts gathering dust. Suddenly everyone from politicians to self styled leaders step away from podiums, and go into silent hibernation or on foreign jaunts, leaving us writers with fingers numb on immobile pens and frozen keyboards.

Luckily there is this one issue which is still smouldering, albeit a little weakly, even after the Bihar elections got over. If not for that I would have had to march to the politicians and the NGOs to remind the former of my rights and the latter of their duties. You see if the politicians can't give us good roads, sufficient power, water, employment or a clean environment at least they should make some really controversial statements for us to write about at this time of the year. And why should NGOs go, like government servants, on paid leave now, abandoning plum agitations midway. Come spring it makes it harder for all of us, to warm up to their causes, after such a long lull.

Well the sole issue that just saved me from joining the ranks of protestors is the same issue which has made protestors of many writers, intellectuals and other of the creative ilk. By now you must have guessed, that the issue is intolerance. However the issue runs far deeper, than what other writers have cared to explain.

Like others, I too feel that we live, in intolerant times. Amongst the most rabid forms of intolerance one sees, is the intolerance to smoking. Remember the good old days

Intolerance or intolerance

By Paramjit Bakhshi

this harmless activity, which gets rid of all work and martial tensions, is being denied to us. The moral brigade with more victories to its credit, than the Indian cricket team, has made life utterly joyless. All the dance bars across the country have been closed. I don't know what all this fuss is about. After all, the harmless swish of a skirt or a chunni is no tandav and the world will not be trampled to extinction under the light hearted steps of a few pretty ladies.

Talk about extinction and one remembers the freedom to hunt in the olden days. All that was required was a licensed weapon and a permit to hunt. What a joy it was to go out into the forest, and return with some jungle fowl, a barking deer or a wild boar. Well you better stop salivating now because none of that is tolerated anymore. Especially dangerous is shooting black buck. However, if shooting is still your passion you are a little luckier than your smoking, drinking and womanising friends though you need to understand that what constitutes fair game is different now. Your new prey is your own two legged brethren and not the four legged wildlife. All you have to do is get some likeminded people together, get a few automatic unlicensed weapons, and send out some six or seven figure extortion notes. Any-one then refusing to fill your pockets becomes fair game, and you can shoot them, where and when you want. Should you tire of the game after having become super rich, you can quit quite easily, hide or sell or surrender your weapon, and return to society which will give you a hero's welcome and a rehabilitation package.

Hey, talking about intolerance I just realised how utterly tolerant we are. Come to think about it, perhaps I am on the wrong track talking about intolerance. And so is everybody else. Killing fellow human beings has been tolerated for a long time, and why should Dadri alone make us feel, that the country has suddenly become intolerant. People have been killed for some reason or other since independence. Some have been killed for economic or political gain, some

national role but did not help Indian causes as is evident by India's global isolation during the Indo-China war. NAM has outlived its days and is no longer relevant in the current global order. The important question to ask is whether it is fair to glorify NAM and Nehru, when from an Indian perspective it did nothing for the nation other than having an obscure place in the pages of global history.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada

MBOSE: A cause for concern

Editor,

This letter has a bearing on students doing their MBOSE hence I feel the need to share my concerns. My son cleared his MBOSE in 2010 with a pass of best of five. He failed in Mathematics. Later that year he joined a school at Roorkee and by November his registration was completed. But he and another boy who had passed his

for ethnic or religious reasons, and some to give impetus to some local issues. All large communities have also routinely preyed on minorities whether it is in Kashmir, Gujarat, Delhi, Mumbai, Manipur, or Meghalaya and Assam. Hindus have been killed, Christians have been killed, so too have Sikhs and Muslims, and we have never screamed intolerance before.

And if we are talking of intolerance because of a ban of beef, we are still harking up the wrong alley. Is eating beef any healthier than smoking or drinking? In moderation all these activities are all right, so how come governments get by banning just the last two? Production and consumption of beef moreover, poses a larger risk to environment. According to scientists, the livestock industry is one of the largest contributors to global warming, producing not just carbon dioxide but about thirty seven percent of methane which contributes more to global warming, than any other gas.

So rather than talk about intolerance would it not be better to talk of our extreme tolerance. We are too tolerant of too many things in this country. We are tolerant of corruption and nepotism and hence we are also tolerant of the militancy caused by it. We allow emotions to sway us when they concern our self interest or that of our community, religion or ethnicity. We are also tolerant of many bans even though they make little sense. It is not just Nature which is polluted today but our own natures too, because we rarely clean the cobwebs in our minds and seriously ponder about the real issues which concern us.

When my editor asked me why I hadn't written for some time, I told her that apart from one issue, I had nothing to write about. She told me that I must be joking, because there is so much to write about. She is of course right. Indeed there is so much to write about, that sometimes I don't feel up to the task. And if you don't know whether this article has been a serious piece or a joke please don't worry. This piece is written a little for your sake, a little for the editor's sake but mostly in anticipation of any award, which I solemnly promise to return at an appropriate time.

The writer can be contacted at bakhshi03@rediffmail.com.

MBOSE from Thadlaskein were de-registered on the basis that Health and Physical Education was not recognised as a core subject by the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) since Physical Education was not part of their syllabus. I took up the case with the Chairman, MBOSE. He directed me to the then Director of DHTE who then referred me to the Under Secretary, Education who again spoke to Mr Kharbhih and told him to look into the matter. Eventually the Council of Boards of School Education (COBSE) was contacted and they in turn said they couldn't do a thing. I wrote to the Chairman, CISCE but to no avail and so my son lost one year due to no fault of his. But what concerns me is that the same fate could befall other children who may pass in five subjects inclusive of Health Education but since the Board has not changed the syllabus till date other students may experience the same hurdles as the two students above because even the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) does not accept Health Education as a main subject.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Rising India in stunted Bharat

By Sujit De

Recently Public Health Foundation of India in collaboration with other institutions has come out with a report that four out of ten children of our country suffer from stunted growth as a result of malnutrition and poor socio-economic conditions. These children display reduced growth during early childhood and are at risk of its long term consequences like poor learning ability, poor school performance and unachieved potential. The position of our country is at rock bottom when it comes to taking care of our children or in other words the future of the nation. Only Niger, Malawi and Madagascar currently have higher stunting prevalence levels than our country. This shocking report is the icing on the rotten cake of India's dismal performance in human development where we are to sit behind 134 nations with a score of meagre 0.586. Even Sri Lanka has got a score of 0.750 that enables her to sit much ahead at the 73rd position. Having gained the 9th position in Human Development Index, Singapore has shown what all round development means.

Our politicians can give speeches taking pride in the fact that ours is a young country, but they are not interested in developing this huge human potential. Being a backbencher in Human Development Index, our political leaders fight shy of seeing why inclusive growth is a must for getting a better place in the class of civilised welfare states. Without trying to get a better bench by giving top priority to the welfare of the people, our leaders are tend to follow the mindset of school backbenchers who resort to all sorts gimmicks to cover their negligence to do what they are supposed to. However, it is difficult to find a family whose head manages resources curtailing expenditure in health and education to finance travel to foreign countries like Chad (read the moon) and Mongolia (read Mars) while 39 per cent of his children are stunted and 35.6 per cent of the family members illiterate. It is a mockery to the idea of a welfare state.

Ramanan Laxminarayan, vice president of Public Health Foundation, New Delhi has rightly said, "We're staring in India at the largest loss of human potential in history". India is still home to 40 million stunted children.

A popular myth is doing the rounds in our country that had there been no subsidy for the poor, India could have become a superpower. Amartya Sen has rightly pointed out how incorrect such notions are. He said, "Reading the papers and hearing broadcasts, you would think that it is subsidy for the poor- food and employment- that strains India's public resources, even though more than twice as much public funds are spent in subsidizing the better off". Yet the creamy layer of the society is still hungry to gobble up even the subsidy for the poor which is only one third of the total subsidy. Another myth that has been nurtured to cover up India's lack of investment in human development is India being too densely populated to achieve inclusive growth. But this argument does not hold water either. The density of population is 436 per square kilometre in India but it is 501 in The Netherlands. While the former is stuck at the HDI rank of 135, the latter is at the 4th position with a score of whopping 0.915. India has committed a blunder of neglecting her asset of huge human resources and thus making it her liability.

The United States of America in particular and European countries in general have promoted themselves from police state to welfare state. The welfare state which ensures freedom of an individual as well as guarantees his or her social security is a synthesis of the thesis of capitalism and antithesis of socialism. Surprisingly, India is made to walk backward from welfare state as enshrined in our constitution (Article 38) to a canibalistic state of survival of the fittest raj that has been discarded by the civilised countries. The disinvestment policy and the policy of gifting the education and health sectors to the private players without meaningful control negates the concept of a welfare state as it causes unemployment and robbing of one's social security. The employment to population ratio is a clear indicator of what is the general outcome of our liberalisation policy. While employment to population ratio was 58.6 per cent in 1994, it has, alarmingly, come down to 52.2 per cent in 2013. The liberalisation policy helps carry coal to Newcastle leaving the suicide door open for the unemployed who have, now, become almost half of the employable persons in our country. Unemployed receive a handsome allowance from the state in the countries like the United States of America but there is no such security in India although protection of life (Article-21) is a fundamental right and right to work (Article-41) is a directive principle in our constitution.

According to the constitution of India the name of our country is India that is Bharat (Article-1). But over the years our country has, most unfortunately, become India in Bharat as a result of her trying to grow at a superpower rate having totally ignored human development in the process. Thus we have got a stunted Bharat with pockets of rising India. Any lopsided growth in the body can turn out to be malignant. It is time to realise that the growth of greedy India in needy Bharat has caused cancer to our Motherland and those 40 million stunted children are the symptoms of the disease.

“*Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, faithfulness the best relationship.*”

— **Buddha**

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 126 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2015

Shillong’s moment of shame

SPIRITUAL leader and global peace activist, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar who visited Shillong after 14 years remarked that the city has become filthy and its open drains which are also dumping ground for garbage could pose serious health hazards. Sri Sri arrived in Shillong on Monday afternoon. In the two days that he has moved around the city he has been able to get an overview of the civic status of this hill station. The spiritual leader also observed that the buildings could be planned better. Sri Sri challenged the disciples of the Art of Living to get together and clean up the city and not just look to the Government to do the job.

The Wah Umkhrah has become an eyesore not just for visitors but also for the citizens of Shillong. What is lacking is concerted effort. At the moment there are two types of residents, one the polluters; the other the onlookers who feel certain pangs about the filth around them but are helpless to do anything about it. The point is to form a coalition of stakeholders and to rope in the Government as a key partner. There has been an overdose of blame game in Meghalaya. The Umkhrah River belongs to all. If it is restored and cleaned up it will bring pride to all Shillongites. Shillong is the drawing room of Meghalaya. In their own homes people keep their drawing rooms spick and span and well decorated. But there is no single organisation to take on the challenge of cleaning up the mess of Shillong. One of the reasons why this problem has become intractable is because implementation of Government or Dorbar Shnong diktats is weak. Signboards that prohibit littering usually have a lot of litter under them. That’s the kind of respect that people have for the law. Indeed, the inherent sense of lawlessness among the citizens of Shillong is what makes the job of law enforcers that much more difficult.

A time has come to take stock of the city and for caring and compassionate individuals to get together and restore the health and hygiene of Shillong.

LOOKING BACK

March 4, 1988

Political will

A simple two word expression has lately come very much into vogue political will. It has different suggestions to suit different occasions and different purposes. The one recent use of it was made usefully by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi while in his Tripura election campaign he repeatedly made the broad accusation that the then state government there had lacked political will to resolve Tripura’s chronic problem of TNV insurgency. It is now the turn of the Assam Home Minister, Mr. Bhrigu to trade the same charge against the Union government, accusing that the latter lacked political will for amending the Illegal Migrants (Detection by Tribunal) Act, with the AASU taking up a fighting postures over the overall question of implementation of the Assam accord, the AGP Ministry is naturally obliged to shift the blame at the door of the Union Ministry which has not yet seen its way to come forward with any proposal for amending this legislation which holds the key to meeting the demands of the AASU and, to a less impatient degree, of the AGP also.

Pleading, therefore that the State government had fulfilled its own part in implementing the accord and what remained of the exercise belonged to the Centre, the Assam Chief Minister proposed a tripartite conference of the AASU that what was represented

to it by the AGP was factually true, if not also to convince that the Centre too was right in holding what it did in respect of the Central Act in question and its projected amendment. The Union Home Minister, however, has not agreed to come to attend the tripartite conference, and one reason could be that he was very much hard pressed for time during a busy Parliament session. Strangely enough he had not taken up this plea in his reply. One reports says that the Chief Minister has been informed by New Delhi that negotiations with the AASU should be held at the state level and only thereafter could talks on the Assam accord be held in New Delhi.

The Union Home Ministry should have been knowing that these negotiations were actually being held for quite some time and the latest in the series was proposed to be a tripartite one to make it more purposive and meaningful since New Delhi had a vital role in regard to the particular issue which held up further progress in the bilateral discussions, the other report form Guwahati is that the Chief Minister feels under the circumstances, that the centre wants a confrontation between the AGP and AASU. It may not all be true but New Delhi may be seen as, looking at the question from a purely political angle Mr. Mahanta’s suspicion may acquire a measure of credibility from the other report of New Delhi having concerned parties.

So I had to go somewhere to meet someone and it was an urgent meeting. I took a shared taxi from. And to my luck there was a huge rush of cars both local and private and as is the usual experience I got stuck in traffic! Now I won’t bore you with my thoughts of why there is so much traffic in Shillong and our country as a whole; that has been said a million times by countless others. The reasons are varied- from having too many cars plying around in already congested roads, illegal parking places, street hawkers hogging up the roads to set up their make-shift stalls, reckless overtaking by “Daredevils” showing off their swanky two-wheelers. And of course there’s that popular saying -“A family of 5 with 6 cars,” meaning that people now spend lavishly on cars, never mind the cost of the car itself or fuel to run it. But let me not go down that road.

Coming back to today, yes! I was running late! Yes! It was urgent! Yes! I should have come out earlier and Yes! I felt like cursing. As this huge wave of torrid emotions ran through me, I noticed a village boy aged about 17 years sitting beside me. He caught my attention because he seemed so carefree that I was actually envious of him.

At this time a small boy of about 10 years knocked on my car window. This boy like so many other delinquents was trying to sell me book-marks. Of course these little boys peddle the usual dialogue- “Bah(Sir), Please help me with one or two of book-marks; I haven’t eaten anything today and I’m starving; and to top it off I haven’t made a sale yet. Please have some humanity and help me”. I took out a twenty rupee note and handed it to him telling him to go eat, knowing fully well that the kid would either spend the money on cigarettes, some “kwai” or even a drink, but then I can’t help it. I needed to assuage my conscience.

And so the traffic was moving slowly. Since I am restless by nature I started to find ways to amuse myself. I took out my phone to surf the internet but there was no net-work. I asked the driver if he could switch on the radio and tune to Red FM. The driver with a smile as wide as his face said in his rustic accent that there was no radio attached to his car. After this failed at-

TO THE EDITOR

To beef or not to beef!

Editor,
Some days ago your esteemed daily published a letter titled “India a super-power?” (ST Dec 10, 2015). It was heartening to see someone move away from political rhetoric of rights and freedom and using logic and reason in presenting their point of view. The opinion in the letter was quite clear, however, what intrigued me was the correlation between beef and India’s might in the world. Hence, I venture to present my two cents. Before I begin, let me set it straight I am merely presenting facts and it is up to the individuals to use their logic and reasoning in light of the facts to form their own opinion. As a ‘non beef eater’ perhaps my personal opinions are biased. However, my choice although initially cultural was reinforced by logic and reasons.

Firstly, let us take a point wise look at the arguments made:

* Protein deficiency in Indian population:

Given the complexities of the human body, it is unimaginable to even think that there is a single defined benchmark for protein or any other nutrient for that matter. The “right” amount of protein for any one individual depends on many factors... including activity levels, age, gender, muscle mass, physique goals and current state

tempt at recreation I started scanning my fellow travelers. Next to me was the village lad, next to him was a businessman or lawyer all suited and booted. In front was a lady in traditional attire. While I was looking around the cab, the lad next to me started to whistle. I was taken aback at this and so too the other passengers. The driver who now was just lazing around looked at the kid and asked him what song he is listening to so intently and which he seemed to enjoy so much (I should have added that the boy had earphones on the whole time).

The boy replied that it wasn’t the song that made him happy but what the song held for him. As he said so, he took off his ear-phones and started to play the song at full volume to my pleasure and a silent grumble from the businessman. The lady in front who had paid no attention to any of this and had continuously stared out her window looked at the kid with more interest. The driver, too, now interested in what the kid was saying asked him to play the song from the beginning. Now I forgot what the song was, and yes I didn’t get the artist as well. But nonetheless the kid played the song again and began humming the tune until the driver asked him why the song made him happy.

The boy smiled. He said that it was this song that won the heart of his girlfriend. He confessed that he had been dating this girl since his school days and now that they were both in higher secondary school he had gathered courage to propose to her. The girl was apparently so smitten by this act that she broke down in tears and cried “Yes! I will be yours...” All of us in the taxi laughed at this; even the grumpy businessman did. I mused at what the boy said and how he felt at that particular moment in time. He was happy, in love, carefree and oblivious of the worries of the world. I heard myself asking, “Where did those days of youth and joyfulness of

mine disappear? “ I guess everyone feels the same. We are so caught up in our day to day lives that we forget to just take a moment to relax. I realized that I myself am so caught up with my work, odd jobs and errands that I don’t take time for myself or for my family and friends. I’m living in the fast lane, chasing after dreams and aims. It feels like I don’t care about anything anymore except that I must achieve my goals and objectives.

And this is not just me, it is happening to everyone around me. My friends have no time for anything, my family members are busy chasing their own dreams too. I look at my little brother, he hardly has time to relax and play the way I did during my childhood. He comes home, eats, bathes and does his homework after which he starts studying. His life seems like an endless cycle of mundane things that sometimes have no relevance to any of us.

Why do we study? Why do we work? Why do we keep trying to make ends meet? Why try so hard at what we do when we can’t even take a moment to enjoy our successes if any, or mourn our losses. One project leads to another and then another. Sometimes we are so money minded that even virtues and morals are neglected. Sundays are sometimes turned into working days, not necessarily in the office but at the home front.

Parents’ don’t have time for their children. They shunt them away with maids and helpers, only recognizing them during functions and occasions or when the child has been naughty. The child is naughty because of want of attention but that’s the case for another discussion. We live in an era that feels like a week is not enough, 24 hours is too less, 365 days pass by so swiftly. A new year comes with new worries! This is the hectic life we lead. We have no time to enjoy Sunsets, no energy to wake up and enjoy Sunrises, we have no time for fun or leisure or love. Leisure nowadays is substituted by drinking parties

with high profile individuals which ends in business deals.

No more hiking, no more walks, no more would you see children flying kites or playing marbles. All you can see nowadays are children with their heads down and backs bent, foreheads filled with worry. Is this what we are giving our future generation? A future of mundane tasks, working to achieve some designated goal only to be replaced by another? Are we striving to our own death? I pity myself and my siblings and the future generation as a whole. We are brought up to a future that seems bleak. Unfortunately I can’t see a solution to this, except if we change our train of thought and set our priorities right and give more time to the things that actually matter in life- Love, Respect, Fun- the small things in life that come for free that we fail to realize. Why not give a chance to our parents to sit and talk to us? Why not do something for our loved ones than just chasing rain-bows? Why not learn to whistle? Why not relive that first moment we fell in love? Why not take time and revisit friends, our kith and kin? Why not just take some time out? I have been living life in the fast lane, but on seeing the joyful face of that lad in the taxi, his carefree attitude oblivious of the world around him, made me think that maybe we still have hope for the future. And hearing that boy whistle the song again made my worries disappear... Suddenly the meeting didn’t seem that important; suddenly I felt light. I was enveloped by a sense of joy. I felt happy again. I felt I could just get out of that taxi, run towards someone and sing and dance just like in the movies... Shout ‘I Love you,’ to anyone from atop a mountain. But since I’m a shy person I did something different. I still felt elated and happy, felt no sorrow or worry but I had to restrain myself.

So, I got off the cab, paid the driver and whistled away feeling happy. I walked back home just to enjoy a carefree day with my brother.

And to think this happened, “All Because Of Traffic”.

not just easier to cook (less cooking time) but also easier to digest and absorb for the body.

* Comparison of sportspersons: While I do have respect for the Undertaker, a body built on steroids can hardly be ideal. On the contrary, there are many Indian wrestlers from UP, Haryana and Punjab who thrive on a vegetarian diet and have won medals for India in the international stage. If that is not convincing enough Ironman Brendan Brazier, ultra runner Scott Jurek, health writers Tim Ferris and Matt Ruscigno are few of the increasingly growing number of people migrating towards vegetarian diet.

The world is moving towards sustainability. The Paris summit went into overtime in order to figure out an agreeable climate solution. But the responsibility of reducing carbon footprint also lies on our shoulders. One of the ways is by reducing meat consumption. It may not be very obvious but one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas is beef.

Beef requires 28 times more land to produce than pork or chicken, 11 times more water and results in five times more climate-warming emissions. When compared to staples like potatoes, wheat, and rice, the impact of beef per calorie is even more extreme, re-

quiring 160 times more land and producing 11 times more greenhouse gases.

Agriculture is a significant driver of global warming and causes 15% of all emissions, half of which are from livestock. Furthermore, the huge amounts of grain and water needed to raise cattle is a concern to experts worried about feeding an extra 2 billion people by 2050. (The Guardian, Giving up beef will reduce carbon footprint more than cars, says expert. July 21 2014). If you consider the complete product life-cycle, one kg of beef produces 27.0 equivalent kgs of CO2 and ranks second only to lamb. To put it plainly, you need to drive 63 miles to produce the same emissions as eating one kilogram of beef. Moreover, imagine the economic impact of scares such as mad cow disease, avian flu, e-coli have caused over the years.

The call for ban on beef may not have been brought up for the right reasons. It should be the individuals’ choice but we cannot deny the fact that its impact is indeed far reaching. There are far better alternatives available to us if we could only stop and look. Pisciculture offers a much better energy conversion ratio when compared to beef and therefore would have a lower bearing on grain market. The health benefit of fish over red meat is also well documented and

ISIS threat unites rivals India, Pakistan

Dialogue must for peace in subcontinent

By B.K. Chum

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop. Our greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising every time we fall.”

By resuming their stalled bilateral talks last week, India and Pakistan have acted on the first part of, to repeat what a 6th century BC Chinese philosopher and political theorist had sermonised. Though a welcome start, given their perennially tense relationship marked by wars, it is too hazardous to predict how long they will take to traverse the thousand miles journey for normalizing their relations.

The development needs to be examined in the backdrop of the insistence by Islamabad that Kashmir should be a priority item of the bilateral agenda while New Delhi wanted the bilateral talks to be centered on Pakistan’s sponsorship of terrorism. At present, one can only conjecture about the reasons behind the two neighbours abandoning their rigid stands for reaching an agreement for resuming their long-stalled bilateral talks. These talks have now been rechristened “comprehensive bilateral dialogue” by incorporating both sides point of view. It is a laudable start in their endeavour to resolve the issues plaguing the two countries relationship.

The change in their till recently adamant stands on resuming talks was seemingly brought about by three factors. The first factor, apparently, was Washington’s intervention which wants a united global action to counter the Islamic State. The second factor was the IS’s threat to expand its violent actions worldwide from their Syria-Iraq base to the Indian subcontinental region. To repeat what an English daily had reported, “In its December 3 “Black flags manifesto”, ISIS has vowed to expand its fight to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and (several other countries). President (sic!) Narendra Modi is a right-wing Hindu nationalist who worships weapons and is preparing his people for a future war against Muslims”.

There are already indications that, besides Jammu and Kashmir, there has been growing presence of ISIS in Pakistan. Realising that the worried Washington wants united global action to counter the ISIS and will help the targeted countries, including Pakistan which has itself become the home grown terrorists target, the Pakistani Army chief Raheel Sharif recently visited the US. He met senior US defence authorities. These developments will further help the Pakistan Army establishment to tighten its stranglehold on the Nawaz Sharif’s civilian government inferring that the Army is on board the current India-Pakistan dialogue process.

With India, already a victim of the Pakistan-based terrorists’ actions, especially in Jammu and Kashmir which also now faces ISIS threat, General Officer Commanding of Army’s 15 Corps Lt. General Satish Dua recently said “The ISIS is a live threat that cannot be ignored. It is a cause of concern and we are monitoring it”. He was replying to a question about the possibility of IS forging an alliance with terrorist outfits like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. “Security forces and intelligence agencies are monitoring this”, he said.

During his New York visit

widely accepted. Sure, it would require a significant change in dietary habits and there will be a lot of opposition. Then again, when has change been accepted meekly? Change requires commitment and persistence, and given the gravity of the situation it is the need of the hour.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate that these are merely

in September, Modi, in a strategically positive move, focused on global cooperation to fight the IS during his meetings, among others, with Jordan, Egypt, and Sweden leaders. He stressed the need of delinking terror from religion given the perception that it is primarily the Islamic bodies which have been indulging in terror actions including in Muslim majority countries like Pakistan.

Conflict of interest makes politicians act contrary to what they profess. This has also happened in the case of the Modi government’s postures in international forums and on the home front on countering terrorism. The prime minister’s laudable stand at international forums is in direct conflict with his discriminatory attitude in dealing with the terror actions of Muslim and Hindu fringe in the home country. Some examples.

Terrorists, it is said, have no religion. But it is primarily the Muslims fringe which has come to be treated as perpetrators of terror actions. Successive Indian governments, including the present Modi-led government, have been taking actions against such elements. But there have been cases where the extremist Hindu fringe has also indulged in terror actions. Previous governments have proceeded against some of the perpetrators. But the Modi government has often tried to protect the extremist Hindu fringe which has been charged with terrorist actions. Some such cases need to be recalled.

Rohini Salian, special public prosecutor had said that “in July last she had been asked by the National Investigation Agency to go “soft” on the 2008 Malegaon blast case in which she had wanted to seek discharge of nine Muslims, arrested and chargesheeted by the Maharashtra ATS and CBI for the 2006 blast in Malegaon. Ever since her statement on being told to go “soft”, 29 witnesses have turned hostile in two other blast cases - 15 in the 2007 Ajmer durgah blast case and 14 (the number of witnesses going hostile has been going up) -among the prominent accused is Aseemamand- in the 2007 explosion on board the Samjhauta Express”. She was later asked not to deal with the case.

There have also been a number of killings of scholars and rationalists including M.M.Kalburgi by the extremist Hindutva elements who were annoyed with his radical writings. The Modi government has also not taken any punitive action against those BJP MPs and “sadhus” and “sadhvis” who have been making extremist and separatist statements which create atmosphere not conducive for communal peace. Contrary to Modi’s claim of having ensured communal harmony and his call to the international community to fight against terrorism, his actions against the extremist Hindu fringe in India only proves that hypocrisy reigns supreme in politics.

It is imperative not only for Modi but also for the country that the prime minister reigns the hotheaded Hindutva elements and also sustains his reconciliatory image adopted after BJP’s massive defeat in Bihar Assembly elections. (IPA Service)

facts, perhaps biased to a certain extent. It is up to each individual in their wisdom and perception to form their opinion. “To beef or not to beef...” that is still the question.

Yours etc.,
Hari Subedi,
Budapest,
Hungary.

“Money has never made man happy, nor will it, there is nothing in its nature to produce happiness. The more of it one has the more one wants.”
— Benjamin Franklin

The Shillong Times
Vol No: LVIII No. 127 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2015

Rajan on debt pile-up
RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan has pointed out the risk involved in any heavy borrowing or over-leveraging by corporates. He has given vent to the worries of not only the Central bank but also of the government. Rajan said that debt was like dynamite and asked for moderation in the matter. Official data indicates the danger of the debt pile-up. Bad loans or banks amount to Rs 3.74 lakhs crore. Loans taken by wilful defaulters add up to Rs 64.335 crore. Bad loans account for 11% of all outstanding loans of Indian banks. Credit Swiss estimates that it can be as high as 17%. According to it, the growth debt of India’s 10 most indebted industrial groups has risen by 12% since 2013.

Much of the debt is on account of the bid for investment in infrastructure by large corporates during UPA rule. Some of it is because of projects failing to get off the ground owing to approvals held up and to slow down the economy. The large groups suffered as also too many lenders such as state owned banks. Banks have acted against defaulters and initiatives have been taken like strategic debt restructuring taking control of the corporate’s concern. But the results are yet to be seen. What is needed is reform of India’s financial sector. Top corporates and business groups should be made to raise funds from bond markets or other intermediaries after fixing a lowering of borrowings from banks. The financial market has to be broadened and deepened by the RBI to ensure the financing of the country’s growth. Governance of institutions and firms should be toned up. This is for the RBI and the government to make the necessary move.

LOOKING BACK
February 23, 1988

Role of speaker

The behavior of Mr. P.H. Pandian, the speaker of the dissolved Tamil Nadu Assembly continues to be the focus of attention in authoritative quarters for the part he played in the recent constitutional crisis in that state. He had been accused of arbitrarily interfering with the normal working of the House at a crucial stage of its functioning in relation to formation of a new government there. All that flowed from such undemocratic conduct led ultimately to the dismissal of the Ministry that he tried to prop up by all conceivable means, fair and foul, and also to the dissolution of the Assembly. A demand has since been made, and this is initiated among others by no less a person than Mr. C. Subramaniam, a former Union Minister, that Mr. Pradhan should be removed from this exalted office. Earlier, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. Chidambaram had asked for his resignation, which Mr. Pradhan refused to comply with taking shelter behind Article 179 which lays down that the speaker will continue to be in office until immediately before the first session after the dissolution. Against this is quoted Article 356 under which it is argued that the President can suspend Article 179 and this coupled with his proclamation dissolving the Assembly would imply that the Speaker had vacated his office, his membership of the House dissolution of the Assembly. While there is no difficulty in accepting the over-riding authority of

the President in this respect, Mr. Subramaniam prefers that more democratic course of invoking the Parliament to adopt a resolution removing the erring Speaker, rather than taking resort to any executive or presidential order for the purpose. In the case of an Assembly being non-existent, it is the Parliament which broadly assumes the role and responsibility of the State through the Governor during the pendency of President’s rule. A resolution adopted by Parliament should be preferred for the further reason that this would afford an opportunity for raising a debate on the doings of the particular Speaker in question and on the conduct of Speakers in general in identical situations. While the Constitution does not have detailed provisions in this regard, it is unfortunate that neither has any convention been established over the years which could be an adequate guide for uniform application in all Houses by all Speakers. Instead, the Speakers have tended to whimsical in cases which suit their temperament and purposes, leading at times to extremely unwholesome and unwelcome situations as happening in Tamil Nadu recently. Even an elementary convention that a Speaker once elected to this exalted neutral office should cease to be member of his erstwhile political party is observed more in its breach than otherwise. No wonder that such a truant Speaker should incidentally land himself in a catastrophe as has been brought about in Tamil Nadu.

It is heartening to note the Centre’s recent decision to select ten higher education institutes having a potential and provide these with substantial funding over the next four years to improve their quality. These institutes are expected to be granted funds ranging from Rs 100-Rs 500 crores so these can create world class research infrastructure and laboratories. Obviously, this has been intended to enable them to storm into the 100 or 150 global academic rankings. Some of the top ranking IITs as in Delhi, Mumbai, Madras, Kanpur and Kharagpur, besides the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore are among the institutions identified so far for the grant of funds. It is worth mentioning that in a recently released survey of Times Higher Education, BRICS and Emerging Economies, Indian educational institutes occupy 16 places among the top 200 universities among which are the IITs of Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Kharagpur, Roorkee, Guwahati and Kanpur. As is well known, China and South Korea have quite a few institutes among the top 100 in the world. Both countries as also Singapore have invested considerably with funding and policy support to endure quality upgrade in higher education. The Modi Government’s initiative in this direction is no doubt well intentioned though such endeavour should have been taken up much earlier by previous governments. In the present rankings, China has five institutes among the top 10 followed by two from South Africa and one each from Taiwan, Brazil and Russia. Even Taiwan has done better than India with 24 universities in top 200. One needs to ponder here about the plan of the present government towards the other higher educational institutes who are in the top 50 or 60 in the country. Lack of resources is a big problem for these and many other institutes and starving them of funds would have an adverse impact on the education system. There are far too many

Educational Institutions
Govt grant raise judicious
By Dhurjati & Oishee Mukherjee

universities in the country and it is expected that there should be some sort of uniform standards. It is pertinent to note that the national Knowledge Commission (NKC) while arguing for the establishment of an Independent Regulatory Authority in Higher Education (IRAHE) to take over the functions of the UGC, AICTE, NCTE, MCI etc. had made number of recommendations regarding financing of higher education. These include: Increase government support for higher education to at least 1.5 per cent of GDP from the present level of 1.15 per cent; Autonomy of universities to set student fees level, tap other sources and allow commercial use of facilities lake land; Student fees should meet at least 20 per cent of total expenditure of universities; Engage professional firms to generate alumni contribution and license fees and permit entry of foreign institutions in India and promotion of Indian institutions abroad. The 12th Plan approach paper echoed this view and mentioned a target of public spending of one per cent of GDP on higher education and 0.5 per cent on technical education. The Working Group on Higher & Technical Education for the 12th Plan projected a resource requirement of Rs 413,367 crores which obviously would require innovative and newer avenues of funding (Narayana Murthy Committee, 2012). Special attention should be paid to the problem of mushrooming of private centres of higher education and charging of high fees. This is so as one can safely say that in 40-50 per cent of cases, the quality and methodology of teaching and conducting examinations is rather poor. There is no monitoring of standards by any authority or by the Ministry of

Human Resource Development. The Central Advisory Board of Education Committee (CABLE, 2005) on Financing of Higher Education in its report aptly observed that “growth of self-financing courses in higher education institutions and private higher education should be regulated to avoid vulgar forms of commercialization”. Another important development that needs to be welcomed is the Supreme Court calling for an end to the reservation system in all institutions of higher education. Justices Dipak Misra and PC Pant noted (on October 28) that despite several reminders to the Centre and State governments to make merit the primary criterion for admissions to super specialty courses, reservation was still being given preference over merit. The obvious problem with reservation is that it dilutes the process of teaching. This has been aptly pointed by K L Chopra, former Director of IIT, Kharagpur: “While the hallmark of teaching in good institutions is the total autonomy of teachers to teach what they think is the frontier for professionals of the future, this is just not possible when 50 per cent of students do not even understand English. Good teachers, therefore, are demoted to the level of a school teacher”. Apart from funds, the basic factor that is needed to improve performance and quality is to give more autonomy to these institutions and less interference – whether by political leaders or bureaucrats. The other major factor is the content of the courses which has to be in tune with modern paradigms and recent advances in different spheres. But it also needs to be pointed out that merely following Harvard or Oxford or Cambridge is not

necessary in reforming or formulating our courses. In Western universities excellence is pursued to the exclusion of any social role, any role in defending any freedom struggle, any role in social transformation etc. But the case is different with Indian universities where intellectuals, including professors have played a major role in social and political life of the country even after Independence. It is thus quite apparent that the scenario, as regards higher education is concerned, is not quite bright. At a time when more and more students are aspiring for post graduate and even higher studies, there is need for creating more institutions of higher learning in the country to cope up with the demands. A recently completed study from 50 countries established that more and more higher education provided to at least 10 per cent of the population can witness significant increase in GDP. Education is not only a fundamental right for each human being but it also has the power of enabling all other rights. As Kailash Satyarthi, the Nobel Prize winner rightly pointed out: “When one wall of a classroom is built, the millions of walls that divide humanity collapse”. As more and more people become educated, there is bound to be social and economic progress and prosperity in the country. In its emergence as a world power, the country has to concentrate in planning a system of higher education that is judicious and rational and suited to the changing socio-political and socio-economic needs of the country and this has to be kept in mind while finalizing the Draft Education Policy. The educationists and planners have a vital role to play to ensure that all sections of the population get quality teaching facilities in tune with other countries of the world. — **INFA**

TO THE EDITOR

When justice weeps!
Editor,
What justice can we expect when a superstar Salman Khan can walk away after killing and grievously injuring the footpath dwellers in a case of drunken driving? The world is now so sharply divided between the haves and have nots that life has itself become uncertain and insecure. One is reminded of people like Ravindra Patil, the unarmed bodyguard assigned to Salman Khan whose only fault was to have spoken the truth. In the wake of the incident, Patil lost his family, his job and his own life. From a man with a job secure enough to fend for his family members he was reduced to a criminal and a beggar who finally lost his life in 2007. The bare truth here is that the rich, powerful and mighty can get away with anything while the poor and downtrodden are trampled to death. Who really cares about Ravindra Patil or Noorullah Khan who was crushed to death by actor Salman Khan, or the other four who were injured? The only person who really mattered was the superstar. This simply shows that only those who wield power have the last word. Similar is the case with our very own corrupt officials. We often see how a petty thief would be shamed, attacked and beaten to death while no one dares lift a finger against a powerful and more dangerous thief wearing the mantle of power, status and fame. Who is at fault? The system or we the people who make and mar the

system to suit our selfish interests and to remain secure in our comfort zones! The law has always been more harsh, stringent and cruel towards the weak and the powerless! Like in the rest of the world and the country, our state too is not far behind. Tragic indeed!
Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Via email
Online shopping killing the retail market!
Editor
The month of December is much awaited by the business community for it is at this time of the year that the sales go up. This year too, business person have waited patiently for the year-end. Unfortunately this time around, the story has not been the same. There has been no significant change in the sales. Actually the sales have gone down. One of the main factors behind this is the ‘Online Shopping’ mania that has gripped the middle class. This has destroyed the fortunes of wholesalers and retailers. These days people hardly come out of their homes for shopping. Some shopkeepers even close their day without a single sale. Physical retailers feel threatened by the marketing blitz of their online counterparts. E-Commerce is emerging as a real threat to the retail market. Some people are now shutting down their retail trade and trying their luck elsewhere. Retail shopkeepers remain in shock when they come to know of the heavy discounts given by online markets. People need to realize that Retail Shopping still has a lot to offer; in fact more than they can imagine. People need to step out of their homes and explore the market. Who knows, they might find something worth buying. Only time will tell whether E-Commerce has taken over the Retail Market but if things continue like this, the future of the retail market is going to be bleak.
Yours etc.,
Pratham Sharma,
Via email
Fake grievances!
Editor,
Apropos the news item on black flag protest of the Meghalaya Secretariat Service Association (ST Dec 9, 2015) I would like to advise the Association to first motivate its members to work hard and improve their efficiency instead of demanding for more money. I draw the attention of all concerned to the fact that the employees of the Meghalaya Secretariat who sit in their ivory tower are already drawing higher pay than those who serve in the Directorates and the diffi-

India has to navigate through maze of risks in 2016
By S. Sethuraman

As we enter 2016, with Modi Government’s third budget due in ten weeks, the domestic economy was still struggling out of a quagmire while continuing global slowdown and newer financial risks loomed large. India’s growth, with less cushion abroad, could thus remain subdued within 8 per cent in fiscal 2017. Any growth rate above 7 per cent in India, however, is often linked to some significant advance on the promised, though elusive, reform path. That is how investors abroad, even domestic corporates, keep calculating, meanwhile holding off making significant commitments. Government inevitably has to play a larger part with capital expenditure to create and update key infrastructure like power, roads, railways etc. This could inject some new energy and perhaps trigger investment revival. Claims of such step-up in current fiscal and outcome thereof could be known in the awaited mid-year review of economy. But un-fulfilled reform promises of the Modi Government, as it enters a politically crucial third fiscal year, assume greater importance, while an inevitable rise in public spending would pose tougher challenges for budget-makers. Social development commitments cannot be lost sight of as also mounting rural distress if there has to be credibility on NDA Government’s professed concerns for the poor. With lacklustre investor response, whether of those courted abroad or home corporates, many debt-ridden, and a seemingly endless process of making ‘doing business easier’ for them, with one enticing step after the other, India has still to ride out of a twilight zone for clearer signs of growth. This is where GST gains desperate urgency to chalk up at least one key reform. There may be varying perceptions of how well GST would impact for business or how badly consumers would fare, and irrespective of current efforts to get it through in winter session so as to usher this major tax reform by April 2016, not all states to be compensated see eye to eye with the Centre on reform details. As important as GST, is direct tax policy clarity, which has proved a mirage in the first two years of this government, despite all the reassuring notes from Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. Besides the Shah Committee’s recommendations in favour of foreign firms, another taxation committee is also at work for longer-term recommendations. Mr Jaitley will have three priorities - one to clear up the tax policy mess, another to restructure corporate tax, as announced, eliminating several exemptions, and a third to advance unfinished reform agenda (land, labour etc). He sets great store by fiscal consolidation, not to swerve from the committed road-map 2017-19. All this at a time when Government expenditure will mount in fiscal 2017, with the implementation of revised pay scales of central government employees, proposed by the Seventh Pay Commission and with more states pressing for special drought and disaster assistance after successive monsoon shortfalls and natural disaster, notably in Tamil Nadu. Other non-developmental outlays include rising defence and interest payments. Even as ‘plan’ and non-pan’ expenditure distinctions are sought to be obviated, the states would be coaxed to share to a greater extent spending on development under ‘cooperative federalism’. Centre’s revenue cannot be linked to more ambitious GDP growth projections and what looks feasible is not less than a minimum of 8 per cent after an estimated 7.2-7.5 per cent

growth in the current year. Even so, the fiscal policy strategy in 2016/17 is bound to rely not only on step-up in both tax and non-tax revenues but also enlarge the sphere of ‘cesses and levies’ in blind pursuit of ‘user pays’ principle. As the NDA Government enjoys the boon with lower oil prices, set to continue into 2016, Mr Jaitley could cut subsidies further. He is also toying with the idea of reducing post office savings rates for the people affecting the poor and senior citizens alike. Nevertheless, the budget cannot go short on reforms and development without a vision. The bait of reforms to benefit people - whatever time it may take to arrive at the ‘achhe din’ - with power for all, houses for millions, high speed trains, ‘smart’ cities, ‘make in India’ with capital and technology inflows, if adequately forthcoming, on terms set by investors, and translating other catch-phrases into workable propositions - cannot be ignored in the Budget. The implicit burdens for the common people have to be clothed nicely, and “inclusive development” is the most convenient jargon. A robust growth is supposed to translate into higher revenues and more revenues should mean more good to the people - though the people are no longer prepared to buy into these faulty aphorisms. This Government has been gloating about having restored macro-economic stability, “conquered inflation” and controlled deficits and launched reforms galore, but results on the ground are not visible at all. CPI is on rise with prices of pulses, edible oils and other essentials nearly doubling up. A sustained manufacturing growth is awaited but this also depends on demand pick-up. As expenditures grow and demand begins to build up, growth would be accompanied by inflationary pressures. Let it not be overlooked that lowered inflation indices do not reflect price stability or lowered prices for the basic food or other consumer goods. With service tax also enhanced and its cascading effect, India is now well-trenched into a high cost economy for its billion plus people. Externally, despite the US Fed moving to hike interest rate, the first after seven years of crisis, by mid-December, and consequent spillovers like capital outflows, India seems equipped to counter the negative impact. Dr Raghuram Rajan, Governor of RBI, has said the central bank is prepared to meet any eventuality arising out of US Fed actions but there are other imponderables in the evolving global context. The new source of risk haunting economies all over had been the market turmoils in China and its abrupt currency depreciation in August, triggering volatile movements in global exchange rates. 2015 was already one of the worst post-crisis years with growth slowing to 3 per cent due to uneven growth among major economies, a distinct slowdown in emerging economies and revival of financial market instability fears. Continuing low commodity prices hurting oil and other producers and depressed demand for minerals and metals have also lowered global trade volumes. The overall outlook for 2016 is not materially changing with the added likelihood of capital outflows from emerging and developing countries as interest rates harden in major economies. These together may operate to India’s disadvantage in terms of trade and capital flows. (**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.

“To live a creative life, we must lose our fear of being wrong.”
– Joseph Chilton Pearce

The Shillong Times

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The Nirbhaya sequel

IT was three years ago that Nirbhaya was raped and murdered. But the 17 year old accused who was the most brutal got only three years in a remand home and he is to be set free. Naturally Nirbhaya’s mother is very unhappy. The Rajya Sabha has not yet got around to clearing the Juvenile Justice Bill, 2014, which permits juveniles between 14 and 16 to be tried as adults. The present law is based on the notion that juveniles between 16 and 18 do not know what they are doing. This should not apply to such heinous crimes as gang rape and murder. The National Crime Records Bureau paints a dismal picture of juvenile crimes. Since 2001, there has been a 400 % rise in the number of such cases registered against juveniles. The Nirbhaya atrocity was followed by the Shakti Mills gang rape in Mumbai. Here also two convicted juveniles were sentenced to three years in a reformatory. Nirbhaya’s parents are right in thinking that all this is a travesty of justice. The present system provides privacy and financial aid to juvenile convicts instead of putting them behind bars. The juvenile rapists are protected while the rights of raped women are ignored.

Many other countries have got tougher in dealing with violent crimes committed by juveniles. Both US and UK now allow their juvenile courts to waive jurisdiction In favour of adult courts in cases which call for punishment and protection of society rather than lenient rehabilitative measures. India should follow their example and the Indian parliament should wake up to the need for speedy reform. Union Cabinet Minister, Maneka Gandhi is already fighting for such reform.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1988

Telecast of Parliamentary proceedings

Britain's House of Commons voted a motion to the nation 318 MPs voted in support against 264 opposing the motion, which shows that the MPs were present as much in strength as they were also sharply divided. The voting cut across party affiliations : the Conservative MP's motion was opposed by the Conservative Prime Minister, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher herself. The Bill now goes for a detailed scrutiny by the Select Committee and then will be given a second vote. Meanwhile, the debate for and against the innovation would surely evoke wider interest for after all the proposal involves a severe break with the past. The House of Commons, the Mother of Parliament as this unique and pioneering institutions is called, has ever been jealous as much of its many conventions as also of its numerous traditions which have been emulated equally jealously by most of the Common wealth countries wedded to Parliamentary democracy of the Westminster variety. The British move will inevitably have its repercussion in India as well, so that our Parliament and the Sate Assemblies may also be tempted to initiate similar debates and decisions if the Commons move gets final approval as it is likely to. Since Parliamentary and Assembly proceedings in our country in select cases at times become unworthy of a national exposure, a live telecast, which would not admit of any selective cover may not be deemed to be an unmixed blessing. At the same time, the threat of this exposure to a wider audience may itself work as

a brake on unbridled tempers running riot and at times, as in some of the Assemblies, ending up in a free for all. In cases also of intemperate use of words in fierce wordy duals, the presiding officer expunging the particular part of the proceedings would become useless as a remedy since the live telecast would have already done the mischief . Even so, on merit, it may not be tenable that the legislature alone and for all time is allowed to retain its essentially secretive sanctity, which would appear to be an antithesis of all human progress attained, technological and otherwise, since the age old conventions were ordained in days long lost in antiquity.

Meghalaya journalists form Union

The Meghalaya Union of Journalists (MUJ) had demanded from the Bhachawat Wage Board special allowances for journalists in the frontier regions provision for their security, insurance cover and hill allowance. The MUJ which was formed on Feb 20 in presence of Indian Generation of working of Journalists President K. Vikram Rao, elected Mr. Sumar Sawian as the convener and Mr. Subroto Bhattacharjee as the joint convener. The Union, is the 24th unit of the IFWJ. Mr. Sawian and Mr. Bhattacharjee were also nominated as the special invitees to the IFWJ working committee by its president.Later, Mr. Sawian and Mr. Bhattacharjee announced that a general body meeting of the Meghalaya journalists would shortly be held to elect its office bearers.

Lesson of Tolerance during Christmas Season

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

One writer described tolerance as the ability to take suffering and withstand any undesirable situation. Tolerance is also a key principle of every religion. Another scholar defined religion as human effort and strategy to satisfy and please his Maker or Creator and therefore tolerance is very much the tenet of that effort. Religion is the personal matter of a person and the same principle should also apply while propagating any religious beliefs. In this competitive world, tolerance helps a person to endure odd situations before achieving the desired objective. I thought to myself the kind of greetings I should convey in this season and the appropriate one is to recall the contributions of the few historical personalities who were born to detest intolerance and made the world fit for everyone to live in, but more is needed to do in order to complement their efforts. Today religious sectarianism is more political and power-oriented.

From Abraham Lincoln to Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Mother Teresa to Nelson Mandela, Abdul Kalam and many others, all of them have one thing in common that is their clear understanding on the equality of all persons irrespective of colour, race and background. Based on this fundamental truth of equality, complete freedom and deliverance from all types of oppression is indispensable so that a person or community can further acquire for themselves ways and means to develop and prosper in order to shape their own destiny. And for this reason, throughout their lives, they fought, propagated and lived by confronting the people, the society and the Government as well. Besides, they also fully acknowledge and recognize the inseparable freedom of the spirit of human beings which guides them to conduct themselves in relation to their physical needs as well as spiritual, mental or intellectual and social needs. Understanding this reality, intolerance is completely not within their vocabulary that they would even dare to think about it.

The world we live in both past and present is not free from oppression, clashes or attempts to dominate or enslave one over another. Intolerance occurs not only in the realm of religion but everyday everywhere in the work place, the streets especially when

strangers park their vehicles close to our homes within the community or religious organizations. The tendency to express aversion towards someone by someone is very common especially when a particular community or group is in a dominant position. Most often, our nature as human beings reveals that we cannot tolerate to see others prospering or achieving something good in life. Rather we desire to be on top of others even if we don't openly express such angst. This is the corruptible nature of the human race and in my opinion we need not be afraid but face them naturally as they are.

The fact is that when The Darwin's theory of evolution has failed, whereas the Khasi philosophy that The Hynniewtrep originated from heaven but stuck on earth entrapped in deception somehow is closer to what the Bible described. The first man Adam had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Then this human race that all of us belong to is undoubtedly a fallen race and is not free from jealousy, hatred, intolerance, etc. But history has its place and there are people who created history by their efforts and acts of goodwill to detest all these form of injustices.

When this issue of intolerance erupted, it reminded me of a small booklet I read few years back which contained the speeches of Rev. JJM Nichols Roy at the conclave of religious leaders in 1952 organised by the Ramakrishna Mission at Calcutta. At this gathering, he explained the three aspects of the Spirit of Christ. First is the Spirit that helps Christ to do miracles, heal the sick, forgive sinners and set people free from bondage and oppression. Second, the Spirit that raised Jesus from the death and third, the Spirit that makes people believe that Jesus is God Himself.

History has so much to tell and teach us about events and occasions that built and united societies. It is a source where we can understand our origin and background. In the same way God too as eternal

Creator plays His part in every episode in order to shape His own purpose. The state of affairs of the nation at the time when Jesus was born was in complete crisis both social and political. The Jewish state which was under the control of the Roman Empire was unstable. On the one hand, there was a puppet government ruled by Herod and alongside, there was a group of rebels or revolutionary outlaws led by Barrabas who was later captured by the Romans. In the social and religious affairs, the so called Pharisees and Sadducees specialized in the interpretation of the laws of the prophets and of Moses. They considered themselves as the intellectual class whose views and thoughts should be accepted by everyone in the society. They enforced what they believed and never tolerated those who opposed their way of life. From generation to generation people were expecting and anticipating freedom and liberty to choose their own destiny.

In those days health was not a state subject and beyond the purview and responsibility of governance. Sick people are often left to themselves and to the mercy of their own fates. Most of the times, they were regarded as a punishment because of their own wickedness or past transgressions and were ostracized. On the contrary, we learn that Jesus during His earthly ministry went around doing good things, healing all kind of sicknesses and oppressions. He touched the untouchables and lived among the rejected of the society. He looked for sinners, out-castes and gave them new hope in life and His primary objective was to eradicate hatred and the corruptible nature from this world and offered His own life as a sacrifice for that.

Toward the close of 4.B.C and in the beginning of the 1st A.D, something happened that evoked the future of the royal administration turning the entire state into a tragedy. When the enquiry on the birth of the new born King reached the court of King Herod, all hell broke loose. King Herod was totally perturbed and became violent. The fear of

losing his identity, position and privilege enraged him. Fearing that he would be upstaged, he turned his anger and intolerance towards children and executed all those below two years of age.

There was a deliberate attempt to stop the mission that Jesus intended to accomplish right from His early days but as promised no one could take away His life until He Himself gave it up which happened at the cross at Calvary and there He established a perfect mechanism for reconciliation. King Herod failed to differentiate between the political king and this spiritual King who conquered the hearts of men with love and forgiveness whereas the wise men understood the futuristic mission of this new born child. Later on His disciples and those who were with Him and witnessed with their own eyes, fearlessly carried the same mission across the world. One of them, Thomas died in South India. Therefore, Christianity in India is not only a western gospel of recent century, but dates back to 2000 years and more.

Those who think that their objectives have been achieved by imposing certain conditions and restrictions over others leading to numbers of unexpected incidences, are wrong. They are doing more harm upon themselves and their masters. The Gujarat riots of 2002 are a lesson, which the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee linked the NDA's defeat in the 2004 General Election. Therefore, the present NDA regime, however effective and serious it might be, should take note of it because there are millions more Indian people who do not wish India to be divided along any sectarian line but are happy enough to co-exist with multiplicity of cultures and beliefs.

The world we live in belongs to us and collectively we should show no tolerance against the destruction of our environment. The Supreme Court has done the right thing by controlling the sale of diesel vehicles over 2000cc designed for the rich to pollute the environment making it hard for the poor to survive. It is high time that we revive at any cost the green ecology symbolized in the green and shining trees.

Centre Bashing
Non-BJP states join hands

By Insaq

Non-BJP States are having a field day slandering Prime Minister Modi and his NDA government at the Centre. Every single day this past week, the Opposition benches, particularly Congress, in both Houses of Parliament have grabbed one or another issue to lambast the power centre in New Delhi. Unsavoury developments either in Delhi, or Arunachal Pradesh, or Assam, or Kerala are being described as political vendetta unleashed. For starters, the infamous Delhi-Centre fight has become bigger. The CBI's recent raid on the secretariat of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to nail his principal secretary with corruption charges has the AAP government fuming. It has managed to garner support from Congress and TMC, who too are facing the CBI wrath. In its defence, the BJP has refuted all charges and hit back by accusing Kejriwal of trying to defend corrupt officers. In turn, Kejriwal has dragged in the Union Finance Minister, saying that CBI was looking for files in his office on the Delhi District Cricket Association (DDCA), in which Jaitley "would be nailed". Sadly, the blame game is getting uglier, much to the chagrin of those yearning for governance. Sign of any respite from mud-slinging is clearly elusive.

Arunachal Pradesh 'Destabilised'

Likewise, in the North East, the BJP is being blamed for the upheaval in Congress-ruled Arunachal Pradesh. In all 21 rebel Congress MLAs have joined hands with 11 of BJP and two independents to 'impeach' Assembly Speaker, interestingly at a makeshift venue (community hall). Recall, for the past three months, Chief Minister Nabam Tuki has been under siege with the MLAs' group seeking his ouster. A worried Congress has accused BJP's Governor of 'running a parallel government' and calling the Assembly session unilaterally. It thus had the administration seal the Assembly complex and 27 of its MLAs boycotted the proceedings. Claiming that the Speaker's impeachment was "illegal and unconstitutional", the Congress in Delhi led a delegation to President Mukherjee. Party President Sonia Gandhi accused the Modi government of trying to 'destabilize its democratically-elected government' in the State and sought intervention. However, the BJP hit back saying the Congress cannot pass on the buck of its internal fighting to it and there was an 'emergency situation" in the State. All eyes are on how the Congress retrieves its State. Will the spat see it knocking next on the Supreme Court's door?

Assam Monastery Row

Assam poll preparations are getting hotter by the day with the Congress-BJP war growing. On a visit to the State, Congress Vice-President Rahul Gandhi alleged he was stopped by 'RSS workers' from entering a 'temple' (actually a monastery) in Barpeta. His claim was backed by three-term Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, who in Delhi asserted he was well aware of the ploy through the State intelligence. Though women are not allowed in the Monastery, the BJP and the RSS conspired and got a group of them to sit in front of the entrance to block Rahul. Even though he had the police force, Gogoi said he chose not to make a big issue and Rahul prayed from the gate outside! However, the head priest refuted the charge and insisted he waited for over four hours to receive Rahul, who then chose to bypass the monastery. The big question is who to believe? An inquiry

into the case, as Gogoi said should nail the culprits. Be that as it may, fresh controversies are bound to erupt. The electorate would undeniably be kept busy and amused till Assembly polls due in March-April 2016.

Kerala Peeved

Down south, the UDF government in Kerala is up in arms too. It's peeved over the withdrawal of an invitation to its Chief Minister Oommen Chandy at the "behest of the PMO". The case being: Modi was invited by the organisers, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam to unveil the statue of former Kerala Chief Minister R Shankar, wherein Chandy was to preside over the function. However, Chandy was struck of the list. By withdrawing the invite to the CM, the PM has insulted the people of Kerala, is the Congress charge. The Centre denied this saying it had no hand in it and that the decision to withdraw the invite was taken by the social organisation itself. Modi's 'cooperative federalism' has become a victim in this tu tu mein mein. Worse, on his first visit to the State since taking over as Prime Minister!

UP Lokayukta

Uttar Pradesh Government of Akhilesh Yadav would be embarrassed pink. Following its shocking failure to comply with the Supreme Court's order, the latter invoked its constitutional powers and appointed the Lokayukta on Wednesday last. Two months ago, the apex court had fixed a deadline for the 'constitutional functionaries'-- Chief Minister, Leader of Opposition and Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court, to appoint the Lokayukta, which has been mired in controversy since April last year, when the post fell vacant. Regretting the 'astounding' failure of the Samajwadi Government, the Court put former HC judge, Justice Virendra Singh in the coveted seat. It did so after examining the five short-listed names for the post of the State's ombudsman, for which no 'consensus' was arrived at. Recall, that Governor Ram Naik refused to accept Akhilesh's nominee as the Lokayukta and the long tussle reached apex court's doorstep. The new Lokayukta has promised to weed out corruption from the State. Crucially, whether he will put the Chief Minister's office within purview is what needs to be watched.

Drought-Hit States On Notice

The Centre and eight drought-hit States have been put on notice. This follows serious concern that provisions under the National Food Security Act 2013, which places obligation on the State to provide 5 kg of food grains to each person in the family per month, are not being adhered to. A PIL was filed in the Supreme Court, wherein the court has asked Maharashtra, UP, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Telangana to respond. Sadly, the issue before the apex court was that State governments "have failed to redress the misery of a vast population. They have even failed to properly implement the existing schemes that could have provided support during this period of distress..." For example, a survey in Bundelkhand region in UP showed that "39% of families had not consumed pulse even once in the last 30 days, 60% had not consumed any milk and 14% admitted going to bed hungry at least once!" All eyes are on these States as to whether they have made provisions to assure at least two square meals a day to the affected people.---INFA

TO THE EDITOR

The frustrating news

Editor,

People expect a lot from news channels, for they bring headlines from one corner of the world to the other, but these days news channels do not live up to the expectations of viewers. Instead of presenting the headlines, they focus on a particular story to kill time. A month back, the entire focus was on the Sheena Bora murder case; now, the news channels have shifted their attention to the Mumbai double murder case. News channels are constantly in search of a story which can kill time. This is true with most news channels. The management bodies of such news channels should come up with ideas to satisfy the viewer rather than to kill time. At the time when the Bihar elections were going on, news channels were busy sowing seeds of conflict between the contesting parties and also between the members of a particular party. They did this by continuously making announcements of the abuses hurled by the candidates on one another. News is no more news. The management board of the news channels should look to present the proper news and headlines. Until this happens, news channels will

not be able to touch heights or to satisfy the common man.

Yours etc.,
Pratham Sharma,
Via email

NH 44 : Govt deaf to pleas

Editor,

I write with deep concern over the pathetic and deplorable condition of the National Highway 44 in East Jaintia Hills particularly from Sonapur Village-Umkiang to Ratacherra. Through this letter, I also would like to express my deep anguish and unhappiness over the attitude of the Govt. through the PWD(R) Jowai Central Division and NHAI towards this road. It is to be reminded that the road is under NHAI. Last year, I was informed through a reliable source that NHAI has sanctioned more than Rs. 21 crore to repair the NH-44 from Jowai to Ratacherra. The task to repair the road was given to the PWD(R) Jowai Central Division and thereafter the PWD(R) has further given the task conferred on it to some private contractor and I have documents to prove that as per the terms and conditions between the con-

tractor and the PWD(R) Jowai Central Division, the road should be repaired by July 2015. I have to admit that, the PWD(R) through its contractor has repaired some portion of the road like in Jowai and Ladrymbai and some parts of East Jaintia Hills. However, the repairing was badly done and the villages which fall under Elaka Narpuh in East Jaintia Hills were not covered in the said work. The longest bridge in Elaka Narpuh the so called Sonapur bridge and the lone road tunnel in Sonapur, were not repaired even once since 2012. The road over the said tunnel and bridge is almost not motorable. All the rods are exposed but all this is glossed over by the PWD (R) and NHAI. The present condition of this road is like a curse to the commuters and people who live in these villages. Many parts of this road is littered with potholes, big enough to make a heavy vehicle turn upside down. Small and light vehicles often breaks down and accidents in these areas is a daily routine.

Recently on the 16th December 2015, one loaded truck met with an accident because of the potholes in a village called Kuliang. The consequence was that the entire NH-44 from Khliehriat to Ratacherra was

jammed and blocked for the entire day and this has brought a lot of hardships to the people. I still fail to understand , why the PWD (R) cannot repair the road even after getting such a huge sum of money? Where has this money gone? Can the PWD(R) use such money for the good of the people? Who wants bad and pathetic roads? I don't think that the condition of the road will be as it is now if is in Shilllong. It's a shame that, the PWD(R) is himself from Jaintia Hills but still he doesn't see this problem. It's a shame that our local representative is in the ruling party but he is yet to raise his voice on this issue.

Its already too late for the NHAI and the PWD to act, but still I request you again to please act for the sake of the larger public. Failure to act, will make the two agencies answerable in the court of law in the form of a PIL....and the judiciary will act.

Yours etc.,
Kynjaimon Amse
Umkiang,
East Jaintia Hills

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.

By Anna Juhi John

William Shakespeare's 37 plays (17 comedies & 10 each tragedies & histories) and 154 Sonnets (126 sonnets addresses a young man and rest 28 a woman often referred to as the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady respectively) are the most read and used writings world over (translated into 80 languages) after The Holy Bible.

Little did he imagined that people would eagerly lap up his writings even centuries after he would be gone.

The Bard of Avon, as he is popularly christened and immortalized as the National Poet of England linguistically rules the world in every and all human conceivable ways and manner undisputedly and irrefutably as there is no literate person in the world who is not using his words innovatively coined as a wordsmith directly,indirectly or remotely.

Shakespeare was born on April 23,1564 (disputed) and incidentally died on the same day in redolence to that of Lord Buddha whose birth-death days coincides known as Buddha Purnima.

His name was derived from the old English words of "schakken" and "speer" meaning argumentative. It is (un)believably stated that he himself spelled his name in 80 allotropic ways and isotropic manners !!!.

Attended King's New School,a local grammar school, in Stratford-upon-Avon.

No University Education since married persons were barred from University enrollments on those days.

Recall the Indian epic creations of Meghadoot by famed Kalidas as having no basic epic era class gurbul education on those days.

At the age of 18 in 1582, married 8 years older Anna Hathaway.

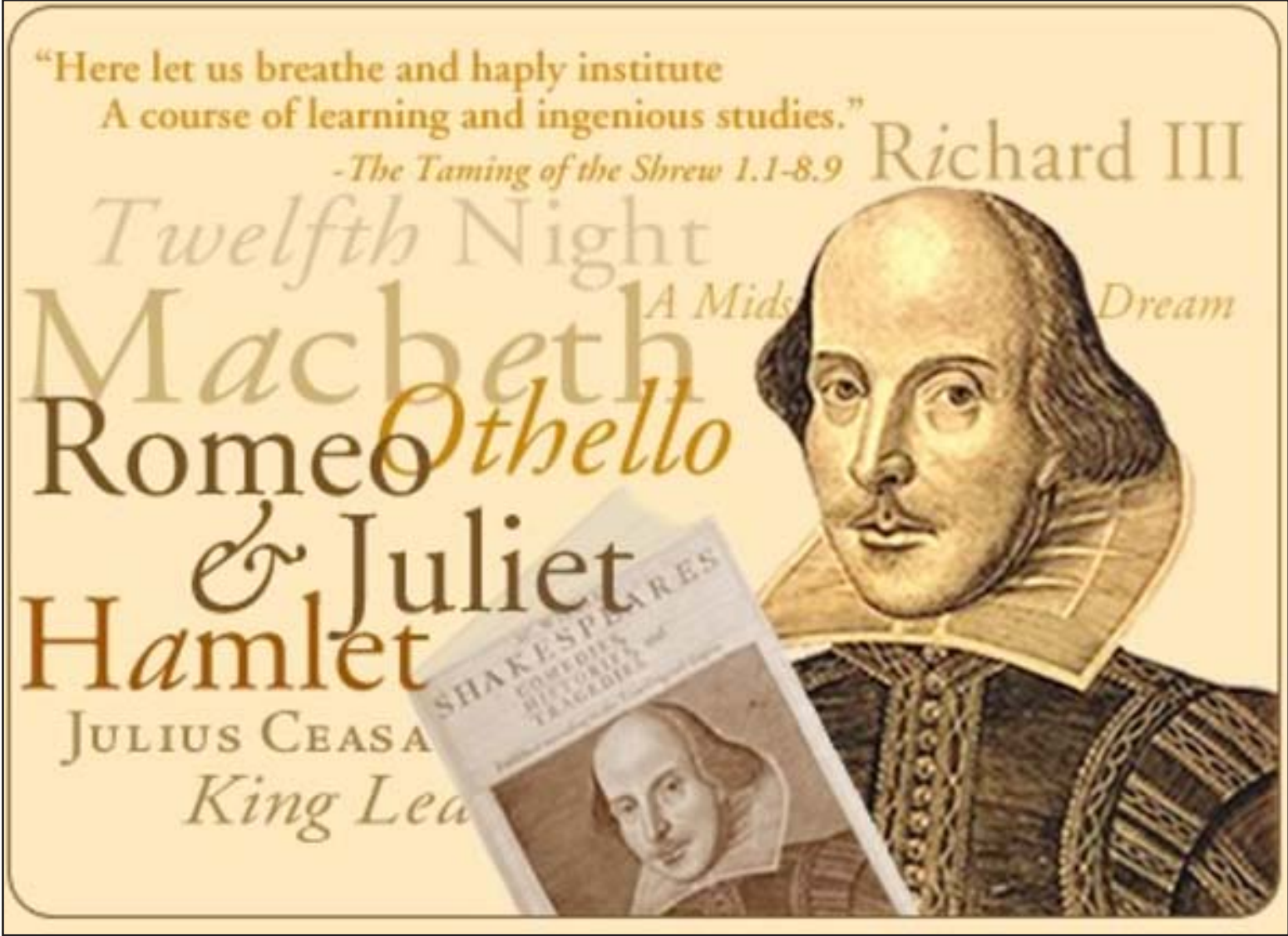
Daughter Susanna was born in 1583.

Son,Hamnet (died at the age of 11 in 1596) & Daughter,Judith twins born in 1585.

Mysterious period (1578-1582).

Nobody is sure about what the young Shakespeare did between 1578 when he left the school and 1582 when he got married. In any case, he ran away from his home about which one version is that he was caught and prosecuted for his act of stealing a deer. Some claim that Shakespeare worked as a butcher. Another version is that he worked with a legal office.

In any case, this mysterious period in the life of



Shakespeare @As U Like Him

Shakespeare is a mind bothering matter of intense study and research even today.

First Play "Comedy of Errors" in 1589-94.

Creative years between 1594-1613 with the last play "Henry VIII" .

Mysterious death on 23 April,1616.

Shakespeare's birth place, also popular as Swan House locally due to its conversion into an Inn for some time , is now managed by a Trust and is place of academic pilgrimage and a tourist destination "As You like (love)It " .

For the English writers, a visit to Shakespere's birth place is like a visit to Bethlehlem, the birth place of Jesus Christ.The walls and glass-pans are mischievously scribbled with the name of visitors in the olden days(nowadays under 24x7 camera eyed failure free surveillance and observations).

One such scribbled name is that of Charles Dickens (as told to me by my father who saw it physically on a visit to Shakespeare's birth place) like that is visible in the monumental Indian tourist edifices except in Taj Mahal , scribbling in the liv-

A pupil's quatercentenary tribute to the Bard

ing rooms of Shakespeare who later saved the house from going into private hands. Outside, several professional actors perform scenes from his plays on demand as a tourist entertainment activity.

His 400 years old grave epitaph inside the Holy Trinity Church at Stratford-upon-Avon remains undisturbed till now and reads his life wish:

" Good friend for Jesus sake forbear To dig the dust enclosed here !

Best be the man that spares these stones And crust be he that moves my bones."

Man Theatre to Movie Theatres.

Numerous adaptations of his plays have been floated across the moviedom in English and Indian vernacular lan-

William Shakespeare was born at Henley Street on 23 April, 1564, Father : John Shakespeare (Gloves Maker) & Mother: Mary Arden Siblings: Edmund; Richard,Anne;Joan ; Gilbert;Joan & Margaret.

guages. Shakespeare's journey into Indian Cinema is contemporaneous with his entry into Hollywood though the Bard made entry in Calcutta with its historic advantage of the East India Company.

It is said that when Shakespeare came to India, he became an Indian. And when he came to Bollywood, he became a Bad Shah."

In Hollywood, the famous few are: Taming of the

Shrew(1967) from The Taming of the Shrew; Big Business (1988) from Comedy of Errors; The Lion King(1994) from Hamlet..... etc and that in Bollywood,the famous ones are: the very famous are: Dil Farosh (1927-silent film) frm Merchant of Venice; Romeo & Juliet(1947) starring Mother India famous Nargis and Mother of Munnabhai famed Sanjya Dutt;Angoor(1982)

from Comedy of Errors: Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak (1988) from Romeo and Juliet; Maqbool (2004) from Macbeth;Omkara (2006) from Othello, Haider (2014) from Hamletetc... while in Kollywood, Bhranti Bilash (1977) from The Comedy of Errors; Do Dooni Char(1968)..... In Malayalam , Kaliyattam(1998) from Othello and in Manipuri,the Macbeth adaptations like Manipuri Macbeth (1997); Macmeth (2014); Macbeth(2015) to name a few.

HAMLET- Globe by Globe.

As part of the year long globetrotting celebrations of the 450th birth anniversary of the Bard across the world, a twelve- member team as in the picture of the original Shakespeare's time existed Globe Theatre, England in association with the British Council in India staged the best rated tragedy HAMLET infamous for its "To Be or Not to Be" soliloquy in an abridged form limited to two hours show in Bangalore recently for Indian show being a country where Shakespeare is most revered and respected.Hamlet became much popular adaptation in India (Contd on P-VII)

Child: "Face it, Dad, you're a dinosaur." Me: "Could a dinosaur do THIS?" (My fingers flicker over the computer keyboard and I accidentally delete Photoshop and emptied the trash.) Child: "Yes." Me: "Ah. That was meant to be a page of HTML5 code."

Technology is trouble. You have no idea. A bad driver was just arrested after her car phoned the police. The motorist was bumping into things when her Ford car computer tipped off the cops and then turned into a two-way radio so they could speak to her.

"Your car called to say you'd been involved in an accident," a police officer said.

Everything's fine, the woman lied, but the cops preferred the car's version of events. It told them their location and they arrested her on hit-and-run charges. As they dragged her away, the car computer could be heard saying quietly to itself: "One down, seven billion to go."

Okay, so I made up the last bit, but the rest is true. It happened recently in the US state of Florida and the report was sent to me by reader Daniel Platt, who said: "If gadgets are going to start reporting users' misbehavior, we're all screwed." True.

Platt's friend has a paranoid smartphone app called Bugle that calls for help if it feels abandoned. Last week she went for a one-hour swim but stopped at a donut shop on the way home. Her phone, waiting at home, sent out texts and emails saying she'd disappeared. "All she was doing was giving herself a little 600-calorie reward for burning 280 calories," he said. "As one does."

I told him that one of my friends has a

Samsung Galaxy phone which sends a n emergency alert if he presses the home button three times in a row. He's clumsy and it regularly calls for help when he most needs to be alone, frequently summoning emergency help to the toilet.

A colleague from Australia said the police in the west of her country set up roadside computer cops to automatically spot motorists driving without having paid road

A car just called police and had its driver arrested

tax. The lists were unexpectedly long. It became obvious that when human police had been doing the job, they let most offenders off, because they were repentant and tearful: "I'm so sorry, I'm six months behind because of the trauma caused by the recent death of my pet flea."

In contrast, the computer cop wouldn't let anyone off even if they were one day late and all 20 of their children had died that morning. Police, ordered to immediately arrest virtually everyone in Western Australia, instead disabled the computer cops.

But that's rare. Mostly, technology is getting the upper hand. The most worrying thing was that Platt said that all new cars contain computers.

In your next car, remote voices will give you live advice while you are actually driving along the road.

Police: "The data stream shows that your driving is shockingly bad, sir. We suggest you make more use of the on-board car computer."

My kids: "Fat chance. The man's a dinosaur."

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

How did you come by playing the Santoor? Why do you call it the Shata Tantri Veena?

My father Rabi Bhattacharya used to play the Sitar. As a child I was not at all serious about music but grew up playing the Organ, Sitar, Guitar, Tablas and the Piano as my father ran a music school in our Howrah residence. It was my father who not only introduced me to the world of music but literally pushed me to pursue music. It was a good 15 years before I finally decided to take up music, the Santoor, to be precise (his first year in college), under the guidance of Pt. Dulal Roy. Yes I prefer calling my instrument the Shata Tantri Veena. The name Santoor is of Middle-Eastern origin, just like it is known by other names in different parts of the world. Shata Tantri Veena, the original name can be found in the Vedas, so why not use the original.

Is it true that you were the only approved disciple of Pt Ravi Shankar in Santoor? Tell us about that experience

Indeed. It was a lovely experience. He was my Guru till he breathed his last and will continue to be so. I have learnt so much from Panditji. I used to stay with him, in Varanasi. I also visited him in Mumbai and the USA. You see, it is very important to have that Guru-Shishya

bond, only then can you learn music. One should be able to follow his guru in all times. There is a difference between a teacher and a guru. Now you may say it means the same when you translate the word guru into English, yes it indeed translates into a Teacher, but, a guru is someone according to me that is, one who will not only teach you a lesson but will be able to mould your character. Panditji, my Guru, was that man. He would look at me and instantly he would know something was not right. He would speak to me alone and try and solve the problem. Under Panditji, I kept on learning and improving, till today I try and match his skills but it will take time to reach that level. There is only one Ravi Shankar, I doubt if there will be another one.

Pt. Tarun Bhattacharya has brought new dimension in the playing style of Santoor, creating patterns that were unprecedented. The maestro is a familiar name in the global music scene but recognition from his own country is elusive. In a chat with IBNS correspondent Sudipto Maity he opens up about his music, life and how he has been overlooked for decades now by his own country

‘Pt. Ravi Shankar will continue to be my guru’



Pt. Tarun Bhattacharya

Do you think that Bollywood music eclipses Classical music in India? Who do you think is responsible for this trend?

Partly yes. Look, I think we are responsible in a way. I am a very hopeful musician, I am a very positive musician, and I strongly believe in the art of presentation. I think we should have been a bit more careful while catering to the youth. It is all about horses for courses. When I play in college fests, I generally try and modify my style. Play a Bollywood tune; delve into it, try and play some ragas related to that tune and I have seen it works. Similarly when I am playing to a much older audience, my performance becomes a lot more raag oriented, a lot grammatical. I do it very professionally. So you see, we have to be a bit smarter in presenting ourselves. Make

us a bit more appealing to the youth. I personally want to inculcate classical music among the youth. It is all about engaging them; spreading the music to the younger generation.

Are you satisfied with the music scene of our country now?

No, I am not satisfied with the music scene of our country. Having said that I support all kinds of music, I listen to a lot of fusion music. But, I strongly believe classical music could have enjoyed a bit more success. We suffer from the lack of sponsors. Look at Bollywood music; you have MTV and other dedicated channels. Look at sports; even it has so many channels. The animals too have their own independent channels in this country, but classical music...none. No one wants to promote us. Be it radio or television, it is all about TRP and clearly classical music will not provide them that. Having said it all, the radio stations at times do their bit, but it is simply not enough. We need a major uplift.

How important is music for growth?

Music is a drug, a positive drug. This is what I tell everyone, be musical if you cannot be a musician. Personally I believe that music helps everyone overcome their stress. You can meditate using music; it is such a powerful tool. My music is currently being used in German (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Like botany one of the other parts of life science is zoology. People who are keen to work with animals may look for career into zoology. Zoology, a branch of biology, is the scientific study of animals including protozoa, fish, reptiles, birds and mammals. In other words, Zoology is the science which deals with study of animals and their existence in the environment. It encompasses the structure, anatomy, characteristics, behaviour, distribution, mode of nutrition, physiology, genetics and evolution of animal species.

One can take this subjects in the graduate level. Students pass enroll them in science stream after secondary examination. Zoologists study or work directly with different species of animals not only in Zoos, but also in their natural habitats, i.e. forests. There are more scopes for the students of Arunachal Pradesh as the state is rich in fauna. There are scopes in the field of conservation apart from research and teaching.

The Zoological Survey of India, the only taxonomic organization in the country involved in the study of all kinds of animals from Protozoa to Mammalia, occurring in all possible habitats from deepest depth of the ocean to the peaks of Himalaya, was established on 1st July, 1916 to promote survey, exploration and research leading to the advancement in our knowledge of the various aspects of the exceptionally rich animal life.

After completing graduation in this subject one can go for higher studies. Many universities in the country and abroad offers courses re-

Career option in Life Science - Part II

lated to zoology. After graduation aspirants may look for specialization for better career and job opportunity.

Aspirants must prepare themselves for various job opportunities after completing zoology as subjects. As government jobs are limited so aspirants need to explore more avenues which are possible through various mediums. Most of the students have called up and asked me about what they can do after passing botany .here, I would like to mention that scopes in zoology and botany is bit similar as both are part of life sciences. People who are interested in sales and marketing may go for MBA or join various pharmaceuticals companies. There are many scopes in private sectors and interested may take up entrepreneurship as a way of earning and better livelihood.

Exam Updates:

CTET: The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India has entrusted the responsibility of conducting the Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) to the Central Board of Secondary Education, Delhi. The Central Board of Secondary Education, Delhi will be conducting the 9th Edition of Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) on 21-02-2016 (Sunday) for a candidate to be eligible for appointment as a teacher for class I to VIII. Last date for applying is 28th December.

JEE Main: Admission criteria to Undergraduate

Engineering Programs at NITs, IITs, Other Centrally Funded Technical Institutions, Institutions funded by participating State Governments, and other Institutions shall include the performance in the class 12/equivalent qualifying Examination and in the Joint Entrance Examination, JEE (Main). The Paper-1 (B. E./B. Tech.) of JEE (Main) will also be an eligibility test for the JEE (Advanced), which the candidate has to take if he/she is aspiring for admission to the undergraduate programmes offered by the IITs. The States of Gujarat, Nagaland, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Odisha have joined JEE (Main) system. Therefore, the candidates seeking admission to the institutions in these states, which were earlier admitting based on their State Level Examination, are also advised to fill in the JEE (Main) - 2016 application form online. The last date for applying is 31st December.

Vocational courses at TISS: TISS Guwahati campus has announced admissions for Bachelor's degree and diploma courses related to Early Child Protection, Child Protection and one year diploma course in Geriatric Care. Classes would start from January next year.

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

By Veturi Srivatsa

If Virat Kohli keeps harping on "unfair criticism" of the dicey pitches on which his Indian team won the Test series 3-0, he is unwittingly admitting that there is some truth in what critics say.

Right through the four-match series against South Africa, the Indian captain seemed visibly unhappy with the media not giving enough credit to his young team beating the world's No.1 team.

No one has belittled the victory, coming as it did against a team hailed as the best travellers who did not lose a series overseas for almost a decade. It was only pointed out that if the matches were played on slightly better pitches, the enjoyment for both the teams and the fans would have been more instead of making it feel pyrrhic and blurring the big picture of Indian cricket.

For a year and half or so, a sense of deja vu will prevail as India will be playing much of its international cricket at home. Imagine, if the fortunes reverse like it happened when India went without a victory in eight overseas Tests against England and Australia not so long ago, the depressing scenario.

Will the cycle of winning at home and losing overseas continue?

To be fair to Kohli, he has shown lot spunk as captain and his young teammates rallied around him to raise a hope that things can change in the coming years.

After the South Africa series, Kohli has somewhat modified his line of attack, saying people are finding new ways to criticise his team when it is miffed. He is particularly wined with some former players whom the younger players looked up to while growing up.

He reserved his harshest for the media: "Someone who hasn't played for the country has no right to comment on an international

Kohli's below-the-belt strike

cricketer anyway. I don't think that has any kind of logic. You cannot sit there and say how you would have done something differently when you have not been in that situation yourself and don't have the mindset of a cricketer."

It surely is a below-the-belt strike.

His grouse is that that the series was played at home and people here were out looking for weaknesses and finding ways to criticise, failing to notice the kind of good cricket the team played.

Kohli predictably took shelter under stats, pointing out that the top five run-getters and the top two bowlers were Indians, without mentioning that it was in a low-scoring series.

As for former cricketers, he is a little conciliatory in tone. He says he is hurt seeing the people he has grown up watching and admiring going hammer and tongs at his players.

Kohli feels that what is written, spoken and analysed in the media is taken

as Gospel by the fans and if things were projected negatively, then the players suf-



fer. It is not difficult to know what he was hinting at and he was clearly trying to protect his teammates like a good leader.

Some of his comments are as flippant as any, coming from any captain. He is not the first one to rant. To say that only those who played

international cricket understands the pressures doesn't merit a reply. He spoke like his team director who soon endorsed his protégé's ability to turn things around. Both have been promoting each other ever since they go together.

Kohli is not the first captain to undermine critics. Some of his predecessors also tried to put the media in their place, almost saying they should only report the game on the basis of the scoreboard and not air their critical appreciation on a highly skilled sport!

One captain, perhaps the first Indian to start writing a regular column in a magazine and who now sits in the commentary box, questioned a highly respected cricket writer's competence to comment on missed catches in the slips by wondering whether the journalist ever stood in the

slips and took a catch!

Then there was that classic by a garrulous skipper who asked a passionate cricket writer what did he know about cricket. He used the same line to tick off all those who didn't agree with him. At last one reporter gave it back, saying he had played a fairly good grade of cricket to sit in judgment on what's happening out in the middle!

Another worthy couldn't take criticism by one of the greatest India captains and cheekily stated that his predecessor was far removed from modern day cricket and didn't understand the rigours of the game.

A lot of players seriously think that the job of the media is to faithfully reproduce what they say without questioning and they are happy as long as their game is not dissected or their form questioned.

Modern sportspersons are so fond of their face and voice, they would only like to be projected as they would like it, failing which "no interviews, please."

No one will thus risk annoying an Indian captain!

‘Pt. Ravi Shankar will continue to be my guru’

(Contd from P-VI) mental asylums to treat people. I have seen people taking recreational drugs for fun, I tell you, leave those and for a change take this (music). You will spot the difference. You will feel so better, so refreshed, it is like magic. And once you put in this habit you will be so much better. Try listening to Pandit Ravi Shankar after you wake up from your night's sleep and go to bed listening to Ustaad Bismillah Khan. Within a month's time the drugs will be gone. Our body functions like a machine. The mind is its software and the exterior self is the hardware and just like a machine both the software and the hardware needs to function well in order to keep things going. Listening to music will upgrade our software, the mind. And when the mind is stable, the body will run smooth, free of malpractices.

You have performed in so many countries and in so many lovely venues, if you are to pick out the top three, what would they be? (He performed at the Royal Albert Hall too)

Since you mentioned about the standing ovation I will share a small story. It was my first tour and it was Canada. There were three of us. We were sent by ICCR and they were top notch venues but our first performance was special. We played a small piece as instructed by Panditji. He told us to shorten our pieces, play a piece for half an hour each and not prolong it any further like we were used to in India. So there we were, the three of us, just finished a piece and right afterwards every one, all 2000 people stood up and clapped. We were new and thought that was it, these people are leaving. So we too packed our instruments and left. Moments later the manager arrived and asked us why we left and we told him that we were under the impression that the audience were leaving. The manager looked at us and said we performed extremely well and that was a standing ovation as a result. So that was it, my standing ovation story. That was the first time I experienced the thrill of entertaining a large crowd. Now I was performing in Spain and the caption of that event was ‘Om Shanti’. Right after I finished, everyone in the crowd chanted ‘Om Shanti’ and they were in meditative state. It was a strange encounter. Back home, I was performing in Santiniketan. They applauded by chanting ‘Sadhu, Sadhu’, it was such a lovely experience. I once performed in Varanasi and you won't believe what I witnessed. The 2500 odd people together chanted ‘Har Har Mahadev’; it was a spine chilling affair. So you see, every place I have been to, it has been a different experience. I have enjoyed it all.

Why aren't you scoring for movies?

I have done the background score for many Bengali films. But I am sure you want to know why I am not scoring for any Hindi movies and the reason is the lack of good projects. Yes I have been offered projects before, but I would love to score for a love story, that will depict real love, not only lovey-dovey scenes but pain as a form

of love. And so far I have not found anything substantial.

People are returning their national awards in India to protest rising intolerance as they say. Do you believe that returning of awards will help?

No, I do not think what they are doing is right. By returning the awards you are in fact embarrassing your own motherland and what good is it to anyone. Look, our country is like our family and just like in our family, differences exist, but to wash one's dirty linen in public is uncalled for. There are ways in which you can protest, but this is no way. Returning of award is simply a trend. Some people are riding it. People are doing it to get attention, I think these days getting an award is not that important as the returning of them is (he laughs). I would personally never return an award, however I will protest in other forms. Maybe by writing a blog or doing something that will not create such hype.

Is politics hampering art and artists?

Yes, it is. Musician or any other artists need years of concentration to reach a certain level. If you are busy doing other things other than practicing your trade you are bound to falter and that is what is happening with many people I know. Politics itself is not a bad word. Politicians are also not bad, for example, Khudiram and Netaji gave up their life for this country. They were politicians, but it's the state of politics now that I am afraid of. They tend to curb away your power and I am against it. I am against anything that will direct me to compromise on my music, for me it comes first, others follow later.

Looking at the number of awards you have received from the government so far, do you think you have been overlooked?

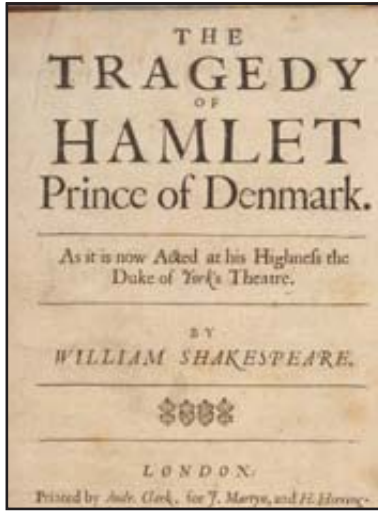
Now that is a big question you have asked me. I would not hide anything either. Yes I am disappointed. I do feel I have been overlooked. There are others, less superior, whose work simply fails to match mine, who have been awarded while I have been largely overlooked. I don't know why. Having said that I am not boasting

about myself, and I don't want people to misinterpret what I am saying, but think for a moment. I don't get it, how do you give away these awards, there must be a standard protocol and a proper body who will judge every artist according to his or her merit and then decide. There must be something right, something that will act as the yardstick, which if you fulfill you will then be handed over the award. I have done some philanthropy work, for years now I have campaigned for the polio eradication and now I'm involved with the cornea donation campaign. I also run a small school in a village in Howrah's Domjur area where I teach people Santoor free of cost. For years now I have also performed in so many places, my country have been lauded along with me but when it comes to the awards I have not been given any. Yet I will never say no to one when I will get one, if I do. I will continue to play music and continue to learn till the time I'm breathing. (TWF) *(Images by Subhdeep Sardar/IBNS)*

Shakespeare @ As U....

(Contd from P-VI) through Khoon Ka Khoon (1935);Hamlet(1954) and Haider(2014).

Shakespeare was a very good business man and a highly successful economist along side his unparallel success as a play writer-actor who made both name and fame concurrently. The Globe Theatre with his 10% share investment is strategically located in the then industrially growing and galloping locality south of river Thames over which the city council had no control to cleverly escape from tax liability and west of T.S.Eliot famed London Bridge at the Bankside, where the industrial



workers after a highly straining hard works desperately looked for relief entertainments ill-affected by gambling houses and brothels.

William Shakespeare, a master of puns, spinner of quotes, wizard of story telling..... etc.... etc.. has steadily moved from being the world poet-play writer of 19th century colonial imaginary to an intimate country centric friend “As You Like Him”. Shakespeare may be smiling undisturbed as he wished when lived in his quite and tranquil grave in The Holy Trinity Church at Stratford-upon-Avon for his cross-country adaptations and stage performances. Thanks to Lord Macallay for his visionary introduction of English Education in India.

(The Author is a BA(Hons.)- English Language & Literature Student and is reachable by e-mail: annajuhijohn18@gmail.com)

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

‘Star - Gazing’

Sunday, Decemember 20, 2015

Good opportunities come up and can be utilized to your benefit as Moon conjunct Uranus on your solar return chart. Your career sector is energized and prospects for growth open up. You could get an opportunity in a hitherto untried area or field. Go after the opportunities but be sure to tone down your aggression. Financially too you will but avoid risky ventures. Explore sound investment options. Celebrations in the family will keep you involved. A long term romantic relationship can be initiated. Travel could bring about a series of significant events. You will be happily surprised by some outcomes of your plans.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)



The planetary configuration brings good results. You are likely to swing to extremes, sometimes being happy, celebratory and at other times heavy, serious and depressed. Professional situations and personal relations are sensitive and tend to go through ups and downs. You are involved in multiple activities and need to avoid mental stress. It's the right time to concentrate on your career prospects and professionals skills as a promotion or up-gradation in work area is likely to present itself. You have more energy for work and your daily routines tend to speed up now. Perhaps you have a larger workload than usual. It's a fabulous time for joining a gym or stepping up exercise and health routines.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)



This phase highlights activities related to communications such as journalism, literature, speaking, etc. These would figure more prominently in your life. You would be more sensitive than usual and need to be more accommodating and compassionate in relationships and not take things personally. Friendships, cooperation and synergy are available to you. You would create a work of art in your field of activity. This brings success and good fortune at work and opens new horizons for expansion. This is the right time to participate in current events and share views, ideas and feelings with people around you, as this brings new opportunities and bring monetary gains. Sports and physical activities keep you fit and energetic.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)



This period highlights friendship, love, romance, spirituality and children in your life. You may have positive results from marketing, communication and public speaking. You spend time with your beloved and go on trips, shopping and fun times. This is a favorable time to go for higher learning and joining new courses such as fashion, computers, fine arts and fields related to show business. This is a good time to promote harmony and good relations with family members. You may change your personal style, buy new clothes and spend money on grooming. This is a good time to build your skills, to get organized, and to attend to your health and fitness routine.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)



This period brings mixed results for you. After dealing with tough people and complicated issues you feel much stronger and clearer about the priorities. Your most natural talents would meet with reward and acceptance although desired financial gains would not be forthcoming. It is best to accept challenges that life offers you and keep going through ups and downs realizing that this too shall pass. You may feel a bit defeated by situations at home and work. Allow space and time for things to change on their own. Take care of your health and adopt a routine of regular walk and exercise.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)



If you feel especially angry, frustrated or restless, it would be great to find a little more work and things to do so that you can channel excess energy constructively. Your heart and head pull you in different directions when domestic and family related decisions are to be considered. You are more inclined to take pride in your intellectual accomplishments and your ability to socialize and make connections. You have mental clarity and logical approach to resolve matters. Communications and business associates from overseas bring good news and offer lucrative opportunities. A marriage proposal is worth considering. Health needs care and old habits of excesses need to be kicked.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)



Your confidence gets a boost and you attempt difficult tasks, people in higher position. Be careful when expressing feelings and emotions others can misunderstand you. You handle conversations, seminars and express yourself with élan. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are

worth considering; you have to positively use your talents and efficiency. You interact with people in position of power and authority with grace and diplomatically. Health and energy need to be conserved through a busy time at home and work.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)



The planetary configuration brings good-luck for love and romance. You are noble and generous in family situations. You adopt new styles and this brings colours and glamour in your life. Your thoughts turn to children, pleasure and romance. You focus on having fun, enjoying sports and expressing yourself creatively. You express your views, terms and conditions without hesitation and deal many issues bravely and successfully. Monetary transaction brings gains in property related issues. An overseas or long distance journey with includes pilgrimage is on cards.You maintain a fitness routine and healthy diet program.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)



You achieve success as you are brilliant and there is good fortune attending to professional, personal and material aspects. You interact with people in position of power and authority gracefully and diplomatically. You will be able to make best use of your talents, work experience and would insert your creativity into your work and projects in hand. You have more opportunities to improve relations with relatives and friends in your immediate environment. You may be especially focused on pleasing your loved one and may discover new facets to your love life. You are full of energy and indulge in sports and other physical activities during the week.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)



This period brings love, emotions, spirituality and pleasant interactions with people at work and at home. You manage to communicate with moody and angry people with a sensitive approach and gentle manner. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental and emotional to your loved one. You would work in association with senior colleagues and people in authority and learn many more things at the work place, which boosts your confidence and you use your best talents and co-relate all activities to expand the business and work opportunities.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)



Your heart tends to over react emotionally in personal and professional relationships, look at things from a balanced and positive perspective. Cooperation and a focus on harmony and understanding benefit you professionally and personally. You tend to be fiery and impulsive when faced with choices and decisions. You especially enjoy games that involve competing with others. This is a favorable time to learn something new, feeling at ease in social situations, taking care of the details of daily life. Obey traffic rules and don't indulge with people in authority.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)



You may be especially focused on pleasing family and children and be fond of the life of the home and family at this time. It's a passionate time, although you are unlikely to display a whole lot of self-discipline. You have a tendency to compromise and adjust and take a soft approach while dealing with people at work and at home. You are likely to take your hobbies and talents more seriously. In fact, this is an excellent time for materializing personal hobbies and talent, as this would prove to be helpful in financial matters. Health food, yoga and meditation are recommended as would help to overcome from health problems, however, health of spouse needs to be attended to.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)



This phase brings good results in professional matters, as achievement is most important to you now. You are resourceful and don't want to waste time, energy, or resources and make best use of them now. 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 indicated. You may explore new ways of doing your work as this brings more efficiency and continuity on your work. Family 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. This is an excellent period under which you bring more understanding to your relationships with loved ones. It is easier than usual to be sensible about your diet, health, hygiene, and fitness needs.

“Much talking is the cause of danger. Silence is the means of avoiding misfortune. The talkative parrot is shut up in a cage. Other birds, without speech, fly freely about.”
—Saskya Pandita

The Shillong Times
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The Saudi Design

IT is obvious that there is nothing Islamic about the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The ISIS is planning to target a number of Islamic countries also and it is hardly possible to put one's finger on is subjective. It is therefore not surprising that the Islamic country of Saudi Arabia has announced the formation of a 34-state coalition to fight Islamic terror groups especially the ISIS. The alliance will share information and train, equip and provide sources to wipe out the threat. Besides, deputy crown prince and defence minister of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin salman has spoken of international coordination with major powers and world organizations to combat ISIS terror. A joint centre of operations is proposed to be set up in Riyadh. But such coordination is showing a tendency to loosen even among western powers particularly between Russia and other western countries. The same goes for the Saudi grand design. Iran is not in it which means the alliance consists only of Sunni nations. Islamabad has always been ambivalent about the war on terrorism, especially of Islamic brand. The differences in the Saudi sponsored coalition have to be ironed out. Also, the misgivings in some Islamic countries about Saudi Arabia's closeness to the US may also impair the Islamic coalition's effectiveness.

Admittedly, the ISIS was born out of US intervention in Iraq. Western countries fail to address the social and political aspirations in these Islamic countries. But in no way the religious extremism threatening the lives of many across the world can be tolerated. The Western powers and the UN have a role to play in eliminating the danger. But a coalition of Arab countries fighting the ISIS is most welcome.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1988

Salseng Marak's ambivalence

The Meghalaya Tourism Minister, Mr Salseng C Marak has been caught in an ambivalence over the proposed construction of a Youth Hostel at the Crinoline Swimming pool. On one hand he had to make a statement in the State Assembly last week defending the Tourism Department's decision to site the 60-seated Hostel at the swimming pool premises, and on the other, he had to preside over a meeting which passed "unanimous" resolution rejecting the decision.

Mr Marak, who is the President of the Shillong Swimming Club and Health Resort, however, made it clear to its Executive Committee that he was associating himself with the resolution not in the ministerial capacity.

It is recalled that the Tourism Department has recently decided to construct a centrally-sponsored Youth Hostel which will provide accommodation to youth coming from all over the country and abroad. The funds were sanctioned by the Centre in 1977, but owing to difficulties in finding a suitable location the matter remained in cold storage.

The Swimming Club in its Executive Committee meeting held on July 3 urged the Govt to find an alternative site since its location at the Crinoline fall area would be a positive detriment to the cause of conservation of environ-

ment, swimming club activities and the peace and tranquility of area.

Meanwhile, the State Board for Preservation & Control of Water Pollution in a letter to the Special Secretary Tourism Department has expressed apprehension that "the catchment area of the water sources within the Malki Reserve Forest will get polluted due to the construction of the ITDC Youth Hostel and other massive structures in the vicinity of the Crinoline Fall."

The letter further stated "the Head of the Department of the ITDC will be deemed to be guilty of the offence, under Section 48, read longwith Section 24 of the `Water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act 1974' for causing such pollution."

The Board has suggested to the Department to "abandon immediately" the proposal to construct the Youth Hostel in the Malki Reserve Forest.

Angry PHE staff hold procession

Over 300 employees of the PHE Offices in Shillong went ina procession to the Secretariat building on July 6 demanding release of their salary.

The employees called on the Chief Secretary who assured them of releasing the pay on July 7.

It islearnt that owing to certain technical ground the Treasury officer withheld the paybills.

Now everybody is in a festive mood and we are gradually forgetting the very disappointing incident that had happened in the state recently because public memory, as they say, is very short. Though the issue was important because it has to do with the future generation of the state, we conveniently and deliberately pushed the issue to the backburner. The unpleasant incident has even made some in the community and even the members of the teaching fraternity to compare Meghalaya with another state in the country which is famous for cheating and using unfair means in any kind of test or examination.

The incident is none other than the recent case where questions of certain subjects in the final examination for class IX (nine) conducted by MBOSE was available to the students even before the examination. According to news reports there is a widespread leakage of question papers particularly in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. In such an eventuality the first question that needs to be asked is, why did somebody have to leak the question papers in the first place? Isn't it true that the questions leaked because there is a demand for them and according to the law of demand and supply there would not be supply if there was no corresponding demand.

I am not trying to protect the officials (it has to be officials in the schools where the questions were kept who had access to the questions) who were involved in the crime, but what makes students succumb to such unfair practices? Of course anybody involved in a crime should be dealt with accordingly, but why would students or even their parents and guardians (if they were also involved) stoop so low as to resort to such shameful acts? What are the pressures that forced the students to decide to use unfair means during examinations?

The first reason that had tempted the students to use unfair practices could very well be because the community and families give undue importance to those students who score high marks and top their class. The habit of admiring only

Of Education and Learning

By H H Mohrmen

top ranking students has become a par for the course particularly among the Khasi Pnar people. The local communities, churches and even NGOs are obsessed with the idea and organize functions to recognize those who excel in various examinations. The community's obsession with top rankers also creates pressure on parents and even teachers to push the students to score high marks or achieve top ranks.

In such a situation not only are the youths excelling in other field not recognized but in the process we demean those who do not do well in their examinations. We also unconsciously build pride among the top graders and label the others as non-achievers thereby creating inferiority complex among those who cannot do well academically.

The cumbersome syllabus which creates a problem even for the schools to complete it on time is another reason for the students to use the easy way out of their examinations. Schools have to conduct extra classes and even that is not enough. Apart from spending six to seven hours inside the classrooms students still have to take the help of private tutors to complete their studies. Kids nowadays have no time to play and most importantly the students do not enjoy studying, because it is thrust upon them. Now is this the kind of learning that we want for our kids?

The question is also how much does one learn from an education system which only expects schools to complete the burdensome syllabus and for the students to memorize what they learn for the purpose of reproducing it in the exam. The test that we are conducting now is not to gauge how much the students understand what is taught to them, but how much they can reproduce from memory what has been taught to them. This

is not learning it is only memorizing and this could be another reason that students with poor memories resort to unfair means in the examination. There is no learning in the present education system; there is only an insistence on memorizing the lessons and reproducing the same during the exams. The sad part is that all that was learned for examinations was forgotten soon after the exams are over.

The other question that we should also ask is how much does one make use of what one had learned from the lessons in school? Perhaps there is no better lesson to test this than that which is right in front of us and which a very important visitor to the capital had pointed out recently. The case in point is the way people treat the Wah Umkhrah. Nearly everyone in Shillong is literate but who pollutes the Wah Umkhrah? Does education or what they learned from health education have any impact on how they behave or live their lives?

Education is important because it prepares the future generation of the State and the country, but the recent embarrassing situation has only proved that examination based education has failed us and as someone had remarked before me, it had only help produce living robots, who cannot think creatively. The pertinent question is also what kind of students our education system has produced? If a Class IX student resorts to unfair means to pass the annual examination, then I fear for the future of the State. What kind of future do we expect if our kids would even cheat to pass their examinations?

Another reason for the kind of education we have is the prohibitive fees. Education is expensive. This is obvious in the availability of different standards of educational institutions in the state. The rich- poor divide is very obvious in the kind of schools the students attend. This happens even in mission run schools.

There are many mission schools that are beyond the reach of the poor and the needy. In fact the top institutions of higher education in the state capital are beyond the reach of the poor family.

We will experience similar incidents if we continue with the present system of education. What is more disappointing is that there will be no learning in such a system. Students will only concentrate on their syllabus and what they learn is from the textbook only. And because they do not have time to think and even observe and learn from the world around them, their learning is limited to textbooks. For them learning is from the textbook or what is in the textbook only. They feel their education is complete after cogging the prescribed lessons from the textbook. In fact there is no time for them to even try to understand and learn what is around them because the lessons are so intense that kids do not have time to rest.

Surprisingly during exams even parents have to spend as much time as their kids to prepare them for their examinations. It has also become a trend in the government offices now that parents would avail leave during their children's examination. Sometimes one wonders whether the examination is for the child or the parents. It is also a common experience now that students have no time to read books other than those prescribed in the syllabus and generally they don't even have time to read the newspapers.

What does it make the students attempt to pass with good grades and come out with flying colours no matter what? Student even resort to unfair means and at the end of the day education not only fails to help our students learn, but sadly it also makes them morally bankrupt and forfeit their reputation early in life. In such a situation the objective of education which is to prepare the young generation for the future has not only failed them. It has made them morally bankrupt.

A cloudburst out of thin air

By M J Akbar

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's outburst against the Union government after CBI raided the offices of a member of his personal staff can be placed in three categories: cynical, intriguing and revealing. Of the three, cynicism is easiest to understand, for distortion is the only option when facts are running against you.

Rajendra Kumar, the civil servant in question, was appointed to a position of power by Kejriwal despite the fact that he had history. He has, it transpires, used his influence to get contracts for particular companies. Details of his alleged chicanery are in public space, and need not detain. Suffice it to mention that Transparency International, a watchdog body that tracks corruption where it can, had formally warned Kejriwal about Rajendra Kumar. Instead of paying heed, Kejriwal gave him a coveted job.

Without an answer, the Delhi Chief Minister used the oldest tactic in the business: to raise a cloudburst out of thin air in order to camouflage what he had done. His attack took two forms. He used vituperative language against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. And he followed this up by trying to revive some jaded and

line in order to preserve and protect Rajendra Kumar?

We do not have a clear answer yet, but the question raises its own doubts. There is speculation, of course. Memories are stirring about the mysterious cheques, for instance, worth Rs 2 crore that found their way into the AAP account before the last Delhi Assembly elections. It is pertinent to recall that Kejriwal's closest comrades, those who helped set up AAP and claimed leadership of the moral centre of the movement that gave birth to AAP, men like Shanti Bhushan, Prashant Bhushan and Yogendra Yadav, have broken with Kejriwal because they began to suspect his bona fides.

Sometimes unintended consequences of an episode reveal interesting dimensions of a person's thought process. There is no shortage of hostility in the battles for power. Equally, there is nothing personal in the hostility. MPs who do as much as they can to provoke one another across the aisle in Parliament, relapse [and relax] into banter when they gather in the Central Hall. Moreover, at all times the democratic discourse is marked by restraint.

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discredited allegations against Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

The allegations against Arun Jaitley lost steam more than two years ago, for a good reason. The UPA government of Mrs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi exonerated him. This was not any act of charity. UPA would have been delighted to prosecute; and indeed asked the Serious Frauds Investigation Office to investigate. They wanted a verdict quickly, and got it fast. It was just not the verdict they expected. Despite the fact that UPA was in power, the investigators pronounced, on 21 March 2013, that there had been no fraud. The story died. Jaitley, with general elections around the corner, withdrew from cricket administration. It is important to note that Kejriwal, who has created a political career out of a crusade against corruption, never once made an issue of these allegations.

Which brings us to the intriguing part: Why has Kejriwal manufactured a false storm in order to defend a bureaucrat? It is not as if he has deep emotional commitments to bureaucracy and will always defend the institution to the death. Just a few days before the Rajendra Kumar incident, CBI had raided another civil servant in the Delhi government. Instead of defending him, Kejriwal rushed to share the credit. Why is Kejriwal putting so much political capital on the

Slander never injures the target; it only demeans the accuser.

Kejriwal lost all restraint when he spewed venom against the Prime Minister. When he discovered that the public reaction was negative, he tried to make some amends when talking to the press the same evening. He admitted, with a sort of pity-me look, that he might have misused a word or two, but explained that he had been born in a village in Haryana.

In that throwaway remark lay evidence of an intrinsic contempt for the village; as if it was only to be expected that villagers would be abusive. Astonishing. This is a mindset trapped in prejudice; perhaps unconscious, but still powerful.

Whatever else you may say about Indian democracy, it is certainly never dull. As the drama of power and challenge consumes the second act of a five-act scenario, the characters become true to their basic nature and surprises multiply. A generation is engaged in the wars that always erupt during an age of change. Ambition waits in the wings, waiting for mishaps or mistakes on centre-stage, even as it seeks attention of the audience by any means. There is no need to expose ambition. It always advertises itself. Ambition is not the fatal flaw of only a tragic hero; it can infect a Don Quixote as well.

TO THE EDITOR

Can they be trusted?

Editor,

The Meghalaya High Court had to step in to extend the MUDA Building Bye Laws beyond the Municipal area. Building bye laws are generally needed to regulate building construction. In high seismic zone areas prone to earthquakes, the size and height of the building, the structural design and the load bearing capacity of the soil are directly related to how safe the structure is. Not everyone is qualified to enforce such safety measures. It requires a statutory authority with competent and qualified technical personnel to do so. This is highly desirable because the safety and lives of the building's occupants depend on it. The Nepal earthquake and the resultant high death toll are glaring examples of the need to have strong building bye laws to protect ourselves.

The KHADC had challenged the intrusion of MUDA Bye Laws into 6 Schedule areas. With hind sight one can say that this challenge was high on political sentiment and very low in qualitative technical input. It was clear that the

KHADC had neither the technological expertise nor the manpower nor a longterm political will to enforce its building diktat. It is now clear that the challenge had more to do with projection of KHADC jurisdiction rather than ensuring the safety of buildings. It had more to do with ego struggles within the Congress party than any real desire to protect us from natural disasters. Political expediency was placed first public safety last. This was highly unacceptable. The court had to step in.

The court decision has now exposed a long held suspicion relating to the competence and credibility of the Synjuk ki Nongsynshar Shnong ka Bri U Hynniewtrep (SNSBH). The members of this organisation had openly supported the stand of the KHADC. Why is not clear. The State Government was identified as a political soft target and emotional pressure applied forcing it to withdraw its Meghalaya Building Bye Laws from 6 Schedule areas. This tactic, for obvious reasons, could not be applied on the High Court. The court in its attempt to ensure justice listened more to logic, merit and

reason and found the decision on Building Bye Law withdrawal highly dangerous and detrimental to the welfare of the citizens of the state. The court allowed common sense to prevail over emotional nonsense. Safety of the citizen came first, political chamchagiri last. The point under consideration is why couldn't the (SNSBH) have done the same? Is the future of the KHADC more important than our lives? Why play politics with our safety? Point is, are all other decisions of the SNSBH also devoid of any serious thinking process? We need to know.

Yours etc.,
B Nongrum,
Viaemail

MeECL's continued default

Editor,

It has become a regular feature for the MeECL to shut down power for 25 minutes to one hour in Mawlai, Mawroh. I fail to understand why this is happening when there is no wind, rain or storm. The usual reply from the station attendant at Polo is that it

is due to overloading of the transformer. And why not? The same transformer used ten years ago when I was a resident of Umsohkhur, Mawroh and when there were only a few houses is still catering to the hundreds of homes today. This is the same story in other localities, sub-localities in Shillong. It seems that Shillongites are comfortable with the recurring shutdowns even with the cold winter this year. I do not know how to appeal to the MeECL engineers or which is the higher court of appeal on this issue.Please do your homework and assess the strength of the existing transformers considering the number of households have increased tenfold and so too the usage of electricity at present. I never fail to pay the bill on time so you have no right to deprive us the consumers of the right to uninterrupted electricity.

Yours etc.,
R N Rymbai,
Shillong - 22

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

“The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance - it is the illusion of knowledge.”
—Daniel J. Boorstin

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 132 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2015

Many faces of (in)justice

A petition filed by Delhi Women's Commission in the Supreme Court, seeking punishment for the juvenile who brutally raped Jyoti Singh alias Nirbhaiya, was dismissed on Monday. There is an overwhelming feeling that a loophole in our legal system has allowed the perpetrator of a heinous crime to escape with a 'rap on the knuckles' while his partners in crime rot in jail with death penalties hanging over them (though later indefinitely stayed by the Supreme Court). One has committed suicide.

Too add insult to injury the Delhi government has recently announced a rehabilitation plan for the convict. It includes a one-time financial grant of Rs 10,000 along with a sewing machine, rental space for a tailoring shop and ancillary help to sustain his business for a period of six months. Rehabilitation is an important part of the criminal justice system and the law seeks to ensure that juvenile delinquents are judged by logic rather than politics, prejudice, and uninformed passion. However, this is a case of someone who virtually got away with murder and brutal rape due to a technicality — being a mere six months short of his 18th birthday, on December 16, 2012. The focus then must be on whether he will be a threat to the very society into which the state intends that he be reinstated. He could quite simply take advantage of the law that has forbidden the media from reporting his name or disclose data on his looks and turn it around to repeat his crime. What leads us to believe that the juvenile has had a change in heart while in the correctional home? Reports quoting his counsellor say that the offender has shown “zero remorse” for his crime and has no regret for what he had done. It is but natural that the parents of Jyoti Singh feel deeply betrayed by the legal system.

The Juvenile Justice Bill which is pending in Parliament allows juveniles between the ages of 16-18 years to be treated as “adults” for heinous offences like rape, acid attacks and murder. It is unfortunate that this landmark legislation is pending in the Rajya Sabha owing to repeated disruptions by a set of MPs who are hell bent on making this session yet another washout. Until this law is passed the juvenile who was released on Sunday can thank his lucky stars. Society can only hope that he does not repeat the crime since he must suffer from some pathological disorder to have committed such a heinous crime in the first place.

LOOKING BACK
February 21, 1988

Our home work not done

India is one of the treasure houses of human thought and literature. We might pride ourselves on the fact but we have not done our homework well at all with the result that only the scholarly world is aware of it. The rest of humanity jogs by unaware of our pride and our achievement in human thought. We aggravate the situation by borrowing whole sale ideas, ideologies, and guideline from the west. There is scarcely a political, social and economic idea of our own which we can recognize. All our ideas on socialism, capitalism, democracy and institutions growing thereon are borrowed from somewhere or other in the west. We claim that ideas have no national barriers demonstrating our ignorance about ideas in general. Ideas, ideologies do not flourish except artificially on soils not native to them in which they have not originated. With regard to scientific achievement, we might have been behind none in the old days. But these days the less said the better. Our best scientists flee the country for what they

might find elsewhere. Our scientists are bound to the apron strings of fund giving bureaucrats. And instead of pure science of any kind we swear by technologies and transfers of technologies. Our scientific education is guided by job providing and the student emerges out of our educational institutions half baked, covered by a large cloud of unknowing. There is a large variety of prideful boastful love of the past among us. We have every new cosmological discovery as a vindication of the sayings of the Vedas. They threat any new discovery of genetic as a cart of the ancient Indian system of yoga. A poet of modern times set about discovering the splitting of the atom in a Tamil Siddha poet of indeterminate age. Beautiful vague mystic utterances serve as texts for modern knowledge in the mouths of these conservatives. Most of the languages in India are bent on discovering pure words for scientific discoveries and inventions which happen elsewhere. The Tamil language body which inclined to purism of a rank kind wants pure Tamil words for modern discoveries.

Birth of the Prince of Peace

By Fabian Lyngdoh

ries among nations, but also among religions, and even among different denominations of the same religion. Religious rivalries among human beings arose since time immemorial, and continues even today not because God has confused us by giving different revelations to different prophets, but because the followers of any faith started enclosing the content of God's revelation within the narrow walls of a human institution. It is a natural human tendency to institutionalise anything that is perceived as serving some aspect of human needs, for uniformity of practice, regularity of observance, and unity of control. God revealed the same messages to all prophets of all ages but it was the institutionalised messages that made the difference and created the deadly rivalries. Apostle Paul in order to heal the rift caused by spiritual pride among believers wrote to the Corinthians, “The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (2 Cor.

wars. It was not the requirement of a divine decree, but it was the need to maintain the glory of an institutionalised faith for the sake of strengthening human control that led to the idea of eliminating the infidels and unbelievers by the sword, or the silencing of heretics by fire. The world needs peace, and humanity as a whole should pray for God's intervention by surrendering all the glory that belongs to Him alone. This would be fulfilled not by intensifying institutionalised worships which would instead widen the gaps of divisions among humans further, but by a universal prayer in the form of a genuine and desperate human cry for peace. The believers in Christ are called upon to live in happiness individually deep in the heart, and to live in peace with one another. Christian churches of various denominations have a responsibility to translate and fulfil the message and the mission of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, in the grassroots communities. Institutional worship necessary for maintaining the internal order of the church

sounds of the bells, the colourful decorations and the abundance of food, while at the same time in the private life of the individuals and the community there is rampant poverty, superstitions, hatred, cheating, enmity and crimes. We fondly believe that we have fulfilled our mission of peace when all our institutional programmes have been conducted or performed in spite of the fact that superstitions and all evils still rule supreme in the grassroots society. Christ called his disciples to tend the sheep not only when they are gathered and crowded together in the pen, but mainly to tend to them while they stray in the fields to graze.

Let the celebration of Christmas this year, be a sober and thoughtful resolution for each one of us to be instruments of peace in whatever capacity we are placed in this wide web of social relationships. Apostle Paul urged the early Christians, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace” (Colossians, 3: 15). God has called us to live in peace (1 Cor. 7: 15), and not to eliminate one another in whatever form. May the true believers of Christ translate the message of peace not only within the theological and liturgical walls of an institution but right there in the grassroots where the sheep are grazing to fulfil their socio-economic human needs, where they compete and kick each other for scarce resources, and huddle together for mutual warmth. In spite of all odds, may Christ mission of peace triumph for he had assured, “Peace I leave with you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John, 14:27). Humanity is created to live in peace and to enjoy peace through the happiness of each and every human individual however humble and lowly a person might be for we are all equal before God. Apostle Peter wrote to guide and confirm the faithful, “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called...turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it (1 Peter, 3: 8-11). I end this little Christmas message with Jesus' words, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John, 16: 33).

I am neither a pastor nor a priest, but having observed how Christmas is being celebrated year after year as a religious solemnity as well as a social festival for merry making, I gathered enough courage and impulse to venture into a field I have not been formally trained, to present a different idea of the Christmas message for the year ahead. The Gospel says that on the night Jesus was born, the angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests” (Luke, 2: 14).

14:32-33). Man thinks that he should institutionalise an idea, a practice or a revelation so that it would serve him best, but when an institution emerged and acquired an identity of its own as a formidable Levathan, then do or die, his life is imposed with a responsibility to serve and maintain it whether it is true or false. So instead of an institution serving his need for peace, man ended up serving the institution for its own glory's sake. This is the primary cause of all religious rivalries and is one thing, and fulfilling the mission of Christ in the grassroots society is another thing which is more important than institutional worship. But what we normally observe is that church leaders are mostly interested only with institutional programmes for worships as well as for festivals set to be conducted throughout the year until the next Christmas, and leave the grassroots societies to their own fate. In any village or local community there are endless religious celebrations in the churches with the sweet

TO THE EDITOR

A pampered class!

Editor, Apropos to the news item ‘strike by Secretariat association’ I am amused to note the association is wearing black flag for pay rise and against access control system. It has become a fashion in our country to fight for rights while conveniently ignoring duties. There cannot be any rights without a corresponding duty, responsibility and accountability assigned to it. The General Secretary of the Association who is working in the Finance Department for a long time does not even know the basic fact that any salary increase is associated with the Pay Commission report and Secretariat service cannot be considered for pay rise in isolation. Government servants of the state are a pampered a lot and public has to pay for maintenance of the luxury of such people. While the larger population is struggling for day to day survival this arrogant, inefficient and even corrupt pampered class is demanding more money from the public exchequer. Nobody begged this class to come and join Government service. If one is not happy in the service he or she should quit. There are thousands today who are starving and waiting for jobs so if some of these shirkers quit their jobs they would be doing a great service to the public. This pampered class has forgotten that the Secretariat service people are paid much more than others in the same grade. What is great about this class of Government servants? And why such a discrepancy in pay? This Association has been also demanding for removal of access control system (ACS) in the Secretariat until all other offices in the state are covered. By the same logic no salary should be given to this class until all other offices are provided with the same salary. It is like a criminal saying in the court, “Don't punish me until all others are punished!” These employees who behave not like public servants but like masters from the elite service should first prove that they deserve the job and the pay then they need not be afraid of ACS or any other machine. This fear is because most of them come so late that they are caught by the ACS. So don't cheat your conscience! We say this is a Christian State where service to people is service to God but we don't see that in the performance of duties, do we? Yours etc., H. Syiem (ret'd Govt employee) Shillong- 3

Who will save the environment?

Editor, The news reports that have highlighted the death of fresh fishes in the River Lukha come as no surprise. This has occurred even when coal mining was at its height. However, the controversy remains to be uncovered as now when coal mining has stopped which party is responsible for the bluish colouring of the River Lukha? Is it the cement companies or some other reasons? RTI activists Michael Syiem has produced evidence of rampant encroachment of Narpuh forest and now with the poisoning of fishes we do not need any further explanation from a toothless MPSCB or its officials. Every public hearing is a sham and only meant to manipulate the crowd through so-called development programs. Perhaps the High Court could take a look at the role of cement firms which are directly violating the NGT and have failed to protect all forms of ecosystems. The High Court should take suo-moto action on this serious degradation caused to the environment. We now need environmental justice to be served by the judiciary Yours etc... Dominic S. Wankhar Shillong-3

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

Joy to the world and peace on earth
Spirituality beyond religion

By Bijoya Sawian

Spirituality is an integral part of religion. Sadly, it has been side lined for the glitz of endless rituals and the politics of hatred and suspicion .The tragic diversion from true worship stares at us hard in the face as we walk about with our eyes wide shut. Dreaming ,chasing only short term gains and instant karma. Gandhiji believed that the roots of violence are-Wealth without Work/Pleasure without Conscience/Knowledge without Character/Commerce without Morality/Science without Humanity/Politics without Principles/Worship without Sacrifice. To this ,I humbly add-Religion without Spirituality. Religion without spirituality is like a tree without leaves, a flower without fragrance, a river devoid of water ,a body without a soul. The unfortunate fact that spirituality is missing from our lives has led to discord and darkness within ourselves and, therefore, inevitably, in the world outside, causing much pain and mayhem. We were all born spiritual but somewhere, somehow along the way we lost it. Being spiritual entails neither sitting in solitary prayer and meditation nor going to various places of worship with huge offerings .It simply means being a good human being living a virtuous life of Truth and Compassion where hatred, envy ,greed, sloth and violence find no place. True worship lies in respecting all God's creations, animate and inanimate. Respecting all human beings regardless of caste, creed ,class and colour, all other creations from the tiniest insect to the strongest animals, from the smallest rivulet to the mightiest of rivers ,from a blade of grass to the tallest and largest of trees. Thousands worship every day in churches, mosques, temples ,gurudwaras and other places of worship with such an obvious lack of godliness. They walk in with so many offerings in their hands and nothing in their hearts. What is the use? Rituals are only a small part of religion and worship. They are, in fact, optional. Putting your hands together in prayer is not as worshipful and spiritual as extending those very hands in helping someone in need. The way we worship is an indication of how we perceive God and our relationship with Him. If our perception is shallow and superficial then everything we do is a reflection of this malady and our worship is a mere a gesture. If our hearts are not filled with love and compassion then following any denomination is but a formality .How does one achieve this harmony ? Live a life of Truth and Honour, Joy and Harmony. All religions teach the same but it is fashionable to find the differences rather than identify, nurture and celebrate the intrinsic oneness of all beliefs. Yes, we walk around with our eyes wide shut taking in only what would serve an immediate purpose. That is the tragedy of our times. Living a life of correctness is not easy but once one has crossed the blockade in the mind, the hurdles and the confusion within ourselves, it is not difficult. It simply demands clarity of perception of our purpose in life which does not include the bad and the ugly but only the good. It is frightening the way values are just tossed away like toffee wrappings and crushed under our feet like dry, dead leaves. Among the Khasis,even before a hunt the rules that have been laid out are followed meticulously, to show respect to the Creator of all things and of the entire universe. First a prayer is said to Mother Earth ,Mei Ramew, paying respects the single most important entity of our human lives ,on which we live on and so do all the creations of God. One does not hunt beyond a specified number of days, the specified number of animals and never during the breeding season. All over our hills we have the Sacred Groves where one is not permitted to touch a single leaf, kill a single bird or beast and defile the forest in any way. This has helped us preserve the ecological balance, keeping water sources clean and plenty and also the flora and fauna of the land. All these are acts of worship ,more important than going to man-made houses of worship .This is being spiritual -this very act of respect and understanding of the environment By keeping the world outside in natural harmony one harmonizes within. Over a hundred years ago ,Rangbah Orjo Sing wrote and composed a beautiful song which exemplifies that variety is God's gift to Mankind and meant to enrich our lives.It is still sung in Seng Khasi . “Flowers of the land/This land of ours/They bloom and emit their fragrance/To glorify the Creator/. So many variety of flowers/Exist in this world/They have their own season/To glorify the Creator/. Birds too, so many kinds/Who God has created/Their have their own tones and tunes/To glorify the Creator. Thus with Mankind too /God has created so many different forms/ Each one with his own tradition/To glorify the Creator.” We are meant to celebrate this immense variety. That is the design of the Great Divinity. How can we then, in the name of religion, indulge in violence 5 because of the very essence of all faiths : variety which symbolizes the multi-faceted dimensions of the Great Divinity and Super Consciousness who we call, God. Among the Khasis ,there are no special prayers except during the main ceremonies like naming, marriage and death and also smaller one during house-warming and before starting new work or before a journey. Every good thought, word and deed of the day is a prayer, an offering to God ,U Blei , a spiritual act, matchless and complete. Infused into or lives is a special responsibility to live a life of virtue with God's great gift as our guide, i.e our conscience. That is spirituality the neglected aspect of religion, the pillar on which worship stands on. We have chosen to ignore this as we ride on mindlessly worshipping the new entities -Hatred, Intolerance, Violence. Bernard Shaw said long ago, a few words that still ring true, “Now that we have learn to fly in the air like birds and dive in the sea like fish, one thing remains-to learn to live on earth like humans.” The Somali Kenyan poet, Warsan Shire wrote ,‘later that night /I held an atlas in my lap/run my fingers across the whole world/and whispered/ where does it hurt?/ it answered, everywhere /everywhere/everywhere.... Is that the world you would like your children to grow up in and their children and grandchildren? As the year comes to an end and the festive season which began in October with the Pujas, followed by Eid, Guru Nanak's birthday, Seng Kut Snem and closes with Christmas ,let us jointly pray for joy to the world and peace on earth .Let us make it a mission to change the world to a better place to live in. Each one of us is important like every single drop in an ocean. Do not look beyond yourself. You are the world and you can do it.