

"Dreaming permits each and every one of us to be quietly and safely insane every night of our lives."

--- William Dement

The Shillong Times

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Is the AAP a party?

THERE is something unique about the Indian metropolis. Delhi is perhaps the only world capital which has two parallel governments. That has never contributed to efficiency in governance. The division of powers has always been weighted in favour of the Centre. As long as the Congress ruled at both the Centre and in Delhi, there was no significant conflict in words and deeds. The sudden and phenomenal rise of the Aam Aadmi Party, especially a second landmark victory, upset the political balance. But the Delhi electorate had not bargained for the fact that they were voting for a movement which would take long to mature into a party. After the total effacement of the BJP and the Congress, the so-called Aam Aadmi Party lost its ideologues and Arvind Kejriwal presided over a virtually one-man system. His promise of a bonanza remained confined to concessions in electricity, roads and water supply. In view of this, the confrontation between the Centre and the AAP has turned into hurling of abuse by Kejriwal. He has said that Narendra Modi is so "frustrated that he could get me killed" and that he is "coward and a psychopath".

There is truth in the allegation that the Centre has been ham-handed in dealing with the AAP government. The Centre is alleged to have arrested eleven Aam Aadmi MLAs, whisked away the Chief Minister's principal secretary and made large scale transfers of Delhi officers. The CBI has also arbitrarily conducted raids at the CM's office. Be that as it may, the AAP has to prove itself capable of playing an effective role in a federal democracy. If it is idealism and a crusade against corruption which drove it to power-idealism is an elusive quantity in contemporary Indian politics-the AAP has to translate these into effective political activity and let the governmental chambers be inspired by them.

LOOKING BACK

February 24, 1989

MLA-Cum-MDC's

One of our correspondents recently raised a point why elected MLAs should offer themselves for election to the District Council also. He has made out a case that this should not be so, and we also find ourselves somewhat inclined to his view. We feel that if simultaneous membership of the Parliament and any of the State legislature is statutorily debarred, there is no reason why the same principle should be given the go-by in the case of dual membership of an Assembly and a Council. The Sixth Schedule and the rules there under do not admittedly debar this, but if there has been no restrictive provision in this regard it may have been due to an apprehension in those early years that there could be a dearth of candidates to man the new Councils. That not being the case now, there could be a convention established not to choose an MLA for being also an MDC, or vice versa, except in absolutely unavoidable cases. After all, the Sixth Schedule Councils are replicas of our established legislatures: the District Council-in-session is a mini-legislature for all practical purposes.

An absurd demand

Dr Rongpi, the newly elected Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council has summarily rejected the plea of rigging as accounting for the astounding success of his party in the recent Council election. This is too common a plea advanced by those defeated in an electoral fight and therefore has lost its validity also in this process. The weaker the party, the more glaring is the margin of defeat and

therefore the plea of rigging is even less acceptable on that account to an impartial assessment. The rout for the AGP Opposition in the Council has been total and this alone should have silenced all adverse criticized from a sense of sheer shame implied in it.

A more absurd demand is that since there has been rigging, there should be Governor's Rule imposed on the Council. There has been precedent to such an action during the fairly long years the Sixth Schedule has been in operation, and therefore the demand has at least the merit of novelty however thoughtless and absurd in its concept. We surmise that the most vehement in his opposition to the idea would be the Governor himself. A Governor taking over the administration of a local body purposes would hardly add to his high dignity, even if adding considerably to the load of trifles in a thankless task.

Sidhu not leaving for Windies

Navjot Singh Sidhu, Test players cum defendant in a Manslaughter case will not accompany the Indian team to the West Indies on Saturday. Board of Control for Cricket in India BCCI Secretary Ranbir Singh told newsmen here today that certain West Indies embassies have withheld Sidhu's visa and are awaiting Punjab and Harayana High Court's verdict on the cricketers bail.

Ranbir Singh said that in the event of Sidhu not being permitted to go than W V Raman, the first standby was all set to go. If the judgement is in favour of Sidhu then he may be able to reach West Indies before the first one day international on March seven at Bridgetown.

Setting the record straight

By H H Mohrmen

This article would not have been written if it were not for a write-up which appeared in the editorial page of this paper (ST July 25, 2016) which mentioned about an incident that happened some years ago. Although the writer did not mention me by name, but it is obvious that the incident mentioned in the article is related to me. The article by Roney Lyndem had unnecessarily dragged me into a controversy which I have nothing to do with and have no interest in. Besides raking up the four-year old incident, the part of the story he mentioned when he wrote the article is also only 'part' of the story and not the whole story.

Roney would have done me a favour if he had spared me from the hullabaloo between the members of TUR and writers of letters to the editor of the Shillong Times and the editorial team of the paper, to which I am not party to. Nevertheless, I take this opportunity to tell the whole story of what had really transpired on that fateful day so the readers of this column would know the details of the incident when I was detained at the Laitumkhras Police Station on the unfortunate May Day.

Although the people who have filed the FIR against me and I have left behind the incident and moved on a long time ago, I feel the need to tell the story to clear the cobwebs and set the facts straight. It is of course like reopening an old wound, but inevitably the right story needs to be told and I hope the people with whom I have made peace with, will bear with us.

One fine day I was informed by the Officer in charge that there was an FIR against me filed by few individuals at the Laitumkhras Police Station (PS) for defaming the then Deputy Chief Minister of Meghalaya Mr Bindo Lanong. The officer told

me that I should report to the PS but because I live in Jowai the officer told me that I should drop by at the PS whenever I visit Shillong.

It so happened that my mother was then admitted at Bethany hospital, so I thought I would call on the PS before I visited my ailing mother. But when I visited the PS on May 1, 2012, I was taken to another room and was questioned by the police officer. After the interrogation, before I rose from the seat to leave the station, the officer in charge told me that I have to sign a bail bond before leaving. I immediately called the Editor of the Shillong Times (who till then did not know that I was in the police station and who was at the time out of station) and told her what had happened. She asked me to wait for sometime while she consulted the newspaper's lawyer. A few minutes later the editor called me again to tell me that the lawyer's advise is that I should not sign any papers and leave the police station as soon as possible. I informed the officer what I was instructed to do and told him that I cannot sign any papers. The officer looked at me and said, "In that case I have no other option but to arrest you."

I then called the editor again and informed her of the development. She asked me to wait for some time while she again consulted the legal counsel. The melee lasted more than an hour. The officer who interrogated me had to leave his seat several times to attend to phone calls on the station's landline telephone which was in another room. Then I received another call from the editor who told me that lawyer said that if the officer is not releasing me, then I should sign the papers and leave the police station. I then told the officer that I am ready to sign the bond. He turned towards me and said there

was another problem. He said I needed somebody to sign as a witness too. I then thought for some time and called Mr Powell Sohkhlet of Mawphor and told him what had happened and that I needed him to sign as a witness to my bail bond. He told me that he was in the Polo area and he would reach Laitumkhras PS in a few minutes.

When Powell Sohkhlet arrived, he was ready to sign on the dotted lines but the officer again rose from his seat to attend to another phone call. Sohkhlet asked me what had happened and I told him about the case and my detention in the PS in detail, but before I could even finish, the officer came back to the room and before he even took his seat, he looked at the two of us and said, "Well, it looks like you don't have to sign any papers at all." He also added, "You are free to go now." The whole commotion took about two hours and before we left the police station Sohkhlet asked to see the FIR and went through it and then left the station. We left Laitumkhras PS on Sohkhlet's scooter and headed straight to the Shillong Press club where I met the media persons. I was interviewed in the Press Club and narrated my side of the story.

Then the next day friends who are from the movement for Right to Information called me and suggested that we file RTI under the section 7(1) of the act which requires that the PIO should reply to the application within 48 hours because the case falls under the section which concerns 'life and liberty' of the individual. This is perhaps the part of the story that Roney is referring to when he said in his article that 'TUR has always defended Independent and free media. His precise words are, "Whether it was in opposing the defamation case against one of your columnists when he wrote about coal mining..." The

argument in the petition was that I needed to know who else was behind the FIR because we have every reason to believe that some very influential person(s) are behind it and my life could be in grave danger. The case reached the State Chief Information Commissioner (SCIC) and the Commissioner in his wisdom decided that the case did not fall under the 'life and liberty' section of the act and the petition was dismissed.

I must say that I am grateful to all those who had supported me in my time of trouble but I thought people were supporting me in their individual capacity. I also thought that people are supporting me out of their own good will because they believed that it is the right thing to do at that point of time. I did not expect that four years later, someone would use the act of kindness that they had rendered to me to settle scores with others. That is like putting their gun on my shoulder to shoot at their detractors. And I also have reservations on people calling me 'columnist', because if by columnist people mean that I am on the payroll of the newspaper then there too, they are way off the mark again because I am writing pro-bono as a concerned citizen.

I know TUR by its very name is on a perpetual war path, but I think that they should take due care not to unnecessarily make people collateral damage in their battle. I am not at war with anybody because personally I do not subscribe to any ideologies. If at all I have to fight I choose the kind of battle I will fight. I only speak and accept the truth as I am given to understand it. In my life I had never joined any political party and I wish to maintain my independence and keep myself free from affiliation with any group or parties and I want to keep it that way.

TO THE EDITOR

Mischievous FIR

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

Mawryngkneng affair reeks of politics

Editor,

Those of us who live in Mawryngkneng know Peter Lawai very well. He is a member of the Hynniewtrep Youth Council whose members are ready to jump into the fray in the next assembly elections. This organisation had created a furor and tried to cause mayhem when the then CEM, KHADC was summoned by the Meghalaya High Court in a contempt case. Incidentally, Lawai is also a school teacher and a Sordar of the Mawryngkneng Dorbar. How can a single person discharge so many responsibilities without falling short on other responsibilities? It would be interesting to find out if Lawai actually discharges his duties as a teacher judiciously. We are told that he had called a meeting to discuss the issue of the Mawryngkneng PHC and had stated that the doctor/doctors in charge did not attend to their duties. Those who attended the meeting were apparently made to sign an attendance sheet. That attendance sheet was later attached to the FIR that was filed at the Police Station without the knowledge of the signatories. We are told that there was short circuit at

PHC and that the doctors and staff had said they would not expose themselves to danger unless the fault was repaired. Whatever be the matter, Peter Lawai used unfair means by filing an FIR and dragging the signatories without their knowledge to strengthen his complaint. If this is a means to popularise oneself for politics then it is a very foul means. I hope your would reject such desperadoes whose intentions are selfish and who use any means to build their vote banks.

Yours etc.,
SN Kharsati,
Via email

Job Scam

Editor,

Recently we have seen in the news that a lady had duped hundreds of youth with the promise to provide government jobs in return for cash (ST July 20, 2016: Lady 'cop' dupes 450 youths on false job promise). It is sad that in this civilised and techno-savvy world of ours people are still driven by ignorance, greed and laziness to verify the antecedents of such wheeler-dealers.

What else can explain the willingness of parents or the youth to shell out huge amounts of money to secure jobs for their children or themselves despite having all the resources at their hands either by reading a newspaper or at the click of the mouse or a swipe of a fingertip. Why else would a person impersonate a government official to dupe

hundreds of people promising fake jobs for her only-God-knows ends unless she knows that people are gullible? I like to think that it is ignorance on the part of the parents and the youth and greed in case of the fraudster. But I cannot fathom how the victims could fall prey to such fraudsters in this day and age and why they could not utilise the media and other forms of communication and go through normal channels to secure jobs like everyone else.

It is not as if all jobs advertised by the government departments are displayed only in their respective offices in Shillong or at their respective headquarters which may cause disadvantage to the rural folks. Each and every 'situation vacant' is advertised in local and national dailies and the concerned government department website. It is not hard to get a copy of any local daily anywhere in the state whether it is at Aradonga, Umkiang, Mawhati, Dawki, Balat, Resulbelpara or Williamnagar. Thus it is unthinkable that the victims have to bribe an insider or an agent on the promise of a job. Are they too lazy to fill out the application forms or to prepare for the recruitment examination?

My point is that those people who are willing to resort to bribing to secure a job are also part of the problem in this job scam.

Mahasweta Devi a writer for the Poor: An Unending Legend

By Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

She lived a legendary life among the Lodha tribe of Midnapore, the Kheria Shobors of Purulia and Dhikaros of Birbhum. Her heart bled for the Kurmi, Dusad or Bhangira of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh and also the Santhals of Bengal. I never took any formal interview of her as she was too iconic a literary figure, too outspoken and too moody for a columnist like me and to direct questions at her until I met her in Bangla Academi during a book launch. She looked stern but could not hide her softness when I really confessed my discomfiture. She was an image of elegance all through and lately I found her so lively when she was sarcastically cutting jokes for Mrinal Sen on the dais. I went several times to Bijaygarh college where she was teaching but did not talk to her on her novels or her personal life, or about Bijon Bhattacharya her first husband, the famous litterateur of Bengal who wrote Nabanna. She married him in the year of Independence and only once did Mahasweta Devi write for Desh.

She had a life of plain living high thinking. I went to her house too and saw the same writing table. She never changed it - it was never arm chair writing for Dalits, tribals and the marginalised. She lived with them and wrote on them from her everyday experience.

Mahasweta Devi lived nine long decades from 1926 to 2016. She never compromised. Even when she was so close to Mamata Banerjee as Chief Minister of West Bengal, she did not mince a single word when it came to criticising the Park Street rape incident. With a wry humour she said that with every government she is 'a hardened criminal.' This dauntless lady was Mahasweta. She never deserted her commitment and led the life of a crusader whose heart bled in her golden ink. She gave Indian fiction a dimension of the Fourth World Literature by focusing constantly on the indigenous people. She went beyond writing and worked like a zealous activist. Basically a leftist intellectual of the Bengali middle class Mahasweta loved to scribble the brazen stories of the barren pain of the marginalised Dalits with her golden nib. Her Draupadi which Gayatri Spivak translated made her mission clear as a writer. She says, "Life is not mathematics and the human being is not made for politics. I want a change in the present social system and do not believe in mere party politics."

In her 60-year long poetic career she penned more than one hundred novels, twenty collection of short stories and authored innumerable articles nearly all on tribal life. Awards came her way including the Padma Vibushan, Magsaysay, Sahitya Akademi and Jnanpith for the wonderful saga of pain and poverty that she narrated in Hajar Churashir Ma (Mother of 1084, Aranyer Adhikar, (Right to Forest), Jhansir Rani (The Queen of Jhansi) Agnigarbha (The Fire Within), Rudali, Sidhu Kanhur Daaakey These offer

precious insights into the lives of the oppressed class. Her novels were adapted for the silver screen. In 1993 the first award winning film Rudaali directed by Kalpana Lajmi was based on her novel of the same title where the sad life of the professional mourners of Rajasthan is focused with ironical commentary on the upper caste life of the males

In 1998 the most remarkable socio-political novel Mother of 1084 was screened reminding us of Maxim Gorky's Mother though here we see a mother who wanted to know the reasons behind her son's participation in the Naxalite movement. The culture of mothers, cow-mothers, nation-mothers, and goddesses embodying motherhood was not what Mahasweta Devi

envisioned in her life and writing. Chotti Munda and His Arrow, Bashai Tudu, Breast Stories, Titu Mir - all give us hope and courage. She was as much non-conformist in her creative writings as in her journalistic articles. Today when journalists are called 'presstitutes' for not conforming to government ideals and policies, a writer like Mahasweta was needed to voice a loud protest. She wrote innumerable articles for the newspapers and journals and highlighted the sufferings of the Dalits and the oppressed.

Her childhood days were most influential in shaping her mind since her Shantiniketan days. Her grandparents participated in various movements in the promotion of Western education and social reforms. Her father Manish Chandra Ghatak, brother of Rwitik Ghatak was a renowned poet. Mother Dharitri Devi too as a writer was fond of the realistic novels of Pearl S. Buck about old China and its poverty-stricken life. She learnt a lot about Tagore from her father and her own days at Shantiniketan enriched her ideas as a writer. It is natural that she took part in the heady atmosphere of Indian cultural nationalism.

Mahasweta Devi emerged as the voice of the subalterns and she never shied away from politics. Born in the house of a poor poet father, and a social worker-writer mother she got an ambience of social thinking. A revolutionary woman like Shanti Munda who was at the forefront of the peasant-led Naxalbari revolt of the 1960's rightly expressed her regards to Mahasweta saying that 'Mahasweta Devi inspired many to fight along with us.' She dreamt of the new millennium for the Dalits and the indigenous people and she breathed her last in the nursing home Hathighisa in Naxalbari far from the madding crowd of Kolkata. She lived among the poor and died too among them.

(The author is Associate Professor and Head Post Graduate Dept of English, Dum Dum Motijheel College, He is a columnist for Dainik Statesman and Book Reviewer The Telegraph).

way through it.
Yours etc.,
Evan Teilang Marboh,
Mawlnrei, Shillong.

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 single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

--- George Bernard Shaw

The Shillong Times

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Media against itself

AT no time has the media in this country been so fragmented by radical political stances as it is today. There was a time when newspapers were known to lean towards one or other political party but that was taken in its stride. Media persons maintained an air of civility and refrained from attacking each other's political positions. Things have changed drastically since May 2014. Of course we had media persons with known political affiliations, even to the point of helping to fix ministerial berths in the UPA-2 Government. The expose gained momentum with media persons themselves questioning the ethical positions of such scribes. Some of them lost their hallowed positions but sprung back to action. Others remained where they were and continue to remain the most recognizable face of their Company. That word- Company is precisely the problem. Television companies function like corporate houses and as long as the TRPs come in and the advertisements don't fall short, the Company has no problem with the lack of ethics of their anchors.

The Kashmir imbroglio has now snowballed into a media war with one television channel raving and ranting against another for not being "national" or "patriotic" enough. The two anchors who once started their journey in the rough and tumble of television news together are today sending out verbal barbs through their newspaper columns and through social media. This is unprecedented. The same media is also dragging in other noted television anchors to elicit their views on this dog fight. Thankfully, many have refrained from adding to the cacophony.

What this fight boils down to is what is also framing the larger political narrative in the country. Kashmir has become a flashpoint and individuals and media persons are judged by the positions they have taken on the Burhan Wani episode. There are those who feel that Wani was not a dreaded terrorist and should have been given a chance to surrender. Others are unrelenting in their views that those who take a liberal position are betraying the nation and its soldiers who fight a protracted battle against Pakistan-sponsored militants in Kashmir. Earlier the media refrained from taking such definite position on an issue and allowed opinion makers from across the social and political spectrum to have their say. Today, every news channel carries the label of being Left, Right or Centre and none of them respect the stance of the other. It's a real big fight out there and it's not doing the media in this country any good.

LOOKING BACK

February 24, 1989

Demand for office for F.P.O certificate

The Secretary of the North Eastern Council, Mr P H Trivedi has strongly pleaded for the string up of a Regional Office for F.P.O. (Fruit Processing Order) for the North-Eastern Region with a view to removing the difficulties experienced by the manufacturers of the North-Eastern Region and to promote industrial development in the region. Mr Trivedi in his letter addressed recently to the Secretary to the Department of Food and Civil Supplies, Government of India, referred to the delay in obtaining Fruit Processing Order Certificates by the exporters from the North-Eastern Region because of the location of the F.P.O. Office at Calcutta. The NEC Secretary also mentioned in his letter how the NEC had been exploring possibilities of increasing the volume of export of processed fruit products from the North-Eastern Region for which there is great potential. He also mentioned that the NERAMAC (North Eastern Regional Agror-tion Marketing Corporation) has recently executed export orders of processed fruit product to the tune of 370

tonnes valued at Rs.30.50 lakhs and it has no offshoots for export of about 1200 tonnes

Congress (I) List to be Announced On Jan 6

The Congress (I) Parliamentary Board is expected to release the list of party nominees for Meghalaya on January 6, the day the Prime Minister is scheduled to return from his sojourn in Lakshadweep. The Pradesh Election Committee earlier in its meeting held here at the Chief Minister's Bungalow, finalised the draft list after lengthy discussion. The committee took into account the sub-committee report on the three "general" seats of Shillong. Meanwhile, the Union Minister of State for Surface Transport Mr. Rajesh Pilot and the AICC (I) General Secretary Mr. Oscar Fernandes arrived here on Sunday morning. They are reported to have met a large number of party-men and discussed organisational matters. Mr. Pilot, who leaves for Delhi on Monday morning, is scheduled to open party campaign at Jowai on Jan 13. The following day he will address a meeting at Tura. The Prime Minister is expected to arrive here for campaigning in to laps.

The fat tax debate

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

Beating the Rhetoric

The recent announcement of imposition of a "Fat Tax" in the Kerala budget has generated a lot of discussions around the country. The proposed tax seeks to tax burgers, pizzas and other processed foods at 14.5%. It also seeks to tax food served by major fast food brands.

Obesity has emerged as a global problem in the world today. According to a study published by acclaimed medical journal Lancet in 2014 India has the third largest number of obese people in the world. According to the study India is home to 30 million obese people. If the current trends continue, this number will skyrocket to 75 million by 2025. Childhood obesity tracks into adulthood, and is an important risk factor for the development later in life of type 2 diabetes mellitus, metabolic syndrome, among others. This has to do with unhealthy food, sedentary lifestyles and loss of traditional knowledge. In such a situation it is indeed laudable that Kerala has taken an initiative to tackle the problem.

The concept of Fat Tax is not new. A fat tax is an example of a Pigovian tax which seeks to impose a restriction on the unhealthy food regime that has emerged in the world. Japan was the first country in the world to impose the "metabo law". This law which included measurement of waist sizes was sought as a tool to fight rising obesity numbers in Japan. Similarly in 2011 Denmark introduced a fat tax on certain products as a tool against rising obesity and lifestyle diseases.

However after a fifteen month stint it was taken off because the law had failed to take off and the government admitted to people buying food from

across the border.

Understandably the introduction of such a tax has led to discussions whether the tax would serve any purpose. One of the first points of discussion has been with regard to the financial rationale behind this taxation. This tax would add almost ten crores into the coffers of the Kerala government. Those who do not favour the tax argue that ten crores hardly make a difference into a budget that runs into thousands of crores. Industry insiders argue that such a tax will not signal a shift in consumption pattern but will only add to the burden of the customers. Moreover Kerala does not have large number of fast food chains compared to the other major southern states for this tax to make any major impact. In summation critics argue that this will only mean rising cost for the consumer.

Another major argument relates to the fact that fat tax on pizzas and burgers is essentially a non starter because such "Western" food constitutes a small part of the larger Indian dietary pattern. Indians have long been a haven of spices and oil with samosas, pakodas and other fried items almost inevitable in Indian menu. Kerala has its own share of fried items in form of the famous banana chips and beef fry. Each of this item carry huge threat potential to the health of the population. And thus imposition of tax on pizzas and burgers do not make sense.

Others argue that the Denmark failed experiment must be a lesson for those who seek to tax fast food. The failure of the government of Denmark to wind down the schemes within 15 months citing administrative burdens is a sign that such schemes are marked to fail.

However each of these myths must be addressed logically. The rationale behind this taxation is not so much as to earn taxes as to create awareness about the existence of health hazard. It is true that the Indian dietary menu consists of large share of unhealthy items however which can't be denied is that products like pizzas and burgers have made rapid inroads into Indian markets and are soon poised to take over from traditional Indian foods. A recent judgment of the Delhi High Court in 2015 is noteworthy in this regard. The judgment delivered in 2015 sought to ban sale of junk food in school vicinity. It also sought to control and regulate the advertisements of such products in schools. This undoubtedly shows that policymakers recognise the obesity issue and awareness is the first step towards combating it. This tax would not so much as fill the government coffers as it would create awareness about healthy food items. In the long run such awareness will also spread over to traditional Indian unhealthy snacks. Hence such a tax should not be opposed merely because it targets only a particular category of items.

While the Denmark experiment has been a failure in some measure there are experiments around the world in different forms which have shown such schemes are successful. For example a "soft drink" tax imposed by Mexico in 2014 of one peso per litre resulted in the dropping of soft drink sales by 2%. It also added about 2 billion dollars in the government coffers, almost a third more than what the government had anticipated. While sales have picked up again since then, yet the rate of sales are nowhere near the pre taxation levels. On the other hand there have been successful experiments in

Hungary, Finland and France of taxing one junk food item or another. In summation it can be concluded that governments worldwide are waking up to the reality of obesity and unhealthy lifestyle.

The most important component to this debate however is the threat to the poor. As any poor economist would tell us the poor are vulnerable to false impressions of a better lifestyle, because it signals aspiration. Burgers, pizzas and cold drinks are seen as symbols of a better lifestyle. This is why perhaps there are stories of McDonalds employees mistreating street children who are later fed by benevolent customers. The fact that such street children hang around fast food chains is a testimony to the vivid imagery that these chains project. And it is this image to which the poor are most vulnerable. In a country like India which is confronting the poverty challenge boldly, providing a better food basket is an important part of that challenge. And it is towards this that the projection of fast food has to change from being a symbol of growth to one that is fraught with its dangers.

As we move into a global order, food habits and dietary charts will undoubtedly change. For example the consumption of pulses have rapidly fallen in India. Yet it is important to keep reinventing the basket so that at any point it offers a healthy modicum of choices for the consumer. And it is towards this change of perception that the fat tax should be seen. It is not a tool to earn revenue or rapidly shift the consumer consumption pattern. It must be seen as an indicator that seeks to check and balance our dietary behaviour should it reach dangerous levels.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

TO THE EDITOR

Muddy concerns

Editor, I am not an ardent football fan, however when it comes to community building I enjoy the game that is much talked about. "Football"! For those who play the game, my regards and well wishes and for the ones who watch; we belong to the same club. I never followed the division (1st, 2nd, 3rd & Super) games at Polo until now that I am a village representative and I feel my presence is, in a way an encouragement to the young lads who play for the village and its reputation as a whole.

However, I was in for a shock when the match was conducted in the so called, "Second ground" which to me (and to many more) resembles a mud wrestling arena or rather a mud pool that we normally witness in rock concerts. On such a ground, I am sure no one can identify or witness talented and well groomed footballers. Furthermore, upon enquiring with the people around the area I was disappointed that the "Third ground" (artificial turf ground) is normally used as a practice field, especially paid for and used by the "elite and other clubs" in and around the city. Since, they have booked the said ground for daily practice the only place left to identify and pick up talent and skills of the local youth is the mud field, that I would rather not step into unless it's a question of life and death.

I understand that the authorities need to make money and generate funds for the upkeep and maintenance and many other reasons; however

what I fail to understand is that in doing so how can they allow struggling teams to wrestle in that mud ground and earn a name in the state football chart? I pity that all the fund generation and accumulation is happening at the cost of young footballers who are underprivileged.

My only concern and question here is whether the future of a football club/village depend upon their skill to adapt to such low standard grounds. You cannot play football in the mud; it is an entire waste of energy and skills. Regardless of what terrain/ground they train on, they should be given a fair chance to show their talent and skills. Let every sportsperson who deserves recognition be highlighted. My plea is to let them take part in the game as professionals. Let the sportsmen and women be judged neither by the DIVISION they represent nor the level of football that they are into. A sportsperson is a sportsperson irrespective of the game he/she plays and the village they play for.

The authorities should take up this matter on priority basis and at least reschedule the remaining qualifying games so that they may be played on a decent football ground. My desire is to see footballers play the game in acceptable conditions. If this is the way the games are being conducted we will gradually see a decline in the participation levels. We need to realize that these young sportspersons spend hours in practice to pursue what they love. Let us give them a fair chance and make them feel good about playing the game.

Yours etc.,
Rupert Lyngdoh,
Via email

Clarification on mushroom poisoning

Editor, With reference to the recent unfortunate events that have led to the sad demise of several people of Meghalaya due to consumption of wild mushrooms and the letter to the editor, written by Saikat Basu from Canada, the Horticulture Department would like to suggest to the public that the only mushroom that can be eaten without a shred of doubt are those which are commercially cultivated since they have been studied extensively and are time tested. These mushrooms have been analysed and shown to have a wealth of nutritious parameters and are safe for consumption because they have been cultivated under strict hygienic conditions. They have been extensively studied for decades and no negative effects have been seen or reported from the consumption of the cultivated species.

Yours etc.,
T Shylla,
Assistant Director,
Horticulture, Mushroom
Development Centre,
Upper Shillong

Terrorists can't be sweethearts

Editor, In recent times we are weighed down by the load of deceit, greed conspiracy, and, more importantly, terror. The recent spat between Arnab Goswami of Times Now and Barkha Dutt of NDTV is a pointer to that. Yes, the Indian media stinks of dirt and filth gathered over the years. When one goes deeper one realizes that there

is hardly any remnant of credibility and integrity in the mainstream media of India now.

The manner in which experts are invited to regular debates in the newsroom smack of ulterior motives. The TV anchors of some reputed channels hardly have patience to listen to the logical arguments aired by their sensible guests. The talks are deliberately turned and twisted to suit their hidden ploys. Mostly, they are aimed at creating hostility among a certain section of communities and political parties. Patriots have practically no room to express themselves in the newsroom.

We cannot be deluded by articles published in the leading newspapers and magazines which are anti-national and misleading. Some are aimed at defaming certain communities. Recently many stories were churned out against Indian army which fights in hostile circumstances against Pakistan-sponsored terror groups. Not just that, the arguments and opinions put forth in those articles only create more animosity among the particular groups of communities. Is it not condemnable that some famous media persons have a direct connection with the heads of terror groups with whom they overtly exchange sweet nothings and a lot more?

One political analyst from Delhi, KR Sharma says -- "Pseudo-secularists and ultra-liberal columnists are notoriously vocal to score their personal points. They sadistically engage in pernicious propaganda which now is proving detrimental to the nation". What a big shame, a junky Kanhaiya Kumar of JNU was made a hero and the terrorists the martyrs! In the

A Good Fight Lost

By Ananya Guha

A lot has been said, and presumably will be said of Irom Sharmila's 'surprise' decision to end her fasting, join politics and get married. The third is a purely personal affair and the less nose digging into it the better, but with a ubiquitous media, this hasn't been happening. Let us take the first, ending her fast. Well one day it had to. She has won world wide acclaim for commitment to a cause, her resilience and fortitude, both moral and physical. Sixteen years of fasting with the threat of a criminal case of attempting suicide, arrested and then nominally released, forced feeding are in all terms a torture. But she stayed glued to her cause for repeal of a law which she strongly argued like many others, was a direct violation of law and freedom. People from all walks of life espoused her cause, at least theoretically, common people, activists, writers such as the late Mahasweta Devi as well as writers in her state and in the North East Region.

Once in a Zubaan meet in New Delhi I saw vociferous

same bandwagon she fought against, politicians. In a very well written article in The Hindu dated 28th July 2016 the author a teacher in the Jindal School Of Law argued that again she has surprised people by her decision which has been misinterpreted. Her decision the author claims is once again a landmark in her crusade, and a tribute to Indian democracy. Indian democracy or Indian politics he argues further allows scope for such a voice, entering it and fighting against a system.

I am not very sure whether or not this is a naive perspective. We all know the murky waters of the Indian political system, and she will be entering the midst of a very community, who sometimes harbour links with all kinds of people. Secondly as an Independent representative, assuming that she contests successfully will it not be a lone voice? And thirdly if after that she aligns to a political party, how will she garner all the support?

Without batting an eyelid he continued with the work of running the state, not waiting for eulogies. Manipur of course the situation might be very different with over thirty splinter groups clamouring for space and one really doesn't know the nexus that they have.

support for her cause, where a theatre group from Maharashtra staged a play and some sort of a rally to support her. That was in 2010/11. Soon she became known not only nationwide but the world over. Recently the Supreme Court based on a PIL indicted severely that law termed by many as "draconian". It all started in the year 2000 when ten people were "allegedly" killed by the Assam Rifles near her home town. Then as a very young lady in her teens almost, she realised and came to be aware of what terror is and how innocent people are unsuspectingly caught between public and private terror groups. After that it is history.

However, in this decision contradictions remain. She has said that she knows that repeal of the law may not take place and that is why she will take recourse to politics. Secondly, she has not got much support and thirdly she will join politics as an Independent fighter, not allied to any political party. If she has not got much support, public support that is, then political leaders supporting her at this juncture seem to be a vague conjecture. Fighting as an Independent candidate does not guarantee a win in a political contest. In India we have seen student leaders winning elections, but then becoming ciphers in politics in our backyard, in North East India.

Again she seems to be aligning forces with the very

In Tripura the Chief Minister repealed the law because he believed his state did not need that law. His belief was instant and his decision prompt. Without batting an eyelid he continued with the work of running the state, not waiting for eulogies. In Manipur of course the situation might be very different with over thirty splinter groups clamouring for space and one really doesn't know the nexus that they have. It is perhaps, in present circumstances a far more complex problem. True, in Tripura things at one point of time were as bad, if not worse.

Of course her commitment to a cause and her valiant fight will go down in the annals of history, but now her political fight remains to be seen. In India the murkiness of politics, the complete absence of ideology, party swapping, the power of money, may be only too overwhelming for her. She fought a lonely and basically an isolated fight, now she will have to prevail upon the law administrators. Will they listen? Knowing their idiosyncratic behaviour to say the least and whims this might in itself turn out to be a lost fight. And that, will be the pity of it!

But even after having said that we know only time and the fortuitous waves of history will tell. We can only wish her the very best, in this intransigent world of Indian democracy.

entire globe there is no country where its own citizens hatch conspiracies to defame and destabilise the land of their birth.

One wonders, what toxic ingredients these elite intellectuals carry in their minds that for them human rights of terrorists are more valuable than the lives of hapless citizens who are brutally and mercilessly killed? Do they derive sadistic pleasure by giving entry to a swarm of dangerous terrorists into the Indian soil? What will happen if terrorists are allowed to storm into the country with arms and

arsenal and our soldiers' hands and legs are tied? Is this not what a section of the media intensely and insidiously want now and for which they have been droning on and on?

Yours etc.,
Salil Gewali
Shillong-2

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

"What if nothing exists and we're all in somebody's dream? Or what's worse, what if only that fat guy in the third row exists?"

--- Woody Allen

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 353 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2016

Crimes against women

A leading gynaecologist turned activist, Dr Shaibya Saldanha who is currently with an organization called Enfold in Bangalore was the resource person at a seminar titled, "Breaking the silence on Rape," organized jointly by ICARE and St Edmunds College recently. Dr Saldanha prised open the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act for the benefit of the audience comprising nearly 500 college students. From the questions elicited during the course of the seminar it was evident that college students both male and female do not have enough exposure to sex education. The absence of adequate vocabulary in the vernacular languages makes the discussion on sex and sexuality which is critical if we are to reduce sex crimes, very difficult. Words for naming the male and female genitalia are 'bad' words in most vernacular languages. So how do parents even discuss sex education or matters related to male and female sexuality with their children? The ignorance and/or half-baked knowledge about sex and its consequences pushes young people to rely on their friends, on books or the internet for more clarity. But that is provided the individuals are educated and have access to books written by doctors and experts. What about the large number of young people who have no access to education because of economic conditions or because they have dropped out of school? They usually resort to pornography to satisfy their sexual urges. But for how long? At some point they want to experience real sex. The rise in pornography viewing is directly proportional to the rise in the number of rape cases at least as far as Meghalaya is concerned.

Societal silence on these issues and the transient nature of public protests which are usually a one-time show of solidarity with the family of the rape survivor, are not enough to address the issue of rape and sexual violence. That two similar cases - rape followed by murder - have occurred in Upper Shillong should evoke enough anger to push the Government to take action and for legislators to take up the matter in the Assembly. Faith-based institutions with a captive audience should also engage with this issue instead of preaching of the 'after life.' Schools and colleges need to create a non-threatening, non-judgmental space where abused students who are afraid to discuss their malady can come out and unburden themselves. It is important to demystify sex so that both girls and boys learn to act in self defence in case someone attempts to rape them. A reaction from male students that caught everyone by surprise is that women/girls are not the only victims of rape. Boys too can be sodomised and violated. Sexual violence is Meghalaya's biggest challenge today and it is evident that the laws alone are inadequate to prevent such crimes. Ultimately it is the family which is responsible for bringing up sons and daughters with healthy minds, for, rape is not just about sex but is prompted by a sick, aggressive mind.

LOOKING BACK

February 24, 1989

Assam reign supreme in NE Sportfest

Assam maintained its supremacy in the race for medals in the athletics on the penultimate day of the third North Eastern Region State Sports Festival here today Manipur reigned in table tennis when they bagged gold both in the men and women's event. Assam won seven golds six silver and eight bronze. Hosts Nagaland secured three gold five silver and four bronze followed by Manipur one gold four silvers and two bronze Tripura won two gold while Arunachal Pradesh won one.

A twelve-years old girl from Manipur, Lingthoingambi became the stars attraction when she bagged in the three thousand meter run. In

football Assam will take on Nagaland in the finals tomorrow. Assam merged the champions in Women Hockey

21st Junior National Boxing at Shillong

The XXI Junior National Boxing Championship commences from February 28 at the Garrison Grounds in Shillong. About twenty five States including Railways and Services will be participating in the five-day meet.

The Meghalaya Amateur Boxing Association which has spearheaded the growth and the popularity of the sport in the State will be conducting the championships.

Evolution not Revolution

By Paramjit Bakhshi

It is becoming increasingly difficult to make sense of the world. White police officers in the self professed land of liberty kill black men without provocation, Muslim immigrants kill dozens of their innocent French and Italian hosts and a young Japanese caregiver kills nineteen disabled people. Closer home in Kashmir, protests over a killers killing, leads to the death of about fifty people and injuries to hundreds, and some people throughout the country, start thinking that human life is less sacred, than that of a cow. Yet even closer home, in Meghalaya, a new organisation denounces mixed marriages, as a grave threat.

The irony is that while people desire goods made by other communities and countries they feel a kinship only with people of their own communities, or within their own religion or sect. They have no misgivings about buying Kalashnikovs smuggled from foreign lands, but find accepting good ideas from outside, akin to ingesting some toxin. On an individual level perhaps human beings are not so unmindful, unless deranged, but banding together as communities, religious groups, companies, political parties, nations and coalitions brings out the worst in them. Then movements, wars, campaigns, insurgencies, jihads and crusades are begun where truth is the casualty and only loyalty to the group or an ideology or doctrine no matter how skewed or irrational is acknowledged, enforced and often rewarded. As groups it does not seem to matter whether you bomb people to accept democracy, prop up dictatorships to steal foreign resources, misuse mercy and refuge to infiltrate, kill, kidnap or maim people to demand development or amass personal wealth in the name of doing good. Somehow a banded hypocritical ideal is supposed to justify the most unethical and violent means. It is somehow accepted that as long as you believe in a cause, any cause, you have a licence to use, machine guns, bombs, suicide bombers, missiles, drones

and pellet guns to kill, disable and annihilate large numbers of civilians. The American euphemism for such atrocities is collateral damage and somehow we seem to have accepted such a ridiculous explanation. But do the ends justify the means. In the long run the Newton's third law of motion catches up on all of us. Every action does seem to generate an equal and opposite reaction. The developed world reached a stage of civilization by using superior weaponry and deceit to further their end, and are today victims of their tools being used against them. Even in India where civil disobedience got us our freedom it is today used indiscriminately with bandhs and dharnas having become the weapons of mass obstruction and even parliamentarians resort to obstructive strategies to stall legislation. To use a couple of clichés, what goes around does come around and what we resist somehow does persist.

There is a line by Rumi, the great thirteenth century Persian poet which goes like this: "A life without love is a waste. "Should I look for spiritual love, or material, or physical love?, don't ask yourself this question. Discrimination leads to discrimination. Love does not need any category or definition. Love is a world itself. Either you are in; at the center...either you are out yearning." It should baffle everybody how some people can love with discrimination only people of their own community, race, religion and family. Any truly loving person, any true humanitarian, cannot make any such discrimination. One can either love or be consumed by hate. Yet today it is fashionable for the most liberal amongst us to discriminate and have varying standards to judge different sets of people.

There was an era in history where competition played a role in our survival. We fought animals, a hostile environment, and even each other to survive. That was the age of tribalism, nationalism and religious groupies. Today we need a wider awareness because, where we stand today and the problems we face now demand cooperation rather than

antagonism. Climate change, global warming, and inequality are the biggest threats to our survival as a human race. These are global challenges of a globalised world and have to be addressed globally. Merely demanding a bigger share for our communities as happened during the period of imperialism is not going to solve these problems. Today's solutions have to be based on give and take. The law of reaction ensures what you take forcefully is again taken away with force, and manipulation only breeds further manipulation.

One has to remember that nations and states may be necessary for administration purposes yet such divisions should not be used to divide the whole human race of which we are all, without exception and undoubtedly a part of. Our old songs too sometimes come in the way of this awareness. It is necessary to sing, "Saare jahan se acha Hindustan hamare" or "Ri khasi, ri khasi, nga ieid ia pha" ? Why can we instead learn to chant, "Sundar saara jahan hamara" and "nga ieid ia baroh kawei ka pyrthai". Someone once pointed that our education system also teaches us conflict. In geography we are taught to learn the differences in terrain, food, people and climates throughout the world but no effort is made to stress the commonality amongst the people and their problems worldwide. Similarly in history every country or community reads history which is flattering to its own people and completely uncomplimentary to the opposing side. Movies, plays and songs too often appeal to our communal emotions rather than to our nobler natures. However shown a proper path the shining humanitarian part of our character, can and does respond to more uplifting tunes like "Imagine" (John Lennon) and "We are the world" (Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie).

Narrow narratives of me and my kind have not just caused mayhem, chaos and destruction in the outside world but have also been responsible for large scale psychological aberrations. A jihadist may willingly blow himself to kill kaffirs but would hesitate to jump into a river to save a drowning Muslim. The reward of

seventy virgins does not apply to such humanitarian acts. A politician who comes to power with the promise to help his people does not see anything wrong in siphoning funds for their development to his personal account. Groups wanting to save cows from slaughter have no qualms about lynching humans and gangs can pour petrol and torch outsiders to ensure justice for local indigenous people.

Our problem is that we are quick to find fault with people of different communities and religions and either keep quiet or even condone violence when people of our community or religion are involved. When violence is perpetuated by one of our own ilk he is considered to be merely misguided and needs to be forgiven but such an act from others propels us to ask for the most severe punishment. This attitude of not seeing any wrong in our own is rampant amongst most parents. Teachers and police officers will tell you that hardly any parent believes that their wards could have carried out any act he or she is accused of.

It is said that the objective world only mirrors our subjective attitudes. That what we consider to be reality is merely a reflection of our thoughts. People who see scarcity in this world end up being poor, people who are suspicious end up being fearful just as people wearing red glasses end up seeing everything as red. Therefore people, who use violence as means, create and live in violent surroundings and deceitful people live in societies where nobody trusts anybody. It is perhaps time to introspect and see the type of world we are creating.

If we want to see a peaceful world perhaps what we need is to drop most of our old embedded narrow beliefs and have faith and courage to embrace openness and change. More than believing in revolutions what we need to do is give evolution a chance.

I leave you with a very ancient phrase which perhaps sums up this article: "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam". I hope some of you will be concerned enough to Google and find its meaning.

The writer can be contacted at bakhshi03@rediffmail.com

TO THE EDITOR

Of school projects and inclusive education

Editor,

Several writers recently have aired their concerns about inclusive education and the need to overhaul the education sector in the state. Through this letter I would like to highlight one area which is related to these issues in a small but important way. This is related to the so called 'projects' that students are asked to do in some schools in the city. Students as young as 9 - 10 years of age (Class IV or V) are asked to make models of several things. For this purpose, sometimes they need to handle instruments like a saw, hammer, strong adhesives, etc. Naturally, parents would not allow their young children to do these things and would undertake to make the models themselves. Students present the creations of their parents, uncles, etc. as their own and marks are given even though it is an open secret that the students do not make the models by themselves. In this scenario, first generation learners are at a disadvantage. In many

instances, students are asked to consult the internet for ideas. It appears that internet connection, a coloured printer and obviously a computer are a necessity for every home. Illiterate and uneducated parents find it extremely difficult to meet the demands of the modern education system. Children of such parents do not feel that they are equal to other students and this has a telling effect on their performance. We should introspect why some families from certain villages in the suburbs of Shillong have been suppliers of domestic workers and daily labourers for several generations, even though they do send their children to school who, most often, drop-out before completion of the desired level.

Many present day teachers, principals and policy makers have been first generation learners and it would be of great help if they remember their own school days when they did not need the help of their parents to study, when learning was simple and not burdensome. That kind of system made them successful. I'm all for exploring and enhancing the creativity of young minds. However, it should be done in such a way that it does not increase the inequalities in the society

today. If projects have to be done, let the students do them in school with the help of the teachers. Most probably, teachers would say that time is a constraint, the syllabus has to be completed, etc. Well, if the school hours do not allow for such fun learning, then better drop the idea rather than carry on with this sham.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

NGT directive: a clarification

Editor,

Apropos the news report, "No green court relief" in the front page of your esteemed daily, (ST August 2, 2016), it is to clarify that my original application No 146 of 2014 seeks a holistic approach for rejuvenation of the two heritage rivers Wah Umkhrah and Umshyri from source till both join Wah Roro and empty into the Umiam Lake. The prayer before NGT is for Government to devise a comprehensive action plan covering all polluting activities, ranging from dumping of solid waste and garbage, direct discharge of sewage, sludge, effluents, bio medical waste etc into the rivers and other water bodies, besides haphazard construction activities and encroachment on the banks of the rivers, including penal

action for violation. The petition also prays for involving civil society, traditional institutions and all other stakeholders to ensure that the process of revival begins from each individual household located on the catchment of both rivers and Umiam lake. The last hearing of the case was on July 25, 2016 wherein the Eastern Circuit bench of NGT adjourned the hearing to 5th September 2016 with directive to respondents to furnish copy of all affidavits in response to my petition thereby enabling me to furnish my detailed comments and counter affidavit if any. Whereas the specific hotel ETP issue and order etc of NGT, reported as above relates, to another case OA No 15 of 2016/EZ - Shri James Roy Kurbah vrs Shillong Municipal Board, Hotel Silk Route Keatinge Road and others as respondents. Effluent treatment also is a part of the larger issue of environment degradation reflected in my petition, not as parameters in isolation for intervention but in a centralized manner connecting all houses, institutions etc through piped sewerage system, is one among many solutions sought.

Yours etc
Naba Bhattacharjee
Shillong-4

India Flooded & Submerged

By Poonam I Kaushish

Ok, fellow countrymen let lose the volley of expletives, curse all you want. Of how rotten the State of Denmark is and the Rain Gods for nature's fury. Add to this, our good-for-nothing polity for multiplying our piling miseries. Alas, if only curses could put an end to our miseries one would have no regrets. But year after year, our annoyance falls on deaf ears. Whoever said when it rains miseries, it pours, was dead on!

Take the on-going flood fury which has engulfed the entire country. Andhra, Assam, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Orissa, Karnataka, Bihar are submerged under the deluge of torrential rain - a mute testimony to a callous and selfish polity and administration bereft of cure and consolation. The aam aadmi, after all, translates into sterile statistics to be manipulated at will. All cursing the Government!

Alas, it's like water off a duck's back. The Modi Government has grand designs to build 100 futuristic 'smart' cities in India, but as this week's devastating flooding in India's Millennium City Gurgaon and IT Capital Bengaluru shows, fixing today's flood-prone metropolises appears to be the more pressing task.

Distressingly, Gurgaon resembles a disaster zone as people are stranded for over 20 hours on the national highway connecting the Union Capital. Roads are gridlocked and water-logged. Worse, nobody knows how much it rained as the city's only rain gauge is not working. Schools remain shut, over 250 Fortune 500 MNC's have asked employees to stay home. Succinctly, a living nightmare. Haryana Chief Minister Khattar's response? Impose Section 144 which disallows a gathering of more than four persons!

Scandalously, as the aam aadmi battles to bring about a semblance of normality trust our I-me-and-myself leaders to simply shrug their shoulders, indulge in a blame game and walk away. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal post his tu-tu-mein-mein with Khattar walks away from the crisis for a ten day Vipassana course in Nagpur. And Karnataka's Siddaramaiah had to rush to Brussels to attend to his ailing son. But does anyone really care? Not at all. Everything is kaam chhalao. If lakhs die ki faraak paida hai in our billion plus population? As the people grapple with floods, our netas go through the ritual political circus. All lament the deaths. But their screams are gagged by their ambitions.

The Prime Minister makes an aerial survey. The Government sets up a crisis management team. The State Government seeks Central relief. Babudom analyses the flood situation and its aftermath over official lunches. Everyone is satisfied that they have done their bit for the nation. This is our India. See the absurdity-food grains and fodder arrive at their destination days after the calamity has struck, thanks to cumbersome bureaucratic procedures. Rations are air dropped. Never mind if half land in water and the remaining spark off food riot and killings.

Sadly, why do our netagan prioritise 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.

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.

In fact, a cursory glance at the Parliamentary Standing Committee Report on Disaster Management shows that over 67.4 per cent area of the country is vulnerable to natural disasters like floods,

cyclonic winds and storms. Yet the Govern-ment's approach is one of criminal casualness.

Experts aver that thanks to global warming more frequent and intense extreme weather events means India must improve planning and reduce the potential impact of disasters before they occur. Adds another, "The only way to tackle the growing menace of floods is to control deforestation, denudation and soil erosion in the watersheds of rivers."

Till date our leaders have remained oblivious to hydrological concerns of cities, busy as they are enlarging their respective "relief empires" and pointing accusing fingers at each other. Their ideas and remedies as water-logged as the floods under discussion. Why do politicians feel that mere sanctioning of hundreds of crores will solve the problem? Little do they realize that funds doled out from the Calamity Relief Fund instead of helping the people, are used by most State Governments for purposes other than disaster management.

Shockingly, 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. It's not that they have to look far. If there are trees, plants and open areas around, rain water will be absorbed by the Earth, but if we continue to build concrete jungles, flooding should not surprise one. Government needs to emphasise on national priorities, take into account local realities and involve experts and environmentalists who would evaluate the ecological problems, study its context and be involved in decision and policy-making with special emphasis on problems created by burgeoning population and its impact on the local eco-system. growth of haphazard housing, environmental insanitation and decay, drainage and stagnant water bodies.

Various measures have been mooted since Independence only to be put in the deep freeze. Simply because they don't translate into votes or add to the polity's coffers. How many are aware that in 1947 when there was the task of constructing the Bhakra-Nangal Dam, another project for river Kosi was also mooted. In 1950 it was finalized only to be revised in 1953 and divided into two parts. One, construction of a multi-purpose high-level dam. Two, change the course of the river by raising the embankment on both sides to prevent over-flooding. Since then it continues to gather dust in some obscure corner of the Government's corridors.

Another project in 1957 never saw the light of day, a high dam on the catchment area on Nepal's side to ensure that Kamala River waters did not flood north Bihar and the adjoining areas. Since many Himalayan rivers in the flood-prone areas originate from China, Nepal and Bhutan, New Delhi should have at least worked out adequate water management arrangements with these countries in the event of rivers overflowing. Yet this was not done. Had the Centre taken timely measures, India would not only have no flood miseries, but would also have created enough hydel power to meet the country's requirement.

Where do we go from here? It all depends on our netas. It is high time our leaders put an end to their reckless drift on a subject involving basic human requirement. Offering pies in the sky and indulging in zabaani jama khurch is no substitute for much-needed pragmatic competence.

Let's hope the waters are not further muddied further. The time is far gone for the Government to play the pied piper. And aver: Disaster Management? Never heard of it. --- INFA

"Last night I dreamed I ate a ten-pound marshmallow, and when I woke up the pillow was gone."

--- Tommy Cooper

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 354 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 2016

Meghalaya Congress set to implode?

THERE have been rumblings in the Congress Party in Meghalaya for a while now. This gained momentum after the defeat of the Congress candidate Dikkanchi D Shira in the Tura Lok Sabha bye-election. People from the party including MLAs who had been kept waiting in the wings to join the Government are now frustrated because even if they wished to bring change in governance they would not be able to effect that change in such a short period. The unwillingness of Chief Minister Mukul Sangma to reshuffle his cabinet springs from the fact that the present set of ministers would not upset his apple cart. They are the 'Yes Men and Women' of the pack and are known to be close to him. It makes better sense for Sangma to continue with the present set of ministers than to bring in others whose loyalties he is unsure of. In this the Chief Minister has proven yet again that it is his personal predilections, rather than the governance of the State that sets the priorities.

But a few ministers cannot prevent the Congress ship from sinking. The disaffection against Dr Sangma's style of functioning is growing. There is a feeling in very many Congress workers that they do not have access to the CM to share their grievances. Even the Congress MLAs get a sense that they are treated with disdain. The CEM, KHADC has openly revolted against the Government and is playing his own kind of politics. It is a matter of time before he leaves the party. Quite a few are likely to follow suit, more so since there has been no visible attempt to revamp the Party. Each time there is near revolt against Dr Mukul Sangma, the AICC sends a fire-fighter to Meghalaya who says his piece, tries to bring about a rapprochement and returns to Delhi to report to the High Command that "All is Well." Well, all is not well. You have the Shillong MP openly cavorting with PN Syiem in Delhi and with anyone who is against the current dispensation in Meghalaya. Surely this is a sign that the Congress in Meghalaya is set for an implosion. It will be a miracle if this Government lasts its full term.

LOOKING BACK

February 24, 1989

Normalcy disrupted in tribal area; CRPF patrol ambushed

Life was disrupted in tribal dominated Kokrajhar District and Udalguri subdivision of Darrang District in Assam following a 24 hour statewide bandh called by All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) which began at five am today. The bandh, however, had no effect in other parts of the state. No untoward incident has so far been reported from any parts of the state the reports said.

All shops and business establishments remained closed and vehicles were off the road in the two districts. Work in government offices was affected, official reports here said. The bandh was simultaneously observed in Bodo inhabited Tamulpur under Kamrup district. The ABSU called the bandh demanding unconditional release of its volunteer force convener Sonram Baglari and other activists.

A CRPF jawan received bullet injury when Bodo extremists ambushed a patrol party near Dotoma in the trouble torn Kokrajhar district of Assam earlier on Wednesday night. A UNI correspondent who visited the site of incident yesterday, found that the extremists had first exploded a bomb on a wooden bridge when the patrol party was approaching at about 9 pm and then opened fire from two sides. The CRPF jawans also returned the fire which continued for about half an hour. According to the CRPF, the extremists used

LMG guns which the police denied. The CRPF jawans had fire about 173 rounds and casualty, if any on the extremists side, was not known, CRPF sources said. This was a major exchange of fire between the CRPF and the extremists since the 120-hour "Assam bandh". Meanwhile, police arrested about half a dozen extremists and recovered bows and arrows five guns and two country made revolver.

Ten killed in Bombay riot over Satanic Verses

Ten people are killed and 35 wounded when police opened fire at violent demonstrators protesting against Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses" in Central Bombay today. Soon after 'juma' (Friday prayers), the demonstrators owing allegiance to the Dalit Muslim Suraksha Mahasangh, the Muslim Integration Council and other bodies, took out a procession defying prohibitory orders and ignoring the presence of a large number of policemen on duty at Mastan Talaq the heart of the city.

They were chased and caned by the police. Teargas shells were also burst. In all, police fired 150 rounds to control the rioters who indulged in arson and attacked the police with soda water bottles stones and other lethal weapons.

What is there about uranium mining?

By Fabian Lyngdoh

I had written an article about uranium mining in the Khasi Hills in the local Khasi newspapers U Nongsaiñ Hima (7th October, 2008) and Mawphor (10th October, 2008) with the title, 'U Uranium U Dei U Nongkynti Jong Ka Jaidbynriew Hynñiew-Trep' (Uranium is the property of the Hynñiew-Trep Tribe). Some points of the article are herein reproduced besides other emerging issues. Mining of uranium is unquestionably risky. That fact has become general knowledge, and there is no doubt about it; it doesn't have to be stated by a great scientist. The only remaining question is, how far has technology developed to tame the devil in this element.

Since uranium is a precious but potentially risky material, its utilization should be in accordance with the actual requirement of human existence, and in correlation with the level of knowledge and technology available for safely harnessing its potential energy. Otherwise, man-made disasters like industrial accidents and toxic industrial wastes might create a situation that threatens the existence of humanity. The mad race for industrialization through the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources and indiscriminate use of chemicals to satisfy human greed for temporary benefit, may lead to environmental deterioration and industrial hazards as well as pave the way for the occurrence of natural calamities. Despite the claim of superior technology, the Chernobyl nuclear power reactor in the Soviet Union exploded in 1986, and released radio-active substances which caused man-made disaster in the surrounding areas and stunned the morale of the Soviet Union. In India, the release of nearly 40 tons of Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) at the pesticide plant in Bhopal in 1984 had a devastating effect on human life resulting in long term ill health and disability. These are examples indicating the unreliability of human technology in taming the behaviour of dangerous elements.

A pertinent question arises, up to what level of necessity India has reached that uranium deposit in the Khasi Hills

has to be mined right now? For what use is this particular stock of uranium intended for? The expected answer is that it would be used for peaceful purposes such as generation of electricity. Again the question is, of what use is electricity? Is it for lighting the homes of millions of the general population? Or, is it for driving the machineries of the multi-national companies? Is it morally and economically justified to expend the energy of a rare material to run industries meant for the production of Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Kentucky Chicken, Uncle's Chip, plastic bottles, plastic toys, electronic gadgets, and other corruptible luxurious goods in the mad race for industrialization? It is certain that uranium would be burnt to ashes to produce electricity not for the basic needs of the poor, but for the superfluous economic production of the super rich which satisfies nothing, but only upgrades our vanity and enhances our pride.

Petroleum would not last long into the future of human history. What would happen when all the petroleum reserves of the world become exhausted? All human activities would come to a standstill. But that would not happen because a time shall come when human knowledge and technology would reach a stage when a gram of uranium would be sufficient to efficiently and safely run a heavy vehicle for one year. Even in nuclear reactors for producing electricity, uranium is being used only to heat water into steam to run the generators in the conventional way. Considering the stock of energy that is contained in uranium, this conventional method operates at an extremely low power factor. Hence, the energy derived in electricity is much less than the energy actually wasted. There must be a method by which electricity could be directly generated from nuclear reaction sans the steam and the turbines, but we have to patiently wait for the proper time.

It is wisely said that necessity is the mother of invention. Divine Providence would gradually release the secrets of how to harness nature according to man's necessity, but not according to his vanity. Gold is falsely precious; it only carries value that is subjectively perceived to satisfy human vanity, and made economically valuable

only through international monetary agreement. But uranium is a material with real economic and political value because it possesses potential energy to satisfy human existential requirement. Its value is objectively inherent in itself and not on any subjective perception or international agreement. Therefore, there is every reason to advocate for conservation of this material until genuine human needs arise and until the proper secret for taming it is available to human knowledge.

Would uranium be used to enhance military power? There is a general cry all over the world against stockpiling of nuclear weapons, which means nothing but mass destruction. The level of destruction and environmental hazard of a nuclear weapon can be visualized from the detonation of the two nuclear devices used in Japan during the Second World War. The combined yield of these two atom bombs dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945 was 34.5kiloton TNT and 1,90,000 people were killed. The heat was so intense that at the centre of the blast, all forms of life evaporated instantly, and severe burn to human skin occurred up to 4 km away. These nuclear devices were relatively very small compared to the sophistication and the yield of present day nuclear weapons. Imagine how frightful the destruction would be should today's sophisticated nuclear devices be used.

Uranium carries military power of mass destruction. Hence, whichever country possesses it, has a bargain in the international balance of power. India possesses this uranium. But Divine Providence buried this material deep in the land of the Khasi tribe. Now, what bargain has the Khasi tribe with the Government of India in exchange for this powerful military power? In every era, it is a natural tendency for man to think that his social system and political structures are the ultimate. Great empires existed and there was perception that their political systems and structures were to last forever. The British too had never imagined that their rule in India would come to an end. The communists of the Soviet Union had believed that they had achieved the ultimate political system

which the whole world should aspire; but their hope came to an end. The Indian Union is only 70 years old; it is beautiful but brittle and has to be handled with extreme care. If we say that we live in the age of knowledge, we should also be wise enough to learn a lesson and not make a mistake of believing like in the past, that the present political arrangement on the globe is final because change is not impossible. India is a flower garden, a unity in diversity, where each community and tribe has the right to bloom fully with its natural and cultural resources. Let it remain so, for lasting unity.

There seems to be a secrecy on the issue of uranium in the Khasi Hills. The Chief Secretary Government of Meghalaya had clarified and made it clear that the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had not intended the construction of the Rs. 470 crore, 60 km two-lane road of Nongstoin-Wahkaji-Mawthab in South West Khasi Hills District for the purpose of uranium mining. How clear is the Chief Secretary's clarification? It is true that we still need good roads in the Khasi Hills, but why should a good two-lane road be constructed only to that stretch of land where uranium sleeps underground, while other areas could not even enjoy the comfort of a kuchha road? There is no doubt that the road was made to facilitate or 'accelerate' uranium mining. 'Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction' (Matthew, 7:13). So, if the road was not constructed for uranium mining, let there be also no mining of uranium. Landholders of the sites where uranium deposits were found may demand for mining of uranium in consideration of land compensation. But in the Khasi Hills, the principle that 'land belongs to the people' ultimately implies 'belongs to the Khasi tribe as a whole' and not to the particular landholders. The tribe is the land owner, and the individuals and clans are only the holders or possessors of land as long as they utilize their lands in tune with the welfare of the tribe. The individuals and clans hold lands not as direct gifts from God or from any government, but recognized and enforced only by the custom of the tribe, and to be used not against the interest of the tribe.

Our attitudes towards street vendors

By Maranatha Wahlang

Hawkers as they are now categorised, are the people, generally women who sell on the streets. However, they have always been there in the iews and bazaars and it was for the purpose of controlling the Indian population that the British Empire enforced the first rules for street vendors. For those of us who harp on and on about tradition and culture, they are very much part of our culture. Our local markets have always been people coming in and buying and selling in the different iews of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills and our neighboring states. Now, in the city of Shillong, they are conveniently seen as unwanted pollution and when they stand up to fight for the rights granted to them by the law, many of us are afraid or silent.

The state government, whose job is to protect the weaker sections of society is the one that threatens them the most. Like most professions that are at the receiving end of our moralistic and insipid complaints, we all forget that we are not listening to them and we blatantly use legal reasons for evicting them, when in truth we are the ones who do not know the law. As the insecure middle and upper class our biggest fear is the image of its 'burom and rukom' in its myriad manifestations. Burom, for us is how things look not how things are, because if we go deeper into the issue, we find many unsettling things.

One, our state is heavily divided into rural and urban class. While education in Shillong still has the potential to equalise, once we step out of Shillong, development in terms of infrastructure and well being is abysmal. Most rural areas in Meghalaya do not even have proper electricity. We have elected political leaders who are modern Thlens and would sell away lives of thousands to keep gathering land and political power around them. The indifference has, among many things, led to concentration of trade in Shillong. People from the neighbouring villages can only trade in the city to make a living. However, after all the neglect, forcing people to come to Shillong to make

a living, the state illegally chases them out.

Secondly, our attempts at being developed have always taken the 'cars and rich people route'. This is so clear in our desperate tries to be included in the Indian government's smart cities selection. In our desperation, we disregard the lives and livelihoods of the people who make Shillong what it is. Our dukan kwai, our nongdie soh and nongdie jhur and dohkha form an integral part of Shillong. What exactly is it that we want? To strip away this part of us and turn Shillong into a city where we can only buy and sell in malls owned by the Ambanis and their likes? What we forget is that not only will this destroy what Shillong is but we cannot make people disappear just because we want them to. Perhaps what we should do instead, if we truly care for space and sanitation is to stop being so Shillong and Sohra centric. We should recognise that while Shillong has potential, it will lose itself if we keep chasing the dream of malls and big cars instead of equality.

Shillong itself is infrastructurally poor. If we weren't up in the hills where the geography prevents flooding, we'd be swimming in sewage like most Indian urban cities. So let's stop kidding ourselves and scape-goating street vendors for sanitation problems. We do not have proper sanitation infrastructure. Period. Neither do we have good public transport systems.

Third, we, including myself, really need to start accepting that we are a racist, classist and patriarchal bunch. Our ideas of who is allowed to live and trade in the city are driven by these attitudes. When the state, as an enforcer of laws and regulations keeps quiet, it caters to these attitudes. We forget that street vendors are, as a wise friend said 'people who make the most honest living'. They are people, who when driven to desperate ends, have started revolutions

(The writer is with the Centre for Neural and Cognitive Sciences, University of Hyderabad)

TO THE EDITOR

Screening of Onaatah at Film Fest

Editor,

I have a serious concern over the programming of Indian Panorama Film Festival scheduled to start on August 4, 2016 in Shillong. My concern is with the positioning of the National Award winning film from our State - Onaatah which is the pride of our region, in the program of the festival. First of all, the inauguration of the festival is slated for 4pm on August 4, 2016 while the screening for Onaatah is at 1pm, i.e. before the official opening of the festival. My questions to the organizers are:

1. If you are screening Onaatah before the inauguration of the fest, is Onaatah a part of the festival or not?

2. If Yes, by what logic, why do you have another film after the official inauguration which is labeled as the "opening

film"

3. If you don't have a logical answer to this, can you explain why you screen a film before the official inauguration of the festival?

4. Are you using Onaatah as a crowd puller so that you can have a jam packed auditorium for the official inauguration immediately after the screening of Onaatah?

Organising and co-hosting a film festival is a very welcoming idea because it is one way of providing governmental support and encouragement towards film making in the state. In fact, the need of the hour is to promote the arts in the State and empower the artists. But this should not be at the cost of insulting our very nascent, young and budding film industry. We don't want it and we don't need it. In this case, it is not just an insult to the film makers of Onaatah but an insult to all of us directly and indirectly involved in the process of film making in the state.

Yours etc.,
Cherry Kharshing,
Viaemail

On mushroom poisoning

Editor,

Apropos the letter to editor by T Shylla, Assistant Director, Horticulture, Mushroom Development Centre, Upper Shillong, Meghalaya (ST Aug 2, 2016), I greatly appreciate the authorities for taking sincere initiatives in educating the public regarding mushroom poisoning. It will be important for all the concerned government departments to reach the remote, rural areas to inform people about the potential dangers of mushroom poisoning. Local health workers, health service centers, postal and forest staff could be integrated into disseminating a comprehensive awareness program for educating common people particularly in the forested and rural areas to avoid consuming wild mushrooms and consume only certified and commercially grown mushrooms for safety and better health.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada
T1J4B3

The Mawryngkneng PHC affair

Editor,

As a resident of Mawryngkneng I was surprised to see a letter written by one SN Kharsati (ST Aug 1, 2016) which claimed that whatever happened with the FIR against the Medical Officer of Mawryngkneng PHC is politically motivated by our village Sordar, Peter Lawai. As residents of the village we contest the allegations made by SN Kharsati against our Sordar which are baseless and condemnable. We wish to clarify that Peter Lawai is the Sordar of the Village felt it his duty to look after the welfare of the village community. When a complaint came to him about the non-functioning and irregularities of the power supply to the PHC, he enquired from the concerned authority and was told that there was no electricity in this PHC for over a month. This has

affected the residents of the village as even for minor ailments they had to be shifted to hospitals in Shillong for treatment. During emergency cases like accidents and mishaps which require emergency treatment, the patient is not treated in this PHC on grounds that there is no electricity and medicines. This has created problems for the poor as even for a simple delivery they have to be taken to Shillong which is an expensive affair.

To resolve these problems our Sordar along with the village elders (Executive committee) convened a meeting of the Dorbar on July 21, 2016 which was attended by the residents of the village and as is the practice any person could raise issues that concern the village. It was in this meeting that a collective decision was taken to file an FIR regarding the poor functioning of the PHC. The people willingly agreed that in the FIR all the names and signatures of the people who attended the meeting would be submitted, contrary to the allegations of SN Kharsati. About the Sordar's

association with the HYC, that is his personal decision. We the people of the village trust him as long as he can shoulder his responsibility as the Sordar. With regards to the Sordar's profession as a teacher, we cannot raise any questions as it is the School Managing Committee which will take appropriate action if they find him to be irresponsible and negligent towards his duty as a teacher.

Moreover, through your esteem paper, I would like to inform that because of this FIR the electricity supply was restored within one day (on July 22, 2016) after a gap of over a month, and the PHC is functioning normally now. If SN Kharsati is a genuine resident of the village then he/she should not miss any Dorbar meeting and if the person has doubts then he/she should be bold enough to raise questions in the Dorbar or meet the Sordar personally instead of spreading misconceptions.

Yours etc.,
Shri B. Myrbob &
Shri K. Nongpluh
Mawryngkneng

"He felt that his whole life was some kind of dream and he sometimes wondered whose it was and whether they were enjoying it."

--- Douglas Adams

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, FRIDAY, AUGUST 5, 2016

GST at last

THE Goods and Services Tax (GST) reform has been passed finally in the Rajya Sabha. It had already been adopted in the Lok Sabha and since some amendments have been sought in the upper house, it has to go back to the Lok Sabha for ratification. However, the show is virtually over and since all parties except the AIADMK have already arrived at a consensus, the rest is smooth sailing. It is surprising that the Congress brought up the proposal under the Prime Ministership of Manmohan Singh but started raising objections after the BJP took over. All is well now. There may be some differences of opinion expressed by the states before the constitutional amendment comes through but these are likely to be ironed out shortly. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that the reform will promote Make in India, help exports and boost employment. According to him, it is the best example of his pet theme of corporate federalism. He thinks that a "unified national market will help development on the lines of the European Common Market. The new tax regime would bring together the Central Sales Tax, state value added tax and entry tax while replacing the central excise duty and service tax.

The next step will be working out an appropriate standard rate which will be acceptable to all and will not trigger inflation. Second, a compensation mechanism for states will have to be created. The centre; government promises to compensate states for revenue loss for 5 years but if it cannot be done, the states will no doubt be in revolt. If the compensation comes through levying a corporate or income tax, preferably corporate, only the rich will be hit whereas an indirect tax will squeeze the poor. The Information Technology backbone will support GST. It may be argued that a flawed proposal may cause some resentment, but a perfect system is not hard to evolve.

LOOKING BACK

February 24, 1989

Garro Hills coal mining

Much of the misgivings generated over Coal India taking over coal mining in Garro Hills should be removed by the Chief Minister assurance that this did not suggest "nationalisation of coal mines of the State," which it is not. It has been explained that the Coal India Limited, a central public sector undertaking, was invited by the state government itself to undertake coal mining in Garro Hills and as such, this was no interference on the part of the Centre by way of intrusion into the realm of State authority. Nor did the decision involve any interference with the traditional tribal rights since we have it from the Chief minister that the Coal India would be carrying out mining on what is customary known as 'Aking land' which already belongs to the community as a whole awarding no individual rights as such on the same. The Coal India's entry, therefore into this field of work in which it has specialized should rather be welcome.

Siju area in Garro Hills is huge depository of enormous coal wealth, the exploitation of which is now allotted to an expert agency ensuring fullest benefits to flow from the sophistication they are expected to bring into the job. The Nongalibira Thermal power plant and the Siju cement plant, the two new industrial ventures that are coming up in the area, would solely be depending for their fuel

requirement on coal extracted from these indigenous mines and this also suggests that the extraction work should be 10 safe and expert hands. What is important from the point of view of the local population is that the indigenous labour IS not deprived from what is their due by way of employment in the prospective mining operations. We hope the State government may have made adequate safeguards in this regard. The Coal India also should be looking forward to local labour becoming used to and trained in this job which would be good as much for the work force as for the Coal India too. The latter should thus be assured of the fullest economy in its operation, which is a major plus point.

Small coal mines in Khasi and Jaintia Hills, including those around the Mate's only big industrial undertaking at Cherrapunji, are doing their job fairly well. This is not saying that the private miners may not be doing better with expert guidance from a specialised agency like Coal India. If the mining rights are safeguarded for might be useful to associate coal India gradually in these areas also under a suitable scheme assuring fullest understanding with the local mining labour not losing their means of livelihood, but at the same time proving the quality of their work which above all should assure maximisation of overall output in extraction.

Cinematic Tourism: It's not that new and it's not that bad

By Benjamin Lyngdoh

The recent highlighting of the concerns revolving around the movie 'Rock on 2' can at best be described as 'a storm in a tea cup'. Well, at least it is so till the time the movie is scheduled for release on 11th November, 2016. That eagerly awaited date would be the 'service encounter' moment whereby the claims and counter claims, charges and defences, inhibitions and apprehensions of all quarters and stakeholders will be evaluated and concluded. Be that as it may, in the context of our state the movie has brought forward one important form of tourism which is predominantly entwined around the media and entertainment sector, namely, 'cinematic tourism'. In relation, I would like to place the following pointers -

Firstly, cinematic tourism (also referred to as film-induced tourism, movie-induced tourism, cine-tourism, film tourism and so forth) is not a new genre of tourism. It has been present since time immemorial and ever since the advent of the motion entertainment sector in the west during the late 19th century. Contemporarily and with the advancements and innovations of information technology supplemented with the easy-quick sharing of data platforms, cinematic tourism had a launch-pad, took-off and has acquired a centre-stage. In a nutshell, 'cinematic tourism' is basically the promotion and marketing of tourism through the powerful lens of movies, documentaries, electronic-enabled stories, including pictures and so forth. It is a platform through which a country, region or state can be propounded to the national and international clientele. Advantageously and because of its soft, relaxed and eye-catching elements, it presents as an effective channel for communicating the tourism resources and attractions to the market. In reality, they do motivate people to actually visit the 'featured place'. However, let us not draw conclusions about Rock on 2 on the basis of this paragraph alone.

Secondly and in the context of recent movies, there are profound examples of cinematic tourism. The much popular movie The Lord of the Rings (Trilogy and its succeeding versions of The Hobbit) was shot at the stunning natural landscapes of New Zealand. The animation movie Frozen was based on the Norwegian countryside, Harry Potter series relived the attractions of north-east England, the Twilight Saga series shot in the small town of Forks (United States) made it famous; Braveheart further marketed Scotland and so forth. Closer to home, movies like Jab We Met and 3 Idiots promoted Himachal Pradesh, Chennai Express and Life of Pi catapulted the Munnar tea plantations of Kerala, Highway and Rockstar presented Kashmir as a must see destination and so forth. Locally and very recently, the wonderfully made Onaatah presented numerous locations like Rapleng, Umkhoi, Thangsning, Mawlyngot, Wahlyngkhat, Mawkynew and so forth to the immediate clientele. This analogy has one thing in common. Although subject to varying degree of clientele response and ultimate visits, the movies advertised the locations to the masses and this led to an increase in the number of tourist foot-fall at those places.

Thirdly and in relation to the above, it is claimed that about half of Rock on 2 is shot at various locations of Meghalaya. As such, the movie has a huge potential to further promote and market the tourism resources and attractions of the state. However, is Rs 2.20 crore funding for the project justified? As appealing as it might be, it is better that we do not try to dig and answer this now. All will be revealed once the movie is released. Nonetheless, a few thoughts on the said amount are tenable. To start with, the average expenditure for making a movie like Rock on 2 (based on estimates) is around 7 crores. As such, we have funded around 30% of the movie. What will be the take-home from this investment remains to be seen. Interestingly, the official trailers of the movie as available till date do not say much about Meghalaya other than a passing reference about Shillong. In the midst of it all, it is quite clear to see and understand

TO THE EDITOR

Child labour

Editor,
When India badly needs a stringent child labour law to rescue her child workers, it is unfortunate that she is to get a new amended child labour bill with glaring loopholes like allowing child labour in "home enterprises" and in agriculture and obliterating the tag of "hazardous and prohibited for children" for 80 out of 83 activities. Unfortunately, these loopholes will further strengthen the vicious cycle of poverty. Child labour causes unemployment (as it denies employment to employable persons), labour exploitation (as a child gets much less remuneration than an adult) and unskilled and unhealthy future labour force (as a child worker cannot get necessary rest, education and skills). With 10.2 million child workers and 40 million malnourished children, India is going to face the music of a stunted workforce. A dismal future of our country is being constructed by failing the future citizens of India.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Respect for women and children

Editor,

This has reference to your editorial "Crime against women" (August 3, 2016). It clearly shows that crime rates against women are much higher in big cities than in small cities or rural areas. Time has helplessly watched women suffering in the form of discrimination, oppression, exploitation, degradation, aggression and humiliation. In a country where women and girls are traditionally revered as the Mother and the Goddess, this is simply unacceptable. A society that is unable to respect, protect and nurture its women and children loses its moral moorings and runs adrift. The major lacuna in the laws is that they are not gender neutral. Many women and their family members, therefore, misuse them to settle scores, intimidate and harass the husband and his family. It is not uncommon to project self-inflicted injuries as

assault by husbands. Sensitivity training and knowledge of the rights of women and children are another vital need and must be made mandatory for all law enforcement agencies. To increase the reporting of such cases at first we need to empower the women and children. They must be educated on their rights and be encouraged to come forward to register the cases. There are many violent cases but due to stigma in the society very few are reported. The problem cannot be solved by the government alone but by a national awakening involving the entire country and civil society. A nationwide campaign is needed to reignite India's core values and traditions that respect and nurture women and children.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad - 15

Riotous brawl

Editor,
In the song, "Who Let the Dogs Out! Hu! Hu! Hu! Hu!" dogs running astray on the streets cause enormous headache to the neighborhoods. It is my grandson's favorite song but I never knew that a day would come when I would

such, our USP should be ecotourism and not mass tourism. It is far better to have smaller batches of tourists coming in and staying in certain ecotourism locations over a period. People coming in for day tourism zooming in and out of Meghalaya must be handled appropriately as this is least beneficial to the local populace.

It is high time that we move away from portraying Meghalaya as a destination where tourist will come in masses; rather we should position ourselves as an alternative tourism destination with ecotourism, wellness, experience and adventure at the heart of it. To this end, we missed the bus of huge opportunities concerning alternative tourism in the 1970s when we got statehood. Fact being, places that focussed on sustainability and maintenance of resources in the 1970s and 1980s are reaping all the benefits of their interventions then and investments now. Thus, let us start now and at least not miss the taxi of curtailed opportunities.

Lastly, let us be realistic. As rosy and pragmatic as cinematic tourism appears it must be treated with limited dogmatism. It is not a magic wand which is going to catapult tourism beyond measure. Truth is, if a location is depicted through a movie, it is also subject to strict and detailed comparisons with other competitive locations by the clientele. As such, it might be counter-productive as well. In addition, just highlighting the product is not enough, more critically; the available travel and stay infrastructure must be scaled up and advertised appropriately. Depressingly, studies worldwide have shown that cinematic tourism has a limited life span as far as pulling tourists is concerned. In most cases, they are effective in kindling thoughts about a place in the minds of the clientele for a period of 4-6 months only. As such, most of the Hollywood movies listed in paragraph two above were economically effective in increasing tourism for a period of 4 months only immediately after the release.

(The Author teaches at Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, NEHU)

have to witness this dog show in Indian television news channels. Some news channels are of late are indulging in this street fight. The dog fight between a man and a woman of two news channels indicates that for these television companies there is nothing left in this country of 1.2 billion people to show or debate about than yelling over a morsel called Burhan Wani. The country's top two media houses, which call themselves 'national media,' have shamed the nation, its people and particularly their own viewers. While one shouts throughout prime time every weekday, the latter is comparatively sober but equally venomous. Despite shouting till midnight the former comes in every now and then with his, 'Now, I'll speak,' as if he has been keeping quiet and only invited guests ones were speaking. This current breed of journalism is caricatured by this man and woman. There are in fact comparatively better television news channels, which do not indulge in barking journalism. One does not understand why

Floods the burgeoning myth

By Ananya Guha

Once again there are the recurring floods in North East India. A news headlines said that over 30 are dead in floods across the country. In Garo Hills the number of people affected by floods is over a hundred thousand. Who talks about it? Does the so called national media report these disasters? In Assam this has been a phenomena which I have been regularly hearing about for the last thirty years. Earlier there used to be talk of 'relief'. Later on it was discovered that this relief never reached the people it was meant for. Slowly floods became a routine affair reported by the media. Floods in Assam meant Majuli. Floods in Assam meant only ten dead. A former Chief Minister of Assam was on record saying that the government was helpless; that the people would have to live with it, or change circumstances. Gradually flash floods started occurring in Meghalaya both in the rural areas, and in the capital city. Floods in North Eastern India or for that matter Eastern India do not matter for mainstream India. Reports will only talk about the country in general. So much for mainstreaming news and the country!

The fact of the matter is that the poor people, labourers, domestic workers et al are the most affected. Climbing trees does not become an adventure for them, but a must to survive. Garo Hills already a much backward area of the tiny state of Meghalaya is now the worst affected along with Assam as flash floods have taken toll of lives as well as displaced people from their habitats. And we talk about eco friendly environment and how to live 'intelligently' with floods. Can we have some of this intelligence as a support base from the powers that be, both within the state and outside it? Can we have something beyond lip commiseration? If we use the Army to kill our own people, why can't we keep a battalion ready every year for such impending disaster?

Natural calamities happen at any time taking people off guard and unawares. States like Meghalaya and especially Assam are prone to floods due to obvious reasons, and the Garo Hills of Meghalaya border both Bangladesh and Assam. Flash floods cause more disaster as there is total lack of preparedness.

I am not saying that we declare a national calamity, mourning for the state and such ritualistic observances. Those who are being affected are mourning enough. What I am talking is the collective will for preparedness. The danger of

tsunamis also cannot be ruled out. The tragedy with India is that the people who do not matter after the vote bank system has been replenished are the left over stock. They can rot or die like cattle. Even the routine aerial surveys by Ministers are missing. It is no longer a novelty! Floods remain as a kind of burgeoning myth in the country, a routine call, routine reporting, routine news and of course routine death of the poor, shunted out from homes to fend for themselves in the wilderness.

Latest newspaper reports in a 'national' daily say eighty dead in eastern and northern India. I presume that east includes North East. The point is that for over thirty years this is regular newspaper headlines but nothing has been done to declare it a national emergency, so that there is preparedness, and the matter can be dealt with on a war footing. This is a must and allied to this is compounded the feeling of alienation and neglect saddled in the minds of people. I am focusing on North East India because of these reasons of alienation, misgivings and pangs of isolation. This year floods have devastated Garo Hills. Even in Shillong city proper there have been floods. These must be anticipated every year so that disaster management forces are ready. So long as the elite classes are not affected everything is fine. But what about the rural areas? Are there not people there, buying, selling, working and studying? Boat experiments in Bangladesh have found to be successful in weaning children from being exploited and trafficked. The danger of national calamities is that they can, apart from bringing starvation and disease lead to exacerbation of social evils. The governments should seriously tackle these issues in every region of the country on a war footing by installing nearby camps with measure of safety, food and shelters.

It is amazing that the electronic media with all its penchant for discussing ethnic clashes, fundamentalism, and what have you, does not fire salvos at corrupt or inert officials during these times of national calamity and disaster. The shouting matches and mud-slinging perhaps will take place at a lesser level. We operate at levels of excitement and titillation. That is what the people want. At least the people who are in a position to switch on their glutinous television sets!

anchors have to shout and pull each other down in order to profess one's profession. This man thinks that he is the Goodman of journalism in the country whereas his bête-noire, the woman, challenges him every time at the cost of the television viewers. This is akin to watching the antics of Indian politicians in parliament. So when the duo charge politicians for their foul mouth and uncouth manners in public then who is supposed to charge these newsroom villains? Can they actually raise their voice at the first instance? Here comes the regulation aspect of it. If a responsible entity, which is considered as the fourth estate, goes awry there is need for a regulator to blow the whistle. The public should be the whistle blower when that is required the most.

Yours etc.,
PK Dwivedi,
Shillong- I

SSA Textbooks

Editor,
Hope my letter finds

space in your daily where I would like to register my voice against the failure of issue of textbooks under the S.S.A. Scheme by the Meghalaya Board of Secondary Education. This year we got the old text books with pages missing. This makes it difficult for the students to go through the textbooks chapters. The Education Department is supposed to supply four books to each student of Class-VII, but this year they did not do so. The principal of Laban Bengalee Girls' Higher Secondary School managed to get some old books and gave those to the students of Class VII. I have got only three books. Therefore through your newspaper I intend to draw the attention of the authorities to do the needful at the earliest because students are the future of the country and they should not be ignored.

Yours etc.,
Arpita Das,
Laban Bengalee
Girls' Higher Secondary
School.

“Those who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night.”

--- Edgar Allan Poe

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 356 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 2016

Role of Governors

THERE was a heated debate in the Rajya Sabha between the Congress and the BJP on the role of Governors. What triggered it were the developments in Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh. The Congress objected to Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijju replying to the questions, because he had been party to what had happened in Arunachal Pradesh. Kiren Rijju had to reply in the Rajya Sabha as Home Minister Rajnath Singh was away in Pakistan. The objection was overruled. Congress deputy leader Anand Sharma said Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked about cooperative federalism but his government brazenly violated the Constitution targeting Congress ruled states. Governors were used as political agents to topple governments, a view which was echoed by Kapil Sibal. On the other hand, Minister for Information on Broadcasting, Venkaiah Naidu said that the Congress had no moral authority to talk about misuse of article 356. It had, according to him, used it 90-100 times and only 4-5 times it had been justified. He stressed that what happened in Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh was an internal matter of the Congress.

What is significant is the assertive role of regional parties. The DMK demanded the abolition of the post of Governor. The Trinamool Congress maintained that Article 157 dealing with the appointment of Governors be amended with eligibility and qualifications criteria brought under review. Governors seem to play a dual role. They usually toe the state government line but sometimes owing to their allegiance to the Centre, they meddle in matters which are beyond their purview. As a rule they have decorative posts. But only when there is a serious law and order problem, they have to report to the Council of Ministers at the Centre. The utility of the office is open to questions.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

Regional parties may not have poll pact

There is no firm indication yet whether or not the Opposition parties have been able to work out an all-embracing seat adjustment formula for the ensuing District Council elections in Khasi Hills. Enquiries with the leaders of the HPU and the HSPDP yielded vague answers. It appears that regional parties have been making half-hearted attempts at coming together. Both sides do not want to sacrifice too many seats in favour of the other. Parties leaders from both sides said that they were trying to find an acceptable pattern for distribution of seats. But no one agreed to say anything more at this stage.

It is learnt that the former civil servant, Mr A H Scott is likely to contest on HPU ticket from Jaiaaw from where he unsuccessfully contested the last Assembly election. Former Congress (I) Minister Mr Kitdor Syiem has filed nomination as an Independents candidate from Mairang. Meanwhile, the UMPF has announced the nominees for the remaining three constituencies: Laitumkhrah, Dr Justine Khonglah (ex-MLA), Mawthegkut Mr Naster K Lyngdoh (Cong-I) and Mairang - Phrester Manik Syiemlich (Cong-I). The Cong-I has set up 25 candidates leaving four for Independents.

According to one report there has been some bickering among the Congress(I) workers over the allotment of seat to Dr Khonglah who is a rival of the sitting MLA and the

Speaker Mr P G Marbaniang. It is understood that Mr Marbaniang was pressing for his own nominee.

Bodo extremists killed, 4 cops hurt in encounter

A Bodo extremist was killed and four policemen were injured during the 24-hour Assam bandh which ended at five am today, official reports said. The bandh, called by All Bodo Students Union demanding release of its Volunteer Force convener Mr Sonaram Baglari and other unconditionally, remained confined to Kokrajhar district and Udalguri subdivision.

An extremist was killed in an encounter with the police a Dalgaoon in Udalguri subdivision of Darrang district. Four police were injured when extremists fired at them at Rowta in the same district. Police returned the fire and some extremists were injured but they were taken away by their companions, the reports said. Meanwhile, all developmental activities have come to a grinding halt and educational institutions and government offices stopped functioning following large scale violence in Kokrajhar district in Assam since February 10 in the wake of ABSU agitation demanding a separate homeland.

In the Bodo inhabited areas roads are deserted and shops and business establishments closed on even "normal" days. Male members have fled their homes to avoid "police harassment."

CM Nitish smacks of emergency tyrannies

Fear of booze imprisonment shocks Bihar

By Arun Srivastava

Even Indira Gandhi, the so called autocratic face of Emergency and the Indian polity, did not dare to implicate entire members of a family for the "anti-national" activity of one particular member of that family. Though Emergency was despised and maligned as draconian as the rulers perpetrated barbarism, it however was restrained in selecting its victims.

But this is not the case with the Bihar chief minister, Nitish Kumar's Bihar Excise (Amendment) Act, 2016 amended by the Bihar Assembly on August 1, just 4 months after its passage. The law does not discriminate between the boozers and the innocent family members. According to the amended law all adults in a family are liable to be imprisoned if even one person of the family drinks or keeps liquor at home. Of course the law empowers the Collector to extern a drinker for 6 months.

The most controversial provision is treating all members of the family guilty for the consumption and possession of liquor at home by any member of the family. The assumption is that all adults must be in the know, and must be held responsible until proven otherwise. It is incumbent upon homeowners to inform police if their tenants drink. A district Collector can impose a collective fine if a group in a village or town is a frequent offender.

Nitish clarified: "This provision has been made as it would serve as a deterrent. But let me clarify, that only those adult members who are present in the house at that time will be liable for prosecution. This law won't be applicable to an adult child who is studying in a college or staying in hostel or a woman who has gone to some other district." Fine.

But it is the women members who are always present in the house. Obviously in such cases they will be the first to be thrown to jail. What is really a matter of shame is that Nitish is not concerned about the

violation of the fundamental rights of innocent people. He would have to suffer to serve his whims and satisfy his inflated political ego. Criminalising large numbers of families, companies and communities who are not criminals today will significantly increase policing load. The US experiment with prohibition saw the rise of a black market in alcohol and gangsterism.

The most intriguing aspect is Nitish Kumar's apprehension that he might be annihilated. It reminds us of Indira Gandhi's famous public lecture. The day before her death (30 October 1984) Indira Gandhi visited Orissa where she gave her last speech: "I am alive today, I may not be there tomorrow...I shall continue to serve until my last breath and when I die, I can say, that every drop of my blood will invigorate India and strengthen it. Even if I died in the service of the nation, I would be proud of it. Every drop of my blood... will contribute to the growth of this nation and to make it strong and dynamic." Indira faced terrorist threat. But Nitish does not appear to face any such threat from any corner.

Obviously this raises the question as to why he uttered this sentence? He told the assembly "Even if I am annihilated, I will not compromise on the strict penal provisions incorporated in the new prohibition law". In all fairness he must reveal the reasons for his apprehension.

This is not only a gimmick resorted to by Nitish; this underlines the nature and character of the politics he practices. It is beyond comprehension how a leader claiming his ideological allegiance to the socialist politics, to Lohia and JP, dare to take to extrajudicial and tyrannical measures? Nitish must be aware of the machinations and tricks played by the police to fabricate false cases and implicate innocent people; what in common parlance is called "case connection". How could he leave innocent people, especially the women, at the mercy of

the police? Women are of no political importance to police.

Though Nitish in his speech on the bill in assembly was quite ebullient of his gains, he failed to spell out the check measures and how the police excesses can be curbed. One thing Nitish must realize is that he is not immortal and cannot continue to be the chief minister of Bihar forever. Can he guarantee that in future the new incumbent chief minister would exercise restraint and ensure that the law is not misused?

In fact there is no denying the fact that the provisions of law would be misused by some over zealous police officials during his tenure too. This may sound like exaggeration but it remains a bitter truth. Since October 2015, after coming to power after assembly elections, Nitish held at least five meetings and interactions with the police officials and repeatedly cautioned them to behave in a proper manner and ensure that law and order is strictly maintained. But unfortunately these exercises have failed to yield desired results. The police administration is behaving in the most lackadaisical manner. It appears that the words and orders of the senior officials have no impact on the junior level officers. On some occasion even Nitish had to caution the junior officers. In this backdrop who can guarantee that these officers will not misuse the law to make ill-gotten fast buck?

Undeniably the worst sufferers would be the women, for enticing whom he came out with this law. We know police planting drugs, revolver and Maoist literature in the homes of poor, innocent and gullible people. The police extract bribe from these people and in most of the cases these people are imprisoned for years without proper trial. Can Nitish provide an undertaking to the people of Bihar that this will not happen?

Significantly his mission organizing bodies, social media activists, daily journals, citizens and teachers to come forward with an action plan and address the need of the hour. Perhaps, the government's involvement in initiating a comprehensive mechanism is very important. I urge the perpetrators (polluters) to stop indulging in such a destructive behaviour and learn from many programs, campaigns and movements like 'Swaachh Bharat', 'The Chipko Movement' etc. and think about the clean environment to save our planet for our survival.

Yours etc.,
Sengman Mrong
Dakopgre, Tura

TO THE EDITOR

Good job by Meghalaya police!

Editor,
I wish to commend Mr K C Nag, SI and In-charge, Police Station, Nongthymmai, Shillong. He managed to retrieve a mobile phone stolen from my residence. The theft took place sometime in March this year and together with the mobile phone a camera and some cash was also stolen. I had actually forgotten about the case. The professionalism and persistence of Mr Nag is remarkable. This could be a classic successful illustration to the Investigation Training branch of the Meghalaya police particularly the process adopted by Nag in retrieving the mobile phone.

Yours etc.,
Rudi Warji,
Shillong-14

Save the Ganol River!

Editor,
I wish to draw the attention of the general public, Nokmas of concerned jurisdiction, political leaders, NGOs of Tura region in particular. Ganol River is one of the

main and important source especially for the residents of Tura town from where water is being supplied by the PHE Department. Moreover, throughout its valleys farmers use the water for cultivation and fishermen earn their daily livelihoods from it as well. In addition to that, Ganol river and its banks is noted for its natural beauty and its unique landscape. Hence, picnickers and local visitors are attracted to it and it remains a favoured destination for recreational retreat. It is only about 3 KM away from the Tura town. I have visited the banks of the Ganol river along Pelga, Sella and Ganol Songgitagre and am pained to see heaps of liquor bottles, polythene packets and scattered pieces of sharp broken bottles all along the river bank and even in the riverbeds.

Though, the cleaning drive was carried out not long ago by certain youth bodies at the particular area of the Ganol river bank it is not a lasting solution. If the general public remain mute spectators and allow this to happen repeatedly such destructive and foul human behaviour would continue. This beautiful riverside will be transformed into a rubbish dump. Hence, through your newspaper, I appeal to the concerned authorities, leaders,

organizing bodies, social media activists, daily journals, citizens and teachers to come forward with an action plan and address the need of the hour. Perhaps, the government's involvement in initiating a comprehensive mechanism is very important. I urge the perpetrators (polluters) to stop indulging in such a destructive behaviour and learn from many programs, campaigns and movements like 'Swaachh Bharat', 'The Chipko Movement' etc. and think about the clean environment to save our planet for our survival.

Yours etc.,
Sengman Mrong
Dakopgre, Tura

LPG consumers' woes

Editor
I refer to the news item published in your newspaper (ST 5th August, 2016) captioned "LPG Row - Jail Road Committee clarifies," where the chairman of the committee clarifies that they will put a stamp and signature separately in the LPG Card. As of today the Jail Road Welfare Committee refuses to put the stamp and signature on the cards of consumers who are not members of the Welfare Committee. This implies that all the resident of Jail Road must compulsorily be

members of the Committee otherwise their LPG cards will not be verified. To obtain membership of the Welfare Committee each family in the locality has to pay Rs 150 annually to the Committee. This means that those who don't wish to pay Rs 150 to become members of the Committee cannot avail a gas cylinder.

Now, my question to the Chairman of the said Committee is if any person does not want to be a member of the Committee will that person be allowed to reside in the locality? Since all the residents of the locality are paying Municipal Taxes every year should they also be compelled to pay taxes to the Welfare Committee? The LPG card has been checked by the Gas agency and verifies from time to time hence the Agency should supply the cylinder as per the list available with them which has been made after verifying the LPG card. Hence the question of shortage of LPG cylinder does not arise.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Quite interestingly the copy of the amended bill was handed over to the legislators just before it was introduced on the opening day of the Bihar assembly's monsoon session. The MLAs were asked to suggest their amendments. A significant number of legislators cutting across the party line described the proposed law as draconian.

On his part Nitish tried to come out with a strong defence. But it lacks reliability. He said: "If any instance of harassment of innocent people comes to light, the erring officials would face four types of action. There will be action under the anti-corruption law as well as departmental proceedings. It may lead to three-year jail and in proven cases sacking from service".

Certainly his sincerity should not be questioned. But the fact cannot be ignored that by the time cases of harassment come to his knowledge the family would have been ruined; their prestige would have been decimated and annihilated. In Bihari society, going to jail is a shame. What an irony, Nitish coolly ignored the issue of tremendous increase in bootlegging. (IPA Service)

members of the Committee otherwise their LPG cards will not be verified. To obtain membership of the Welfare Committee each family in the locality has to pay Rs 150 annually to the Committee. This means that those who don't wish to pay Rs 150 to become members of the Committee cannot avail a gas cylinder.

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Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

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

Zakir Naik and the indentity hypocrisy

India, Bangladesh in respective traps

By Garga Chatterjee

While powerful sections of the political class in the Indian Union and powerful mass media is trying to whip up the demand for taking stern action against Islamic tele-evangelist Zakir Naik, the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has gone ahead and banned Peace TV Bangla, the Bangla language channel in Zakir Naik's Peace TV stable.

Zakir Naik came into focus in the aftermath of the Dhaka killings when it was alleged by numerous reports that some of the killers were inspired by his preaching. With Zakir Naik's often offensive preaching and his Peace TV transmissions emerging as a one-stop explanation for Islamic radicalization among "innocent" folks, it was rather rich to see even ex-Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi using the opportunity to refer to other human beings as "preachers of hate and violence" at a time when more than 30 Kashmiri protesters have been gunned down by Indian armed forces in a matter of days.

While calls for the defence of freedom of expression have been curiously muted in the context of Zakir Naik and the pre-existing ban on his Peace TV in the Indian Union, the ban in Bangladesh has been relatively easy in the context of the recent murderous Islamist attacks in Dhaka. Freedom of all kinds, including freedom of expression, is best curtailed in times of "emergency". But in Dhaka too, the nature of the by now significantly loud murmurs that have opposed the ban on Peace TV provide an interesting insight into the subcontinental politics of attacking supposed enemies by proxy.

This ban has led to discontent from a section of Bangladeshi society who have argued either along lines of freedom of expression or a positive warmth for the kind of religious preaching that Indian citizen Zakir Naik has been indulging in or both from largely studios and venues in the Indian Union.

What is relevant to note here that opposition to what is perceived as an invading "Indian culture" in the form of TV channels with content from India (largely in the form of Hindi films and Bangla serials and shows produced in West Bengal), is extremely high precisely among this very sector of society. Emanul Haque Khan says, "Those who used to badmouth India a couple of days ago, were ready to launch jihad in Facebook to boycott Indian products and Indian channels, I am seeing them sitting angrily with red flared nostrils in support of a solid Indian product like Zakir Naik," (quote translated from Bangla). It is relevant to mention the technical point that Peace TV is actually broadcast to the world from Dubai, though most of its video productions happen out of a rather shabby building in the Dongri area of South Mumbai.

Notwithstanding Khan's broad generalisations, this goes to the heart of a certain tension - the question of what can be deemed "own" even if Indian and more importantly, what is actually meant by "Indian". When a the "Indian" content boycott comes with a Islamic exception clause, that shows that it is "non-Muslim" "Indian" content that is deemed as a threat. In the context of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, non-Muslim is largely a codeword for Hindu, just like in the Indian Union, the term "minority" is a code for Muslim. Thus, in this world-view, things Islamic can be deemed acceptable even if Indian, while the Indian content that needs to be boycotted is deemed essentially Hindu in character and content. This distinction between Zakir Naik and Indian also privileges Muslimness as being less "foreign" to this sector of Bangladesh. Indeed, this understanding of Bangladesh of being a Muslim land that is incidentally

Bengali or South Asian forms one of the important competing narratives of what is the meaning of a sovereign Bangladesh and its raison d'être.

Such dog-whistle messaging that conflates Indian and Hindu becomes a particular predicament for those patriotic Bangladeshis whose opposition to things Indian to the extent of calls for boycott are not predicated on religious prejudice and communalism. And there are many reasons of discontent for a Bangladeshi vis-a-vis the Indian Union, the giant neighbouring hegemonic super-state. This includes regular border killings by India's Border Security Force, ruthless Indian corporate expansionism including those in ecologically fragile areas of Bangladesh in the face of fierce local opposition, unilateral intervention into riverine lifelines (like building the Farakka barrage), mistreatment of visa applicants, alleged shadowy intervention into People's Republic of Bangladesh's domestic political scene, the nasty portrayal of Bangladeshi citizens in mainstream Indian political and media narrative (with few notable exceptions) as criminal, communal, fast-breeding, illegal immigrants, etc.

The Peace TV ban episode in Dhaka is part of the vicious subcontinental political game around religion-based codewords. Just like in the Indian Union, "Pakistani" is a code word - to some it means Pakistan, to some it means Muslim, to some it is a way to say Muslim without ever publicly acknowledging to have meant so. It is not accidental or without reason that then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi during some of his earlier election campaigns talked repeatedly about and often even addressing directly "Pakistani" and Mia Mosharraf, in elections where not a single Pakistani citizen was eligible to vote. "Illegal Bangladeshi" or even just "Bangladeshi" is a similar term. While the biologist Theodore Donzhansky said, "Nothing in biology makes sense except in light of evolution". One might as well say, many things in South Asian economic and political life makes sense in light of the communal Partition of 1947 and its afterlife.

In the context of oppressive media-corporate hegemony and a milieu of communalism, Zee Bangla and Star Jalsha, the two West Bengal channels very popular in Bangladesh, becomes in that very private mindspace of a significant number of individuals, where all politics and yearnings collide, what Ashis Nandy has called in a different context, "the intimate enemy". The hard nationalists of the Indian Union have a certain pride in its so-called soft power. This pride is unfounded since such dominance is highly unlikely to exist in the absence of a hugely asymmetric economic and political relationship. And all deep money powered "cultural" exports are basically political autonomy and cultural identity demolition machines. While the largely West Bengali and also some Hindustani or Bollywood centric channels dominate a significant part of the Bangladeshi television viewership, Bangla channels from Bangladesh are not available in West Bengal, where about 40 per cent of Bengalis of the world live. It is a sector that Bangladeshi channels would want to enter but due to certain Indian Union rules and fee structures, that has not happened. It's West Bengal's loss really. Deprived of the amazing talent of Mosharraf Karim, arguably the most talented Bengali television actor of the present time. (IPA Service)

By Tushar Charan

To illustrate what constitutes 'news' students of journalism are told that dog bites man is no news but man biting dog is because it is rather unusual. But nothing is said about the more common dog bites (barks, to be more precise). And when this phenomenon concerns the men and women in the media world?

In the old and staid--'boring'-days of bland journalism it was almost unheard of that two journalists will go after each other like two 'dogs' fiercely guarding their territory. This is, of course, not to suggest that fights, physical and verbal, between journalists were unheard of. Quite the contrary. But the ugly scenes were rarely enacted in public view even if it will be an exaggeration to claim that the tribe of journalists in the bygone days was an embodiment of decency and uprightness.

That the past era was lived without the benefit of many modern gadgets and technology, the chief of which must be the mobile phone and the internet, could well have been the chief reason why the ugliness in the media remained hidden behind doors. Now everyone seems to be in a rush to express his opinions unabashedly and without any restraint. In the case of most mortals this activity remains somewhat restricted, not so when it is about media personnel.

Thus almost the entire country appeared to be abuzz after sharp verbal exchanges between two of India's best known TV personalities-Arnab Goswami of the Times Now, a Times



Setting new norms in news presentation

Datt of the NDTV, who enjoys almost a cult status

ers. Not surprisingly, it began with a Goswami programme in which in his typical hysterical manner suggested jail term for media personnel who are not 'nationalist' enough. That is to say, those who did not measure up to Goswami's definition of 'patriotism' and tended to question many acts and words of the present ruling dispensation deserved to be incarcerated. It should not matter whether these elements belong to Opposition political parties or were journalists by profession.

The Times Now anchor seemed to be particularly riled by Datt's alleged 'defence' of the 'anti-national' acts witnessed in Kashmir during the violence that followed the death of a

militant commander. Goswami made it clear that when it comes to Kashmir and militancy anyone who does not endorse his views is 'anti-national' and, hence, should be put behind bars.

Datt hit back with gusto, wondering aloud in her Facebook account if 'this man is a journalist' and her 'shame' of sharing the profession with him. She reminded him of certain 'basics' of journalism, including the fact that journalists are not expected to be toddlers of the government.

One would expect that in the world of social media, opinions are divided and being expressed with vehemence and without any inhibition. It is possible to divide the two camps on the basis of political ideology:

is commonly witnessed between political rivals. But it is not necessary to see it with a political prism. When two media personali-

ties have a public spat it is mainly a matter concerning the media and its affairs. That makes it a matter of deep concern because what we have been witnessing of late is (Contd on P-VII)



Group outlet, and Barkha among some of her followers.



Goswami and his followers wedded to the Right and the Datt camp consisted largely of 'liberal' and 'secular' crowd. In other words the 'war' between the two camps was no different from what

By Dipankar Jakharia

Renting out your house?

If you take a typical three story house in a large city, most of the time you will find that the owner of the house occupies the middle floor and he gives out the other two floors on rent. But do you ever analyze how much one has invested for that rental income?

Renting out a part of one's house is a common source of income for many families. I know many friends and relatives who own big houses and give them out on rent. Of course it makes sense, as it ensures a trouble-free income for years to come. Hence, it is the post-retirement plan for most urban middle-class individuals.

Let us take the example of my neighbour Singh, who has rented out two floors of his house. The Singh couple are in their 60s and their only son is a Navy officer, settled in Mumbai with his wife and a three-year-old daughter.

While building the two floors, which are now on rent, Singh has spent Rs. 20 lakhs on construction. He now gets Rs. 3000 a month for each floor. So, the income from a 20-lakh investment is a meagre Rs. 6000 per month. The return is, thus, a mere 3.6 per cent, which is less than the returns from any savings account in a bank. If Singh had, instead, saved that large amount in a fixed income, he would have earned more than Rs. 13,000 a month, with a return of eight per cent per annum. The value of their property is indeed increasing daily, but the Singhs have no intention of selling the property, so the value appreciation is non-existent.

At the same time, had he acquired a second property, which he could resell at a later time, it would have attracted a sizable return on his investment. **Points to ponder:** 1. The house you live in is a liability, because you need at least one house to live in. It serves no other purpose. 2. Your second property is an asset, as it will give you a better return upon sale. 3. Most of the time, residential rental income is less than prevailing FD

(fix deposit) income rates from banks and other financial institute.

4. Calculate your cost of construction and expected return before jumping into the conclusion that all rental incomes are good.

5. For commercial properties, the rental income is much higher.

Q&A

Q- I want to take a home extension loan to build another floor in my house, which I will give out for rent. It is a residential property. What do you suggest?

A- Rental income from a residential part-house gives a lower return, compared to other financial products available in the market. Moreover, such part-houses are seldom sold, as you will not get its appreciated value.

Best option is to do a reverse calculation. For the size of the property which you intend to build, what will be the expected rent? Say, the expected rent is Rs. 5,000, then make sure that the construction cost is less than Rs. 7,50,000. Because if you keep Rs. 7,50,000 in a bank FD, you will get an income of Rs. 5,000 every month, assuming a return of eight per cent on the FD.

But having said all that, a house is built not only for commercial purpose. More than the bricks and cement, it is love, compassion and commitment among the family members that is more important. And if any addition or extensions to your house improves that bond, then please go ahead with your plan.

(The writer is a Guwahati based independent financial adviser. Follow him on twitter @d_jakharia)

What's a woman's attire without an appropriate bag to go with it? Pramita Bose checks out some trends in the bag-front making waves

Bag it

Shah adds. He also adds cross body slings, backpacks and the long strap variety to the list. "These are very much in. Large tote bags and the puny Chinese

Designer Masumi Mewawalla of Pink Peacock Couture finds "a printed bag super trendy as it goes with everything in your wardrobe. A sturdy shoulder bag also helps you get through the wet season with ample packing room and crisp details".

Sure, crocheted and straw handbags have appeared on the runways too. "But these lovely woven items are more statement pieces than something we can rely on to cart our essentials," but she admits that they are extremely attractive showcasing a diversity of dyes. "Handbags are now every woman's besties like dazzling diamonds. Be it for the office or an evening of fun and



frolic, bags are sported as arm candies," comments Shivam Khanna, director, Eské Paris. Targeting modern Indian women, this internationally reputed accessories brand has introduced an exclusive line of handbags in a wide range of eye-grabbing samples. Shoulder bags, cross body bags, hobo bags, shoppers' totes and clutches in a

plethora of colours and designs grace the shelves of all its swanky outlets. The colour palette noticeably extends from pop vibrant shades to subtle clas-

sics. They are modern as well as fashionable and claim to cater to both high-end and middle-end of the consumer profile. Subscribing to bags in beautiful pure leather with nice detailing, Shah rejects the fake ones as a strict no-no.

Keeping the 'Skill India' philosophy in mind, Shah opts for handcrafted bags which go well with ethnic wear. "Embroidered bags in Rajasthani stitches or with leather embossing bring a value-addition to the finished product," he observes. Moreover, potlis and jholas in radiant colours and gold-silver brocades hit it off in Indianshaadis with the bridal outfits being desi lehenga-cholis or Banarasi saris and guests too going for the traditional wear. Sequins, mirror-work, Gota Patti and appliqué stitches are also applied to craft out exquisite bags at (Contd on P-VII)



What's an attire, be it a sari, salwar suit or designer label dress without an appropriate bag to go with it? It's an extremely important accessory to enhance that smart look. From small purses to big shopping carriers, bags are indispensable to every woman's lifestyle today, as was in the past. Think of the Victorian ladies with their fancy little purses. But today multi-tasking women need bags to match different occasions. "You may call bags a large pocket, offering some good extra layers to fit in all your necessities, knickknacks," says fashion designer Nimish Shah. From cell phones, car keys to wallets, cosmetics-kit and even umbrellas during the rainy season, a versatile bag is a must, he points out. So, medium size bags are in now for the convenience factor. "A woman's dress is usually devoid of pockets unlike a man's to hold the essential stuff. Bags fill in that gap. You can also stack in a lightweight jacket in case there's a slight nip in the air or squeeze in a shawl if you come home late at night,"

purses are definitely out."

or an evening of fun and



By Ranjan K Baruah

Library and Information Science as career

Can there be any career related to libraries? Yes, the subject or career option related to library is Library and Information Science. Library and Information Science (LIS) is an interdisciplinary field that applies the practices, perspectives, and tools of management, information technology, education, and other areas to libraries; the collection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information resources; and the political economy of information. The libraries being the repositories of knowledge and information, their importance has increased. In this situation, the librarianship has attained the status of a separate discipline. Librarians are the custodians of libraries and they organize, maintain, and store books in the libraries. They help people to find information and use it effectively in their personal and professional lives. The traditional libraries which contained only books now have periodicals, journals, microfilms, audio-videos, cassettes and slides for various purposes such as education, research, reference and pleasure.

Minimum educational qualification required to take up a course in Library Science is graduation. One with graduation can go for Bachelors degree in library science. Duration of this bachelors course is one year. Those with Bachelor degree in library science can go for Masters Degree in library science which is of one year duration. One can also go for M.Phil and Ph.D in this field. There are also diploma and certificate courses.

Today there are a number of career prospects in Library and Information Science. The qualified professionals are em-

ployed in various libraries and information Centers. Trained library professionals can find opportunities for employment both as teacher and as a Librarian. In Librarianship, designations could be Librarian, Documentation Officer, Assistant Librarian, Deputy Librarian, Scientist (Library Science/ Documentation), Library and Information Officer, Knowledge Manager/ Officer, Information Executive, Director/Head of Library Services, Information Officer, and Information Analyst

Courses in LIS includes Certificate course in Library and Information science, Diploma course in Library and Information Science (DLIS or DLIB), Bachelor in Library and Information Science (BLIS or B.LIB), Master in Library and Information Science (MLIS or M.LIB) Eli, M.Phil in Library and Information Science.

Employment opportunities are also diverse as there is a lot of scope for a career in library science. One may get employment in public/government libraries, universities/colleges/schools and other academic institutions, News agencies and organizations, Private organisations and special libraries, Foreign embassies, Information centres/documentation centers, Museums and galleries, which have reading rooms and research facilities, etc.

Updates:

CDS Examination: A Combined Defence Services Examination (CDSE) will be conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on 23rd October, 2016. Indian Military Academy, Dehradun shall admit 150 individuals for 143rd Course commencing in July, 2017 [Including 19 vacancies reserved for NCC 'C' Certificate (Army Wing) holders].

Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala shall admit 45 individuals commencing in July, 2017 Executive (General Service) [including 06 vacancies reserved for NCC 'C' Certificate holders (Naval Wing)]. Air Force Academy, Hyderabad—(Pre-Flying) Training Course commencing in July, 2017 i.e. No. 202/16F/PC shall admit 32 individuals. Officers' Training Academy, Chennai—106th SSC Course (for Men) commencing in October, 2017 shall admit take 175 individuals. Officers Training Academy, Chennai—20th SSC Women (Non-Technical) Course commencing in October, 2017 shall take 11 individuals. Aspirants may apply online and the last Date for Submission of Applications is 12th August.

(The writer is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)

By Ankit Sinha

India's musical landscape is currently witnessing an overwhelming change and there is no doubt that independent artistes across genres are collectively pushing the limits with bohemian ideas. But the seriousness of this trend is well understood when filmmakers too show an affinity towards recognising independent talent.

Delhi-based trio Studio Fuzz, a music production house that comprises Arsh Sharma, Srijan Mahajan and Nikhil Malik -- musicians associated with popular rock bands like Parikrama, Fuzz Culture, Half Step Down, Cyanide and The Circus -- has given a beacon of hope to non-film artistes in the country by composing the soundtrack of the acclaimed film "M Cream", which follows the exploits of four rebellious friends who set out on a road trip in pursuit of a mythic drug.

The OST (Original Sound Track) composed by Studio Fuzz for "M Cream" features six tracks with renowned names like Shubha Mudgal and Half Step Down's vocalist Dhaval Mudgal. Ranging from rock, jazz, folk and instrumental pieces, these tracks reflect an immense diversity and add an aural dimension to the film.

Mahajan says the beauty of creating the score for the film was "the lack of a thought process". "We scored it like innocent little kids in a room (which is what it was minus the kids part, I think). We would spend about 10-12 hours a day with the film on our screen and sit with our instruments and just kind of doodle away and somehow the music just made itself," Mahajan said. Malik says that the music was written first without keeping any vocalists in mind.

"That way we had a lot



of freedom to pick and choose from. Being from the same musical circuit, we had seen a lot of these musicians live and knew what they would bring to the table," Malik said. Unlike mainstream Bollywood films, where the music rarely serves as soundtracks but often as dance numbers, "M Cream" evokes the feel of western cinema where sound tracks are used as accompaniments to the movie's overall



essence. "A new breed of film makers is hitting Bollywood and they are open to looking at other places for new music

rather than rely on the same people to give them the same formula tested stuff," Mahajan also believes that nowadays people are also opening up to the idea of music production as a career. "Music production is, as is anything else, a viable career choice provided you get good at what you do and are intelligent about it!"

Three musical musketeers

he said. "You have to realise that when producing music for a specific purpose, you can't be bull headed and do only what you want to do. You need to see the purpose, the vision of the director and the ultimate goal of what the music needs to achieve and combine it with what you would want to do. A lot of indie musicians don't understand this and get stuck here I feel," Mahajan added. Meanwhile, Malik hoped that their work "encourages and paves the way for every kid who aspires to become a musician in our country". Coming from a rock background, the trio also believes that times are changing for the genre in the coun-

try. According to Mahajan, "people's ideas of live music is changing from listening to a band to having a band as background music". Sharma rues that not just India but "worldwide rock music has taken a big beating over the last ten years or so and electronic music and electronic music producers have come to the forefront". "Rock music definitely needs revitalising, but for that rock bands also have to change and evolve with time; otherwise we risk becoming like the dinosaurs," he added. (The writer can be contacted at ankit.s@ians.in)

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, August 7, 2016

This year would bring some mixed results as Venus square Mars on your solar return chart. You would focus on your career and though you put in a lot of energy and time your efforts may be scattered and you may not get desired results. You would need to structure your work and routines and set some boundaries. This will help you turn things around. Family life may be neglected so take requisite steps to spend quality time with your loved ones. Those in a relationship may go through some hiccups but eventually things will work to your satisfaction. Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

This phase brings mixed results. You are able to find a healthy balance between work and home. Relationships and partnerships benefit from expansive, warm energy, or successful new ones are entered into in this period. You are likely to benefit through marriage, business partnerships and negotiations. You need to negotiate with more care than before. You may find yourself taking on the role of consultant or advisor. Good publicity may come your way. If your work takes you before the public, you can safely expect popularity. Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

You would have an excellent aptitude for understanding the fine arts; especially activities related to dance, music and singing. You are more productive with a responsible outlook. Although you have a desire to make contacts, you are now rather pre-occupied with learning or producing. You could feel an unusual pressure to structure your time and effort, and to cut out communication that seems unnecessary. You will have ideally gained a greater depth of understanding, having focused on information and communication that you really can use to feel more effective in the world. Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

This is a phase that brings fortune, trips, creativity and communication. Plenty of social activities also figure at this time. A strong mental connection with a loved one is likely. You might meet a partner through learning avenues. A tendency to think too much and to focus on serious or even negative issues should be watched. The skills you are working so hard on will be valuable in the coming weeks. Work could involve more counseling or collaborating with a partner. This is a favorable time to reach out for higher learning and joining new courses to improve your professional skills and efficiency. Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

This phase brings new beginnings, whether this means a fresh start in existing relationships or new ones altogether. Power struggles are possible in close personal relationships. Your relationships tend to have distinct themes revolving around personal power, domination, jealousy, manipulation, or self-will. Study business offers and professional opportunities in detail before rejecting or accepting them. You are especially fond of higher studies, children and spirituality. Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

The planetary configuration would help to boost your morale and self-confidence as you meet difficult tasks and resolve work related issues. The lines of communication open up between you and your partner. Sharing daily events and goings-on with one another gives you much pleasure. This can also suggest a real learning experience with someone with whom you can share ideas and come to a better understanding of how you define yourself. Meeting a partner through travel or educational activities is also possible. Partnering with a co-worker, or working with a partner, could also figure strongly. Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

This period brings commercial transactions and business deals to the forefront. Money matters take priority, as some unexpected expenditures have to be met. You would have

cordial relations with colleagues and friends and have an enjoyable time in interacting and conversing with your loved ones. Life picks up pace considerably, and you feel like you can move mountains; and you probably can. This is the time to go after what you want. It is easier than usual to be sensible about your diet, health, hygiene, and fitness needs. Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

Love, romance and excitement in personal relations would be highlighted. Intimate personal relations and business partnerships are likely to get closer and limited relationships are likely to fall apart. It is right to make important decisions. Relationships would move to a completely new level for you. You will form a partnership that either leads to marriage or is otherwise significant. Opportunities for fun and romance are particularly strong. You have tremendous energy at your disposal. Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

You would exhibit mastery in your field of activities during this phase. You achieve goals and targets on time. This is an exceptionally exciting time as professional and business opportunities are offered to you at this time. Your communications, presentations and style brings you closer to people who matter to you as you make a favourable impression on them. You need to keep your eyes open for opportunities in these areas of life. You might also spend a lot of time in physical activities like sports and games. Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You are emotional, loving and caring in personal relationships and family situations. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental with your family and relations. If you do get a chance to travel, which could come up quite unexpectedly, unusual, eye-opening experiences may be in store for you. The people that you meet tend to stir you into new ways of thinking. You are more inclined towards a personal philosophy that is traditional now. You may encounter some challenges regarding shared finances or property. Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

Issues of shared resources, shares and possessions are featured this week. Take charge of your life by taking the necessary steps to make yourself feel secure--on solid financial ground. You have more work and you may be offered a leadership role in your organization. This is a phase of professional stability and good financial returns. You are called upon to take a stand. If you continue to tend to your partner's comfort levels while ignoring your own, feelings of resentment and neglect can affect your relationship. Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

You would get mixed results this week. You would initiate a current of forceful energy to achieve success in an important venture. Finances are a serious matter for you, and you could take pleasure in building your resources and analyzing your cash flow. There is a fine line between financial discipline and worrying excessively about financial details. You tackle domestic and work related issues and handle all these issues successfully. Surprises surrounding personal matters, shared finances and resources and financial support may be in store. Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

This phase brings cooperation and harmony professionally and enhances your reputation and public standing. You would find more joy in your daily routines. Although work can be rather hectic at times, you tend to enjoy taking care of all the details. A move towards working out of the home is likely for many of you. If you have been trying to land a dream job, this is more likely to occur now. Get in touch with what feels most comfortable for you, and the intimacy level in your relationship will step up. Avoid over-analyzing your relationships, or treating them more like businesses.

Bag it

(Contd from P-VI) home-grown cottage industry outlets.

Talking of affordability, Khanna shares the principal motive behind his brand's entry to the business. "Our focus is on craftsmanship as well as comfort, which makes our bags and footwear popular. At a highly within-your-means price-point, the customers are able to get a premium commodity," he claims.

With several brands like Nappa Dori and Globus also inundating the cyberspace as tough competitors, fashion experts view online shopping as a big change-maker in shopping habits of consumers in India. The aspirational and well-travelled working women comprising a big chunk of consumers these days, these portals strive to offer the best of products on-line.

Mewawalla's upcoming bag-launch promises an array of everyday usage. "The USP is to dole out enough pockets to organize the



(TWF)

belongings inside. Our bags are also appropriate for a wide variety of social and professional situations," she says. "A versatile bag can be put in anywhere its owner might want to go on a daily basis. In sync with this concept, we pledge to make our collection immaculately appropriate for all seasons and reasons for its users," she affirms.

When it comes to the shade-card, she ticks off blacks with occasional whites alongside a steady appearance of subtle nudes, gorgeous browns and glossy tans. This would induce a much-needed break from the monotony of regular tones, she fathoms. Faux leather, fabric and vinyl shine as the most popular bag materials according to her.

"The material of a bag helps determine how long the item will last. Printed cotton bags with embellishments are also much in demand. Rather than motifs and prints, you would witness colour-blocking as a centrepiece in my inventory of bags," informs the designer-manufacturer, who is ready to retail by this December.

Setting new norms in news presentation

(Contd from P-VI) an all-round dumbing down of the classical forms of media practices.

This is not an oblique plea for going back to the days of 'he said here today' kind of insipid journalism. Rather, media should continue to sharpen its swords when discharging its duty as the primary watchdog of democracy and public life. What leaves a bad taste is when the media, particularly some of its 'leading lights', assume partisan role and appear contemptuous of public sentiments.

While it may not be possible to eliminate 'ideological' prejudice and bias in the writings of commentators, who are, after all, humans, they should hold no their punches when discussing or writing about issues that concern ordinary lives. For instance, one would have expected the media to be more strict in questioning the government on its failure to arrest polarised politics. What we have observed is that those in the media who should have raised a sustained voice against the divisive politics of today have been content with an occasional comment while showing more interest in some of the esoteric programmes of the government that thrive more on catchy slogans than anything solid on the ground.

As an ordinary cash-strapped citizen, it was monumentally disappointing to see that while prices of many kitchen staples, Dal (lentil) in particular, have been continuously escalating for more than a year the media has shown only a minimal interest in it.

Rahul Gandhi, in a rare burst of aggression, perhaps enlivened the issue in Parliament with the 'Arhar Modi' slogan, but that will satisfy neither the common man who has to live under the yoke of rising prices nor can it be seen as a winning strategy for the down and out Congress.

What, however, is profoundly distressing is the prominence given to a government propaganda line that expectedly sought to blame the previous government but failed to explain how Dal prices jumped virtually overnight by 100 per cent or more over a year ago, and have hardly scaled down since.

Every monsoon-even when 'poor'-brings misery to most of India: floods in the countryside and floating slush on inundated roads, not to speak of traffic snarls and all that. Has the media lost the power to make the government take such problems more seriously and find solutions?

What we see is almost routine denunciation of the failure of the authorities but never have we been told why it has not been possible to fix the rain-related problems when they have existed for as long as one can remember? Don't tell us that there is still no technology or method to fix these problems.

If instead of wasting time and energy on cacophonous and vacuous TV debates on politics, the Indian media can better serve the people by devoting more time and showing a hitherto unseen seriousness in talking about many day-to-day problems that never seem to go. The 'lead' has to come from the self-styled captains of the newspaper industry who claim to set new norms in news presentation and even the way newspapers should look. The newspapers have to shed their greed for increasing their profit margins at the expense of the reader and his or her convenience.

How many readers, for instance, welcome the sight of a newspaper with a flapping half-page as the first page or concur with a newspaper judgement that 91 per cent of Indians go to barbers and beauty parlours is worth the second lead? With that kind of standards you can only expect more of the 'dog bites dog' variety of journalism. (Syndicate Features)



"They say dreams are the windows of the soul--take a peek and you can see the inner workings, the nuts and bolts."

--- Henry Bromel

The Shillong Times

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Drugs haul in Meghalaya

THE series of drugs haul in Meghalaya's capital city of Shillong in recent times raise several uncomfortable questions about who the consumers of these substances are. Have drugs replaced liquor as the substance of choice among the youth? Those in the know say that the targets of the drug peddlers are young people. Their objective is to get the youth hooked on to drugs early in life so that they develop long term dependency. This means that the young would need their regular fixes and therefore the drug suppliers have a lucrative business to meet the demand for narcotics ranging from cough syrups to hard drugs like methamphetamine to marijuana and heroin. The movie Udhta Punjab was a shocking revelation of the drug scene in Punjab. That the cartel which pushed the drugs into the market comprised mainly of politicians was, of course, not surprising. During elections, drugs were given out to the youth in lieu of liquor. The movie is based on a true story and it shows the modus operandi used by drug smugglers from across the Pakistan border which is to use discus and javelin throwers to haul the drugs across the border so that they are not intercepted at the border but would land at specific locations within India.

The repeated drug haul in Shillong means that this city is not just a transit point but is also a hub for drug abuse and this reality can no longer be hidden as it is evident from the growing number of young people seeking treatment and rehabilitation due to drug abuse. At one point there was denial from several quarters that drugs were consumed within Meghalaya since most of the peddlers were people from other states, mainly Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram. It was believed that drugs are consumed only by people of the above states residing in Shillong. Today the reality is that substance abuse is the bane of large numbers of households in this city and beyond. While there is need to create mass awareness among the youth about the evils of substance abuse and its life-shortening effects it is also important to tighten the vigilance on the entry and exit points for drugs to and from Meghalaya because this state is also a transit point, apart from being a consumer state. The Customs Preventive Division for the North Eastern Region is doing a commendable job in seizing offending goods. A better and closer cooperation with the State Police might help to strengthen the vigilance and make seizures more effective.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

Electronic telephone exchange for Shillong by 1990-End

As a major stride towards improving telephone services in Shillong a 7000 lines digital electronic exchange will be installed by the end of September next year replacing the existing obsolete electro-mechanical crossbar system said the Chief General Manager of the NE Telecom Circle Dr D P S Seth.

Talking to the Shillong Times early this week about the problems of the subscribers as well as the Telecom Department, he said that the telephone exchange equipment, which is of 1968 vintage, was showing increasing signs of wear and tear. Soot and smoke particles deposited on the machinery by the chimneys of the Meghalaya Additional Secretariat building get into the tiny spaces between contacts and thereby delay dial tones. Extensive digging along the roadsides also damage cables, which start giving trouble after rains and seepage cause short circuits.

Dr Seth said that the Department did not want to hide under a barrel of excuses, and that besides the promise of a modern exchange, the Telecom personnel are working strenuously to provide reasonably good services, though there is a shortage of personnel to deal with an increasing number of faults caused by the environment and steadily deteriorating machinery. "Our

priority is to get the dial tone back." The immediate programme will be to get hold of a couple of telecom personnel to increase the available work force so that a proper faults surveys and repair programme could be undertaken. A similar effort was undertaken six months ago when three experts from Madras supplemented the staff programme and rectified a large number of faults. Another drive of similar nature will have to be taken up. More people will also be inducted in the exchange. The PABX in the secretariat has only two persons and so from the peak hours 11 to 2, caller are often put into inconvenience.

To improve STD performance a direct linkage with Calcutta electronic trunk auto-exchange is being worked out that should benefit subscribers. Dr Seth said that contrary to reports, cable thefts are not commonplace, and that unfortunately, perspective was lost at a recent press conference in which the Supdt of Police had stated that the cable is not laid at the required depth. The only places where the cables are near the surface are around culverts, or where the nature of the rocky soil is such that the cables cannot be laid at the required depth.

Inevitable collapse of Jowai Municipal Board

By H H Mohrmen

In the early part of this year the employees of Jowai Municipal Board whose salary was not paid for five months stopped executing their duties. The outcome of is that garbage piled like a small mounds all over the town. The saving grace was that the strike was called during spring and not summer when the weather is wet, hot and humid which can cause health hazards to the local residents. The staff of the Board resumed work when they were paid one month of their pending salaries and with the government threatened to promulgate essential service maintenance act (ESMA) to force them to work, but it has been more than three months since they called off their strike and they have only been paid one month salary and nothing else.

The District Administration had convened a meeting of the community leaders to work out a solution to this gigantic problem, but the headmen of the different localities maintained that the community can only pay thirty rupees a month for disposing their garbage. The collection is obviously insufficient to run the Board hence the problem lingers. People of Jowai are not willing to pay for the mess they have created. After the meeting I met one headman who said that it is the government's duty and not the people to maintain the Municipal Board. This is similar to saying that we have every right to eat, but it is the duty of the government to dispose the waste that we produced. We need to ask ourselves what constitutes the government and what we really mean by saying government. Jowaites also need to ask themselves if it is the duty of the residents or the government to clear our waste.

On a daily basis the four dumpers, one 407 truck and one pickup truck at the disposal of JMB do at least two rounds of the

different localities of the town and Jowai is generating between forty and fifty tons of garbage every day. This is indeed a big challenge and the people of the town do not want to accept this fact. Now, the majority of the residents of Jowai town pay not less than four hundred rupees per month for cable connection and the same amount for using their mobile phones. Yet they are only willing to part with rupees 30 for disposing their waste.

The people of Jowai should learn to appreciate the staff of the JMB that in spite of not getting their salary since Christmas last and they have been denied the rightful due till today, yet they continue to carry out their duties. Let us put ourselves in the shoes of the employees of JMB and ask ourselves what would we do if we were in their place? Do you think we can continue working in spite of not getting our salaries for eight months? Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the citizens of this country the right to life, but where is the right to life of the staff of the Jowai Municipal Board? Christmas 2016 is approaching and they have been denied the right to celebrate the last Christmas. It looks like they will not be able to celebrate the ensuing Christmas too.

The country's 69th Independence Day is also approaching and the entire country is going to celebrate this national day. However, while we celebrate the great day of the nation; let us spare our thought for the staff of the JMB. What freedom are we talking about when their right to the salary that they are entitled to is denied from them?

The minister in charge of urban development and the local MLA who is also a Deputy Chief Minister in the Government should bow their heads in shame because they have failed not only the staff of the JMB but they have failed

their children too. If their children had to stop going to school, who is to be blamed? The local MLA who was responsible for the creation of the JMB and who has failed to address the JMB quagmire is now throwing the baby with the bath water. Dr R.C. Laloo's argument is that since he had lost the last two elections on the municipal board issue, he has washed his hands off the JMB imbroglio and he feels it is no longer his concern. His argument is that the person who defeated him for two consecutive terms promised that he would see the JMB is abolished if he's elected. The MLA was elected and R.C. Laloo was defeated hence Laloo does not see the JMB as his responsibility anymore.

Dr Laloo has abandoned his baby and one wishes that it is as easy as that. But the question that begs an answer is whether one can simply abandon an institution like the municipal board just like that? And if the local MLA has abandoned the JMB then the other question that needs answering is - what is the alternative to the JMB that Dr Laloo is offering to the people of Jowai town? Simply abandoning JMB will not solve the problem. Therefore the local MLA should provide the people with a viable alternative to JMB. If the MLA fails to do so then what is the future that the MLA proposes for the town?

The worst fear of the concerned citizens of Jowai is what will happen to the town if the staff of the JMB decide to stop working again. The one thing that we know for sure now is that we cannot blame the district administration anymore, because the failure is at the policy making level. The minister or urban affairs cannot pass the buck and blame the district administration for the appointment in the board, because the appointment was not done at the CEO level. It is our representatives - the minister in

charge urban affairs department and the local MLA who had failed us time and again. The duo and the Chief Minister should be held responsible for the JMB imbroglio. The blame should also be on the community leaders who think that someone else should clean our mess on our behalf.

The question is whether the government can continue to force the employees of the JMB to work without paying them their dues? Does the government have the right to threaten them with promulgating the ESMA to force them to resume work? The staff of the Board has gone from pillar to post to redress their grievances, but it looks like the government is turning a deaf ear to their plight. Their only hope now is the judiciary, but how can they approach the court when they are not even sure about two square meals a day after having been denied their salary for more than eight months now.

If the local representative is confident of doing away with the municipal board, the other question that begs the answer is how will the government hope to implement the various government programs under the National Livelihood Mission (NULM)? Municipal boards or corporation are the platforms from which the six components under NULM can be administered. Is the local representative ready to deny the urban poor their rights to these government programs too? The collapse of JMB is imminent and it can only be saved if all the stakeholders which include the people, the headmen of the different localities in the town, the local MLA, the department of urban affairs, the staff of the board and the district administration put their heads together to come up with a solution to the problem. One only hope that this happen sooner than later.

Why the exorbitant fees?

Editor,

A propos, the news item, "Government order on school fund irks parents," (ST July 20, 2016), I am a parent of daughters who are studying at the said school.

In July this year the school authority issued a bill of Rs. 880 for computer fees to be deposited at HDFC Bank Police Bazar Shillong (Bill enclosed). As per the order of the Education Department which was approved by the Governor on May 24, 2016 which will also be applicable to Shillong Public School, Jowai and Tura schools, the Department had fixed the computer fees at Rs. 500 per student per annum. (Govt. order enclosed).

By forcing students to pay extra charges of Rs 380 the school has clearly violated the Government order and looted the unsuspecting parents. Moreover, the school from time to time had been directing the parents to pay various other fees including building fund, class fund, examination fees, exorbitant identity card fee and so on without issuing any official receipt.

Let the general public know the truth and also let the School clarify whether it is following the Meghalaya RTE Act 2014 applicable to all the government schools including Pine Mount School, Shillong.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request.

TO THE EDITOR

Deficit School teachers' demands

Editor,

E.D. Nongsiang's article on Need to Provincialise Services of Teachers in Government-aided schools of Meghalaya (ST July 27, 2016) makes for an interesting read. While I agree with some of the points raised in the article, I have some differences with the writer based on certain facts. While most of the demands were monetary in nature (where even 100% increase in pay is being seen as not enough), the writer conveniently/purposely fails to address some aspects which are equally important that could have consequences on the state and its job-seeking youths. The writer chose to skip the issue pertaining to recruitment of teachers in these schools. It is a well-known fact that schools were set up everywhere as per the conveniences of the individuals and organisations with no prior permission from competent authorities and teachers are usually appointed by the School Managing Committees at their whims and fancies in total disregard to a fair recruitment process. It seems that fair recruitment is a word that is alien to their dictionary, where the appointees are usually the sons and daughters of the soil, the kith and kin of the Principals, Presidents and Secretaries of SMCs and those of the senior teachers. It is often the

case that in schools being managed by a particular church, only those belonging to a particular denomination are appointed, thereby depriving the educated/duly qualified youths an opportunity to engage themselves as teachers. It is to be noted though that there are certain schools which do deserve provincialization of teachers' services but a total and complete demand for inclusion of all teachers under the same category is highly unprecedented.

Therefore can we ask that the teachers who were unfairly appointed undergo another round of recruitment and total revamp of the recruitment process in these schools? As things stand today, it seems that the Joint Action Committee of All Teacher Association of Meghalaya (JACATAM) is only insisting on their monetary rights to be borne by the government while the latter will have no say in the management of these schools. This is like asking for rights with no responsibilities and accountability and using the innocent students (talking about their gains, losses, benefits, welfare, etc) as baits for their own selfish motives. Of course the schools being privately managed are way better than government-run schools but that's a different matter here. It is also learned that most of the office bearers of this association have passed their expiry date to get into government jobs and therefore are using this opportunity to get a government job by default.

It is a well known fact that these are the very teachers who have given their hearts, bodies and souls to get a government job but could never get beyond the written exams for Grade IV and LDA posts conducted by the DSCs and the MPSC over the years but now suddenly are demanding a pay-scale almost equivalent to that of an MCS officer. It's a different matter though that teaching is no longer considered a Vocation but a Profession.

These are certainly exciting times and it will be interesting to see how this government reacts in the next few days given that the agitation has gained a political twist with the UDP joining the demand-wagon. The writer has also expertly compared Meghalaya with the other bigger states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, etc. But let me remind that these states are highly developed with immense sources of tax collection and for the information of all, Kerala generates over Rs 10,000 crore annually from excise department alone. With the NGT ban on coal mining, relocation and closing down of wine stores, and the state struggling with tax collection, et al., and with the state Assembly elections less than 18 months away, this government is trapped between political compulsion and the state's empty coffers. Whatever decision the government takes will have far reaching consequences for all parties involved including the different developmental schemes of the state government.

Yours etc
S. Kshiar
Shillong - 5

Arabian Night Nightmare Employment creation vital

By Shivaji Sarkar

Development is dicey. Small change in policies or global shift in any area can cause turmoil. Hiking the petroleum price by producing nations itself had caused upheaval and as different energy sources are now being developed it is leading to an Arabian night.

Undeniably, the world did not realize that the boom was artificial and unsustainable for long. And the price crash was inevitable thereby causing miseries to workers in West Asia. India too is having tough times. The Central Government has had to come to the rescue of workers a number of times over the last two decades and more, right from the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein in 1991. True, it is humanitarian issue wherein the Government has innumerable times organised and conducted such rescue missions. In fact, the Indian Navy, External Affairs Ministry and the Government in its entirety have rescued not only Indian national but also citizens of over 26 nations in various conflict ridden countries.

Notably, this has raised many questions as well. Some going to the extreme of the Government getting into such rescue missions due to the failure of the concerned Governments in ensuring proper working conditions in various Gulf countries, preventing their exploitation, humiliation, extortion and the worst conditions they have to face. The others even want an end to countrymen going to do menial jobs like domestic chores, baby sitting and cleaning jobs, particularly in Sheikhdoms.

Pertinently, the recent crisis in Saudi Arabia, where 25,000 workers were given exit visas has accentuated the problem. About 10,000 of them have to be evacuated immediately. This is not all. The Indian mission in Riyadh has to provide for provisions as many of them do not have money to buy food.

Certainly, the visit of Minister of State for External Affairs VK Singh has resulted in only a partial solution like some of the workers being allowed by the Saudi Government to move to other companies, which was earlier banned. Despite this their sufferings do not end. The media is agog with stories of the workers miseries, including death penalties on the silliest grounds. Wherein the Indian Government has to spend a lot of its diplomatic skills, sometimes even large "ransom" and other heavy expenses for humanitarian reasons and prevent a political fall-out.

Clearly, India as of now can hardly do without remittances. An IMF report says India was the largest remittance receiving country, with an estimated \$72 billion in 2015, followed by China (\$64 billion) and the Philippines (\$30 billion). If informal channels like hawala are included remittances could be 50 per cent higher, the report adds. Officially, world remittances total \$ 334 billion.

The IMF adds, "Remittances are free-flowing money without strings which keeps the foreign exchange kitty high particularly as exports thaw". Besides, it is not volatile as FDI or portfolio investments. "In 2009, remittances to some countries were as large as FDI and helped reduction of poverty of the recipient families", the IMF states.

Undoubtedly, this is a disadvantage as such large remittances only add to inflation and erode the rupee. Indeed, the US was the largest remittance source country with an estimated \$56 billion in outward flows in 2014, followed by Saudi Arabia (\$37 billion), and Russia (\$33 billion). Importantly, that is the catch. Remittances to India are not coming only from the Gulf but also from the US, Europe, South-East Asia and even Africa. Consequently, how can New Delhi stop emigration without providing jobs in the homeland?

This would not be possible

till the Indian economy attains such resilience. Once it achieves that, it should also prepare for becoming a remittance source. Specially against the backdrop, of it becoming an outsourcing hub for low-paid jobs largely to some of the neighbouring countries. Hence, should we stop emigration to such countries, where Indians are treated like slaves? According to many people, including the External Affairs Ministry officials this is the solution. Specially, as people from States like Kerala and Punjab happen to be the largest sufferers.

This is also true as their toil has boosted the economies of their home States. Naturally, there is concern in Kerala as the Gulf remittances subside. More so as even high skilled workers in the Gulf are being gradually nudged out. One reason is the locals are replacing many of them. Remember, since 2014, remittances inflow started faltering; worse, it has since dipped by over Rs 23,350 crores in 2015 (according to the World Bank). However, stopping emigration is not a solution till the country can create jobs in large numbers. Given that the Manmohanomics of 25 years only led to shrinkage of jobs despite an increase in investment.

The new Modinomics is only two-year old and aims at creating jobs through Make in India, Skill India, MUDRA, Stand Up India and many other programmes. The economists are keenly observing how these policies function and create employment in the coming years. There is no gainsaying the policy planners tend to believe that the situation is changing. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley told the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in the US recently, "The key emphasis of the Modi Government has been -- decisiveness, consistency in terms of policy direction and transparency in functioning."

Apparently the Government is taking steps. Creating jobs, however, is not easy. As most of the programmes would take time to yield results. Also, there cannot be a blanket ban on emigration. In the 1960s, as IIT graduates moved to the US and Europe, there was furore. This was called "brain drain". Twenty years later the Modi-led Government has termed it "brain gain" as the emigrants created a significant constituency and strong lobbies for promoting India.

But when it comes to the Gulf, India has to be more circumspect. Particularly as freedom to emigrants is limited and they are ill-treated. Wherein, the Government has often to intervene to help them out. Recall, India had stopped emigration to some countries in the past for such reasons. Additionally, it is easier to say that a foreign country has to behave with immigrants in a humane manner. But if there is a breach, it is difficult to correct.

All in all, the Government has taken some steps to protect the emigrants as this is a difficult area. But till such time the Indian economy becomes resilient and booming, the solutions are not easy. Once that happens, which might take possibly a decade; people themselves would not be going to the notorious areas.

Obviously, emigration as a policy cannot be banned. Despite a vigilante Government, the country needs the remittances. Even after developing economic muscles, allowing people to go abroad saves the country from situations like the US, which is now fighting the political battle to save its resources. India would not only have to create jobs in the country but also needs to balance remittance outflows in future with equal inflows. This would ensure the 21st Century and beyond belongs to India! ---
- INFA

"The things that one most wants to do are the things that are probably most worth doing."

--- Winifred Holthy

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 359 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2016

Nepal's new PM

PUSHPA Kamal Dahal or Prachanda has once again become Prime Minister of Nepal. He had accused the ""external lord"-India of unseating him in the past and now the same has been accused of putting him back on the hot seat. India is happy that K.P Oli is out. Prachanda's Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist Centre) has quit the alliance with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). It was the Madhesi and the Tharus who had been on the war path after the adoption of Nepal's new Constitution in September 2015. They complained that they had been deprived of adequate representation. India was openly against K.P Oli. Madhesi groups had links in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and the blockade started by them on the southern border of Nepal was decidedly helped by New Delhi. Oli went to China and signed a trade and transit agreement with Beijing. Chinese President Xi Jinping is due to visit Nepal late this year. New Delhi has been against K.P Oli even more because of it. Nepal's politicians are trying to derive maximum mileage out of pitting India against China. Nepal politics has been in chaos and there have been eight Prime Ministers in eight years. Now the CPN (MC) has been put in power with the help of Nepal Congress. Prachanda is to be PM for nine months and Nepal Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba will be the next. Beijing and New Delhi are watching developments.

Will the Prachanda government be able to effect constitutional amendments to redress Madhesi grievances? Support of the CPN (UML) which has been ousted will be necessary to bring in the amendments. But first, Prachanda will have to ensure that cases against the Maoists from the time of their war against the monarchy are withdrawn. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee will take the decision. Second, reconstruction of the country out of the debris led by the earthquake of 2015 has to proceed apace.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

NZ tour

Javed's double century gives Pak better edge

An attacking double century by Javed Miandad lifted Pakistan to a strong position at stumps today the second day of the third cricket Test against New Zealand at Den Park. Miandad made a superb 271, his sixth test double century and his second high to steer Pakistan to 497 for 5 at the end of the day. At stumps Salim Malik was on 22 and Captain Imran Khan on 8. Beginning the day at 289 for two, Pakistan rammed home its advantage with a disciplined display against a depleted New Zealand attack.

Strike Bowler Richard Hadlee left the field after 45 minutes and did not return. He is suffering an injury to his right heel, the same injury which forced him home early from New Zealand tour of India before Christmas. The day began well for the home side when Shoaib was run out after a Bad mixup with Miandad on the seventh ball of the day. Shoaib's 112, his second century in consecutive Test innings, took 51 minutes came off 254 balls and included 17 boundaries. With Miandad he shared a record 248-run stand for the third wicket for Pakistan against New Zealand. The morning session was abbreviated by 38 minutes due to light rain and Pakistan managed just 45 runs in the 20 overs before lunch. Miandad brought up his 200 in brilliant fashion lifting spinner Stephen Boock over the mid-wicket boundary for his fifth six off that bowler. It had taken 398 minutes and came off 330

balls, with 22 boundaries. Miandad became Pakistan's highest individual scorer against New Zealand when he reached 210, surpassing Imtiaz Ahmed's 200 at Lahore in 1955-56. New Zealand's three remaining bowlers Ewen Chatfield, Boock and John Bracewell toiled bravely but with the pitch offering little help it was a thankless task.

Assembly secretariat constitutes body for redressing staff grievances

A high powered Committee comprising officers and staff of the Meghalaya Assembly Secretariat has been formed to examine in depth all disputes, claims and counterclaims, complaints, grievances etc. and to suggest the fundamental rights of every aggrieved employee.

The Committee was constituted at the suggestion of the Speaker, Mr P G Marbaniang at Staff meet chaired by him on Feb 21. Mr Marbaniang underscored the need for discipline and sincerity and appealed to the officers and staff to uphold the dignity of their profession. While cautioning them against any "ill feeling, indifferent attitude and gossiping" while at work, the speaker urged for a liberal attitude while dealing with the public. Reiterating the need for upholding moral standards and a sense of duty, he hoped the Assembly Secretariat would set a good example for others.

Robert's Hospital: a layman's perspective

By Toki Blah

Whatever is happening to Robert's Hospital Jaiw is no longer a hush-hush affair of the KJPA but it has been allowed to spill over into both the print and electronic media. Everyone knows this. As a Presbyterian it is not in ones nature to bring into the public domain issues and activities that tend to throw the church, its institutions and its clergy in poor light. Therefore it must be made clear from the very outset that this write-up has come up after a lot of hesitation and with the greatest of reluctance. The writer wishes to clarify that he has no official connection whatsoever with the hospital or its various committees; is neither a pastor nor an elder of any church, and as such, not privy to the decisions of the inner circle of the KJPA. I have no personal vested interest in the issue nor is there any intention to malign and vilify anybody. I am, however, a common lay member of the Presbyterian church; one of the many who is worried and totally alarmed at what is happening to this iconic health care institution of the church. The need of the hour is to bring the standoff at Robert's Hospital to close and restore normalcy in the workings of the Hospital to enable this mission hospital to once again impart its healing touch to suffering humanity. That should be the prime objective of any initiative including that of this article.

A thick cloud of confusion obfuscates the real situation as far as Robert's Hospital is concerned. Nobody seems to really know what is going on. Charges and counter charges of an ongoing blame game are flying thick and fast. In the melee the truth is the first casualty. However, there are some common issues that everyone agrees on. Foremost among these is the collective desire, cutting across all sections, of the need to bring an immediate end to the current turmoil; to restore normalcy; and that the hospital should henceforth never again be subjected to such humiliation. There is consensus on this aspect even from those who are in the thick of the fray, irrespective of the role they played in bringing the hospital to its knees. We must take advantage of this consensus factor. It is the strength of

Robert's Hospital, the social capital it brings along. It should therefore form the catalyst in any effort to restore normalcy in the functioning of this flagship health institution of the KJPA.

In any attempt to bring about a full recovery of the hospital an obvious question that needs to be answered - Who, in the first place, allowed the crisis to develop to such a deplorable extent? To be truthful, it's not the first time either and neither is it fundamentally different from all other times. Only this time it's worse. In the past the symptoms of a sick hospital were cosmetically suppressed by simply replacing the incumbent Medical Superintendent (MS) without addressing the root cause of the malady. No wonder the ailment keeps on erupting with such periodic frequency. If the bitter truth is to be told and acknowledged the troubles of Robert's Hospital are hatched, fostered and nurtured by the Hospital's own Management system. The root cause is managerial incompetence. Period!

In the KJPA's scheme of things, especially in its running of its health care institutions, there are two levels of management, the Managing Committee (MC) of the hospital and the KJPA Executive Committee, that through its Office Administration Department, controls the MC. A sort of check and balance mechanism which is perfectly fine. The trouble lies with the composition of both committees; their inter-departmental communication skills; their inability to interact meaningfully. The Medical Superintendent and a sprinkling of doctors amidst a sea of pastors and church elders form the 16 member MC. The KJPA Executive Committee (KJPA,EC) and its Office Administration Department on the other hand, is almost swamped with pastors and headed by its senior Executive Secretary (SES) who again is a senior pastor. Appointment to these KJPA Committees work on a 'buddy buddy' basis where short shrift is given to qualification, experience, expertise and professionalism. Administrative and management pitfalls are seldom foreseen but even when they are, soft options are preferred over hard decisions. The general method of solving problems is to sweep them under the

carpet; by sitting on the file, in the belief that they will eventually go away on their own. Sadly this never happens.

Not surprising therefore that in the past, as in the present, many unhappy episodes of Robert's Hospital are the direct result of sheer administrative incompetence; the inability to communicate; the failure to take decisive action at the right time. Things worsen especially when the MS and the SES do not see eye to eye which seems to be the present case. Work gets affected. In the present context the KJPA seems to realise the root cause of the problem and has therefore kept the MC and the Office Administration Department in abeyance and the Hospital will henceforth be managed by a Special Empowered Committee (SEC) of 11 members. The SEC will in all probability recommend course corrections on all policy mistakes committed in the recent past. It will definitely seek ways and means to sort out the current administrative and financial mess that currently afflict the hospital. It will no doubt try to address the grievances of staff and fourth grade employees of the hospital. It will certainly try to come out with both a short term perspective as well as a long term vision for Robert's Hospital. The mandate of the SEC is clear. 'Bring back Robert's Hospital to its feet. Revive its ability to serve' and everyone who is a well wisher of the hospital should support such an initiative.

It is obvious to everyone that the SEC therefore needs complete autonomy and freedom of action to effectively fulfil the task given to it. Individual ego baggage from the past is the last thing the SEC needs and they should not be allowed under any circumstances to interfere, hinder and obstruct. In the heat of the moment all those involved in the mismanagement of the hospital, whether they knowingly or unknowingly contributed to the mess, should take a step backwards to enable things to settle down and for cooler heads to confabulate and take necessary decisions. Our respect for the former MS, Dr David Tariang goes up by several notches for his voluntary resignation to enable the SEC to function properly. He realised that his continued official presence could inadvertently and unnecessarily affect its

working. For the good of the Hospital he removed himself from the scene. Therefore a similar initiative is expected and required from the head of the KJPA Executive Committee. One step backwards to save the institution is all that is now needed. Saving the institution is the priority here. Inflated egos, sentiment, false pride and petty politics must take a backseat. It's the need of the hour. Otherwise the SEC will remain a lame duck committee if it does not have the freedom to implement its own mandate. Certainly that is not the intention when the SEC was setup.

In conclusion the SEC has its task cut out. It has two main objectives before it. Firstly to immediately restore normalcy and allow Robert's Hospital to once again function as a hospital. If doctors have resigned, the KJPA can use its leverage with CMC Vellore to help it tide over the shortage of doctors. This is important. Then as pointed out above, the SEC also needs to function in an atmosphere of complete freedom without undue influence from any hangover from the past. It must be seen and must act with complete neutrality. Only then will it get the confidence of all concerned. Only then will normalcy return to the hospital. Secondly the SEC has to bring about a long lasting viable and sustainable management system for the hospital. The management deficient profile of Robert's hospital needs to be professionally beefed up. We need to bring in more professionals in finance management, hospital management and hospital administration for both the MC and also the Office Administration Department of the KJPA. Retired Govt servants should get the least preference. They are just not equipped for it. No harm if trained and competent Pastors and church elders remain as chairmen or moderators of the various committees set up by the KJP. One cannot see why young pastors of the KJP cannot be trained for such responsibilities. However all future committees still need to be guided and advised by qualified professionals. Otherwise it will continue to remain a case of the blind leading the blind. It will simply lead to unwarranted disaster such as the one under discussion, that no one really wants.

The GST Issue

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

The passage of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Bill, officially called the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty Second Amendment) Bill, 2014 recently passed in the Rajya Sabha is seen as one of the biggest reforms undertaken by the government since the opening up of the economy in 1990. While there is some road still left to be travelled towards implementation, yet its passage in the Parliament ensures that it will be a reality soon. The GST seeks to replace Central Excise Duty, Service Tax and at the same time will subsume State VAT, Central Sales Tax, and Purchase Tax, among other taxes. In effect, this bill seeks to end the cascading effect of indirect taxation in India.

Before understanding GST, we must understand the present system of indirect taxation prevalent in India. The constitution divides taxation powers between centre and states. Both levels of government have some exclusive areas where they can levy tax. Income tax, which includes tax on company profits, is in the exclusive domain of central government. These taxes are referred to as direct taxes. Indirect taxes are taxes levied on manufacture of goods, provision of services and consumption, which are again in exclusive domain of central government. Taxes on consumption, on the other hand, are under the exclusive domain of state governments.

This system of indirect taxation had some problems. First, there was the issue of multiplicity of taxes. From the moment a product was manufactured, it was treated to a bevy of taxes from central excise to VAT. This added to the total cost of the product which was borne by the final customer. Another problem was that, different states had different taxation rates. Some states had lower VAT rates compared to others. This created a chance of tax evasion and states lost out on revenue that it had to earn.

GST seeks to correct these anomalies in the system. It seeks to replace the indirect tax regime in India which is replete with multiplicity of laws and barriers in interstate movement of goods. At the fundamental level, GST is a value added tax. This will be levied at all points in the supply chain where credits will be allowed for any tax paid on inputs acquired for use in making the output. Since the GST will be tax added on each stage of value addition, the final consumer will bear the GST charged by the last dealer in the supply chain, with set off benefits for all previous stages. It would be applicable for both goods and services wherein the exemptions given are minimum. A minimalistic system that has less discretion will function as a much more transparent and robust system. The GST regime seeks to correct those faults that were present in the indirect taxation regime. GST will make India one unified market.

GST will seek to help the consumer in the following ways. First, all taxes will be collected at the point of consumption. This means that if any product is taxed at 18% (which is the GST rate fixed for now), it will include both central government's taxes and state government's taxes. This will decrease the cost of goods in long run and can create an environment of lower inflation rates in the country. Seen in this light, GST can also play an important role towards achieving the recently announced inflation policy where the government will attempt to keep inflation at 4% with tolerance level pegged upto 2%. Second,

once barriers between states are removed, we as consumers will not end up paying "tax on tax" which is what happens when goods move across state borders. It will also widen the tax base which is necessary for lowering tax rates and eliminating classifications. GST will result in harmonisation of Central and State tax systems which would reduce duplication and compliance costs. The automation of compliance costs will also result in reduction of errors, thereby increasing efficiency.

In keeping with the federal structure of the country, GST will have two components: Centre GST (CGST) and States GST (SGST). This is keeping in mind the fact that base and essential design features would be same. Both the system will be based on tax on the destination model. Thus, exports would be zero-rated, and imports would attract the tax in the same manner as domestic goods and services. Inter-State supplies within India would attract an Integrated GST (aggregate of CGST and the SGST of the destination State). The GST will be accompanied by the GSTN which will work towards capacity building among others. Officers are already being trained towards administering the new GST.

However the GST will face stiff challenges in its road to implementation in the coming years. The first challenge percolates to the rate at which GST will be launched. The prevailing sentiment seems to be at 18%, which will finally be decided and is yet to be notified by GST council, in the long run. While different studies have pointed to different rates, it would undoubtedly help the consumers when the present rate is fixed at a level which would negate the cascading effects of indirect taxation.

Another challenge that has to be encountered is administering the GST with minimum exemptions. New Zealand had the best GST model when it started out with the taxation rate fixed at 10% with almost zero exemption rates. However as most taxation analysts would point out, tax policies can never be fixated in one particular realm, as with changing circumstances and economic behaviour, taxation policies need to change as well. Today, New Zealand has increased its taxation rate from 10% to 15%. Countries have fared better in administering the GST regime when they have reduced the exemptions while widening the base. This is the challenge India will hope to encounter and successfully resolve.

The third challenge would be the implementation itself. India since its independence has achieved political unity while economic unity remains a distant dream. India is composed of various states with different financial standings. While states like Maharashtra and Gujarat are capable of generating their own revenues, the north eastern states, for example, are not on a strong financial footing. Yet the GST will seek to treat every state equally. While this would be challenging, yet it would also harmonise the country as an economic entity in the end. In the long run, GST seeks to benefit all and can truly act as a harbinger of the next round of economic reforms. The road to the same is tricky but the goal is worth it.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

TO THE EDITOR

Rights minus accountability

Editor,
Apropos to the letter of Mr S. Kshiar (ST Aug, 2016) I couldn't agree more with everything he's said. It is very true especially when it comes to selection of candidates. I am saying this because I have been through this while applying in one of the reputed schools in Laitumkhrah. The MC of the school holds the ultimate power to appoint the person of their choice. As expected a kith and kin of one of the MC members was appointed without any transparency. I am very sure that this happens everywhere even as I speak. These same appointees are a part of this Association who are trying their best to lead the other mates and to tell the Government, "Look Government, give us MCS scale of pay and all other benefits including arrears since service, but LEAVE THE SCHOOL ALONE. You should not take control or have any say..

just pay us, we will manage the school and appoint whosoever we want." Once provincialisation is approved, they will stage another 10 days strike demanding another right without responsibility backed up by a bunch of power hungry politicians who will prey for political gains. Another sad thing is that these teachers are using the students as a bait to garner sympathy from the masses.

Yours etc.,
Dashan Warshong,
Via email

Sense of belonging

Editor,
It's a known fact that we Khasis are quick to forget our own culture and root. Is it because the new place we inhabit is more westernized? Is it because the place we inhabit is more urban, and developed? Khasis are guilty of having an "emotion" of "belongingness" (to use a Social Psychology term), which they feel entails severing of links and ties

with the community which they were once part of. We are a small tribe, a minority which most of India is still not familiar with! We must try to develop a strong feeling that "we belong here, and not somewhere else", that this is and will always be "home" for us. When I read fictions by Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri etc, I am amazed by how these affluent Indian writers settled in the west could write about their community with compelling passion and intimate familiarity. It is not only an idyllic or romantic longing, but a sincere love that they show for their community. Yes this town of ours has nothing much to offer in terms of employment opportunities, but even if we go to settle outside we must not be carried away, for this is the place and community which shaped us with every good value. This should be urgently felt by us.

Yours etc.,
Willie Gordon Suting
Shillong 1

Missing children!

Editor,
Apropos your report, "Missing minor girls traced in Delhi" (ST- August 7, 2016), timely action by both the police and people could save many innocent children. While the police should act immediately on complaints, the people too should be vigilant. Police should resolve to pursue every complaint regarding missing children to its logical end. Citizens too should play a pro-active role in ensuring a crime free society. Our lifestyles have undergone a massive change. Most of us do not even greet our neighbours. We live in thickly populated cities but remain isolated. Good neighbourly relations will certainly ensure a safer society. The break-up of joint families, increase in the number of broken families, violence, and too much of materialism have killed the humaneness in us. It is time the issue is addressed in right earnest. A nationwide alert on missing children should be put in place. And no leniency should be shown to the guilty.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad - 15

"The aim of life is self-development. To realize one's nature perfectly - that is what each of us is here for."

--- Oscar Wilde

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 360 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2016

The Kashmir issue

KASHMIR is experiencing the worst civil unrest since the 1990s. Curfews and separatist bombs have crippled the state for 31 days. More than 56 people died and at least 5000 people were injured in the unrest, among them 2000 security personnel. Pakistan is doing its best to capitalize on the crisis. Infiltration is going on across the Line of Control. The Mehbooba Mufti government seems helpless in tackling the crisis. Obviously, the Centre has to move in. An all party meet of MPs on Kashmir is a sound idea. But that depends on how aware the MPs are of the gravity of the situation. Options on Kashmir should be seriously considered. Student and Hurriyat leaders must be engaged in the dialogue. It should however be made clear that the issue of sovereignty cannot be put on the conference table. There can be no two opinions on the issue. What can be discussed is whether there should be greater autonomy in Kashmir and whether AFSPA should be withdrawn from some areas of the state. Of course, curtailment of AFSPA should not threaten the security of the region. India should start a dialogue with Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir. Pakistan claiming that Kashmir will one day be part of it cannot be tolerated. Terrorist attacks from Pakistan may intensify. It is necessary to scale up security measures in vulnerable Kashmir.

At the same time, it has to be debated whether growing Hindutva in India since the NDA came to power in 2014 has led to growing Islamisation in the Valley. Cow vigilantes may spread their network to Kashmir. Cow Rakshaks may become active in Jammu. What is encouraging is that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has come down heavily on such vigilantism.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

Sophisticated arms come to Bodo hands

Bodo extremists involved in largescale violence in this western district of Assam during the past fifteen days, possess an adequate number of sophisticated arms and ammunition. According to police, the extremists had set up gun factories clandestinely with the help of local artisans for making pipe guns, revolvers and bombs. Two hand-made revolvers sized in a recent raid by police, closely resembled the original webby-scott model. Wants was acquired was only a little polishing and the manufacturer's seal police added.

Police said about 200 licenced gun holders reported that their weapons had been stolen. Apart from these about 20 guns were snatched from forests guards and policemen. Meanwhile, police had intensified combing operations in the jungles and other places but recovered only a few hand made guns. Police was also unable to arrest any hardcore extremists. Some Bodos who reportedly left the Industrial Training Institute at Bongaigaon in the same district, were engaged in making guns, police added.

Meanwhile the Central Reserve Police Force officials in Assam today denied a newspaper report that the CRPF deployed in the trouble torn districts of the state was working under "secret instructions from Delhi." CRPF DIG Mr. R.S Mooshary, describing the report as irresponsible said that eight companies of CRPF in Kokrajhar, two companies in Darrang and one in Barpeta districts had been deployed to assist the state police in maintain law and order. They were functioning as part of the unified strength of the state police and there were

no complaints regarding their non-cooperation.

In the maintenance of law and order the CRPF acts basically as a striking force with the minimum deployment strength of a platoon, he said. Referring to the reported allusion to his visit to Kokrajhar from Feb 22 to 24 Mr Mooshary said it was part of the duty of senior CRPF officers to visit the place of their deployment and acquaint themselves on the situation.

He said whenever senior officers visit any place of deployment, they impress upon the CRPF men to act strictly in accordance with law and use force only to the extent required. They also ensure proper conduct of the force in dealing with the public and over arrangements for accommodation, transport, procurement of ration for the force personnel.

Cornered terrorist consumes cyanide

Five people, including a terrorist, died in violence in Punjab during the past 24 hours. A terrorist, Surinder Singh consumed cyanide when cornered by security forces at Sahoran village in Ropar district yesterday. A .32 bore foreign made revolver and seven empty shells were recovered near his body.

District police Chief Mr Chander Sheker said Surinder Singh was wanted for three killings besides some snatching and looting cases. He said terrorists opened fire when the security forces raided their hideout in the village. The terrorist was cornered by the raiding party, having exhausted his ammunition, the terrorist consumed cyanide.

Seventy years of independence from British Rule

By Fabian Lyngdoh

By the end of the 18th century the British defeated the Burmese in the battle of Yandaboo and established their authority in the valley of the Brahmaputra as a right of conquest, and from then onward they gradually penetrated the surrounding hills and established their rule over all the north eastern hills tribes. The Khasi states came under British control in 1833 as a consequence of the war that ensued after the Nongkhlaw massacre in April 1829. The Political Agency was established in 1835 with headquarters at Cherrapunji. That was the beginning of the effective intervention of the British in the affairs of the Khasi states which lasted more than a hundred years and brought about great changes in the Khasi society together with the onset of modernization.

For administrative convenience to strengthen the colonial control, the British thought it proper to recognize and authorize the syiem alone as the chief of a Khasi state, and completely ignored the existence of the dorbar as the supreme authority. Thus, the status of the 'bakhraws' (elders of the founding clans) was relegated to that of mere electors for the occasion of election of the syiem. By way of ratifying the election of a syiem and the granting of a sanad thereafter, the British Government assumed to itself the right not only to appoint, but also to dismiss a syiem at its pleasure. By this act, the authority and power of the traditional 'dorbar ki bakhraw' was abolished and the syiems became a gift in the hands of the British Government. In the Jaintia Hills, the syiem was a raja only over the people in the plains of Bangladesh, but he was only a syiem among the Pnars. The syiems were abolished during the British Rule and the bakhraws or dalois assumed independent charge of their own respective 'raids' or 'elakas'.

On the other hand, after obtaining the sanad, the syiems in the Khasi Hills attempted to identify their position with that of the rajas and maharajas, and to create for themselves a false superior status, to usurp the powers of the dorbar, leading to continuous conflicts. In 1917, a

complain was made on the matter of rights and powers conferred upon the syiem by the British through the sanad which in effect converted the syiem into a landlord while reducing the ruling clans, and land owners and members of the 'Raids' into mere freehold serfs, but the British turned a deaf ear. Historical evidences indicate that the British Government used all efforts to put down people's reaction against the increasing power and authority of the syiems. There had been several popular revolts, but the syiems' power over the people was protected by the British Government because the syiems were powerless without their protection. The British had also interpreted the 'khatduh' (youngest daughter) who was only the custodian of the clan's economy, as that of the legal heir to all ancestral properties.

The classification of the localities of Shillong into European Ward, Cantonment area, Administered Areas of Shillong, etc., was initiated by the British. The framers of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, in Sub-Paragraph (2) of Paragraph 20 of the Sixth Schedule as first enacted, wrote that, 'the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District shall comprise the territories which before the commencement of this Constitution were known as the Khasi States and the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District, excluding any areas for the time being comprised within the cantonment and municipality of Shillong...' Note the phrase, 'for the time being'; it does not suggest perpetuity. If these areas were meant to be excluded from the tribal area for perpetuity, it should have simply been written, 'comprised within,' while the phrase 'for the time being comprised within,' means 'for some extent of time only.' That was the original intent of the framers of the Sixth Schedule. However, the North-Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act, 1971 seems to have tampered with this original intent. I leave this to the Constitutional experts to dwell upon. On my part, I would only say that whether we should retain an arrangement or alter it should depend on our own requirements, not on the basis of a British legacy.

The British had misinterpreted the Khasi political system to suit their colonial expansion policy. But even after India attained Independence, there is still a hangover. The British classified the syiem as 'chief' and all the bakhraws as 'headmen', and this classification continues to be legalized under Para 3(g) of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India and by the 'Appointment and Succession of Chiefs and Headmen) Act 1959', passed by the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (UKJHDC). The Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Appointment and Succession of Syiem, Deputy Syiem, Electors and Rangbah Shnong of Mylliem Syiems) Act, 2007, further classified the lyngdohs, the basans and myntris who were all originally the 'bakhraws' under the word 'Electors', meaning that their only main function is to elect the syiem. This Mylliem Act of 2007 moreover vested the syiem's authority with territorial jurisdiction besides administrative control. This is a wide departure from the Khasi traditional political system, showing tendency towards centralization of power in the office of the syiem.

The status of the bakhraws as representatives of the founding clans of the hima and the authority of their dorbar find no recognition even under the District Council today. The District Council which is a statutory institution has taken over the position and power of the 'dorbar ki bakhraw' in much the same way as the Deputy Commissioner of the British Colonial Government has done. So, even the District Council which is purported to protect tribal traditions and customs is not really protecting the Khasi traditional political system which centred on the authority of the 'dorbar ki bakhraw', but it seems that it is protecting a monarchic legacy invented by the British for their own colonial interests.

However, it is not only the District Council, but also the larger Indian legal system seems to protect the legacy left behind by the British. It is being interpreted that the legislative function of the District Council is not to legislate any law on customs and traditions for reforms and development, but only to codify age-old customs and traditions as they are. And, the age-old customs and traditions of the Khasis

are being interpreted in a manner as defined, described or interpreted in the official and unofficial writings of the British colonial officers. The Courts seem to recognize the writings of P. R. T. Gurdon, Captain D. Herbert, A. J. M. Mills, Keith Cantlie, and others, on the Khasi traditions and customs as sacred and infallible. The British officers did not understand the implications of the Khasi culture in its entirety, but they wrote and documented Khasi customs only as much as it served the interest of their colonial rule. But even today, there is a tendency among us to give more weight to the interpretations of foreign scholars (especially Europeans) about our own customs and traditions as if these European scholars understand the implications of customs better than those who had been born and brought up in a particular culture.

In principle, after Independence, the District Council is the only authority according to the Constitution of India which has the right to interpret the customs of a tribe for which it is established. Members of the District Council as the elected representatives of the tribe should be wiser and have more right to interpret the customs of the tribe than the colonial officers. The District Council has the authority even to nullify all that the British had knowingly or unknowingly misinterpreted about tribal culture. If the District Council does not have this authority, then it is of no use. After Independence, the political administration of the British had been nullified. Hence, their legal interpretations and judicial rulings should no more be taken as precedents in the judicial administration of India. But, if after 69 years of Independence, the District Council can codify the Khasi customs only within the context of the interpretation of British colonial officers then what is the use of the District Council at all? Let the books written by the British colonists be enshrined as legal sacred scriptures and abolish the District Council, and continue with our freedom and independence under the British Rule. But that is not the solution. Instead, let everything be started afresh for our own interest and welfare, according to our own genius, not according to colonial legacy. That is Independence in its perfect sense. 'May all free Indians celebrate a happy Independence Day'

several hotels and guesthouses, that it has to tax its parents or is it the first school in the state that will have the maximum number of toilets? A collection which has no receipt amounts to corruption and why a school has to indulge in this is best known to its principal. According to a section of the local media, when these parents asked for the receipt the uncouth staff from the school office told them that it is for their consumption. That the school staff has the temerity to say this boldly only indicates that they have the blessings of the school administration and the government bureaucrats. This school is a classic case of a fall from grace. And how can the Governor be privy to all this mess and say nothing? The State Government introduces fee collection in this school which is blindly endorsed by the State Governor with his rubber stamp, is rightly questioned by the irate parents.

How can the state

Can there be a free India?

By Ananya S Guha

Independence Day has arrived. Once again there will be mandatory flag hoisting and a flood of platitudes. Once again the poor are lying uncared for; once again the cataclysmic floods have devastated Assam and other states. And once again caste India has raised its ugly head. Sixty nine years after becoming a free nation is a long time. Freedom from foreign yoke meant immeasurable sacrifice and self sacrifice. It meant unification of a country on a common platform. It meant nationalism and ideology. It also meant internationalism in the shape of men like Tagore. It meant wresting power immediately in the view of some stalwarts. It of course meant the partition of the country with a huge fall-out even today. It meant suddenly that the two nation theory propagated by people who wanted political power and who capitulated naively to the British cleverness of divide and rule, became a reality.

Sixty nine years later poverty continues unabated. The problem of slums and unhygienic living conditions are a deep wound to the monolith that is India. Children unable to go to school assail the educationist's alter ego or his sensibilities. The plight of street children is something that haunts us all. Social workers abound but the sheer size of the country makes alleviating such problems n insurmountable task. Kosambi's exposition of a diverse India, in all respects; climate,

has to be spoken of, it is like tumultuous waves in a vast ocean.

Come that red letter day, there must be introspection. Economic citations, mention of being one of the poorest countries also will not help. Achievements will be side tracking main issues of decent living and development. And what is the meaning of development? Compatible living with growth; reduction in disparities between a burgeoning poor, a middle class desperate to reach financial stability and concentration of wealth in the hands of the few who also have access to political power- a word which is corruptible. In India the word 'power' is worshipped and demonised. At every instance one hears of the powerful, the one who wields power, and in front of them the weak and the poor cower. This cowering is the reality of India. Power is but a distortion of its real meaning in a democracy and feeds on the dementia of the public.

But with every Independence day collective memories of a people must come alive that a nation had the nerve to oust a vast imperialist power. That a nation imbued other's cultures to give its own an efflorescence, whether we think of Urdu, or whether shown in mastery of the English language. Indians had the eclectic value of thought whether we think of a Gandhi, a Tagore or a Swami Vivekananda, or for that matter the revolutionary turned spiritualist,

The religious tainted social problems manifest more and more acutely, cutting across all norms of rational behaviour. Blame it on politicians, or blame it on people who want disruption and are fanatics.

geography, culture and history sums up the complex bane of the country. We pride in this as a boon, but are unable to handle the cleavages and the acuity of its idiosyncratic traits. So whichever government comes to power is blamed for inept handling of the economy leading to poverty or bludgeoning ethnic crises. The religious tainted social problems manifest more and more acutely, cutting across all norms of rational behaviour. Blame it on politicians, or blame it on people who want disruption and are fanatics. The result is the same: wanton, death, destruction and killing. If there are separatist feelings in some parts of the country, there is a separateness which also is culture specific, resulting in jingoism. Yet the Constitution is an enabled marker for just one hegemony: unity of oneness underlying all diversity.

Separateness comes with individual feelings gathering in community, caste or religion. Separateness is attitude, wishing it away is not easy, but a must in the strands of diversity that India represents and epitomises. But ethnicity again is a reality because there are strands within strands, communities within communities. There are even denotified tribal communities in parts of India. If the culture of India

Aurobindo Ghosh. Few remember intellectual giants such as the mathematician Ramanujan, or the stellar scientists J.C. Bose, Meghnad Bose or Satyendranath Bose. Or the brilliant savant Raja Ram Mohun Roy. Surely the Indian Renaissance cannot and must not be forgotten. It was the edifice upon which Nationalism and the New Enlightenment were strongly cast.

But with each August fifteenth our hearts must go out to the less fortunate whose milling population attracts a kind of diabolic spirit in a country which has weathered so many upheavals: political, social or historical. This diabolic attack continues, and it is the inner resistance of the country which must will it out, backed by strong political resurgence. The symbols of India today are the poor hapless tribal, the insurmountable floods, and the victims of wanton neglect in economy, education, health and sanitation. The fantasy of the masses can only take the form of wish fulfillment, idolising movie actors, glorifying cricketers, and then going back slowly and poisonously to hard realities. Unless they are free the country cannot be 'independent'.

government babus and governor know the hardships to raise a child in today's expensive trade called education by sitting in cozy bungalows? It is a disgraceful act and the shamelessness of this is the version of the Commissioner and Secretary who told this daily that if parents are unhappy then they should file a written complaint. These parents have rightly flayed his version when they said that instead of seeking their complaints after implementing exorbitant fee collection he should have

asked the PMS to take the parents into confidence, first. But the question is can this be expected from bureaucrats whose children do not study in these schools.

Yours etc.
PK Dwivedi
Shillong - I

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

TO THE EDITOR

Baseless allegation

Editor,
Appropos the letter by Arpita Das (ST 5th August, 2016), this is to clarify that no SSA books have been given to the students in the current academic session 2016 from the school. In previous years whenever S.S.A books had been distributed, those were taken out from the sealed boxes and therefore, there was no question of old books being distributed. So the letter given by Arpita Das of Class VII is completely baseless. It is very unfortunate that a student without consulting the school authority for any academic problem has communicated directly to the newspaper. However, there is no truth in the matter.

Yours etc.,
Principal,
Laban Bengelee Girls' Hr. Sec. School
Shillong-4

"Prevention better than cure"

Editor,
On behalf of all the residents of Langkyrding - Nongmynsong, I wish to point out to the PWD that in this particular locality there are no 'Speed Breakers' in the areas where students throng every day during school hours. It is highly risky for students to be walking on this road, especially near the Presbyterian Church, Langkyrding - Nongmynsong, as drivers tend to speed while driving past. Since several accidents take place in this particular area almost every week the PWD need to put up speed breakers urgently. We also urge the Headman (Rangbah Dong) of the Locality to please look into this matter urgently.

Yours etc.,
Gilbert. S. Thyriang
Shillong-19

PMS - fall from grace

Editor,
I am aghast at the mute spectatorship of Pine Mount School (PMS), Governor's Secretariat and State Education Department over the extortion being carried out by PMS with impunity. What is more startling is how can mute people be in the profession of teaching? Or has the school, Governor and Education department taken a leaf out of Ex-PM Manmohan Singh, who while taking his oath, pledged not to open his mouth while in office. That a fully government run school is indulging in such unfair trade practice is beyond comprehension. From costly identity cards, classroom fund, building fund, exam fees, computer fund to recently the sanitary fees being collected by this school by taxing the parents without issuing any official receipt. Has this school taken the task to clean up the sanitary effluent wastes in the city in the aftermath of the closure notice issued to

"The key to realizing a dream is to focus not on success but significance - and then even the small steps and little victories along your path will take on greater meaning."

--- Oprah Winfrey

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 2 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2016

Sharmila abandoned

IROM Chanu Sharmila is known as, "the world's longest hunger striker" after refusing food and water for more than 500 weeks. Hers is the most long-standing non-violent protest against the state. In November 2000 security forces gunned down ten civilians who were waiting at a bus stop in Malom, Manipur. Sharmila was shocked by the impunity with which her fellow citizens were killed under the cover of the oppressive Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). She decided to go on a fast unto death until the AFSPA was repealed. The state accused her of trying to commit suicide, took her into custody and has force-fed her for sixteen long years through a nasal pipe. Ironically this same woman who was idolised by her society is now abandoned and alone. The activists she inspired and who cheered her on when her actions followed the trajectory they had carefully crafted for her, now feel she has let them down because she has decided to end her fast.

Sharmila is many things to many people. For women activists and human rights defenders she is a paragon of extreme sacrifice. For the state she is a thorn in the flesh which they don't know how to handle. It is also a measure of the depravity of the Indian State that it refuses to repeal a law which is colonial in every sense of the term and treats its own people as the "enemy." Sharmila demonstrated this depravity of the state through her fast.

In July this year when Irom Sharmila decided to end her fast she also decided to contest elections and to marry her long time admirer, Desmond Coutinho, a British citizen of Indian descent. Perhaps it is the last point which has become a contentious one for the patriarchal Meitei society. The women activists of Manipur valley who have turned Sharmila into an icon feel cheated by the fact that she is marrying an outsider. For them this is high treason because it is the very reason on which their ethnocentric struggle is based. Militant outfits of Manipur have taken ethnocentricity to a new level. They have banned all Hindi movies from being shown in cinema halls and via cable channels. That a woman they have idolised for so long is now violating their diktat by marrying a Mayang (outsider) defies their logic. Hence there are subtle threats to those who wish to open their homes for this Iron Lady. As a result Sharmila is abandoned even by her own family members. The irony here is stark. The only shelter for Sharmila today is the state run government run hospital. Such are the vagaries of life that a person who stood up for a cause does not even have the right to choose her future course of action. Has Sharmila become a prisoner of the very cause she took up sixteen years ago? Where have the vocal human rights activists of Manipur suddenly

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

Janata Dal against compromising with industrialists: Singh

Janata Dal president Mr V P Singh today said his party had not yet decided on the extent of donations that could be accepted from big industrial houses. Mr Singh, who came here to participate in a seminar on 'national alternative' organized as part of the national conference of the Students federation of India (SFI), students wing of the CPI (M), told newsmen here that 'we would, however, not accept lump sum donations.'

Mr Singh said his party wanted to be people oriented by accepting donations from them and was against compromising with the industrialists. He stressed the need for a direct interaction with the common masses ranging from land tillers to factory workers. Denying the existence of any splinter groups of Janata Party and Lok Dal (B), Mr Singh felt that the National

Campaign Committee (NCC) was standing in the way of forging a national alternative to the Congress (I).

Without naming the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Mr Singh implicitly indicated that opposition parties without 'sacrificing' their own identity and ideology might come together to the defeat 'common enemy.' Replying to a question, he said his party would allow different state units to make electoral adjustment with BJP to avoid splitting of anti Congress(I) votes. He felt that the decision of taking a 'flexible' attitude towards BJP would not impede the forging of alliance with CPI(M) and other left parties. "We are making direct negotiations with CPI(M) and other left parties. Howrah civic poll is example, he added.

Keeping taxes moderate is next big challenge before government

GST must drive consumption, production and economic growth

By Nantoo Banerjee

The passing of the 122nd constitution amendment bill by Rajya Sabha last week may have eased the process of introducing Goods and Services Tax (GST) sometime next year, after the bill is passed by the required number of state legislatures, but its positive impact on economy will principally depend on a centre-state agreement to keep GST rates at moderate levels – say, below 18 per cent on an average -- to drive domestic demand, consumption and to expand market, increase production, raise economic growth and improve tax compliance. The GST must expand the market to boost the economy.

The expansion of domestic consumption will automatically lead to higher tax collection, benefiting both the centre and states. High rates of indirect tax under GST will choke the demand and consumption. Even luxuries need not be highly taxed to make them the preserve of only the super rich. The consumer base in each segment must grow, including those for aspiring super rich. Otherwise, there will be little incentive for domestic production of such items of consumption restricted by price for only the reach of the super rich. Those items will be imported denying possible domestic production to serve both the local and export markets and diminish the government's 'Make in India' effort. Moderate rate levels will make GST a success from the very beginning and keep the inflation rate within the government's latest target of 4-6 per cent.

However, states seem to have their own agenda concerning GST rates. Some of them are against moderate GST rates, which, they fear, may eat into their own annual revenue expectations and development spending. This is despite the fact that the union government has assured the states full compensation for five years for any revenue loss. But, states are still worried about funds to spend adequately on health, education and other crucial development schemes. Not many are willing to increase their borrowings to cover fiscal deficit. Naturally, they want more. Maybe, there also exists a trust deficit between the centre and states. Or, there could be doubt about the GST compliance level in view of the fact that the number of habitual tax offenders has only grown over the years. And, indirect tax administration of both the centre and states is among the most corrupt bodies. Unfortunately, both the states and the centre do not quite admit the logic that higher GST rates may lower their compliance, as it has been always experienced, benefiting dishonest individual tax administrators more than the tax administration. GST, along with the government's latest drive for financial inclusion and cash less transactions, should act as a part of major combined initiative to substantially reduce trade and economic corruption the country.

During recent state level discussion on GST rates, it was found that some northern states currently levy taxes combining as high as up to 28 per cent,

including VAT, entry tax and others. Some of them want the standard GST rate should be around 23 per cent. In fact, Kerala's finance minister Thomas Isaac had reportedly wanted the standard GST rate be fixed at 24 per cent during the meeting of the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers on July 25. Isaac strongly opposed the Congress party's demand to cap the overall GST rate at 18 per cent. Despite the statements made last week by the union finance secretary Ashok Lavasa, economic affairs secretary Shaktikanta Das and chief economic advisor Arvind Subramanian that GST will follow moderate rates having practically no impact on inflation, bigwigs in the BJP party are believed to be in favour of an average rate of 20 per cent. This is a cause of concern. The political parties and administration, both in the centre and states, don't seem to appreciate the fact that lower direct and indirect taxes since the 1991 economic reform have significantly expanded the market and government's annual tax revenues over the years.

Being an international economist himself, Subramanian himself does not seem to be much in favour of high GST rates. A panel headed by him last year had suggested 17-18 per cent 'standard' GST rate for most of the goods and services while recommending 12 per cent for 'low rate goods' and 40 per cent for 'merit goods' like luxury cars, aerated beverages, chewing tobacco such as pan masala and manufactured tobacco. For precious metal, it

recommended a rate ranging from two to six per cent. The Subramanian panel had pegged the revenue neutral rate at 15-15.5 per cent. The chief economic advisor feels that a standard rate 'higher than 18-19 per cent will stoke inflation.' Rightly, he is concerned that an increase in GST rate by a percentage point may reduce its compliance by the same margin. The government seems to have changed its earlier perception on the standard GST rate and inflation, probably under pressure from states, including those ruled by BJP. It now says even if the standard GST rate becomes 20 per cent, it would have no average impact on inflation. The next rounds of dialogue between the centre and states and in the GST Council are very important for the achievement of the desired goal behind GST.

The constitution amendment bill does not provide the GST rates and the GST Council. The latter will be formed with representatives of both the centre and states. Subsequently, there will be legislations on central GST (CGST) and integrated GST (IGST). The government is trying to hurry up the process. The BJP-governed states may summon special assembly sessions to pass the constitution amendment bill before the next session. It is still not clear if other states will do the same or wait for the next regular assembly session to take up the issue. The union government is, however, very hopeful to take up the matter of CGST and IGST in the coming winter session of Parliament. Until then, the GST rates may remain as a matter of speculation. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

JACATAM response

Editor,

Apropos the letters by S.Kshiar and Dashan Wanshong on Deficit School Teachers 'demands' and 'Rights minus accountability' (ST Aug 8 & 9, 2016) I would like to clarify that JACATAM's demand from the government is to provincialise the services of all teachers in Govt. aided schools in the state for their social security and rightful status and not 100% increase in pay. We are not insisting on monetary rights only.

I sympathise with those with bitter experiences at not being selected as teachers and hope they have the requisite qualities and prescribed qualifications. However, the issues raised by them concern the School Managing Committees (SMC) and not the teachers who have no authority in appointment of new recruits. It is not right to generalise that all teachers are kith and kin of SMCs members.

If the system of selection is faulty it should be rectified and I have suggested in my write up that the Govt should revisit the Higher Secondary, Secondary and Upper Primary School Management rules 1997, frame policies and regulations for recruitment and appointment of teachers and that Govt Dept representatives should be included in the interview/selection Board for transparency and fairness.

Presently the Department of Education has set the criteria for candidates to apply for

any post of a teacher at different levels of teaching for example at the secondary level the minimum qualification is a graduate degree with B.Ed and at the Higher Secondary level Masters degree etc.

It seems that S.Kshiar knows the office bearers of JACATAM very well. It would be more acceptable if he can name the office bearers who have given their hearts, bodies and souls as mentioned to get Govt jobs but could never get beyond the written exams for grade IV and LDA posts conducted by DSC and MPSC. In fact most of the office bearers and leaders of JACATAM are Senior Teachers and well qualified. Some of them gave up Govt. jobs even having passed the interview and receiving appointment letters during the prime time their lives and opted teaching as they consider it a more challenging and noble profession.

Teachers are not demanding MCS or IAS pay structures but uniform pay structures as per their work and duties and to do away with the different categories of schools prevalent today. JACATAM highlighted the gains, losses, benefits welfare etc. but have never talked on these to students and it would be very mean to accuse us of using students as baits as alleged by S.Kshiar. If he admits that private schools fare better than Govt. Schools, there is no reason that these schools should not be supported and teachers' services taken care of by the Govt.

It is also to be noted that Southern States despite having over 2-3 lakhs Govt. aided school teachers and receiving only 50% Central fund in education sector are able to generate sufficient funds to take care of the schools and teachers. Our

state is receiving 90% Central Funds to manage the education sector and the numbers of teachers in Govt., Govt.-aided and private schools is just about 37000, and only 14,000 in Govt. aided schools.

All political parties, NGOs, Parents, Guardians, Public representatives, SMCs and Government employees are welcome to support the cause and demand of teachers. With their support, teachers need not come out to the streets but give their time and energy for the students in the classroom.

Yours etc.,
E. D. Nongsiang
Chairman
JACATAM

NGOs issuing threats without fear of law

Editor,

I would like to ask the Government authorities in Meghalaya as to who has given power and authority to Hynniewtrep Achik National Movement (HANM) and Hynniewtrep National Youth Federation (HNYF) and other such outfits who are openly threatening the people on one pretext or another in the same manner that the so called cow protectors are perpetrating atrocities on Dalits and other people and creating law and order situation elsewhere in India without anyone taking note of such threats. Such violations have been going on for many years as these so called NGOs are thriving under the protection of certain politicians. Everyone knows but no one dares to speak against such menace. Let's be impartial in our ways of thinking and passing judgement if we are interested in transforming our society.

Hope the message is loud and clear. No local or non-

local politics should be allowed so far as the law and order is concerned.

Yours etc.,
H. Gaire,
Via email

Assam floods

Editor

The recent unprecedented floods in Assam has not only impacted the life of the people but has also devastatingly impacted the unfortunate wildlife of the state particularly in Kaziranga. According to media reports around 200 different endangered species of wildlife including the majestic rhinos have been lost while other sources place the number to be way higher. Further to the natural calamity, highly organized poaching units are reported to be operating openly in the Kaziranga belt taking advantage of the situation and helplessness of the Forest Department. Once the flood recedes and normal life is restored in the state the total devastation could be estimated clearly; but the cost is expected to be quite high. Assam as a riverine state is subjected to annual flooding and the intensity of the flooding varies from moderate to devastating scales across the years. In spite of this the State Government has never been able to take any concrete steps to protect people as well as precious wildlife of the state for decades. The new state government has also failed to provide any direction for flood relief as well as wildlife protection in spite of the great hopes of the people who supported them during the assembly elections. The State and Central Governments need to take a closer look at the flood situation at

Zakiranga; and develop comprehensive planning to protect the wildlife better in future following recommendation of experts. Developing higher flood free zones within the sanctuary will be important to provide some safe refuge and transit safe pathways for the animals trying to escape flooding. ?

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada
T1J 4B3

On GST!

Editor,

Apropos the editorial "GST at last" (ST August 5, 2016) more than lifting up the GDP by 1.8% common sense prevailed amongst our netas. One country (India is yet to be a nation) one tax will now not only reduce the level of taxation but will eliminate corruption and pave the way for ease of doing business for which India scores so badly in the world. The passage of Goods and Services Tax has paved the way for the progress of the long delayed key economic reforms which the government can now roll out from 1st April 2017. It will also pave the way for 600 million strong transacting consumers to 63 million enterprises, who do not have access to quality products at affordable rates.

Yours etc.,
VK Lyngdoh,
Via email

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

Library at Mairang: A common resource

By Bhogtoram Mawroh

"Every ending is a new beginning" - Mariana Williamson.

It was on the 6th August 2016 that the people of Pyndengumiong, Mairang, inaugurated their own community library on the day which also marked the end of the annual term for the village Durbar. This idea of a community library emerged out of the vision of 'Kali Kit Kot', a Shillong-based Mobile Bookshop and Children's Library and partners, like Ri Khasi Book Agency, of developing critical citizens in the state. A critical citizen is an empowered citizen.

Knowledge of different ideas is the prerequisites for the development of a critical mindset. A narrow attitude is the product of a lack of exposure and it hampers our appreciation of the futures that might be possible. This lack of imagination is what causes people to suffer from the TINA (there is no alternative) syndrome and an attitude of political indifference. One of the ways in which this 'regressiveness' can be broken is when people can access the various ideas that are floating around in the world. A library is such a repository and the people of Mairang have chosen to embark on that path of imaging a better world for them. The journey towards empowerment has just begun and it is very important that this journey is shared by all. It is here that the communal (community ownership) aspect of the library becomes very important. The library in Mairang is a 'commons' – a resource which belongs to the whole community.

Knowledge is a resource and like the various resources like land, water, etc., treating it as a common has many benefits. Take for example the Khasi property regime which apart from ri kynti or private land has provision for community land, e.g., law shnong, law adong, law kyntang, etc., which are regulated so that the broader ecosystem services (land, water, etc) are ensured not just for the present but future generations as well. This whole structure is based on the principle of custodianship not ownership. The poor were the one who benefited greatly from the commons as they acted as a safety net in times of stress. The existence

of commons, therefore, strengthens not only sustainability but takes care of the need of the most vulnerable as well. It's weakening however has on the other hand played havoc in the Khasi society and neither efficiency nor profitability has been achieved as promised. The wrecked state of natural environment in the state is a testament of that. The increasing destitution of the many at the cost of increasing affluence of the few is the result of the disappearance of the commons. In fact, commons, more than ever, have become the need of the hour. This is more so in case of knowledge.

Knowledge is power and limiting access to knowledge will only exacerbate inequality. The elites of our society apart from controlling the natural and financial resources also control the knowledge creation process which allows them to create mechanisms to perpetuate their hegemony. It is not surprising that modern education has not created mass empowerment but only accentuated the dominance of the privileged in the society. It is in this context that the creation of commons, in this case, community libraries is very important. It allows the community as a whole to access knowledge that would have not been available to them especially for areas that suffer from bureaucratic apathy. And when communities start getting involved in the process of not just knowledge consumption but ultimately knowledge creation, then real societal changes can start to take place.

This is the second community library (first one in Saitden) that KKK Shillong, has established and it plans to start more in the days to come. When people from the remotest parts of the state can engage with anyone else on a host of topics then our vision of an empowered and critical citizenry would have been accomplished. It is a long way to go, but by establishing theses commons the process has already started.

(The author is a member of Kali Kit Kot, KKK Shillong)

E-commerce will now be doing brisk business and consumers would benefit. GST is a new rocket fuel for India's economic ambition by 2030. It is India's reverse Brexit moment that will end State-by-State rules by replacing 17 indirect tax levies and 30 different markets will now be turned to a unified market for goods to be supplied from anywhere to anywhere and also create millions of informal jobs.

All the political parties deserve to be praised but special thanks go to Arun Jaitley, Union Finance Minister who worked tirelessly with his team and consistently telling the country that the bill would be passed in this session of parliament. The Prime Minister had rightly stated on July 5, 2016 before the bill was passed that "if the bill is opposed parties would have committed suicide". Thanks to the BJP led NDA government under the dynamic leadership of Narendra Modi that a mass cremation of our Netas is averted

"You gotta dream? You gotta protect it. People can't do somethin' themselves, they wanna tell you you can't do it. If you want somethin', go get it, period."

--- Steven Conrad

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, FRIDAY, AUGUST 12, 2016

Dalit children persecuted

FIVE Dalit children below the age of 9 were victimized in a Tamil Nadu village called Ulaipathi as a result of, strangely enough, the imposition of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. But it was a case of rank discrimination. The children victimized have been accused of harassing children from the Thevar group which is a politically influential OBC group. All this happened because of a minor scuffle among children which could have been settled without police intervention. Officials have said that the children accused will be protected. But they will be subjected to police interrogation which may maim their minds for good. Animosity between Dalits and Thevars in the village is the root cause. Dalits are in a minority in the area. But the village where the incident occurred is no exception in Tamil Nadu. One reason is that the parties springing from an anti-Dravidian movement have been in power for decades. Caste discrimination in the state is rampant and Dalit empowerment has further complicated the situation.

Of course, laws have been enacted to end discrimination. However, the political bodies do not sufficiently intervene to enforce the laws. The Dravidian identity is gone. Caste and communal identities have taken root. Is the government in league with regressive social forces? The case of a writer like Perumal Muragon shows the blindness of people. Laws are fine but these should be backed by political forces in Tamil Nadu.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

Imam demands judicial probe into Bombay firing

The Shahi Imam of Jsmā Masjid, Syed Abdulla Bukhari, today urged Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi to institute a judicial enquiry into the violent incidents during the Bombay bandh on Friday which led to ten people being killed.

In a letter to be Prime Minister, the Imam said the government should also provide compensation of Rs. 100 000 to the relatives of the victims. The Imam is going to Bombay on Tuesday to visit the riot affected areas. The bandh was observed to protest against Salman Rustdie's book "The Satanic Verses." The mob turned violent, forcing police to open fire. Syed Bukhari alleged police excesses on the people who wanted to demonstrate outside the British consulate in Bombay. He held Chief Minister Mr Sharad Pawar responsible for the incident.

He also demanded lifting of the ban on Muslim leaders from visiting Bombay. Muslim leader Mr Haji Mastan has been recently externed from Bombay for fifteen days. Meanwhile, representative of various Muslim organizations have held the Maharashtra Government responsible for the recent riots.

The riots point out the satanic intentions of Salman Rushdie, who, in the guise of fiction, has disturbed peace in many parts of the country, they said in a release. The leaders appealed for peace and harmony in the country. The signatories to the appeal were Prince Anjum Qadir of the All India Shia Conference, Mr Shahid Siddique, editor Netdunly, Mr Awab Zafar Jung, Secretary AI Ameen educational Society and Prof. Joginder Singh. Meanwhile the death roll in last Friday's violent pretest by south-central Bombay against Salman Rushdie's book "The Satanic Verses" rose to ten today wish one more person

succumbing to bullet injuries in the J J group of Hospital. Maharashtra Minister of State for Home Mr Vilas Sawant, who visited the area today said the situation is totally peaceful". One of the 21 injured remained in serious condition, while two others were improving, hospital sources said.

6 held after assault at Wards Lake

Police picked up six youths following an incident of assault on Sunday at Ward's Lake in Shillong. According to reports, one group of youths picked up a quarrel with the other group, apparently without any provocation. The argument in no time turned into fistfights. A police patrol party which was stationed nearby intervened. At the sight of the police, the youths tried to flee. After a hot chase, the police managed to nab six of them who were lodged at the Shillong Police station lockup. An armed police picket was posted at the Ward's Lake immediately after the incident.

Tripura District Council's allegation

A seven-member delegation of the Autonomous District Council has sought Governor K V Krishna Rao's intervention in the Tripura Government's alleged interference in the Council's "functioning." The Council's Executive members alleged that the Congress (I) TUJS Government was "willfully" standing in the way of the ADC's function. They alleged that the State Government was "curbing the council's rights" by not releasing financial allocations and preventing implementation of its approved schemes.

The land glut in Meghalaya

By Patricia Mukhim

Recently Lady Keane College organised a two-day Water Conference where several water related issues were discussed. Some very critical presentations were made which showed us the status of ground water and its sustainable management, the quality of our rivers (including those from where the city of Shillong draws its liquid sustenance. Interestingly the Khasi Hills District Council deputed their Deputy Chief Forest Officer who expressed his discomfiture at having to speak on the subject of "Governance and Management of potable water sources. The officer said it is well known that, forests and catchments do not belong to the Councils but to clans, communities, Raids etc and the Councils have no control over them. The State Forest Department faces a similar predicament and says only 4 % of the state's forest are under its direct supervision and regulation. So what we are saying here is that about 96 % of the forests of Meghalaya are in a sort of grey area and free for all. So on what basis are District Councils giving permission for clearing up huge tracts of forests for coal and limestone extraction if they have no authority over them? My own conclusion is that the Councils want authority but no accountability. So if the forests disappear the Councils wash their hands off the matter and say the forests don't belong to them. But if it comes to mining permissions then the Councils assert their authority to grant mining rights. This is how the Sixth Schedule has been used as a double-edged sword and believe me the assertion of powers by multiple authorities in Meghalaya will be our nemesis. It is the reason for landlessness and growing poverty since the semblance of protection that used to exist by way of community land being distributed to members of the village is now passé. There is not much free land left. All land is in the hands of private owners.

What was heartening was the presence of the Sordar Smit Mr Kynsai Manik Syiem and his colleagues on both days. In an interesting presentation, Mr KD Talukdar, Additional Chief Engineer, PHE, showed a small video clip of the Umiew River from its source till it meets with the Umtyngar River. The confluence of these two rivers is Umiyam-Mawphlang which is also joined by Umjaliang and Umtong-Syiem, from where the Greater Shillong Water Supply Scheme(GSWSS) draws its water for the residents of Shillong. While the flow of the Umiew River is fairly swift, the Umtyngar River from where unrelenting sand banking and large scale quarrying along its banks is taking place has turned heavily silted and sluggish. Many have expressed serious concerns that the GSWSS is unlikely to survive its full term because these rivers are not as healthy as they were when the project was first conceived in the 1970s.

Mr KM Syiem expressed his concern about the River Umiew which originates in Smit and joins the Umtyngar River. Mr Syiem informed the house that a lot of junk from the nearby markets find their way into the Umiew River. Experts say that Umiew River is heavily laden with chemical fertilisers. Syiem suggested that there be a policy to prevent any kind of construction within 100 feet of the River. Syiem also informed that the Umiew River is community owned. He was trying to draw the attention of the House to the threats that we in Shillong are likely to face in the near future if community resources like rivers and springs are not protected by strong legislation and if the current practice of leasing out land for quarrying by individuals is not regulated. Indeed the biggest threat to a large section of the tribals of Meghalaya is the rapid loss of control by communities over their assets such as forests, rivers, springs, catchments, agricultural land etc. How these community resources have become private property is due to the connivance of those considered custodians of these resources, namely the Syiem, the Dolloi, Sordar Raid etc. These are people who control the use of land and also know who owns how much land. That people from the city could come and buy land in the rural outback and oust out the farming population thereby reducing them to serfs could not have happened without the collusion of these community leaders. I recall

how the Wah Demthring used to be such a vibrant river from where we all fetched water in our younger days until a private individual bought up the land and the Wah Demthring water source. He was perhaps the first to create a water market. I recall writing about this a decade ago but no one paid attention. Now there is another zamindar in Nongrah who is one of the biggest water merchants because she owns the water source that should actually supply water to the entire locality. Do you call the Khasi society egalitarian?

The emergence of these water markets whose promoters operate without licenses and the inability of the State to implement the Catchment Areas Protection Act, 1986 shows how weak our respective Governments have been. The absence of governance on water issues shows up the state as a lame duck. But who amongst the plethora of power holders who will decide the ownership, use and regulation of water sources. Should it be the powerful tribal elite? I don't think so. Neither can the District Councils be trusted with that governance because they have failed to exhibit any sort of responsible management of community resources. The Syiem, Dolloi and Sordar too have fallen short. It is the community that has to now assert itself and retrieve whatever is left of their God-given resources.

Meghalaya's biggest challenge in the coming years will be to tackle the lust for land by the tribal elite. Recently, while doing an analyses of the tourist viewpoint at Ryndang Brier along with the Deputy Commissioner East Khasi Hills we found out that much of the land adjoining the Barapani Lake is now owned by private parties. No prizes for guessing who those individuals are. They already own land and property in the most posh and lucrative localities of Shillong. They have the wealth to buy, buy and buy. Is there no law to restrict such people from buying us all up? Already a lot of construction activities are now taking place along the Umiyam ridge. It is evident that several restaurants and cafes are going to emerge along the viewpoint. Toilets will have to be constructed. So guess where the effluents and the daily garbage generated by these

eateries will be dumped. Right down the Umiyam River. Who cares? Who controls the activities of affluent individuals? Can the Dorbar Shnong Mawiong Rim do it? Doubtful. Our Dorbar Shnong usually has no spine to challenge the rich and powerful, especially politicians. They are too beholden to the land mafia. And that exactly is the reason why this society is going downhill.

If water is life and that water is in the control of a few people in the community then our lives too are controlled by them. Today even the poorest members of society have to buy water. Where is that community bond where the weak were cared for? Where are the clans? Where is the Syiem, Dolloi, Sordar, Wahadar? Aren't they all seen in the company of the wealthy? Does the Syiem of Myliem ever step into Lewduh to see for himself the plight of those who set up shops where there used to be walkways? And does he know who owns the bulk of the shops in Lewduh? In the same manner that the shops in MUDA complex are given out to tribals but are illegally leased out to non-tribals, so too the shops in Lewduh have gone to the highest bidders. We are a people that's good at auctioning our rights to anyone who can pay us.

I find it ridiculous therefore when so-called pressure groups with convoluted acronyms and looking for an opportunity to jump into the political fray make such a hue and cry about uranium but their eyes remain blindfolded to the most pressing issues in Khasi society today. Get real man and look at yourselves in the mirror and ask yourselves whether you have reason to be so self righteous. Which jaidbyrniew are you trying to protect? They are already a lost cause. Are you ready to put the government on the mat and demand a Land Ceiling Act? Let's see you do it! As for the District Councils they are a failed institution. It is better they just wind up and do something else. There are too many people claiming to protect the jaidbyrniew. Well the jaidbyrniew is getting nowhere and 76% of them have lost even the land they used to own traditionally. And we are still talking jaidbyrniew?

TO THE EDITOR

Can two Autonomies co-exist?

Editor, Apropos Fabian Lyngdoh's article (ST Aug 10, 2016) his comments about Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council's function and utility are exceedingly appropriate. Instead of preserving the customary laws of the people, it has become a land-owner! This is against the Khasi customary law. Also, two Autonomies within the state cannot co-exist. One should go. Who should decide?

Yours etc.,
Morning Star Sumer,
Shillong - 2

Clarification

Editor, Apropos the letter by P K Dwivedi (ST August 11, 2016) this is to clarify that the Governor's Secretariat has no direct role in the administration of the Pine Mount School. All State Government Notifications are issued in the name of the Governor. They do not require the specific approval of the Governor except, if constitutionally

or statutorily required under the "Rules of Executive Business of the Government of the State of Meghalaya". In the instant case, which pertains to the fees charged by Pine Mount School, the specific approval of the Governor is not required and hence the subject matter did not come to the Governor's Secretariat. However, the Education Department has been requested by this Secretariat to look into the grievance of Mr Dwivedi.

Yours etc.,
(N.K. Arjun)
Deputy Secretary to the Governor of Meghalaya

LPG consumer's woes: Another view

Editor, Apropos the letter published under heading "LPG Consumers' Woes" (ST August 6, 2016) I assume that the Welfare Committee functions in the same manner as traditional institutions do in areas under KHADC. If this be the case, the Committee needs to maintain an office which has overheads like rent, electricity and staff expenses etc. The Committee should also be having other expenses for various community work such as maintenance,

repairs, cleaning, lighting etc., which the government authorities are unable to provide on time, if at all. Most importantly, a register of members, with full details, needs to be maintained to check flow of illegal migrants and to answer if the authorities or police are looking for details of a particular person. So I do not see a problem if the Committee asks for a measly amount, or insists on membership. If the letter writer is so concerned, he should go to the Secretary and ask for audited expense report, and become a member, instead of whining in public, and that too without revealing his name.

Yours etc.,
Banjop Kuper
Khongsngi
Shillong - 8

Fake certificates from other School Boards

Editor, Through your esteemed paper I would like to alert the Heads of Institutions particularly in the Higher Secondary Section about students who get fake certificates claiming to have passed their S.S.L.C from other Secondary School

Boards like Manipur and Nagaland etc. If the institutions get an application from students passing their exams from the above mentioned Boards and other Boards as well, I request them to be more vigilant and to cross check with such Boards, whether their names are there in their official website and whether the serial number of their documents tally with the serial numbers given by the concerned Boards. The reason I am raising this alarm is that I have heard of those goons who make a very good offer to the parents of those failed students from MBOSE (Meghalaya Board of School Education) that if parents pay them Rs.20,000 or Rs.25,000 then the children will pass the S.S.L.C exam from other Boards without appearing in the exams. This trend has been going on for few years now. If it is carrying on unabated, then our state will go the Bihar way in term of scams and scandals. If it is possible it will be good for the Education Department to have a tracking device for fake certificates and documents.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

Mayawati might become CM after 2017 Assembly poll

Mayawati has big prospects to be the next chief minister of Uttar Pradesh replacing Akhilesh Yadav after the next assembly elections in 2017. Already the exodus has begun to other political parties. Three sitting MLAs of the Congress and one of the Samajwadi Party have left their parties to join Behenji's BSP. What is significant in this is that all four MLAs are Muslims. The 18 to 20 % Muslims in UP always flock behind the party that can defeat the BJP. With her 21 % Dalit support base which is consolidated behind Mayawati particularly after the attacks on Dalits by gau rakhshaks in Una in Gujarat, BSP suprema is smelling victory in the crucial polls next year.

PK wants senior Congress leaders to contest assembly polls

The Congress strategist Prashant Kishor is likely to submit his district wise report to the party high command in October next. PK as Kishor has come to be known in Congress circles, is conducting a survey booth wise in which he intends to recommend to deny tickets to all those sitting MLAs whose report is not favourable. According to sources close to PK, many of the sitting MLAs have not even covered 50% booths and have not been able to even give a single name to the party's candidate. Besides PK has recommended that all big names or ex MPs should also contest to make the election campaign high profile. Those who have been identified to contest have already been given the indication. Among the possible names are of Jitin Prasad, Pramod Tiwari, P L Punia, Zafar Ali Naqvi and Salman Khurshid.

Congress shows no initiative to campaign for Dalits

Questions are being asked about the Congress stand on the Dalits. While the Congress is keen to get the Dalit votes in its coffers, it has maintained complete silence on the Dalit issue. The AICC has not issued a single statement attacking the government nor has the party demanded a debate vociferously on the issue like Mayawati. The party has adopted a soft stand both in the parliament and outside. The SC ST department of the AICC has become totally defunct. Its chairman K Raju who resigned from the IAS to join the Congress, continues to behave like a bureaucrat. He has become inactive after he was denied a Rajya Sabha seat. There have been no protests or dharna on the issue. The reason being cited is that Jaikishen, the five time MLA and the only Dalit voice in the Congress party, has been totally sidelined after he lost the election in 2013. He was the only Dalit leader of the Congress with some following and knows how to mobilise his own. But the thinking among the Dalits in the Congress is that perhaps the party leadership is scared of losing the upper caste votes if they go all out on the Dalit issue.

Rita Bahuguna sulking; looking for options in SP

Rita Bahuguna, the former PCC chief of Uttar Pradesh is extremely upset over the selection of Sheila Dixit as the chief ministerial face of the party. Rita who is the daughter of Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna, a Brahmin leader, was herself a contender for the post. But ever since the leadership chose Dixit an experienced leader over all the contenders, Rita has been sulking. The Congress leadership is also suspicious about her credentials ever since her brother Vijay Bahuguna joined the BJP after being denied the chief ministership of Uttarakhand. Rita too is said to have been exploring options both in the BJP and the Samajwadi Party, her old home. But after the response of the Lucknow rally of the Congress, she

seems to be having a rethink. But then her problem is that she does not want to contest from her sitting seat in Lucknow. But the leadership is insistent that all sitting MLAs will have to fight from their seats or should be ready to withdraw from the contest. The report about Rita's constituency submitted to the high command is not very favourable. Rita scared of being forced to contest is now in touch with Mulayam Singh Yadav. She wants to return to the Samajwadi Party and is seeking a ticket to contest from Allahabad, her father's stronghold. She was also the SP's mayor of Allahabad.

Pramod Tiwari and Jitin Prasad fighting for leadership slot

Pramod Tiwari and Jitin Prasad, the two well known Brahmin leaders of Uttar Pradesh, have now set their eyes on Rahul's committee in Delhi whenever the reshuffle is held. Hectic lobbying has already begun. The competition between the two was very much visible at the Lucknow rally addressed by Rahul Gandhi last week. The rally was very successful because the Congress leaders of UP, full of the much needed josh, had brought most of the buses. About fifty buses carried huge banners with the photograph of Pramod Tiwari with just Rahul Gandhi and the Congress president Sonia Gandhi. About the same number of buses carrying huge banners with the name and photos of Rahul and Sonia Gandhi with Jitin Prasad were brought. But not lagging behind was the Thakur leader Sanjay Singh who too had brought about the same number of buses with banners of his name and photos. But this competition was conspicuously missing at the Congress president Sonia Gandhi's rally. Here too they brought buses loaded with people but those huge banners with their names were missing.

Western UP Congressmen feel neglected

Resentment is brewing among the Congress leaders of western Uttar Pradesh who are feeling totally ignored and neglected. Complaints are being lodged with Ghulam Nabi Azad. Not a single member from west UP has been included in the UP committees. Imran Masood however is an exception. His inclusion is by virtue of his being a Muslim. The thinking in the District Congress committees is that the Congress leadership seems to have given up on western UP. Whatever is given, it is to leaders from east UP. All the Rajya Sabha nominations in the last few years have gone only to east UP leaders. Whether it is Pramod Tiwari or PL Punia who was even given the post of chairman of SC commission or Sanjay Singh. Sanjay Singh was not only given the RS seat but was even made the chairman of the campaign committee. All these people belong to East UP. Even the new MLC Deepak Singh is from Amethi in east UP.

Trinamool Congress MP Mukul Roy on comeback trail

Trinamool Congress MP Mukul Roy is all set for a comeback. The party will nominate him for the post of the chairman in the standing committee of transport, tourism and culture. Trinamool MP KD Singh's term has come to an end this month and Roy, who was earlier the railway minister, will replace him. Roy had fell out of Mamata Banerjee's favour for almost 11 months but patched up a month before the West Bengal assembly elections this year. Dinesh Trivedi, the other Trinamool chairman in Parliamentary standing committee, will also be replaced. Sudip Bandopadhyay will succeed Trivedi in the railways panel. (IPA)

By Uma Ramachandran

India has a rich variety of dance forms. From Bharatanatyam to Manipuri, Garba to Bhangra, Chhau to Santhali, every community has a unique dance tradition of its own. It is said to have begun a very long time ago. When Shiva as Nataraja did the Thandavam, it was a cosmic dance lacking rhythm. Parvathi joined him with Lasyam, and thus created thalam ('tha' of thandavam and 'la' of lasyam).

Krishna's romantic Raasaleela with his Gopikas birthed innumerable dance forms. Devi Bhagavatham, the Puranic Sanskrit text, says that Raasaleela of Radha and Krishna continues in a realm above the heavens, symbolising the unity of soul with God. Indian dance forms are thus spiritual, beginning and merging with God. Dancers often go into a trance, experiencing bliss.

What makes our traditional dances so unique? Is it the diversity, or the incredible vibrancy of our culture? Or the complexity of our people, the multiplicity of languages and belief systems, philosophy, religion, arts? "Our country is Bharatham. We are Bharathiya," says V.P. Dhananjayan, the internationally famous dance guru. "Our dances retain the Bharatiyatvam. Tradition flows without dilution, just like the river Ganga. It is based on Sanaatana Dharma, and Natya has physical, mental and spiritual aspects. Indian culture -- Bharatiya Samskriti -- is based on the four Vedas. Dance forms, the Panchama or fifth Veda. All Indians are connected -- the same thread runs through the entire country. For instance, Ramayana is commonly shared from

experience." The classical form of dances evolved from the folk tradition. Kathakali evolved from Koodiyattam. It flourished in the 18th century. As tribals, we must have entertained ourselves with music and dance. Nature was our guru. Tribal dance gave birth to ritualistic folk dances and this, with more grammar, evolved into the classical form. Just like a language. For example, look at the Hastha. (He demonstrates the mudras). There are 52 alphabets which combine to form words during a performance. (Shanta joins in, making it more elaborate. They beautifully bring alive the story of a pregnant deer, afraid of a hunter who, in the end, is struck by a lightning. His arrow hits a tiger and the deer is saved. She gives birth to a fawn. The story ends philosophically.) Folk art, on the other hand, has a more colloquial flavour. Traces of Thiruvathirakali can be seen in Mohiniattam and Kathakali, especially in the feminine roles.

"Theyyam, in Kerala, is performed by men. They worship women as heroines/deities. Highly ritualistic, its story is from real life incidents about unusual people. After death, they become gods and are worshipped. The entire experience is spiritual. The performer, towards the end,

degraded. The British passed a legislation to abolish it. Much later, it was revived. Now we have the refined Mohiniattam. Similarly, Vilasini Natyam, the Dasiattam of Andhra, faded during the British time. Now the famous Kuchipudi dancer Swapnasundari is trying to revive it. Kuchipudi and Bhagavathamela have their origins in Yakshagana. Both are similar. The former is performed in Andhra Pradesh with music in Telugu, and the latter in Tamil Nadu, again with songs in Telugu. Keralanatanam, created by

Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Natya brings arts together, and art brings hearts together! All forms of dance have traces of Natya Shastra hidden in them." V.P. Dhananjayan and his wife Shanta have been awarded the prestigious Padma Bhushan. They're just back from a holiday in Greece to celebrate their 50th anniversary. Meeting

is like an oracle with divine powers. "The purpose of natya was to discipline the senses and educate people. In the process, they got introduced to philosophy." In olden days, when young girls danced in the temple, it was called the Chinamelam. When women danced in courts and feudal households, it was called



the Natya Shastra in 400 BCE, to the folk and tribal. Beginning with the hugely popular Bharatanatyam, mother of them all, we have umpteen beautiful dance forms to be proud of -- Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Manipuri of the North-East, Odissi of Orissa, Kathak of the northern region, Sattriya of Assam and Gaudiya Nritya of West Bengal, all in the classical tradition.

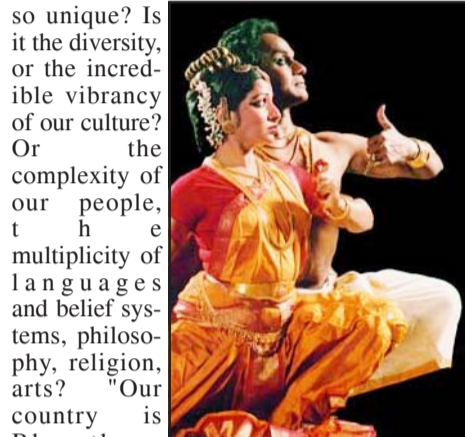
We have the Garba, Gajari, Ghodekhund and Dandiya in Gujarat, Bhangra and Gidda in Punjab, Yakshagana, Bedara Veshha and Dollu Kunitha in Karnataka, Ghoomar, Kalbelia and Rasiya in Rajasthan, Neyopa and Bacha Nagma in Jammu and Kashmir, Chooliya in Uttarakhand, Bihu and Bagurumba in Assam, Sambalpuri in West Odisha, Chang, Cheraw, Chhau, Ghumara, Kachhi Ghodi, Karma, Lavani, Choliya or sword dance... among the

long list of folk dances. The tribals celebrate every event in their lives, from childbirth to death, with music and dance. Every state has a range of tribal dances specific to every region. Santhali dance of West Bengal is famous. Others include dhimsa of Oriya tribes, Nagaland dances, elakkodi, panyarkali, kurumbakali, mudiattam etc of Kerala, Bihu of Assam, Lava of Lakshadweep, Banjaras dance of Andhra Pradesh, crossed bamboo dance or Chiraw, Lezim of Maharashtra, Karagattam of Tamil Nadu, Kabul dance,

bhavai, Chavuttu Natakam... The list is endless. Bharata Muni is said to have used Pathya (words) from Rigveda, Abhinaya (gestures) from Yajurveda, Geet (music) from Samaveda and Rasa (emotions) from Atharvaveda when he created the Natya Veda. Well-known Bharatanatyam dancer Sreekala Bharath says, "We, classical dancers, bring out the cultural heritage of our country. We can be proud it started in the South and has now become popular globally. Classical dance is a divine art form that includes mind, (Contd on P-VII)

our country. We can be proud it started in the South and has now become popular globally.

Classical dance is a divine art form that includes mind, (Contd on P-VII)



Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Natya brings arts together, and art brings hearts together! All forms of dance have traces of Natya Shastra hidden in them." V.P. Dhananjayan and his wife Shanta have been awarded the prestigious Padma Bhushan. They're just back from a holiday in Greece to celebrate their 50th anniversary. Meeting



them is a pleasant, enlightening

the Sadiyattam. Slowly, this became Dasiattam and got

classical, created by Bharata Muni, who wrote

Astounding dance culture of India

By Dipankar Jakharia

Art of Giving

Till the age of ten, Tintin and Phantom were my only heroes. I use to fight the villain riding horses along the wolf named "Devil". Sometimes I also have the ocean with a captain named "Haddock" with blistering barnacles.

I almost forgotten about my admirations and adulations for them until recently, till I meet my real hero. "Arman Ali" tied to a wheel chair but his feats have crossed the skies. Arman Ali heads an organisation called "ShishuSarathi". In ShishuSarathi he takes care of the children with special needs. He gives them wings.

Although I knew Arman for more than a decade and occasionally brush up on facebook or through common friends, I ended in his work place as his organisation needed some advices on investments and others. First time in "ShishuSarathi" I was given a guided tour of it by one of his trusted lieutenant. What I saw in the next fifteen minutes left me overjoyed with both "hope and desperation".

If God pains us with some of his decisions he also sends his Messiah to thought us his ways. History is our biggest witness. And for right now Arman Ali is not less than Gods messenger for me.

Treating me with a cup of coffee in his office Chamber, he began,

"You know Dipankar, I strive for every penny. Every penny more is less for me"

He also told me how with the generous donations of few great organisations and individuals have made their contributions in bringing up the organisation. Somehow I felt a disconnection between his starving for money and all the glitz and glamour of our growing metropolis called "Guwahati".

Guwahatians before you spend lakhs on your son and daughter marriage or order the German luxury on four wheels, visit him once and see what he is doing. I am sure you will feel hundred times better donating to this Mandir called "ShishuSarathi" more than any other house of God, old or new. Not only

"ShishuSarathi", you will find many other house of God if you know where to look and hundreds of Arman Ali. But beware, not every priest in this business of charity is a Messiah and not every Mandir, a house of God. There are many fraud-stars in this business. Use your thoughts and money wisely. And let me assure you any donations to such charity are tax free and as I have discussed it in this column before.

Today we'll discuss how we can secure the future of these children, financially, who are Gods own.

Appoint a Guardian Children with special needs constantly needs our attention, and will continuously do so for a long time. So as parents think how things will be in your silver years or also after you are long gone. They will still need special care and attention. Who will be the best to provide him that? Think logically. His or her Grand Mother may love him/her the most, but chances of she outliving him/her is less. Think about someone who has age in his or her side and also has the emotional connection with the child.

You need not give full powers to the guardian and can limit to specific needs, like financial or medical care. Most importantly, while appointing a legal guardian, make sure to consult a lawyer and draft a legal agreement, detailing the roles and responsibilities of the guardian.

Funding his/her future After appointing a Guardian what is next? You can't expect the legal guardian to contribute financially to your child's need. You need to build a fund or corpus for your child's maintenance. But how much? And how?

First add all his/her expenses. Don't forget to add special equipments like his wheel chair, hearing-aid or care taker's salaries etc. Now add 8 percent inflation for every year to your target year. (Contd on P-VII)

The founder of Fitter Strength, a kettlebell sport facility in Kolkata, **Arnav Sarkar** is also one of the pioneers of the sport in India. A fitness enthusiast, Sarkar is aware of the slow growth of the sport in the country, but is extremely hopeful of KB picking up speed towards the end of this decade. In a chat with Sudipto Maity, he discusses the aspects and the challenges the sport presents.

'Kettlebell community small but supportive one'

Kettle Bells have been gym equipment for years now, but you saw a different side, the sporting aspect it has. How challenging was it for you to spread the message across to other people?

The kettlebell sport which is known as Girevoy Sport, or simply GS, became my focus somewhere around 2012, and I started training for it. The problem however was that no kettlebell competitions were being conducted in India at that time. This was very limiting, as me and other kettlebell enthusiasts did not have the opportunity to participate in this sport unless we were ready to travel abroad. Thus with the support of my team members, I decided to start the first ever kettlebell competition in India in January 2013 with the Kolkata Kettlebell Meet. It was a humble beginning, but with time, the number and quality of participants have increased and we are now being covered by mainstream media and followed online.

It was definitely challenging to get more people involved in the sport, but through the past four years that we have been organizing competitions, we have seen a slow but steady growth in the sport, with more people willing to participate and take the platform. However, the process of spreading awareness is a



Arnav Sarkar

long one and we are ready to take this sport in different corners of the country so that we can take this to the masses.

When and how did it all start?

As a fitness tool, the kettlebell made its appearance in Indian gyms around 2008 or so. However, there were very few people then who were using it, and most were self taught by watching online videos, so technique was not well understood either. Gradually things started changing as some fitness professionals including myself decided to start learning to use kettlebells properly by attending international kettlebell courses. As I learnt more about this fantastic tool, I fell more in love with it.

Are you happy with the response?

The response has actually been quite good when one considers the poor cur-

rent infrastructure for kettlebell sport in the country. At the moment, very few gyms in the big cities keep kettlebells, and very few instructors actually understand the finer details of kettlebell lifting. Despite that we have Indian athletes achieving high ranks internationally, like my student Samrat Sen who achieved Rank 1 in Thailand in late 2015.

The kettlebell community is currently a small one, but I can proudly say that an extremely supportive one. When a competition happens anywhere in the country, there are others across the country who are spreading the news and help promoting it. Lifters from different states come to our events, and pay for it entirely from their own pockets, simply because of the love of the sport. Currently, Kolkata is the leading city in India (Contd on P-VII)

Interview

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career @ Marine World

We have been publishing write ups related to different career options and opportunities. In this edition we are publish information related to option which is not very common for the students of Meghalaya or other North Eastern States. We are covered with hills and mountains and we have rivers in our region. We are not connected directly with seas and oceans and that is why less students are aware of career options related to marine world.

When we talk about opportunities in marine world or related to seas and oceans some of the career opportunities that comes to our minds are Marine Biology, Marine Engineering, Oceanography, Marine Environment Economist, Marine Scientist, Scuba Diving Instructor and Underwater Filmmaker, Aquatic Veterinarian, Marine Environment Educator, Marine Archeology, Marine Mammal Trainer, etc. we are going to focus on Marine Biology in this issue. It is concerned with the study of life in ocean and all of its biological manifestations. Marine biology relate to all marine organisms from small planktons to very large whales.

Marine biology is the study of marine organisms, their behaviors and their interactions with the environment. Because there are so many topics one could study within the field, many researchers select a particular interest and specialize in it. Specializations can be based on a particular species, organism, behavior, technique or ecosystem. For example, marine biologists may choose to study a single species of

clams, or all clams that are native to a climate or region.

The minimum educational requirement for an entry-level job as a Marine biologist is Bachelor of Science degree with a focus on Marine biology. Marine biologists find careers as Marine mammal specialists, naturalists, marine museum or aquarium administrators, educators, conservationists, and fisheries experts. Courses in India include M.Sc. Marine Biology, M.Sc. Marine Science, M.Phil in Marine Biology, Ph.D Marine Biology, etc. There are courses abroad with specializations related to the subjects.

India has a huge coast line and areas connected with seas and oceans. This brings opportunities for young people to plan career related to marine world. There are many things yet to be discovered in connection to oceans and seas. Students need to have patience who wants to pursue career related to marine biology. We shall publish more articles related to marine world and autonomous agencies in India where students may get opportunities in future.

Updates
MAT: Management Aptitude Test (MAT) is a standardised test being administered since 1988 to facilitate Business Schools (B-Schools) to screen candidates for admission to MBA and allied programmes. Govt. of India, Ministry of HRD

approved MAT as a national level test in 2003. Any B-School - national or international - can consider MAT Score as an admission input based on the Score Cards issued to the candidates. Graduates in any discipline and final year students of Graduate Courses can also apply. Last date of purchase of form is 20th August and last date for filling up form is 23rd August.

KVPY: The Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana (KVPY) is an on-going National Program of Fellowship in Basic Sciences, initiated and funded by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, to attract exceptionally highly motivated students for pursuing basic science courses and research career in science. The objective of the program is to identify students with talent and aptitude for research; help them realize their academic potential; encourage them to take up research careers in Science, and ensure the growth of the best scientific minds for research and development in the country. The students can apply for the KVPY 2016 till August 30, 2016.

(The writer is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)



By Ashish Mishra

When eight months pregnant Sukmi's water broke she was in Ongnarpal, a village deep in the jungle of Chhattisgarh where four wheelers cannot reach and the hospital was miles away. However, help arrived in the form of a motorcycle ambulance and Sukmi made it to the hospital "just in time" and delivered a beautiful baby girl.

The motorcycle-ambulance is a new concept in India that is saving lives in remote regions where people had been dying because they could not make it to the hospital on time.

Sukmi and her baby would not have survived had it not been for the motorcycle-ambulance that was able to ferry her from her remote village and take her to the civil hospital in Narayanpur district.

Her case is not exceptional. The motorcycle-ambulance has saved the lives of over 200 pregnant women and helped see a drop in maternal and infant mortality rate in the Maoist-hit Narayanpur district of

Saving lives in forests

Bastar division in Chhattisgarh.

The ambulance, which has seen success in African countries, is a modified four-stroke motorcycle fitted with a side-carriage customised for the comfort of the patient.

Given the maze-type forest terrain, which can perplex any outsider, these two wheelers are driven by local riders only, who are trained to provide basic necessary first aid.

Health specialist at UNICEF, Ajay Trakroo says the motorcycle-ambulance project was initiated last year and supported by the UNICEF in collaboration with an NGO, Saathi Samaj Sevi Sanstha, and the Health Department of the state government.

"Pregnant women are our main focus in the area as mortality rate is high in this conflict bound region of Chhattisgarh. With this experiment we are trying to provide necessary health care to the pregnant women of this Maoist-affected tribal and hard-to-reach forest area," Trakroo said.

He said the motorcycle ambulance's USP is that it can be operated in hard to reach areas. It is a referral ambulance, that means it only ferries the patient to the hospital.

As of now there is only one motorcycle-ambulance in the entire state which serves the pregnant women and other serious patients in whole of Bastar division.

On expansion of the project, Trakroo said that ten more motorcycle ambulances will be deployed

soon.

"Though 108 ambulance services operate in Narayanpur, these cannot reach deep into the forest or hilly terrain where many villages are situated. This is where the motorcycle ambulance plays a vital role. We will bring 10 more motorcycle ambulances in a few months," Trakroo said.

The National Institute of Technology (NIT), Raipur is working to improve the design of the motorcycle ambulance to enhance efficiency.

"We are focusing on increasing the power of the motorcycle and the stability of the ambulance with help of NIT," Trakroo added. The ambulance costs Rs 1.7 lakh and Rs 15,000 per month is investment to keep it running.

Founding member of Saathi NGO, Bhupesh Tiwari says that before the motorcycle ambulance was introduced cases of unorganised delivery were high and mothers used to die often due to lack of proper treatment.

He said that the motorcycle-ambulance has successfully ferried over 300 patients to the hospitals from "adverse areas", of whom 80 per cent are pregnant women.

"After the inception of this project the number of organised deliveries has increased in this conflict bound region. It will certainly improve the infant as well as maternal mortality rate in the region," Tiwari said.

(The writer can be contacted at ashish.m@ians.in)

'Kettlebell community small....'

(Contd from P-VI) in the kettlebell sport. What do you make of this sport's future in India?

As a sport, it will grow for sure, but I am not sure if it will become a true professional sport where one can just compete and make a living. There will be more passionate lifters and also lifters achieving the highest rank in the sport. We will also have national teams competing in World Championships, but it is most likely that they will be self sponsored, or partially sponsored at best. However, the goal of the sport is beyond just medals and trophies. With the growth of the sport, it will be a much needed boost for the fitness levels of the nation.

As an insider, elucidate the readers why one should take up this sport. Also throw some light on the cost involved.

Simplicity and the ease of practicing it anywhere are two of the biggest assets of this sport! Unlike many sports which require a lot of space or is dependent on having the right training partners, this sport can be practiced within one's own bedroom and by themselves. Also, the sport itself has only 3 moves, of which people usually participate in just 1 or 2, which makes it a rather simple sport to train for. The health benefits that the sport offers, considering how little time it needs makes it a winner for busy adults. The cost in terms of training is very minimal. In most cases, 2-3 pairs of bells, and a lifting platform will be enough.

KB's still an elite sport. Does that worry you?
It is still very early days, and the sport has not reached its full potential yet. As more and more gyms start using kettlebells, we will have more lifters from all sections of society participating in it. It just needs some time, patience and hard work.

How do you plan to tackle that problem?
The number one factor to tackle that would be to have more qualified coaches who can teach it to the masses. Right now, very coaches are around, and this makes it hard to reach more people. One way I intend to change this is via the kettlebell courses that I teach across the country via my organization, Fitter Strength. We offer courses, workshops and even online training for trainers and kettlebell enthusiasts all over India to learn the finer points of kettlebell lifting.

How are the Indian KB athletes faring as compared to the other nations?

I would say that at the moment we are one of the top 3-4 nations in Asia. Last year, we had the first ever Indian team participate in a relay in Thailand, and emerge as champions! Some Indian lifters, including myself currently hold, or have held Asian records in the sport. However, the gap between Asia and Europe, where the sport originated, is huge at the moment. There are very few Asian athletes who can survive full 10 minutes with 24 kgs, whereas in Europe many lift 32 kgs for the entire 10 minutes. Then again, it is mostly because the sport is very new here. With time, we will surely have great results even on the world stage.

Talk us through your record of lifting the heaviest weights. Do you think someone from India will break your record?

I was the first person in India to compete with 32 kgs, and go the distance in March 2014. It was quite a feat, as most Indians were struggling to survive 10 minutes with 16 kgs in those days. So while lifting 32 kgs was special for me personally, I really wanted to do it to show the world that even we Indians can lift 32 kgs and not just Russians and Ukrainians. The training for it was tough and challenging, but when you are as focused as I was to be the first Indian to lift 32 kgs onstage, the motivation was not hard to find. I honestly never doubted myself even once when I started training for the competition, simply because I was so motivated! The competition was in Mumbai, and it was the first time that I was personally competing, even though I had organized two competitions myself before that.

The set was challenging, and I pushed myself to lift till the end. The result was what I had expected, so I was glad, but the feedback I got was worth much more than what I could ask for. Many other competitors congratulated me, and told me that they were glad that an Indian has also lifted 32 kgs, which meant a lot to me. (IBNS-TWF)



'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, August 14, 2016

Venus Parallel Uranus on your solar return chart will help you project a more positive and confident image. Your communication skills will be your strength. When you effectively channel your communication you would be able to turn things in your favour and also influence people with your ideas and thoughts. A cherished project can see the light of day and take off with a bang. Long distance travel will help to widen your horizons. Your financial sector will be energized and investments and other related activities will pick up.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)
The planetary configuration indicates that you would be ambitious, realistic, practical and disciplined towards work and commitments. This is a time when you can be bold and enjoy new experiences. You tend to talk more readily, particularly about your own personal likes and dislikes or your past. This is an excellent time to work on intellectual tasks with more vigour and passion. You are likely to draw emotional and sensitive individuals into your social circle. At the root of this is likely to be a quest for a sense of personal freedom.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)
This is a period that brings desire for love, harmony and peace in your life. Personal and professional relations are loving, stable, and harmonious. This week brings social meetings and events, and for situations that call for treating others with equality and respect. This would be a good week for financial undertakings involving electronics, technology, arts as well as group activities. Learning new things is your passion this week. You are more sensitive and your artistic imagination is stirred, and you have an increased appreciation for subtleties.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)
Financial benefits accrue and this week proves good in terms of investments and finances. This is the time when gifts and rewards come to you, as well as opportunities to expand your horizon through travel, a broadening of your "audience" if you have one, or higher studies. Career moves in the form of new offers could also arrive now, is a particularly auspicious period for such matters. You come across as especially articulate, and your good nature is bound to attract some attention.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)
You would be generous, pleasantly emotional and creative. Striking a balance between your attention to career and to your family life is necessary. Taking steps to improve your family and home life as well as your career and public life will be in order. You will also thoroughly enjoy artistic, musical, or cultural events and activities, especially in the company of a loved one. This is a good time to build your skills, get organized, and attend to your health and well being. You are able to stand your ground and assert yourself more than usual.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)
You achieve success as you are brilliant and there is good fortune attending professional, personal and material aspects. You interact with people in position of power and authority gracefully and diplomatically. Your finances could also improve through continuous efforts and follow-ups. In love and romance your personal relationship takes on a special quality as you communicate beautifully. You have energy at your disposal to move your plans forward and you are more enterprising. Health needs care and old habits of excesses need to be discarded; this would benefit both you and your family.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)
Self-confidence and quick action are highlighted in this phase. This is a good time to promote harmony and goodwill as you have to garner a good team spirit right now and be more tactful with your co-workers. You need the energies,

companionship, and support of other people. It can also be a time of endings and new beginnings, relationship concerns, and wistfulness. Personal and social contacts may be secretive as you don't want to disclose personal matters. There may be gains from property, shares and assets in hand.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)
The planetary configuration indicates that your domestic and career needs are likely to be fulfilled. New ideas and concepts floated by you at your work place will be appreciated. You find an intoxicating romance and express your feelings to your loved one. At work, you may take up new assignments and projects that would bring creativity and development of new ideas. Your inner hopes and desires come to the fore even as you tackle your job with a realistic and practical purpose of mind. You extend your hospitality to family and expenses occur this week on purchasing of luxurious household items.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)
You are unusual, introspective and reserved this week. It is good time to organize your workplace and make it more effective and equipped with good infrastructure. This is an exceptionally exciting time as professional and business opportunities are offered to you. You are just fair and generous in family and professional situations. Health needs to be looked at; also be careful in your interpersonal dealings and avoid confrontations. Your mind is focused on private matters and past issues during this cycle. This is a time when you are least likely to speak out of turn or to express yourself freely.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)
You may take up assignments and projects and this would end on a winning note for you. Your mind is bright, alert, and active during this cycle, and you have the ability to come up with unusual and inventive ideas. Sharing your thoughts with others is a prime interest. Others tend to particularly enjoy your conversations during this transit—you are willing to listen as well as add your own thoughts. Your ability to grasp unusual subject matters and to intuitively understand what others are trying to say win you some brownie points. You could also do a lot of thinking and muse about your own happiness and long-term goals.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)
You succeed in areas that require a creative bent of mind as well as technical ability. Some of you may find that your career is moving towards a more service-oriented direction. You have more faith in general regarding your career and the direction in which you are headed. You will have the ability to build up financial reserves and resources, for this placement can bring a good deal of success in all monetary pursuits. You are able to stand your ground and assert yourself more than usual during this transit.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)
The focus would be on responsibilities and workload. You want to leave your mark on the world in some way—however big or small—and you are able to make an impression more than usual. If circumstances are such, you are able to easily fight back. In fact, you may be somewhat combative under this influence, and you may have a short temper. If you've been off track, be kind to yourself, but make sure you re-commit to your personal goals. Take charge of your life, but don't bulldoze others in the process. This is an excellent transit for assertiveness and physical vitality.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)
This week brings for you socializing, romance and stability at the work place. Connections can be made now and networking pays off. Being part of a community or circle of friends and building your social network is important to you at this time. This is a period when practical vision may be at a high, during which you can see what needs to be done and just how to go about doing it. Career and vocational issues may benefit from the increased clarity you possess. Much of your energy will be applied to vocational achievement, professional success, and leadership.

Astounding dance culture of India

(Contd from P-VI) body and spirit, and deals with stories from history and mythology. Traditional dancing is a learning experience -- it is yoga. Every part of the body has movements, and also teaches discipline. It enriches both the dancer and the audience." She continues, "Bharatanatyam has many 'banis'. The basic mudras may be same, but depending on the guru, the style may differ. Every dance form has its own traditional style and audience. Innovations happen everywhere, without disturbing the tradition."

Sreekala has performed in 26 countries, and will soon perform in Norway. 2019 will be the 40th year of her dancing, the 20th year of her dance school.

Traditional folk dances reflect local traditions of the region. The style, the accompanying music, the rituals... everything differs according to the geographical location. Generally, folk dances are part of festival celebrations. Garba is very popular in Gujarat and parts of the North during the Navratri. Similarly, bhanga is performed during Baisakhi in Punjab, and bihu during the festival Bihu in Assam. In Kerala, during festive occasions and weddings, thiruvathirakali or kaikottikkali is performed in groups. The accompanying music will be a story of Shiva or Krishna. Kummidi is another variety of group dance in the South. Rouff is performed in Jammu and Kashmir on set occasions and set locations.

Raasleela is popular in Mathura and Brindavan on Janmashtami and Holi. The Yadavas of Chhattisgarh perform the raut nacha. Ghumara of Odisha is a tribal dance with folk music. Pulikkali is performed during the festival of Onam where dancers paint their bodies like a tiger. Karakattam of Tamil Nadu and mutki dance of Madhya Pradesh (performed during weddings) have dancers balancing pots on their heads. Veeranattam of Andhra is an ancient form of folk dance. So are vilasini natyam and lambadi. Chhau celebrates harvest in West Bengal. Ghoomar is performed by Bhil tribes along with Rajasthani

communities. There are Indian tribal martial dances popular in Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

Well-known mohiniattam dancer Gopika Varma explains, "The actual form of mohiniattam got lost when the Devadasi system was abolished and the Dutch destroyed all written records. When the Tanjore quartet reinvented it by combining Bharatanatyam with thiruvathirakali dance form under Maharaja Swathi Thirunal, the music was Tamil or Telugu, the dress was similar to Bharatanatyam, and the performing women plaited their hair. Kerala Kalamandalam brought the current transformation after studying sculptures, paintings of Raja Ravi Varma, etc." The variety is endless. Traditional dances in our country create a rich tapestry. Woven intricately with the same thread running through its variety, they are colourful and unique. INAV



Art of giving

(Contd from P-VI) Now for investments consider all assets class which you understand. If you understand real-estate more than equity or gold, stick to it. Play the game you understand. Stay away from self style neighbourhood investment Gurus. But if you need help take help from a professional. Consider Financial Planners more than bank Relationship Managers. Ideally for a meaningful corpus building a 60:40 approach of Debt and Equity can be a good start. And please consider adequate life insurance cover for yourself (Parents) for any untimely death.

As I type my thoughts this very moment on this Thursday, May the 1st Shishu Satothi is celebrating its 28th anniversary. I congratulate the entire team of the Angels and pray that God also send some more of them and teach us the Art of Giving, which is the best Art of living.

(The writer is a Guwahati based independent financial adviser. Follow @the_writr on twitter @d_jakharia)

"I do not want to die... until I have faithfully made the most of my talent and cultivated the seed that was placed in me until the last small twig has grown."

--- Kathie Kollwitz, O Magazine

The Shillong Times

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69 years on what has India achieved?

IF one were to go purely by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) then this country has made quick leaps as far as economics is concerned. But economics alone does not tell us much about human progress which is a holistic way of mapping out the human development indices. It is unfortunate that after 69 years, caste remains one of the markers of social inequity. In fact caste seems to have taken on a more rigid form with Dalits facing unprecedented discrimination even while in the pursuit of their traditional livelihoods. Seen from that prism therefore India continues to be dogged by injustices perpetrated in the name of caste. While the essential purpose of economic activity is the promotion of human development, welfare and well-being in a sustainable manner, and not growth for growth's sake, yet we lack effective measures to monitor progress toward these objectives. Advances in understanding, theory and measurement must therefore go hand in hand. There is need to develop a more comprehensive measurement tools for countries like India where despite state initiatives large sections continue to suffer deprivation and discrimination. Beyond the tall promises and long speeches on Independence Day, are the poor really free to articulate their development choices? Today in India we have rising social tensions, growing poverty and communal rivalries driven by radical groups that believe in an India of one religion and one culture.

Also the deficiencies of GDP as a measure are well documented by leading economists Kuznets, Tobin, Tinbergen and many others. Unfortunately, decision-making still remains largely based on GDP and this is inappropriate today. The challenge is to derive more accurate indicators to reflect real, sustainable economic welfare, social development and human wellbeing. Right measurement is therefore a powerful instrument for social progress. India like many countries of the world has failed to achieve the targets set forth in the millennium development goals (MDGs) of the United Nations which looked at holistic human development and whose deadline expired in 2015. After that the UN proposed a new set of objectives termed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are not talked about much in this country. Independence Day is meaningless unless the people of India cutting across all divides are able to attain economic equity. Unfortunately the gap between the haves and have-nots has only grown in the present regime which is dictated by neo-liberalism. Where do we go from here?

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

Bruno : Tyson's 32nd knockout victim

Frank Bruno learned last night what 35 fighters before him already knew that there is no real peak time to fight Mike Tyson. Bruno found Tyson just as he had predicted - rusty and a bit undertrained - but still fell in five rounds under barrage of devastating punches from the undisputed heavyweight champion.

I tried my best, "Bruno said after losing his second bid for a heavyweight title." Mike beat me fair and square. There are no excuses." Bruno had said before the fight that he thought he was meeting Tyson at a peak time because of the undefeated champion's personal turmoil and eight month layoff. But Bruno, despite rocking Tyson with a left hook late in the first round, was never able to take advantage of the champion's problems and ended up as Tyson's 32nd knockout victim.

Tyson's victory wasn't pretty. It might not have been a one-man show but the champion was a one man gang, nevertheless. "Dominate in the ring" he said before the math "That's what I do beat." And he did it ones against before a crowd of 9,860 at the Las Vegas Hilton. Bruno landed some left hooks and one of them seemed to wobble Tyson in the first round. But the champion was never to trouble.

Tyson's victory came on the 25th anniversary of Muhammad Ali's seven round victory over Sonny Liston, Liston was an 8-1 favorite over Ali, who was then known as Cassius Clay. And the triumph came 11 years and 10 days after Leon Spinks a 9-1 under dog. Won the title from Ali on a 15-round split decision at the Las Vegas Hilton.

India's 69th tryst with destiny

By H H Mohrmen

It is indeed a great honour that the day this weekly column is published also coincides with the country's Independence Day. This opportunity will only come to us after seven years from now. This opportunity also carries with it a huge responsibility on the writer to try to do justice to this great privilege which only comes at a long interval. What would be the best way to start this week's column other than to go back to the moment sixty nine years ago when the nation celebrated its first independence day when at the stroke of midnight as the world was asleep this nation awoke to a new dawn.

The day calls on each and every one of us to recapture that maiden Independence Day speech of the first Prime Minister of the country and try to understand what independence means to the people who had fought and achieved freedom in their life time. It is also a time to try and understand the challenges that the leaders of the freedom movement had encapsulated and the goals they set forth for the new country.

To begin with, the speech which is considered to be one of the famous speeches in the world is commonly known as 'Tryst with Destiny' speech and people have different takes on the exact meaning of the title. Some say that 'tryst' with destiny means a rendezvous with destiny and still some are of the opinion that it means a short haul with destiny while others say that it means a pact or a deal with destiny. Some define 'tryst with destiny' as a glimpse of success when complete success was still in the making. Still some are of the opinion that Franklin D. Roosevelt used a similar phrase Rendezvous with Destiny in his 1936 Democratic National Convention speech, which probably inspired Jawaharlal Nehru to coin a similar phrase a decade later.

From the above definition the one thing that we can all agree upon is that freedom from foreign yolk is not the end nor is independence a destination. It was just one

of the meeting places on our long journey towards a common destiny. The millions of Indians were like a busload of people destined to travel together to our common destiny and we have just resumed our new journey and left the chaotic past behind. We would be able to understand the profound meaning of the title of the speech if we continue reading the subsequent part of the speech in which Pandit Nehru said '... A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long-suppressed, finds utterance.' The historic moment is like stepping out from the old to the new and when the voiceless regain their voice and Nehru continues '...and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures. Through good and ill fortune alike she has never lost sight of that quest or forgotten the ideals which gave her strength...' the journey of the country is not a walk in a lush green valley but it is a struggle and independence gave us a new country the strength of which lies in our ability to stand firm on our ancient ideals and value system.

He also said that '...the achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us...' it is new road wide vistas to the future and new journey for us to embark upon. The question for all of us is; do we still continue to see the independence that we had attained from the British government as an opportunity to bring progress to our country. Progress is of course subjective; what is considered progress yesterday is not progress today and what is progress today will no longer be considered progress tomorrow. One's progress is another person's past achievements. Also Nehru in the first independence speech reminds the constituent assembly and the entire nation that 'freedom and power bring responsibility' and the future beckons to us to unceasingly work for the progress and development

of the country.

The clarion call of tryst with destiny is to pause in our journey to look back and look forth and strive to achieve and reach for a greater triumph as we continue in our journey to our common destiny because freedom and responsibility are two sides of the same coin. Very often than not, we stake our rightful claim to our freedom to do things as we are entitled to but neglect our responsibility, because if we only exert our right to freedom without having the responsibility, nothing can be achieved. At times we are selfish; we only care for our vested interests and have no responsibility whatsoever for our actions. This is not what real freedom means.

What are our responsibilities towards our country? Nehru said the service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity and it is our responsibility and the endeavor of each and every one of us to see that these social evils are done away with from the society. Referring to Gandhiji's vision for India, Nehru said 'the ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.' Nehru realized that the work to build this country was not going to be an easy task. And the task is not over yet. The job of each and every Indian is to rid off poverty, ignorance, disease and to end inequality in the different strata of society. Our goal is to 'build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell' irrespective of the differences that we may have Nehru said.

Therefore in my humble opinion, every August 15 is a tryst with destiny. It is a tryst with destiny at the government level (both national/state and district level), a short rendezvous of the bus load of people to reflect and see how much we have traveled since we began our common journey. It is a time to examine and ask ourselves how much we have fared and ask if we had really achieved the simple

goals that were set out in the first independence speech.

At the individual level, let us celebrate this 69th tryst with destiny and ask ourselves what we have done so far and whether we have contributed our mite towards attaining those common goals? The educated lot are also a privileged lot. Let this Independence Day therefore be a time to introspect and ask ourselves how much we have contributed to achieve those goals. Pandit Nehru also said 'All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India with equal rights, privileges and obligations,' because irrespective of our differences we are bonded by our common destiny.

We need to remind ourselves that the job of rebuilding this nation is not the responsibility of the politicians only, each and every one of us in whatever profession we are have to strive towards achieving those goals. Each and every one of us, teachers, bureaucrats, clergies, businessmen, farmers, carpenter, drivers, students (and what have you) are equally responsible for the kind of destiny that is in store for the country. Like ants in the colony we are all the makers of that common destiny, each and every one of us have at our disposal the building blocks for the kind of destiny that is in store for the nation and everything we do will contribute to the kind of India we want to have in the future.

Nehru also said that 'the future beckons us.' We have hard work ahead. There is no rest for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full; till we make all the people of India reach that destiny that is intended for them. Let us today take a pledge to work for ushering a destiny where every Indian lives in peace and prosperity and with dignity. We and no one else are responsible for the kind of country we have in the future because we are the makers of our own destinies. We all are stewards who are responsible for steering this country to the destiny we want it to be. Let us pause awhile and ponder upon the true meaning of 'Independence Day' and then resume the journey.

Mythical memories of Independence Day

By Ananya S Guha.

Considering America has a history of about 240 years and Great Britain of course almost since primordial times, an independence of 69 years, perhaps is still nascent. But with every August 15th there are murmurs, as to how the nation has 'progressed', whether the Indian experiment as some would call it, is still continuing or not. Economic progress is largely seen in numbers, in statistical terms, growth rate and scales of economies. That the country contributes to about 80% of the world's poverty is looked at askance. The Below Poverty Line (BPL to be precise) people are card holders who should be having access to free ration. In antithesis we have the pontificating IPL card holders whose vocation is more for the celluloid. The cleavage between the corruptible wealthy and the abysmally poor does not figure in our scale of economies, or how stagnant the economy has become, in putrefaction. There is no talk of development, health, sanitation or even for that matter education. That, education and literacy as adjuncts are one or two of the founts of education is a misplaced thought. These days there is talk of skills development and vocational education but school boards must give uniformity to this, by redistributing the concept in all schools and putting precepts into practice. In this manner the hiatus in the unorganised sector can be attenuated. This needs working out a detailed and cohesive blue print to be implemented in every state, with the help of the ITIs which are mostly languishing in conditions of gross inertia.

Secondly Independence Day only means recall-memory and ouster of foreign yoke. That is indeed true, but mere recall and extolling past virtues have become a myth of sorts. Squarely facing the present, especially in internal matters, and especially the fact that the common man is impervious to Indian-US relations, and cares little for it, but is concerned for safety, health, and a decent living, is the crux of the matter. More than being eulogistic of the past we must be alive to our insouciant present. The myth of Independence Day has become an archetypal symbol of our escapism. That shackles have not yet been broken in terms of slums, poverty, education for children, caste exploitation and dominance, are things which are not only a point of worry, but are reversing time and the classic clock of History. On the one hand we pride ourselves in the Information and Communication Technology sector. On the other hand we have vigilante groups that stalk cow herders. There are many such anachronisms in such perverse historical and social goof-ups.

Memory and myth are allied to dreams. What dreams do we have of a futuristic India, in terms of cleanliness, total eradication of poverty, clean houses in villages, dismantling of slums to pave way for clean

habitats is perhaps a moot question. The smart cities must have compatibility with decent living for all sections of the society. Uprisings such as those of the Naxalites is a result of poverty and economic fallacies, in terms of wealth and distribution. The Singur and Nandigram protests, the ongoing protest in Meghalaya regarding uranium mining in West Khasi Hills are pointers to landholding, and dispossession which leads to being uprooted from the soil and emasculation by the wealthy. This is a point that our intellectuals, sociologists and even politicians are in abject refusal to meet the truth eye to eye. Similarly the ethnic clashes in the Bodo areas of Assam are all due to the fracas for land, which is not only economy but a deeply felt cultural genesis. It is history, geography, culture, politics all coalescing into cultural and historical dynamics.

The ritual of Independence Day every year has sadly been reduced to a myth of memory, a repetition of vilifying foreign rule, held as reason for even the present malaise. Every Independence Day is actually a tribute to the poor who are eking out a day to day existence in the worst conditions, the stone cutter working in relentless heat, the street child rushing across the insane traffic of cities to sell newspapers. It is a tribute to those also who are working for them in shelter homes and are caring for such people and even trying to educate them.

True the Indian experiment is still on and we are all an integral part of it, mute witness to its transient nature, mute witness to parts of the country which feel they do not belong to this great nation. But the making of this Nation has also been commingled with a history that is antediluvian memory, ancient India, the emergence of Muslim power, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and finally the British. All this, before Independence Day! But will this memory be wiped out in the making of a nation, which we still see as experimental? The myth of this day has outcast all past realities. If we go overboard on the primal existence of the Indus Valley Civilisation, part of it which was in what is now Pakistan, we should remember we were not independent then, nor when Ashoka went through a St. Paul metamorphosis. Independence and history of the country has largely been sequestered and that is the tragedy of it- myths, memories, dreams collide, clash with one another and do not co-exist. The vulnerability lies in religion and the multi-verse of India's ethnicity. The 'country' prior to Independence day is a larger than life attribute to many, sans of course the freedom struggle.

Aren't we attaching too much importance to our individual freedom rather than to the national independence? Why is there little sense of pride in the country and what our parents and grand-parents managed to achieve against all odds? The awakening of masses by Gandhi and the activities of Bose behind the scenes (of strengthening Indian National Army) which had intensified during 1940s were already a cause of concern for the British.

It was not so easy for India to get freedom from the British however; various great people and freedom fighters of India made it a truth. Let us be grateful to

those responsible for the freedom in India. Indians were treated worse than slaves by the British. Let us ensure that we exercise our rights and proudly participate in our democracy so that our nation heads in the right direction. This is a day to revere those patriots who shed their blood for achieving Freedom for us.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit,
Via email

TO THE EDITOR

Library at Mairang: A Common Resource

Editor,
You cannot imagine the joy with which I read Bhogtoram Mawroh's article with the above caption (ST Aug 12, 2016). In a Meghalaya dominated by excessive greed and compulsive acquisitiveness, this thirst of a different kind is refreshingly welcome. Growing up in a world without television and computers, for me it was the book that opened doors into new worlds. Books fire the imagination marking the beginning of knowledge and, as Mawroh rightly believes, knowledge responsibly handled, empowers.

In this limited space I cannot reproduce the inspiring chapter on 'Reading' (This I Believe) by the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes. But in it he refers to José Vasconcelos, the first Education Secretary of the revolutionary governments who, in his capacity as dean of the Universidad Nacional de Mexico in 1920 - at a time

when 90 per cent of Mexicans were illiterate - "ordered the printing of a collection of beautifully bound volumes of Homer and Virgil, Plato and Plotinus, Goethe and Dante...But for a population of illiterate, indigent, marginalized people? Yes, precisely, the publication of these classics at the university was an act of hope. It was a way of saying to the majority of Mexicans: one day you will be at the center, not the margins of society. One day you will have the resources to buy a book. One day you will be able to understand those things, that now, in our day, all Mexicans understand". What is also relevant to the Meghalaya of today is another comment by Fuentes: "The book tells us that the Other exists, that others exist as well, that our persona does not exist in and of itself but has a compelling moral obligation to pay attention to others, who are never superfluous to our lives"... (emphasis mine).

I am not suggesting that the Pyendungumiong Library should be adorned (pyndeng the dark waters!) by the western classics. It should however certainly contain records of our traditional wisdom and house our traditional tales.

And the least the rest of us can do is support and contribute to this same act of hope which spurred those responsible for establishing the library and especially the children and young people who dared to dream. Only then can we all look forward to a Meghalaya where social and educational barriers are dismantled and equality of opportunity becomes the norm. It is up to each one of us to recognise the Other and see the significance of his and her reflection in ourselves. Let this be a new dawn in the way we look at ourselves and the world around us.

Kali Kit Kot - may your wheels keep turning.
Yours etc.,
Janet Hujon

Independence Day!

Editor,
This refers to your editorial "Is India a nation state?" (ST August 12, 2016). All over India people will celebrate the Independence Day of India on 15th of August 2016. This year in 2016, India will celebrate its 70th Independence Day to pay tribute and remember all the freedom fighters who had contributed a lot and fought

for the Independence of India. Everyone knows that our country got freedom from 300 years of British Rule at the stroke of midnight as India moved towards August 15, 1947. The midnight of August 15, 1947 is one of the most memorable events for every Indian on earth, as it is the time, when India gained independence from the stranglehold of the mighty British. The day is a celebration and to realize our freedom. Thousands of our freedom fighters sacrificed their lives and millions of them struggled in order to drive away British rulers and constituted a system of democracy centered around us. How our nation has fared over the last 69 years is something we cannot change but the future is in our hands. India's Independence Day is a day of great significance for the people of India. This is a special day when we remember the great sacrifices of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Raj Guru, Gandhiji and other courageous freedom fighters for their unforgettable contribution to the independence of India.

Don't we forget the importance of this day soon after the evening?

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.

"Dreams that do come true can be as unsettling as those that don't."

--- Brett Butler

The Shillong Times

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Academic autonomy

THE seventieth Independence Day was marked by one step forward in a significant direction. The clash for one year between the PMO and the HRD minister of the time, Smriti Irani at the Centre has tapered off. Irani's obstinacy in curtailing the autonomy of the B-schools has been diluted by the new HRD minister, Prakash Javadekar. The government's role in appointing the chairperson of the board of governors of IIMs has been whittled away. It flew in the face of Irani's decision to reject the recommendation of the PMO and a panel of corporate honchos. The IIM Ahmedabad has been demanding autonomy in this respect for some time. The PMO has been advocating autonomy for the IIMs for a year. It has also suggested that centres of excellence should be likewise autonomous. The UGC which exercises its say in university management also curtails the creativity of academic institutions. All universities in India are against "excessive control mechanism" which imposes the UGC's authority on their administrative and financial powers. The UGC holds the purse strings and decides every rupee to be spent. New courses cannot be started without its consent and financial aid.

The HRD ministry has now taken the right step. Past governments rarely gave a free hand to VCs and academic bodies of universities. But its role in running university affairs has been singularly pathetic. The Rohit Vemula case at Central University, Hyderabad, the uproar in JNU, Jadavpur and Calcutta are glaring instances of mismanagement. So far the HRD ministry had been oblivious to the value of academic freedom. The IIM decision may open a new chapter.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

Walkout in Lok Sabha over PM's remark

A remark by Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi in the Lok Sabha today triggered a protest walkout by almost the entire opposition which has since decided that it would not participate in the proceedings of the house "unless Mr Gandhi make appropriate amends." Mr Gandhi had remarked during the question hour that opposition was supporting terrorism in the Punjab. When members of the opposition benches angrily protested, Mr Gandhi corrected his "mistake" saying the CPM, like the Congress-I, was fighting terrorism.

This, however, did not make any difference in the situation as the opposition groups, acting in concert, demanded an "unqualified apology" from the Prime Minister when this was not forthcoming, barring members of the National Conference, trooped out and decided to stay away until the Prime Minister made "appropriate amends." Later two Ministers - Mrs Sheila Dixit in the Lok Sabha and Mr V P Sathe in the Rajya Sabha further clarified that the Prime Minister's charge of supporting terrorism in Punjab was limited to a long opposition leaders' support for "Khalistan."

Mr M S Gurupadaswamy (Janata) pointed out to Mr Sathe in the Rajya Sabha that the lone members the Prime Minister had in mind was on record denying the had made such a statement. "Why is the Prime Minister chasing a shadow," Mr Gurupadaswamy asked. Mr P Upendra (TD), who raised the issue, counter charted the Prime Minister with "bungling" the Punjab problem and said Mr Gandhi had no right to question the patriotism of opposition leaders.

14 RDF MDCs troop into secretariat

Serving as a clear

demonstration of their strength, 14 newly elected MDCs from Jaintia Hills belonging to the Hill People Union (10) and HSPDP (4) trooped into the Secretariat Building on Monday to call on the District Council Affairs Minister Mr O L Nongtdu. The MDCs who were led by Mr S D Khongwir, accused the State Govt of having adopted "dilatatory tactics" to deny the regional parties opportunity to form the Executive Committee.

Later Mr Khongwir told Shillong Times that he told Mr Nongtdu "let us try to be fair and let democracy be healthy". He said the State Govt in its efforts to make a cleavage in the HPU-HSPDP combine was buying time. The Governor's notification for election of the Chairman scheduled for Tuesday was received by the Deputy Commissioner shortly before noon on Monday. This left little time for the DC to issue notices to all Members for seeking nominations for the Chairman's post. Mr Khogwir saw a clear design in the delay in issuing notification.

The 14 MDCs earlier submitted a joint petition to the Governor urging postponement of the election of the Chairman. The term of the outgoing House expires on Feb 28. In case the election of the Chairman is withheld a fresh notification will have to be issued by the Government.

3 AR Jawans injured in NSCN ambush
Underground Nagas ambushed an Assam Rifles patrol injuring seriously three jawans at Nongsangkhang in Ukhrul district yesterday, according to a police report here. Police said a mine plated by the activists of the "National Socialist" exploded as the patrol party which was passing that way. The injured jawans were removed to an army hospital.

Tesla, Watson and Amazon- the challenges of our times

By *Ibu Sanjeeb Garg*

BEATING THE RHETORIC

In the past one month, three entirely unconnected events make for interesting reading and are deeply connected when seen together. The first event pertains to the crashing of a self driven Tesla vehicle. Joshua Brown became the first casualty involving a self driving car developed by Tesla Motors. The driver succumbed to his injuries after the car "Model S", on self driven mode, failed to distinguish a large white 18 wheel truck and a trailer crossing the highway. The car attempted to drive full speed into the trailer, thereby crashing its windshield with the bottom of the trailer. While issuing a statement, Tesla sought to shift the blame into larger contours of traffic mismanagement in the United States. They argued that while normal fatality for road accidents in the USA stood at one fatality every 94 million miles, Tesla had its first autopilot death since some 130 million miles. Nevertheless the incident has made a dent into investors who have always believed in Tesla and its maverick founder Elon Musk.

The second item relates to news regarding the use of Watson cloud computing platform by Manipal hospitals to aid doctors in cancer treatment, across the country. IBM Watson for Oncology (treatment of cancer) is a commercially available product, which runs on the cloud computing platform. The platform seeks to help doctors to keep track of medicines, research, clinical trials, textbook and other important information dealing with cancer across the world. Precisely, doctors used to take weeks to diagnose or prescribe treatment with regard to specific cases. This they would do so after religiously pouring into literature of research done in that particular field in previous years. Watson seeks to decrease this turnaround time by providing the same details within fraction of a few seconds. This software,

which has been trained by New York based leading cancer hospital Memorial Sloan, Kettering, when presented with a patients profile would analyse over 300 journals, 200 textbooks and crores of text pages to return a result within seconds. At the same time it would suggest treatments for the oncologists to administer on patients as they see fit.

The third event relates to a newsarticle that appeared in the New York Times titled "Think Amazon's Drone Delivery Idea is a Gimmick? Think Again" by Farhad Manjoo. The author goes into explaining how Amazon's drone delivery idea called "Amazon Prime Air" program is not a gimmick as many would like us to believe. Jeff Bezos, another maverick founder of a path-breaking company, rewrote distribution and product delivery rules when he launched Amazon. In its ten years since inception, Amazon broke into profits only in 2015. This was because the company had always reinvested its gains heavily in its distribution network. The launch of Amazon Prime Air is merely a reflection of that same attitude. Amazon sees a future where drones would combine themselves with robotic warehouses and trucks that drive themselves, in the future. And the launch of Amazon Prime Air is central to that idea. The news of logistics company DHL, successfully testing such a drone to locker delivery system in Germany, only points to how the ideas of Amazon are achievable.

Read together, the three items above, point to the progress that mankind has made. Bill Gates had once famously quoted that "We always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change in the next ten." Needless to say in the next few years, technology would acquire new forms of meaning and

control over human lives and its fate.

And it is in this backdrop that the country must prepare itself for a new set of legislations and laws that will look into the future. Each of the situations described above opens up interesting questions. For example, in the case of Tesla self driven car, suppose a vehicle crashed in Delhi, who would be responsible for the drivers' death - the company or the driver. In the case of Watson, suppose a patient dies during the course of treatment, would the doctor be blamed or Watson? Or would both the doctor and the machine be held liable? On the issue of "Amazon Prime Air" the issues get even more complex. Who would fix the routes, who would control them? What if a few years down the line companies start demanding route clearances in form of environmental and civic amenities concern? What if a consumer dislikes a particular product, then in what form would the product be delivered back? Each of these questions will open up new vistas of discussion and drive the gambit of legislations wider. These are changes that are destined to come. What is necessary is to understand them, foresee them and prepare them accordingly.

And the first step towards that would be clear risk assessment. Any form of technology that seeks to have a deep impact on a human life has to be assessed on predefined risk parameters. For example, the threat of a malfunction of technology in the case of Amazon Prime Air would be far less to the threat of malfunction in the case of Tesla self driven car or Watson cloud computing platform. Thus the legislations have to be liberal or strict in accordance with the risk parameters. The second aspect should be clear responsibility fixation. For example the death of a driver in a self driven car has to be comprehensively fixed

at the hands of the car manufacturer. Yet in the case of an "advising" platform like Watson, the onus of responsibility would lie on the doctor on whom the final decision rests. This clear responsibility fixation framework would ensure that ambiguity with regards to application of the law does not exist. The third aspect would be training the manpower for the future. Each of these areas would go into new domains of policing, lawyers, judges and labour officials. As such the government has to start training these vital components of the delivery system.

It is however the question of "conscience" that those legislations would not be able to address comprehensively. What would a machine do if it has to make a choice between threat to its owner and an impending colliding vehicle with four passengers? Would the choice be clearer if the car had a two year old baby? Would the machine further think differently if the driver of the self driven car was a 70 year old man while the occupants of an impending colliding vehicle had a one year old on board? And this is where the question of legislation would get truly difficult. In the future, would machines start thinking from themselves as well or would they continue to exhibit behaviour as demarcated by the algorithms fed by the computer engineers. It is with respect to these questions that legislations and laws have to become imaginative and innovative. Maybe in the future, machines would grow a complete conscience and would take such decisions independent of human intervention. Until that day lawmakers have to keep reinventing. But, the day that dawn arrives where machines start taking their own decisions, humankind would be pushed into new dimensions in the realm of the unknown.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

TO THE EDITOR

Wine store closure in Garo Hills

Editor,

The efforts of certain women's groups in Garo Hills to curb anti-social activities associated with alcoholism should no doubt be lauded. But the more important question which needs to be answered is whether their methods are right. Is it going to be really enough if we prevent the opening of certain wine stores? To set the record straight, I would like to state that I am not a proponent for alcohol consumption. I only feel that there is a need to think deeper and in a holistic manner to firstly understand and then solve the problem of alcoholism in our society. As far as my understanding goes, we need to try and comprehend what is driving our society towards irresponsible drinking. It is a known fact that individuals with low self esteem usually resort to uncontrolled and irresponsible drinking. There can be many factors and I don't claim to know all of them. But I would like to request these sanctimonious civil society groups to get to the root of the matter first and engage in productive

programmes with the society to create awareness in individuals rather than adopting such a haphazard and directionless approach. The effort to bring about an ideal society without social evils cannot be a one-time effort. It has to be a constant endeavour. Can't these groups contemplate providing counseling centres for such individuals? Discussions and counseling with parents on parenting, understanding teenage pressures including peer pressure and helping them with strategies to deal with adolescent children should be provided. I tend to agree with M K Sangma on his views about the rise of drug abuse in the wake of liquor prohibition. The examples of these are plenty. The need of the hour is to look at this problem objectively and not subjectively; practically and not emotionally.

Yours etc.,
Jack B Sangma
Tura

Baluchistan is Pakistan's soft underbelly

Editor,
Pakistan has been continuously needling India and repeatedly

interfering in India's internal matters and that of Jammu and Kashmir. Furthermore, they are directly and indirectly involved in promoting cross border terrorism across India hampering the process of peace, stability, democracy and rapid economic progress of India. India has made her diplomatic protests several times against Pakistan, but this is not good enough for restricting a terrorist based nation to interfere in India's internal matters repeatedly. If India fails to stop this it will soon turn into a regular habit and would continue to embarrass India at international and regional platforms. With the evil nexus between Pakistan and China, this threat is even more dangerous for the future of India. The strong message given to Pakistan by PM Modi in his well worded Independence Day lecture, demonstrates India's uncompromising moral and ethical support for liberation and self-determination of the province of Baluchistan. If Kashmir is the soft belly of India; so is currently Baluchistan for Pakistan. The rise in dissenting voices is noticed against the province against the mass genocides and atrocities carried out by the Pakistani security forces as well as provincial and federal administration against the

ordinary Baluch citizens. They do not have any rights in their own homeland nor over their natural resources, and are being regularly exploited, tortured, abused and harassed by the Pakistani security forces. Countless Baluch citizens have vanished without any records over the past few decades and several of their leaders have been assassinated in cold blood to counter Baluch independence movement. India should make Baluchistan a diplomatic and counter-balancing chip while dealing with Pakistan. The nation is so paranoid and uncomfortable about Baluchistan that any mention of the province brings fever to the Pakistani establishment. India needs to judiciously, democratically and peacefully utilize the Baluchistan issue to counter Pakistan in meddling with the internal matters of India.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge AB Canada
T1J 4B3

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 mine or not to mine- Uranium

By *Jonathan Syiemlieh*

The attitude of the current Meghalaya state government in 'daring' the UCIL to mine at their own risk is flabbergasting in response to the tender notice related to the expression of interest (EOI) issued by Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL) on the 2nd July, this year. Isn't the state government elected by the people to look after their interests and well-being of its people? How can the state government just sit around and wait until the law and order goes out of control? How can the state not make any explicit intervention and assert its stand or at least have a stand in this regard.

An article published in the Financial Times by Arinda Sinha on 27th October, 2007 indicated that UCIL had announced that it would invest in mining units in the state even though the project had not yet received the necessary environmental clearances. This highlights the callous and insensitive attitude of UCIL not only towards the environment but also to the livelihood of the people who would be displaced due to the project. UCIL may be facing hurdles in procuring fuel material supply for its nuclear reactors but the nuclear behemoth needs to first assess and understand the concerns and apprehensions of the people regarding the mining of this radioactive metal before coercing its diktat on the state.

The state of Meghalaya is said to possess the third largest reserves of uranium in the country after Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand. According to the announcement by the minister for mining and geology at the Meghalaya state legislative assembly held on 21st June, 2004, the state of Meghalaya had 9.22 million tonnes of ore which would yield about 9500 tonnes of uranium, given the quality of ore expected.

The uranium deposits in the state occur along the southern frontier of the plateau in Domiasiat, Tynai and Wahkyn regions. These deposits have an average grade of about 0.10 per cent (U3O8) which indicates that 1000 kilograms of ore will have to be processed at a uranium milling plant in order to obtain a kilogram of uranium for which a large volume will be discarded as waste material. Such wastes material which are also known as mill tailings are contaminated with toxic heavy metals, such as molybdenum, vanadium, arsenic and with radioactive materials, principally thorium-230 and radium-226. According to the Committee on Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation under the aegis of the National Research Council of the National Academy Press at Washington, the radium-226 decays into radioactive radon gas and epidemiological studies of underground miners from around the world have conclusively shown that inhalation of radon increases the risk of lung-cancer with supporting evidence from experimental studies of animals and from molecular and cellular studies.

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, tailings have contaminated the groundwater across all uranium sites in USA while leftover tailings are stored in tailing dams which are subject to the risk of dam failures due to earthquakes or strong rains. For instance, in the case of Jaduguda uranium mines in Jharkhand, one of the pipes carrying radioactive wastes from the uranium mill to a tailing pond burst on 24th December, 2006 where thousands of liters of radioactive waste spilled into a nearby creek in nine hours before the flow of the radioactive waste was shut off. The attitude of the officials of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) was

so indifferent and insouciant and stated that it was merely a "small leak" which was of no risk to anyone. The pipeline burst with radioactive slurry has taken place a number of times in April 2007, February 2010 and as recently as March 2015. In response to right to information (RTI) queries filed by the members of an NGO, Jharkhand Organization against Radiation (JOAR), UCIL refuted indicating that they have adopted the best technologies to save the local population. The latest pipeline burst resulted in forced evacuation of half the village of Chattikocha of which all the rice fields and livelihoods of the residents were destroyed.

The Center for Public Integrity which is a Washington based news organization indicated in a 2015 report that radioactive and toxic waste have been leaking out of Jaduguda, Jharkhand affecting people, livestock, rivers, forests and agricultural produce in the area. A 2009 paper published by Kolkata's Jadavpur University collected hard evidence of the toxic footprint and found that some of the samples had levels of radioactive alpha particles that were 160% higher than World Health Organization (WHO) safe limits. According to an article published by Down to Earth in 1999 titled 'A deformed existence', Jaduguda has witnessed an increase of incidents of births with congenital deformities and other undesirable outcomes of pregnancy among women living near the industry's facilities. A review of clinical reports and testimonies by the Center for Public Integrity in Washington point out to levels of radiation that in some places reach almost 60 times the safe levels.

The Jharkhand Organization against Radiation (JOAR) spearheaded a health study in nearby villages had some staggering and astounding statistics to report which stated that one in every five women reported a miscarriage or stillbirth. Almost 4.5% reported deformities at birth as compared to similar villages a little further away that reported 2.49% and there was also an increase in incidences of cancer which was a common occurrence in all the affected villages.

The UCIL and India's Atomic Energy Commission have consistently refuted and defended these claims and maintained that operations at Jaduguda in Jharkhand are safe. The corporation faces a real credibility and integrity issue. UCIL's claim that uranium mining will be safe has not been accepted by the public at large with the majority of the populations who do not perceive the project as being beneficial and are against mining. This is also evident in Meghalaya with vast opposition and protest from tribal leaders, local institutions of governance, opposition political parties and the citizens of the state etc. The major grounds for these protests arise out of concern for ecological balance, negative externalities on the environment and the threat of health hazard anticipated from the proposed uranium mining. UCIL needs a rethink on how it proposes to mine uranium deposits in Meghalaya as strong arm tactics in a democracy is anti-people. While the country's energy concerns are indeed pressing and immediate enough to require quick action by the state, on this particular issue the state of Meghalaya needs to reconsider its options and strategy.

(The author's views are personal)

"My dreams were all my own; I accounted for them to nobody; they were my refuge when annoyed - my dearest pleasure when free."

--- Mary Shelly

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 8 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, AUGUST 18, 2016

Judicial Appointments

THE controversy between the government and the Chief Justice of India over judicial appointments continues. Prime Minister Narendra Modi skirted the issue in his Independence Day address. The judiciary has 22 million pending cases and it is necessary to clear the appointment to 478 vacant judicial posts to get rid of the backlog. Chief Justice of India, T.S Thakur has been voicing his protests since April. Last week he threatened a confrontation with the government on the issue. The confrontation actively started last year when the apex court struck down the National Judicial Commission Act. There is a continuing impasse over drafting a memorandum governing judicial appointments. The government is committed to transparency while the judiciary is unhappy about the say of "eminent persons" selected by the government whose competence in the matter maybe in question. However, appointments cannot be deferred until the new procedure is rolled out. Delay reduces access to arbitration and interpretation. The Chief Justice has regretted that securing justice now takes longer than in the days of the British Raj. All this militates against the norms of democracy.

What is a pity is that the prolonged conflict on the issue of judicial appointments between the two pillars of governance-the executive and the judiciary-seems to be unending. Dialogue seems ruled out as the government has proved unresponsive over a long period of time. Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi had assured Chief Justice Thakur only the other day that the matter would be taken up at the highest level though Chief Justice Thakur remained unconvinced. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been breaking the ice over many a ticklish issue. A reference to the speeding up of judicial appointments in his Independence Day address was only to be expected.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

New Jobs for the Chieftains

Mr Purno Sangma, the Chief Minister is more communicative in his election meetings which he has too many to address and ours to report. In one such he has unfolded the State government scheme regarding issue of identity cards for all Meghalayans, which hopefully will be one of the means available to check and detect infiltration of outsiders. A census to be held for the purpose will enumerate the eligible families to which identity cards will be issued. Family-wise identity cards will undoubtedly reduce cost and what is more, may incidentally also reduce chances of misrepresentation by individual card-holders. We do not envisage much of a difficulty for an individual job applicant not holding his own separate Identity Card so long as he is unerringly pegged to a family of card-holders.

The other purpose the scheme serves is to involve the Syiems, Dolois and the Nokmas in the whole process of identification. One copy of the triplicate identity Card will be retained by these customary and traditional tribal heads who can thus be enlisted in the task of effective detection of infiltrators in their respective localities over which they are supposed to have better means of overseeing population movements f this kind. Another responsibility which is proposed to be allotted to these traditional dignitaries is that of monitoring births, deaths and marriages and these are of prime importance in the present-day database concepts of sociology and its application is all spheres of planning and related progress. Small secretariats are to be set up for these tribal local chiefs and it may be all the more gracious if this is done under some sort of

statutory provisions rather than on mere executive formulations.

These and other specific socio-political responsibilities entrusted to the Syiems etc will undoubtedly enhance the usefulness of these tribal institutions, the preservation of which is one of the basic obligation of predominantly tribal State. The local secretariats may gradually grow more in effectiveness and importance with a lot more work to do under a scheme of decentralization which the Prime Minister is now thinking by way of revamping the Panchayati Raj.

Free for all in W.B. Assembly

Noisy scenes and a "free for all", between opposition and treasury bench members on the alleged attempt to assault the Governor marked the opening of the budget session of West Bengal assembly today. The opposition Congress(I) members tore off copies of governor Prof Nurul Hasan's address and threw those at him as he was reading out his speech. The Governor had to cut short his address as a "free for all" ensured after Congress(I) members rushed to the podium and placed posters and Bengal Lamp bulbs, while others put out the light on his desk and teased him from behind.

Chief Minister Mr Jyoti Basu described the opposition's action as a physical assault and battle against the Governor while CLP(I) leader Mr Abdus Sattar said the Ministers and ruling party members had beaten up my colleagues in front of the Governor for protesting the government misdeeds.

Kejriwal is fast undoing a phenomenon called AAP

By Munish Raizada

India has a plethora of political parties, the number exceeding 1400. Yet, the emergence of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in 2012 was quite phenomenal. Born out of "India against Corruption" (IAC)-a civil society movement led by Anna Hazare- AAP appeared as a lode star at Indian political horizon. AAP founders claimed that merely launching a political party was not enough; they wanted to bring vyastha parivartan and an alternative model of politics.

Along its commitment to bring Jan Lokpal Bill, AAP promised that it would change the course of Indian polity in three fundamental ways:

1. Use of only white money in political funding

2. End of high command culture and instituting inner part democracy (Swaraj):

AAP professed that it would be a cadre based organization with a bottom up approach and stressed that the candidate selection for elections would be done in what we know as primaries or caucuses in the Western world. In nutshell, AAP promised to introduce a qualitative version of 'inner party democracy' never seen before in India.

At the governance level, AAP stressed that participatory democracy would be its plank. The phenomenon of 'Direct Democracy' will manifest in way of mohalla sabhas, and taking wider opinions.

Thus, it should be noted that AAP wanted to infuse Swaraj at the party level as well as governance level. It is important to underline this distinction because deviation from Swaraj has become a bone of contention among its idealist supporters and sycophant careerists.

3. Internal vigilance of its own party functionaries and elected lawmakers: For this, an Internal Lokpal (ombudsman) panel was constituted headed by Admiral L Ramdas. It was widely publicized that party volunteers and party members would be empowered with the arsenals called Right to reject and Right to recall.

Since its launch with much enthusiasm in 2012 and backed by a national level goodwill and

watchful expectancy, AAP made rapid strides. In February of 2014, it got a landslide victory with 67 out of 70 seats, upon which Kejriwal muttered that the mandate was scary.

However, much water has flown under the Yamuna Bridge in last 4 years.

Today AAP stands as a model of broken promise. Here are 7 ways how Arvind Kejriwal has undone (or, fast undoing) a revolutionary phenomenon called AAP.

Party (Organizational) Level:

The biggest disappointment from the party has been at the organizational level. A party that was supposed to usher an era of alternative politics has been reduced to merely one other party. The compromise with principles has been quick; the moral debasing of the party has been swift.

1. The principle of Swaraj has been crucified giving way to a totalitarian regime. A party formed to end high command culture is today a living example of 'one man' show. Arvind Kejriwal has increasingly shown dictatorial tendencies with little patience for a differing view. Only a handful of sycophants are running the party. So insecure is Arvind Kejriwal that he does not let systems take shape in the party lest 2nd rung leadership should develop. In Punjab, where the party is focusing on assembly elections, the show is being run by "Dilli Durbar" of Kejriwal. So much for a party that came into politics promising decentralization of power.

2. The office of Internal Lokpal has been practically decimated, even though the party wants us to believe the contrary. After the unceremonious exit of L Ramdas, Kejriwal reportedly wanted a panel of three Lokpals who were 'willing to sign on dotted lines'. As of now, two have left, the remaining single member Lokpal office is dormant.

3. The principle of White Money exists only on papers. The party has carefully devised ways where it only shows the inflow of money, but fails to provide honest and meaningful details of its expenditure. And within the party, there is a culture of soliciting undisclosed

money.

4. Political mileage by hook or crook:

A party formed with a focused agenda of fighting corruption and make life easy for an aam admi, Kejriwal soon started hobnobbing with issues like Dadri beef case, Rohit Vemulla death, and JNU's Kanahiya Kumar. His free for all style has transformed him into a politician trying to encash eagerly on whatever and howsoever manner.

Governance level:

AAP government in Delhi has been characterized by three things: blame game, Hit and Run politics, and hype rather than the substance.

5. Governance has taken a back seat, Realpolitik has kicked in:

A Chief Minister- chosen on the premise of "Paanch saal Kejriwal" (5 years for Kejriwal) -appears to be in a hurry to jump to national scene. Rather than accepting the mandate of people with full humility and trying to bring succor to the lives of people through good governance, Kejriwal started changing tack within weeks of assuming power. Last 18 months, Delhi government has been in news for constant confrontation with Center, challenging and name-calling the Prime Minister and blaming BJP for letting it not perform. During the previous regimen of Sheila Dixit -led Congress government of Delhi, AAP portrayed that she was fully responsible for failure of law and order issues, even though Delhi Police was under the Center. Delhi's constitutional situation remaining the same, today, when Kejriwal is the CM of Delhi, he owes no responsibility for law and order situation! This intellectual dishonesty and sheer hypocrisy has become apparent now.

It seems that the last thing he wants to do is governance.

6. Fighting Corruption: Not only spirit is weak, but flesh is also weak

Within days of assuming power, his unwillingness to take a firm action on the fake degree case of his law Minister Jitender Tomar was a clear indication to party insiders for things to come for a party born to fight corruption and bring transparency. Of course, if you ask Kejriwal, his pet answer: "The LG has taken over Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), so I cannot fight

corruption."

7. Fiddling with Constitution:

Whether demanding complete statehood for Delhi, appointing 21 MLAs as Parliamentary Secretaries to passing Jan Lokpal Bill in Delhi assembly, Kejriwal has shown a clear streak to twist constitutional propriety to his suitability.

Delhi state Janlokpal bill (JLPB) was a hoax: Not only Kejriwal desperately attempted to pass a much-diluted version of JLPB, he wanted a political control on the legislation. His intellectual dishonesty was apparent when he wanted to widen the scope of the Bill so that he could lay hands on central government officers. Arvind's intention was very clear: Pass a bill at assembly level which a central level govt. will never agree.

In conclusion, AAP is characterized by hype rather than the substance. Governance requires a mix of political will, diplomacy and the ability to get things done. Even if Delhi is a partial state, you can still make a difference with the quantum of power and privileges you have. No one is preventing Kejriwal to bring traction to the system with the current resources. An RTI filed by a BJP leader recently revealed that no details are available within Delhi government on the meetings called by Delhi CM on the law and order situation and women security. Does not this reveal this government is only interested in noise than substance?

The latest case of one AAP MLA Mr. Kartar Singh Tanwar getting in trouble with recovery of Rs 130 Cr by CBI in disproportionate asset case has literally collapsed his castle of clean politics.

As the saying goes, as you sow, so shall you reap. Arvind had the best of the goodwill from the society, and the nation. Talented and committed aam aadmis joined him to bring about a change in the way politics is done, but he has splashed away the advantage due to his selfish motive, narrow mindedness, and lack of statesmanship.

The writer is a Chicago-based columnist and chief editor of NewsGram. Twitter @DrMunishRaizada

Editor,
Your editorial, "Sharmila abandoned" (ST, August 11, 2016) volleyed a sharp and just question to the critics of Irom Sharmila if she was a prisoner of the very cause she had taken up sixteen years ago. It is really unfortunate that she is being criticized for her decision to live a normal life after giving 16 long years for the cause of the people of Manipur. AFSPA is a grotesque screw in a democratic machinery. A democratic screwdriver like mass movement is necessary to replace this undemocratic screw. There is no reason why Sharmila has to remain in hospital bed with pipes attached to her face for the rest of her life to be the one-person-army to carry on the crusade against AFSPA.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

The AFSPA crusade!

Editor,

Your editorial, "Sharmila abandoned" (ST, August 11, 2016) volleyed a sharp and just question to the critics of Irom Sharmila if she was a prisoner of the very cause she had taken up sixteen years ago. It is really unfortunate that she is being criticized for her decision to live a normal life after giving 16 long years for the cause of the people of Manipur. AFSPA is a grotesque screw in a democratic machinery. A democratic screwdriver like mass movement is necessary to replace this undemocratic screw. There is no reason why Sharmila has to remain in hospital bed with pipes attached to her face for the rest of her life to be the one-person-army to carry on the crusade against AFSPA.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

70th year marks call for better governance and policies

By S. Sethuraman

India is endowed with a strong and stable Government but it needs to take a re-look on its governance and policies to tackle multiple challenges preserving democratic norms and ensuring its key policies, which command a broader national appeal during a necessary phase of critically addressing the left-over social and economic backwardness.

This is broadly a lesson that could be drawn by the Modi Government on the 70th Independence Day. There can be an iota of satisfaction that Mr Modi, with all his showmanship, has begun to realise that big talk must be followed up in action and to let outcomes speak for promises, as reflected in his customary Red Fort Address.

The sooner he and his colleagues and BJP as a whole give up cheap jibes and make consensual approaches and build social harmony the better. For, the majority of the national electorate is still outside its grasp. And no less formidable are challenges of ensuring internal security against threats across borders and re-strategising relationships with major powers near and far.

Mr Modi, the second most powerful head of Government in India in its post-Independence history, has a special responsibility to live up to the prestige he has earned abroad and to act in tune with the compelling mandate bestowed on him at home in 2014. Democratic world outside hopefully looks to him as defender of our constitutional rights and liberties.

Disturbing incidents over the last two years and odd, damaging for the social fabric of nation, have brought into focus the shortcomings in adherence to our declared values. Mr Modi in his speech said for him, more than what the world thinks, "the image of the country is important." But the Prime Minister has tried to simplify too many issues and reduced them to code words like "substance over symbolism and empowerment over entitlement". It would be laudable if precepts are turned into practice.

Now, at home, in the third year of Modi Government, our economy remains still trapped in low recovery and has to contend with even more global uncertainties. True, a fairly good monsoon holds out prospects of farm improvement in fiscal 2017. However, rising inflation well above the 4 per cent benchmark and exceeding 6 per cent, continued industrial stagnation and low employment have to be addressed through both fiscal and monetary management.

The Prime Minister has claimed that his Government had not allowed inflation to go beyond 6 per cent, despite two years of drought and the "poor man's thali was not allowed to become unaffordable". This may sound fanciful amid the recent accentuation of rural distress and farmer suicides, substantially in BJP-ruled Maharashtra. The Modi Government has no doubt moved in several directions and also promised doubling of farmers incomes by 2019. We shall wait.

Parliament's Monsoon Session, just ended, had a refreshing breakthrough on the long-delayed GST - though its enforcement at the central and state levels bristles with several unresolved issues like rate structure and mechanisms to be determined by the GST Council. The Prime Minister has lauded the parties for the success of recent session but GST did not seem to be in his immediate priorities in the Red Fort speech. Government has to build on the co-operative process in

legislation.

Internal political problems which require urgent attention of Government include ways and means to arrest any deterioration in internal security and secure national harmony by addressing imaginatively the people's grievances in Kashmir and other such issues in North-East. It is unfortunate that the Modi Government has also delayed on appointment of judges, and CJI, Justice T S Thakur has deplored the lack of any mention on the subject in PM's address.

On the economic front, there has been less news to cheer, after the Reserve Bank's third bi-monthly policy statement of August 9 which left unchanged the key lending rate at 6.5 per cent, taking into account the rising inflation trend. As if to validate, the July data showed CPI inflation touching a near two-year high at 6.07 per cent while food inflation soared to 8.35 per cent.

The CPI rise above RBI red line raised doubt on its central trajectory of holding it at 5 per cent by March 2017, though the statement projected it with risks tilted upside. Further depressing the price outlook comes news of Wholesale Price Inflation (WPI) more than doubling in July to 3.55 per cent. This jump is partly reflection of higher prices of cereals, rice, fruits and pulses raising food inflation, non-food inflation has been driven mainly by fibres and oil seeds

Thus, the price situation will now top the concerns of Government, even if hope is nourished for a drastic turnaround from bumper crops in the post-kharif harvest season but meanwhile the monsoon should also remain active over the dry regions for the next six weeks left. In the interregnum, prices may also get a further boost if demand picks up as a result of large cash flows into the hands of Government employees with the implementation of the 7th pay commission recommendations.

So far as food articles like pulses and sugar are concerned, any deficiencies in supply management would have to be made good to meet such contingency. The situation has lent urgency to the setting in motion of the new Monetary Policy Committee, already notified by Government for its constitution. The first meeting of MPC may be called in September when a new Governor, yet to be named, would have also taken over from Dr Raghuram Rajan. The timing of the next rate cut would thus be with the MPC.

On economic growth, the August Policy Review had retained the gross value added (GVA) at 7.6 per cent while external projections for fiscal 2017 vary like IMF (7.3 per cent) and World Bank and Asian Development Bank at 7.4 per cent with higher growth in 2017-18. RBI had noted that successive downgrades of global growth projections by multilateral agencies and the continuing sluggishness in world trade points to further slackening of external demand going forward in 2016 and maybe beyond.

Overall, the passage of GST enabling Constitution Amendment Bill in Parliament has improved business sentiment in India and welcomed by global credit agencies. If GST implementation gets delayed, there would be expectations of investors for other reform measures though doing business has been made relatively easier by the Modi Government. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

An independent feeling

Editor,
Our 70th Independence Day is truly a memorable one in Meghalaya. We are finally free to celebrate our country's Independence without any problems or warnings. Finally we feel safe to move out of our houses and celebrate where many went out to enjoy with families to far and near drives and later came to enjoy the programme held at Khyndailad. Hats off to our government for organizing a wonderful program at Khyndailad and a special thanks be also to our freedom fighters.

Yours etc.,
Nathaneal Muksiar,
Viaemail

A brush with constitutional experts

Editor,
On 14th August, 2016 Raja Sabha TV conducted the show 'Constitutionally Yours' in

the premises of the Meghalaya High Court allowing 20 selected law students to engage and to question various issues relating to the Constitution of India like the Sixth Schedule, Center-State relations relating to Article 246 and the Seventh Schedule, Land holding in Meghalaya, Agriculture and Industries etc... The panelists in the discussion were the representatives of the Executive nominated by the leader of Opposition, the representatives of the Legislature and Judiciary respectively. The show provided a good opportunity for the students to be able to question the prominent issues affecting our State. Such a programme is really beneficial for the students who can share their views and opinions regarding the Constitution.

Yours etc.,
Banmankhraw Lyngdoh
Shillong-5

Sheep without Shepherd

Editor,
This letter is not intended to condemn anyone but a personal view. I am not against the teachers who are

fighting for provincialisation of their services in these past few days. With regard to this matter I leave it to the government to decide. Instead my deep concern is for the students. The other day I happened to enter one school for some work and found that many students were running up and down the school corridor, shouting and howling, yelling and screaming and making so much noise, such that I had never experienced in my school days. Those who were sitting in the classrooms too were banging their desk and benches. I asked myself if this was a school or a fish market? Then I called a boy and asked him, why there was so much noise in the school? To my surprise he answered that there were no teachers in the school as all had gone for the rally. Hence, students are just left alone in the school, where they were like sheep without a shepherd. Therefore, let us fight for our rights but at the same time let us not spoil our younger generation if we call ourselves nation builders.

Yours etc.,
Aiborlang Nongsiej
Savio Juniorate
Shillong -8

"My bounce-around life had taught me that dreams were dangerous things - they look solid in your mind, but you just try to reach for them. It's like gathering clouds."

--- Kirby Larson

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 9

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, AUGUST 19, 2016

Reforming the rebels

THE Government of Meghalaya has signed several pacts with militants from Garo Hills who have expressed their desire to return to life in the mainstream and take up gainful employment. The first pact was signed with the Achik National Volunteers' Council (ANVC) in 2004. But the outfit did not reveal the exact number of its members as it was not sure how many had deserted the ranks and how many others were actually ready to sign the surrender treaty. Many years later the Chief Minister of Meghalaya claims that the Government was misled at the time and that not all the cadres had surrendered. A section of cadres who broke away from the ANVC soon formed the ANVC (B). They were led by Bernard Marak. The Garo National Liberation Army formed in 2010 is led by Sohan Shira and remains the most formidable terror group that the state has to contend with. Despite unrelenting counter-insurgency measures which resulted in the surrender of several cadres, especially in the early part of 2016, Sohan Shira remains a challenge for the security forces.

The ANVC (B) signed a tripartite truce with the State and Central Government in September 2014. The deal was that the ANVC (B) cadres would receive a onetime settlement of Rs 1.5 lakh each as a rehabilitation package but the progress of this deal has been tardy. This might send the wrong signal to other militant outfits that it is not worth coming over-ground and surrendering. The Modi Government has moreover adopted a policy of vigorous counter-insurgency operations as opposed to soft peddling on militancy. The NDA Government has also stated that it will no longer talk to sundry militant outfits. Those who wish to come over-ground must do so unconditionally. This clear signal has prompted many outfits in Meghalaya to agree to come over-ground provided they are given a surrender package to start life afresh. While rehabilitating militants with cash incentives is not the best option as it encourages many youth to adopt this circuitous route in order to get some working capital, the fact remains that as of now there is no clear-cut policy on how to deal with militancy in this country. A clear policy would prove to be a deterrent to those who wish to pick up the gun for a livelihood.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

Scouts & guides seminar on peace

The Meghalaya Unit of the Bharat Scouts and Guides organized a seminar on peace for emphasizing the need for peace and love in the society. The seminar, which started with rendering of patriotic songs and recitation of prayers of all religions, was followed by a peace march by about 300 guides and scouts carrying placards proclaiming the need for peace through the main through fares of Shillong as part of their campaign to make the people aware of the need for peace in all spheres of life.

The guides and scouts present broke up into four groups to conduct the deliberations of the seminar in English, Hindi, Khasi and Bengali Speakers at the various groups emphasized the virtues of love, charity, non violence, sacrifice, tolerance and knowledge of all religions and cultures as essential prerequisites for peace in this world. It was also noted that progress is possible only through peace and national and international problems can be solved only through peaceful discussions. The need for regular community meetings and peace gatherings was also

underscored at the seminar. Other points made were the necessity of patience, humility, compassion, brotherhood and understanding among all fellow humans.

Earlier the Chief Guest on the occasion, Rev Presley B Lyngdoh, congratulated the Bharat Scouts and Guides for the good work they have been doing and referred to the UN Peace Award which they received in '87 Rev Lyngdoh noted that there was no peace in many parts of the world today and in this strife-torn world, the movement for peace assumes greater significance. Rev Lyngdoh called upon the guides and scouts present to sow seeds of peace and observed that like charity, peace should also begin at home.

Joyner retires

Flowerne Griffith Joyner whose electrifying sprint times and spectacular racing outfits dazzled the track and field world last year says she is retiring from the sport. She will make an official announcement at a news conference today. But last night she confirmed reports that she was leaving the sport.

Welcome to the lawless state of liberal residents

By Patricia Mukhim

There are two ways of living life. You are either out there doing things or sitting by your computer finding fault with every policy under the sun. Since the sun hardly matters when you are working indoors, you don't really feel the heat that most people forced to work in the sun, outside their homes actually do. Into this inescapable hell are born million of violets born to blush unseen in some obscure corner of Meghalaya. It is not their fault. It is the fault of a system that managed to turn ordinary mortals, living life close to nature and growing their own food in a God-given land that was virtually theirs for the asking, into 'citizens' who had to abide by a Constitution they had no hand at all in crafting and one they have never read and cannot read because they are illiterate. This is the growth trajectory of Meghalaya and we are still largely misfits within the 'Indian' system of governance. Not that we had a perfect system but it was not so contorted as to turn a proud, landed independent, self-confident person into a landless, powerless wimp, looking for a livelihood on the streets. This socio-economic transformation needs an intensive enquiry. But who will do it? NEHU is no longer the place to pin our hopes on for a research that would push government to formulate more humane policies. NEHU and its academics live sheltered lives, are well paid by the system that created it and as far as they are concerned, "everything's alright with their world."

And this world; their world, is governed by the much quoted Indian Constitution. But it is not only the academics who swear by the Constitution. All of us in this State also believe we abide by the Indian Constitution. And how do we measure that? Just because we have elections once in five years! In every other sphere of our lives we live by our own laws. Let me cite a few examples. The triangular junction at Fire Brigade which is also known as a memorial to someone from the Mawri clan is in shambles. The place itself is full of tall weeds and grass since no one seems to own it.

Then we come to parking lots. Those of us who have parked at Laitumkhrh market or at the Police Bazaar junction opposite the former State Assembly know that we are never given parking receipts. We are at the mercy of the collectors who decide how much parking time we have clocked. There are times when you have parked for just about 40 minutes but the parking attendant insists that you pay Rs 20 for parking time exceeding one hour. Without receipts how does the contractor running the parking lot know exactly how much she/he earns on a single day? The contractor was given parking lease, hopefully on the basis of a tender awarded to the highest bidder (unless she/he managed to strike a deal with MUDA or the Shillong Municipal Board). The money earned is supposed to supplement the income of the shriveled SMB which

Every morning garbage piles outside the fence of that triangle. Yet that is a posh area of the city where the gentry live. So being posh means dumping your garbage anywhere so long as it leaves your own home. This is true of quite a few areas within Shillong city. This is a symbol of lawlessness!

Then you have a law which says that you should not be speaking on the mobile phone while driving. But every other driver breaks this rule with impunity and is never punished because we don't have enough cops to catch people who break the law. I have seen cops in Mumbai confiscating mobile phones and papers from drivers who violate that law. Then there is a law which says that car owners/drivers can't go around playing music at decibels that could break the fragile ear-drums of those whose ability to hear is not yet deadened by heavy metal rock music. But every night such people flaunt the effectiveness of their Bose speakers. Some of us have neighbours who announce their arrival by such heavy music combined with honking. Some areas of Shillong, especially those where there are no VIP residences also have no policing. Hence we live by our own rules unless the Dorbar Shnong decides to take up policing.

Then we come to parking lots. Those of us who have parked at Laitumkhrh market or at the Police Bazaar junction opposite the former State Assembly know that we are never given parking receipts. We are at the mercy of the collectors who decide how much parking time we have clocked. There are times when you have parked for just about 40 minutes but the parking attendant insists that you pay Rs 20 for parking time exceeding one hour. Without receipts how does the contractor running the parking lot know exactly how much she/he earns on a single day? The contractor was given parking lease, hopefully on the basis of a tender awarded to the highest bidder (unless she/he managed to strike a deal with MUDA or the Shillong Municipal Board). The money earned is supposed to supplement the income of the shriveled SMB which

TO THE EDITOR

Unjustified allegations against PMS

Editor,

Mr P K Dwivedi's harangue against Pine Mount School makes me wonder whether he is an aggrieved parent or simply someone whose intention is to put the school in bad light. As a parent, I can safely discard Mr Dwivedi's allegations since I have not come across a mute teacher or my daughter being charged with building fund, classroom fund, and sanitary fees. However, the so called expensive ID Cards was an initiative welcomed by parents, as this is technologically equipped to keep track of our child's presence or absence from school, which is a welcome security step. The computer fees have been mandated to be paid at the HDFC bank for which a parent's copy of the receipt is provided.

An aggrieved parent would have approached the school authorities or at the very least made use of the school's "DROP BOX" to air his/her grievance. If one does not receive a satisfactory redress is he/she free to approach the higher authorities but making wild accusations in public, that have no semblance of a constructive critique amounts to questionable motives as this has affected the morale of teachers students, parents like me and the school as a whole.

In all fairness, Pine Mount School has been a result oriented and highly reputed school for decades and the results speak for themselves, despite the fact that it is burdened by many shortfalls, arising out of the inability of the government to address these problems. I would request Mr. Dwivedi to refrain from making such baseless accusations. If he is really a concerned parent, he is free to admit his daughter in another school which best suits him.

Yours etc.,
Evahunlin Ryndong
Shillong-1

Of faux Khasis

Editor,
India has attained its 69th year of Independence yet there are some who

are told is cash strapped. But is that a fact? If the SMB is gasping for breath why does it not plug the loopholes which prevent it from earning more money from parking lots? Sometime ago a senior bureaucrat looking after Urban Affairs said that the parking attendants would be provided uniforms and a name plate. Many years down the line the parking attendants are still unkempt and they think that anyone who demands a parking receipt is breaking their law.

Another law that is violated by none less than the State Government is to give a Government registration (ML 01) to all the SPTS red buses and Maxi taxis plying in Meghalaya, even while these buses and taxis have been outsourced to private parties. Does this ever happen anywhere else in India? Why this is problematic is because the drivers of these buses (some of whom look like minors) have no driving etiquette. They speed and push other smaller vehicles to corners and intimidate them. The police too look the other way when it comes to those buses/taxis. After all, one arm of the government cannot be taking action against another arm, can they?

Then we come to another aspect which is the most troubling one - the role of hawkers and their attitude towards the garbage they generate. As we drive up from Barapani and approach the Umiam viewpoint, the right side of the road has now turned into a garbage dump. Guess who has dumped that garbage there? Obviously the people who sell Uncle Chips, Lays and all the packaged food items by the dozens beginning at 8 am up until 8 pm. These hawkers have many patrons, foremost among whom are the Khasi Students Union who take up cudgels on their behalf. But if the hawkers assert their right to sell, can we not as citizens of Meghalaya assert our right to see that place clean? Is that violating the fundamental right of the hawkers to a livelihood? Does earning a livelihood and being poor give the hawkers special privilege to dump loads of garbage that emanate out of a commercial transaction, wherever they choose to - in this case by the side of the road? Do ministers and bureaucrats ever stop by to see how the state they promote as a

tourists' paradise actually looks from ground zero? The Mawiong Rim Dorbar was supposed to have taken up this issue with the seriousness it deserves but they seem to have abandoned that noble objective. This also tells us how effective the local Dorbars are when it comes to enforcing discipline among the residents and those occupying commercial spaces.

Those who live in Jail Road and beyond have a harrowing time walking down the road from Police Bazaar down to their residence. The footpath is completely occupied by vegetable and fruit vendors. In the evening the place resembles a thriving flea market. What is curious is that nearly all the hawkers are Khasi women. Male hawkers are mostly non-tribals. I wonder who looks after the kids of these women until the time they return home late at night. Who supervises their studies (that is provided the kids are able to go to school)? If the women had alternative sources of income would they like to remain outside their homes for such long hours? Is the society which is known to speak of inclusiveness and community strengths not responsible in some way for driving these women to the plight they find themselves in? Sadly these issues are never discussed in the Dorbar Shnong, in churches or by the plethora of social organizations. Why? Are these issues not attractive enough to win votes?

Some might wonder why this article speaks of lawlessness but harps on other issues. The reason is because lawlessness is the first sign of the breakdown of governance. In a lawless state might is right and justice becomes a casualty. Injustice in turn means that those who can bend the law and buy justice survive while those who obey the law are penalized because our system is so warped that it cannot deal with straightforwardness. Hence more and more people are pushed to break the law. The argument is that if the high and mighty can break laws, then why not the plebian?

This society is not just at the crossroads. It is at the brink of a social catastrophe. But who cares? That is until the guns boom again!

restaurants etc., how can they own two wheelers and cars in such a short time?

This should also be an eye opener to the local Khasi residents with daughters and properties. They need to guard against these ambitious men and ensure that their daughters do not fall into the trap of "Wannabe Khasis" with wrong intentions. Young people should be vigilant and brave and protect the true culture and heritage taught by their ancestors.

Yours etc.,
L Syiem
Shillong - 3

NGT ban on old diesel vehicles

Editor,

The ban on diesel vehicles which are ten years and above by the NGT is unfair and unjust. If vehicles that are ten years old and above emit smoke and pollute the environment, then so do those that are nine, or eight years old. Simply banning old diesel vehicles without giving them a chance to

Suu Kyi and Sharmila: The struggle of two human rights activists

By Nehginpao Kipgen

Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar and Irom Chanu Sharmila of India are two internationally recognized human rights activists of their time.

Different circumstances entailed them to fight for democracy and human rights in their respective countries but with a similar objective of ushering peace and justice for the general public.

The two share some interesting similarities that have encouraged and motivated millions of people around the world. First is the cause of their sacrifices. They both have been influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence. Suu Kyi had been under some form of detention for 15 of the past 21 years when she was released on November 13, 2010.

She was initially placed under house arrest on July 20, 1989 under martial law that allowed for detention without charge or trial for three years. During the years of her detention, Suu Kyi was offered freedom if she chose to leave the country but refused it knowing that she would not be allowed back into the country.

Suu Kyi's primary objective, at least during the years of her house arrest, was to bring an end to military dictatorship in Myanmar and then to establish a democratic country where there is rule of law and respect for human rights.

On the other hand, Sharmila ended her 16-year-long hunger strike on August 9, 2016. Because of her refusal of food and water for more than 500 weeks, she has been called the world's longest hunger striker.

Sharmila's hunger strike began on November 5, 2000 after the Indian army killed 10 civilians in Malom, a town in the Imphal valley of Manipur. Her demand has been the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), passed by the Indian government in 1958, which grants security forces the power to search properties without a warrant, arrest people, and use deadly force if there is a reasonable suspicion that a person is acting against the state.

Second is their recognition. Among others, Suu Kyi has been awarded Rafto Prize and Sakharov Prize in 1990, Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, and Francois Zimeray, France's Ambassador for Human Rights in 2011. Similarly, Sharmila has been recognized with Gwangju Prize for Human Rights in 2007, the first Mayillama Award of the Mayillama Foundation in 2009, and lifetime achievement award from the Asian Human Rights Commission in 2010.

Third is their political ambition. Suu Kyi, whose father was the architect of Myanmar's independence, has come from a political family. However, she was politically a novice until she, on August 26, 1988, addressed about half a million people at a mass rally in front of the Shwedagon Pagoda in the then capital city Rangoon, calling for a democratic government.

The massive gathering was in some way construed as a culmination of pro-democracy movement in the backdrop of the military junta violently suppressing pro-democracy demonstrations. After spending several years of her life as a democratic icon and human rights activist, Suu Kyi decided to contest the 2012 by-election with the National League for Democracy (NLD), the party she co-founded on September 27, 1988.

After serving as the opposition leader, Suu Kyi contested the 2015 general election. Though the constitution bars her from the country's presidency, she is the de-facto leader of the NLD government in her capacity as the state counselor, foreign minister and minister of the president's office.

After becoming a politician, Suu Kyi has received her share of criticism for not speaking up or being reticent to defend human rights, the core value she had stood for many years. On the other hand, Sharmila's entry into politics is another strategy she has chosen to continue her struggle for the repeal of AFSPA. She believes that the politics in Manipur is dirty and the politicians who would fight for the repeal of AFSPA are corrupt.

Her immediate political ambition is to contest in next year's Manipur state assembly election as an independent candidate and oust the incumbent Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh. Her hope is that at least 20 other independent candidates would support in her bid to remove the present government. Fourth is the choice of their spouses. Suu Kyi was married to Michael Aris, a British scholar of Tibetan culture. Her marriage to a foreigner and their foreign-citizen children has disqualified her from holding the job of the presidency.

Sharmila has said she would marry Desmond Coutinho, a British national of Indian origin, if people reject her as a politician. The idea of tying the knot with a foreigner has faced criticism from within the Manipuri society and from pressure groups such as the Meira Paibis, who have alleged that Coutinho was trying to sway Sharmila and derail their movement to repeal AFSPA. Sharmila has also received death threats for considering to marry a foreigner.

While Suu Kyi has transformed from being a human rights activist to a de-facto leader of the NLD government, it remains to be seen if Sharmila would ever become the chief minister of Manipur and succeed in repealing AFSPA.

Dr. Nehginpao Kipgen is Assistant Professor and Executive Director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University. His writings (books and articles) have been widely published in over 30 countries in five continents - Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, and North America.

maintenance rather than on banning. Complete overhaul of engine, carbonator and timely and regular drainage of mobil oil should be done as soon as the old diesel vehicles begins to emit smoke. Even old petrol vehicles emit smoke if left unattended.

Yours etc.
Stelin G Laloo

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.

“Dreams come true. Without that possibility, nature would not incite us to have them.”

--- John Updike

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Sexual harassment

SEXUAL harassment may be construed to be an absurdly ridiculous issue as a police officer in Kerala interpreted it. There is no law that is for or against this officer's definition of it. Even the best of intentions may lead to a poor understanding of the law. That goes against a sensible handling of the serious crime of sexual harassment. A quick-fix decision may lead to invasive policing. On the contrary, there may be inordinate delay in the matter as in the Nirbhaya case in Delhi which occurred in December 2012. It did trigger widespread civil society protest and agitation. A three member panel was set up under Justice JS Verma to look into existing laws on sexual misdemeanor. The panel was empowered to suggest necessary amendments and its recommendations influenced the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013. But these recommendations turned out to be somewhat loosely phrased and were not mandatory. What it could not achieve was to create public awareness to the extent necessary. Women should be made aware of gender rights. Conservative social values and patriarchal norms still exist. The emphasis on excessive punishment for violence against women on the other hand proves counterproductive.

The police everywhere in India favour males. More representation of women in the police force can redress the regrettable unfavourable balance against the fair sex. The citizenry can then be more sensitive to gender issues. If women join more formal or informal work force, the situation will improve especially if the work they do is changed in nature. A police officer thinking that a boy staring at a girl for more than 14 seconds can be accused of sexual harassment does more harm than good for the protection of women.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

'UMPF has instilled confidence in people'

Former Meghalaya Chief Minister Mr B B Lyngdoh has said that a sense of confidence had been created in the minds of the people with the installation of the present UMPF coalition one year ago. He said the people appreciated the Govt's performance and a genuine feeling had grown in the public minds that it would be able to fulfill the aspirations of the people during the next four years. Mr Lyngdoh, who was participating on Monday in the three-day general debate on the Governor's Address in the State Assembly, welcomed the decision on constituting a commission to study the land tenure system in the State with the objective of an improved use of the land.

Mr Lyngdoh, who moved the motion of thanks, was happy to note that the Governor had stated there would be no interference with the traditional mining rights of the tribal people in the state. He lauded the government's efforts to strengthen the tribal institutions in the state. He however said the old system of education was only increasing the number of educated unemployed and pleaded for a 10+2 system in all schools steps should also be taken to start the Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Science in the state without further delay, he added.

Mr Loniak Marbaniang (HSPDP-DL) expressed his concern over the influx of foreigners into the state but was satisfied with the government's action taken against information and was happy that Seventh Plan allocation had been increased and said the NEC would also spend about Rs. 10 crore in 1989-90 on the development schemes.

Mr Marbaniang also stressed on development of science and technology setting up of small and cottage industries, halting deforestation and ending unemployment problems in the State. Mr H R D Lyngdoh (HSPDP-DL) emphasized the importance of achieving self reliance on foodgrains production. He expressed deep concern over the growing menace of drug trafficking and urged the govt to take effective measures in this direction Mr Lyngdoh underscored the need for expediting construction of road schemes which were already sanctioned. The debate will continue on Tuesday.

APHLC(A) Ministers not to join Cong-I

The two APHLC (A) Ministers in the Congress(I) led coalition have denied that they were contemplating on joining the Congress (I). In a joint statement issued here on Monday, the Housing Minister Mr Armison Marak and the Veterinary Minister Mr Crunden Sangma said that they would "continue to support and work together as coalition partner in the best interest of the State."

The Minister were reacting to a news item appearing in the Shillong Times of February 23. They said that the Chief Minister had not conveyed his displeasure to them over the APHLC (A)'s fighting on its own in the recent District Council election in Garo Hills. "There is no difference between us and the Chief Minister," the statement said.

A year in Taiwan

By Rupakjyoti Borah

Bounded by the Taiwan Strait on the left and the Pacific Ocean to the right, the small island of Taiwan is known all over the world for its high-tech I-T exports and its sumptuous cuisine. However, there is much more to Taiwan than meets the eye. One such thing is Taiwan's political status. Though Taiwan is a self-governing territory, mainland China claims Taiwan to be part of its territory. However, most countries in the world subscribe to the "One China" principle which means they recognize one China (which includes Taiwan), but oppose the use of force to unify what China claims as "One China".

Another less-known fact about Taiwan is its amazing transportation system. It has high-speed trains (akin to Japanese bullet trains), super-fast trains (known as Puyuma), express trains, local trains besides bus services round the clock. What is also amazing is the fact that these services are designed to run even when there are earthquakes and typhoons. From my personal experience of staying in Taiwan, I can vouch for the fact that one can move around the island with the least of inconvenience.

Bus/train tickets can be done in 24-hour convenience shops and can also be done online. Buses in Taiwan run exactly on time and even if a bus has only 1 or 2 passengers, it will still depart on time. If you miss your designated bus, you can always take the next bus with the same ticket and tickets once done can be cancelled even if the bus/train has left (in case you cannot travel due to any unforeseen circumstances).

What is also amazing is that, though in terms of

distance, Taiwan stretches a mere 394 kilometres (245 miles) from north-northeast to south-southwest, in terms of GDP Per Capita, it ranks as one of the richest economies in the world with a GDP Per Capita of \$47,500 (according to the CIA Worldfact Book). As per statistics from the World Trade Organization, in the year 2014, Taiwan ranked as the 20th largest exporter and the 18th largest importer of merchandise in the world. Although the total land area of Taiwan is

Taiwan will always be special for us as it was the first foreign trip for my wife and two sons. The younger one was under 5 months when he left for Taiwan and me and my wife took the risk of a lifetime by travelling abroad with the infant.

only around 36000 sq kms, it produces a whole lot of agricultural products, especially fruits.

ENRICHING EXPERIENCE

Another big experience from my time (along with my wife and two kids) in Taiwan is braving the full ferocity of a typhoon. During one such typhoon, the windows of the apartment which we had rented were shaking so violently that we could not sleep the whole night and when we got up and walked around the next morning, we could see for ourselves the destruction wrought by the typhoon. My elder son also attended an international school while we were in Taiwan and he picked up the Mandarin language as well. I used to drop my son to school in a bicycle and it was a very different, but enriching experience for both of us, as in India, he was used to being dropped off to school either in a car or a two-wheeler.

ATTRACTIONS

GALORE

During our stay in Taiwan, we were based in a city called Taichung, which was 2 hours drive from the capital city of Taipei. Taipei has many attractions like the Taipei Zoo, Maokang Gondola, Taipei Amusement Park, hot springs besides restaurants serving cuisine from across the world. The magnificent Taipei 101 building in the capital city of Taipei is one of the tallest buildings in the world and we went to the viewing platform at the top of the

building, which is serviced by the fastest elevator in the world.

We also visited the magnificent Sun Moon Lake, which is a 2-hour bus ride from the city we were in (Taichung). During our stay in Taiwan, we made many friends who took us out to various places of interest in Taichung and outside. We visited a quaint village lying by the Taiwan Strait seaford along with our Taiwanese friends. We were also lucky to have met a Spanish couple and their son in a place called Sanyi, who have made Taiwan their home. Me and my son visited an Aboriginal village in Taiwan and met people from various indigenous tribes, who have inhabited various parts of Taiwan from time immemorial and much before people from the Chinese-mainland started streaming into Taiwan.

SUMPTUOUS CUISINE AND FRIENDLY PEOPLE

Taiwan is a foodies' paradise with all sorts of

stalls lining the sidewalks of streets. In the evenings, the streets come alive with night markets of all sorts. Most people in Taiwan prefer to eat out since it is cheap, hygienic and saves time and energy. In terms of food choices, almost everything is available on the menu. I have always believed in trying out whatever local cuisine is available, though my better half and my kids were much more conservative in terms of food choices. I used to frequent a Burmese (Myanmarese) restaurant while in Taiwan and found the restaurant staff to be incredibly kind. Upon learning that I am from India, they made me try various kinds of dishes without any extra charges. In addition to restaurants, food is also available in the various chains of convenience stores like 7/11, Family Mart, OK Mart and others which remain open round the clock (and which made life easy for us)

MEMORIES FOR A LIFETIME

Taiwan will always be special for us as it was the first foreign trip for my wife and two sons. The younger one was under 5 months when he left for Taiwan and me and my wife took the risk of a lifetime by travelling abroad with the infant. Fortunately, things went off fine and we learnt many things during this trip. On their way back to India, I came to Bangkok from Taipei to drop them and from Bangkok, my wife travelled alone to Guwahati with the two kids in tow, which was another big challenge, especially since they had a whole lot of baggage.

All said and done, I am sure that this stay of ours in Taiwan has given us memories to last a lifetime.

(Dr Rupakjyoti Borah is currently a Research Fellow with the Japan Forum for Strategic Studies, Tokyo. The views expressed are personal).

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

Senior Modi ministers complain againts NSA Ajit Doval

The role of the National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval is under the scanner. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is under tremendous pressure from senior cabinet colleagues like Sushma Swaraj and Rajnath Singh to replace the present NSA with the foreign secretary Jaishankar. Rajnath Singh is said to be hopping mad over the insult and humiliation he suffered during his Pakistan visit. He has complained to the RSS that he was forced to go to Pakistan by the NSA who was to accompany him but dropped out at the last minute. Doval is even alleged to have mishandled the Kashmir issue. Besides Rajnath Singh, Sushma Swaraj is extremely unhappy with the NSA. Swaraj is said to be upset over the manner in which Pakistani team along with an ISI officer was allowed in the high security base of Pathankot by Doval. The thinking in the MEA is that Doval is not suited for such a job which needs diplomacy. You need a diplomat to handle situations that are related to India and other countries. Doval is even being blamed for the souring of relations with Nepal. As a result, Nepal has been pushed into the lap of China.

Rahul Gandhi acting as de-facto Congress President

Rahul Gandhi is likely to be made the working president of the Congress Party. Rahul took over the reins of the 131 year old Party unofficially by unfurling the flag in the absence of the ailing Congress president Sonia Gandhi on August 15, the Independence Day. The coronation of the prince has however taken place but just short of a declaration. The tradition in the Congress is that in the absence of the Congress president, the seniormost Congress leader unfurls the flag. Last time when Sonia had gone for a checkup, Motilal Vora had unfurled the flag. But this time it was Rahul Gandhi, the vice president of the Party who unfurled the flag. Thus, for all practical purposes, he has taken over the reins of the party. Despite the fact that the majority of the senior leadership does not trust the leadership of Rahul Gandhi but they have accepted him. The first sign of acceptance came on August 15 when Ahmad Patel, the political adviser to Sonia Gandhi also accompanied him from 10 Janpath as he used to come with the Congress President and even Motilal Vora the senior most Congress leader and Janardhan Diwedi, the most bitter critic of Rahul Gandhi stood behind the Congress vice president.

Senior Congress leaders uneasy with Rahul Gandhi

The senior leadership of the Congress is not happy with the ascendancy of Rahul Gandhi. They still consider him a 'novice'. One Congress MP one day bumped into Rahul Gandhi in parliament. Rahul on seeing this MP asked him "I don't think we are meeting so often". The outspoken Congress MP daringly told him, when our minds don't meet, there is no use for us to meet. Rahul then said, then you must find out why our minds don't meet. "That you should find out" said the daring MP. At this some friends accompanying him told the MP later that he should not have used such a language to Rahul Gandhi. At this the MP said, "I don't consider him my leader. My leader is only Sonia Gandhi."

Anand Sharma rebuffed by veteran Congress members

Erstwhile AICC secretary and the current member of OBC Commission Shakeeluzaman, snubbed the arrogant deputy leader of Rajya Sabha, Anand Sharma on Independence Day, in the presence of Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi. As per tradition, after hoisting the flag, the Congress president has tea with the AICC office bearers and chats with them. The vice

president did the same. Rahul too sat down with the Congress leaders over a cup of tea. Seeing an opportunity Anand Sharma took over and started lecturing Rahul on external affairs and on the Prime Minister's speech where Modi supported Balochistan against Pakistan. Anand Sharma was incessantly talking even as the other senior leaders turned restless. It was when Sharma came to his favourite topic of South Africa that an irritated Shakeeluzaman told him, "Choriye ye sab intellectualism, apna aur mudde ki baat par ayye. Udhara Modi is addressing his own constituency by whipping communal sentiments, idhar aap Rahulji ko South Africa samjha rahe hain." At this even Rahul Gandhi looked relieved and the other senior leaders including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh heaved a sigh of relief. Then of course others, including Manmohan Singh also got a chance to speak. Singh cribbed that the economic situation of the country is getting from bad to worse. He expressed his views on the economic policy of the Modi government and said that they are just changing the names of the policies of his government.

Babul Supriyo holds gala wedding reception in Delhi

Babul Supriyo, the BJP minister from West Bengal celebrated his second marriage in grand style. The entire Narendra Modi cabinet and practically all the who's who of politics attended. He had put up most of his guests from Tollywood and Bollywood in Ashoka Hotel where the reception was held. He had booked about 50 rooms for them at his own expenses for one night and two days and even paid for their air ticket. West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee had arranged 10 complimentary rooms at Banga Bhavan as a wedding gift. Though the entire band of her Trinamool Congress MPs were present she did not attend the reception due to her meeting in Tripura. Babul Supriyo wore a designer 'dhoti Punjabi' for the marriage ceremony and a sherwani for the reception. While all the who's who in the country, attended his Supriyo's wedding celebrations, his family members particularly his daughter from first marriage, Sharmilee, reacted strongly and boycotted the event. Meanwhile if one goes by the gossips in Trinamool Congress and given his relations with Mamata Banerjee, Babul Supriyo will contest the next Lok Sabha elections of 2019 on the Trinamool Congress ticket, say sources..

Election wind favouring Mayawati in UP

Mayawati will be the next chief minister of Uttar Pradesh replacing Akhilesh Yadav. This is the finding of the survey conducted by the Modi government. Already the exodus has begun from other political parties of Uttar Pradesh. Three sitting MLAs of the Congress and one of the Samajwadi Party have left their parties to join Behenji's BSP. What is significant in this is that all four MLAs are Muslims. The Muslims always follow the trend and flock to the winning party which can defeat BJP in UP elections.

Karnataka CM's son died of drug overdose

Karnataka chief minister, Siddharamaia's son Rakesh Siddaramaia did not die of multi organ failure in Belgium as publicised by the media. Rakesh had met with an accident 15 years back in which he had destroyed his pancreas. His death occurred because of drugs overdose. He was into drugs and alcohol. For once the media in Karnataka was kind enough not to reveal the truth as a sign of respect for the sentiments of the bereaved Siddharamaia and his family. (IPA)

TO THE EDITOR

Attempts to defame Pine Mount School

Editor, Apropos the news report published in your daily (ST July 20, 2016) captioned "Govt. order on school fee irks parents" and letter to the editor written by one Mr. P K Dwivedi on the same issue, first of the all, the allegations made by some parents regarding school charging various other fees without any receipt is completely false and it is done with a clear objective to tarnish the reputation of very good school like Pine Mount. We are not sure how much Mr. Dwivedi knows about the School. We are proud that our daughters are studying a school which is one of the best in the city. Through this letter we would like to clarify the following points:

a. Every year the school charges a meager Rs. 250 only as Class Fund and I am sure the teachers are keeping full account of the same. The said fund is used for students' activities only. If any parent wants to know the details of the same they can approach the Principal or respective class teacher.

b. ID card fees are charged every year and most schools are charging the fees for the ID Card. So to say only Pine Mount is charging is not correct.

c. Computer fees are charged every year for those students who take computer as a subject and fees are deposited in the Bank and hence proper receipt and accountability is maintained.

d. The School needs funds for Development

and improvement of basic facilities because it cannot wait for Government funds for every maintenance work. Beades Government has its own process which takes a long time. So spending Rs. 2400 per year for every child's education is not much. Moreover this amount is deposited in the Bank Account of the school and proper accounting is maintained.

e. This problem of complaining about fees has started from the time of implementation of Right to Education (RTE) where free education is provided. Some parents think that free education means everything is free.

f. What is wrong in senior students requesting all students to contribute Rs. 30 for the Teachers' Day Celebration as this is the only opportunity for students to show their love and gratitude towards their teachers by organizing some functions / decorating the school, class room etc.

Lastly, Parents have every right to place their views / concerns about the school but of late it has become a habit of a section of parents to criticize every decision of the School in the print media and social networking platforms instead of approaching the principal or class teacher. These write-ups do not help in improving the school. Instead they only serve to demoralise the teachers and students. We request the concerned parents to meet the principal and voice their concerns and we are sure that the school will address the genuine concerns.

Yours etc.,
Concerned Parents of
Pine Mount School
(Name withheld on request)

Recent upheavals in NEHU

Editor, Apropos the recent uproar in NEHU, the steps taken by the Dean Students' Welfare (DSW) versus the students who do not want to comply with the stipulations imposed on them, by way of moral disciplining of the students is absurd. The issues is not simplistic for the DSW and his team of stakeholders to simply create a strictly monitored "peaceful" environment in the campus by preventing "expected" "undesirable" activities from the student community.

The issue has never been addressed from the academic perspective, instead the custodians of conventional mindsets, uninformed and with anachronistic ideas are trying to address students' grievances. The present academic culture in universities which is supposed to be designed for 24x7 working facilities for both teachers and students, is important in the decision making bodies. With the exception of universities in Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya, the main libraries, departmental seminar libraries, separate reading rooms in all hostels of other universities are functioning 24 hours a day, apart from scientific laboratories. In this age of extra fast competition, in most of the universities and research institutes in north, south and central India, this is a fast growing trend because research scholars have to keep pace with their peers in advanced countries. Students and faculty are available and

working in the lab and chambers for as many hours as they wish to.

I worry because our audacious decision makers from the administrative fraternity are uninformed, insensitive and uninspired by such productive aura in the academia of the world.

Here DSW orders for complete halt of any activity inside the campus at 8 pm, which includes the shops, the canteens, the library, the street lights etc., whereas in the nearest IIT Guwahati, canteen service is available for students working in the lab, library, reading rooms the whole night. I wish our DSW visits IIT Guwahati to with his own eyes the academic activity as well as environment prevailing there.

And here he talks of not allowing students to have boiling water facilities in the hostels. Of course, he may be discharging the kind of unpopular duty with extra loyalty to his master sitting in the ground control. If it is so, he is imprudent to choose the wrong master. Does he understand the plight of the students of PG and Technology when three/four students are accommodated in one room of the hostel with no separate reading rooms? He needs to update himself by acquainting with the provisions of hostel reading rooms, departmental libraries, main libraries, etc., functioning 24x7 in BHU, AMU, JNU, Calcutta University etc..

The Vice-Chancellor of this university must discuss this matter in the Academic Council rather than leaving it in the hands of naive administrative staff who are only adept at moral policing.

Yours
Name withheld on request

Who would not like to go little high with a foaming glass of beer? **Aditi Singh** tries to find out universal popularity of this third most popular drink after water and tea

After water and tea, beer is the third most popular drink in the world. Such was its value in the ancient world that it was part of the daily wages of the workers who built the pyramids in Egypt! Before learning to make bread, pre-historic nomads used grain and water to make beer -- it's almost as if man had learnt to drink before he learnt to eat. Speaking of priorities, if the world was coming to an end and you were reprimanded for stowing away a few cases of beer, tell them that Noah's provisions on the Ark included beer.

Besides being the most widely consumed alcoholic beverage in the world, beer is also the oldest, with a history of nearly 12,000 years. It dates back to the early Neolithic Age or 9500 BC, when cereal was first farmed. As hunter-gatherer tribes settled into agrarian civilisations based around staple crops like wheat, rice, barley and maize, they stumbled upon the process of fermentation and thus started brewing beer.

According to anthropologists, beer was the driving force that led nomadic mankind into village life. It was his appetite for beer-making that led to crop cultivation, permanent settlement and agriculture. Though the earliest known alcoholic beverage is a 9,000-year-old Chinese brew of rice, honey and fruit, the first barley beer was born in the Middle East and is recorded in the written history of ancient Iraq and Egypt.

In Mesopotamia, the oldest evidence of beer is a 6,000-year-old Sumerian tablet depicting people drinking a beverage through



reed straws from a communal bowl. The early beer was cloudy and unfiltered and was usually drunk with a straw to strain the bitter solids from the brew. As early as 3000 BC, the Babylonians had nearly 20 different types of beer. They were so finicky about the quality of beer that if someone brewed a bad batch, he would be drowned

Some of humanity's earliest known writings refer to the production and distribution of beer. The Code of Hammurabi included laws regulating beer and beer parlours. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, a wife (brewster) Siduri dispenses this ancient advice to Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk

night make merry." Early Sumerian writings contain numerous references to beer; including The Hymn to Ninkasi. "Ninkasi, you are the one who bakes the bappir (barley bread) in the big oven, Puts in order the piles of hulled grains, You are the one who waters the malt set on the ground... You are the one who holds with both hands the great sweet wort... Ninkasi, you are the one who pours out the filtered beer of the collector vat, it is like the onrush of the Tigris and Euphrates."

At a time when literacy was limited to aristocracy, the prayer to the beer goddess doubled up as a method of remembering the recipe for the common folk! It also gives us a deep insight that in olden times the 'brewsters' were mostly women. The Finnish epic Kalevala, based on centuries-old oral traditions, devotes more lines to the origin of beer and brewing than it does to the origin of mankind. Beer was spread through Europe by Germanic and Celtic tribes in 3000 BC, when it was

Cheers to beer

brewed on a domestic scale. By 7th century AD, beer was being produced and sold by European monasteries. The early European beers contained fruits, honey, plants, spices and narcotic herbs like hemp and poppy. Hops were a later addition, first mentioned in Europe around 822 by a Carolingian Abbot, and in 1067 by Abbess Hildegard of Bingen.

From 1000 AD, beer began to be bittered with wild herbs such as bog myrtle, lemon balm, borage, St John's wort or elderberries. Hops were added to beer to reduce the putrefaction caused by microorganisms. The 12th century Old Icelandic poem Alfvissmál says, "Ale it is called among men, but among the gods, beer." The practice slowly spread

he invented the wonderful drink, and he made it out of hops."The popularity of the English pubs, alehouses and taverns in the 17th century gave rise to a popular phrase. Keeping a watch on the alcohol consumption of patrons was always a big problem for bartenders, who would sometimes scribble 'p' or 'q' on the tally slate to indicate the pints and quarts consumed. As a reminder, the bartender would recommend his patrons that they 'mind their Ps and Qs' in all honesty. Today, the bartending term implies to mind one's manners. One reason for the beer's universal popularity in the medieval period was the poor quality of drinking water -- rivers and canals were often



across Europe and reached Britain by the middle of the 15th century. The British drinking song 'Beer, Beer Beer' gives an apocryphal origin -- "A long time ago, way back in history, When all there was to drink was nothin' but cups of tea, Along came a man by the name of Charlie Mopps, And

contaminated by animal or human waste, and beer seemed a safer alternative to drinking water. Today, the US is leading the way in the latest global trend of craft beer. A microbrewery or craft brewery is usually independently owned, (Conrd on P-VII)

Lions are introverts

I dreamed that TV wildlife guru David Attenborough was narrating a film about my life: "And for the 49th time, the runt of the group attempts to climb out of the pit but does a dramatic face plant into decomposing warthog poop. Let's see if he gets up this time."

Yet I remain fascinated by animal news stories. A reader just sent me one about a team of Australians who flew to Botswana recently to paint eyes on cows' bottoms. I showed it to an illustrator colleague and she said: "Artists have to take whatever jobs are available, cow bottoms, whatever."

The article said that they were painting pairs of eyes on bovine buttocks to stop lions eating them. The big cats apparently turn away from what they see as ugly "faces", thinking: "She looks like a cow's behind, she's got enough problems without us mauling her."

A similar trick has long been used in India. Woodcutters wear ugly masks with big eyes on the backs of their heads to deter lions. "That poor man's so deformed he's got two faces," the retreating beasts say. "Probably give us indigestion."

The scientific thinking behind this is that lions are known to hate being stared at. Lions are introverts. If you are

and think: "OMG, that fish is eating with its anus" and are so fascinated/disgusting they forget to attack.

Incidentally, National Geographic writers found a giant sea cucumber which eats with its anus. Where I live, some human fans of colonic irrigation treatments have wheatgrass nutrient drinks inserted from below, wasting the time of the people who toiled to make them taste good.

But returning to fake eyes, many butterflies have evolved quite realistic eyes on their wings, which seem to work, judging by the complete lack of lion-versus-butterfly fighting videos on YouTube.

These tales of smart animals coincided with the arrival on my desk of a travel report containing proof of the astonishing scale of human stupidity. In the US alone, humans left US\$765,000 in small change in trays at airport security gates last year, it said.

A colleague has just pointed out that this could be 765,000 travellers each leaving a few coins, or Donald Trump alone forgetting to pick up his pocket change. Whatever. It's still stupidity.

But of course not everyone appreciates the good qualities of animals. I remember going to a zoo in China some years back where the little name plate

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

outside each cage had words like "Evil" and

"Edible" on them. This seemed a bit insensitive, especially since humans are very evil and technically edible, too. Especially if unmasked and approached by lions.

When I mentioned this to a naturalist friend, she told me about the Fourrey Butterflyfish, which has two huge fake eyes at one end, and a real face at the other end. Approaching deep-sea predators stop

to see here.

Column done, time for a break. And if the office canteen is serving wheatgrass drinks, I think I'll just drink it the old way; so move along, nothing to see here.



reed straws from a communal bowl. The early

in it as punishment!

-- "Fill your belly. Day and

3000 BC, when it was

By Abha Sharma

Deepika Rathore: On the heights and highs of adventure

"It was serene and beautiful. As I sat alone at the highest peak awaiting my teammates, I was so overwhelmed that tears rolled down my cheeks. But I quickly wiped them and said to myself: 'I should capture this moment and enjoy it'. In that hour I felt as if I was close to God." Tenacious, spirited, modest, athletic,

first expedition of 10 girls between 19-21 years of age. Although she belongs to a state where it's common for

At first glance Rathore looks like the typical girl-next-door, pretty and rather lean; there are no overt signs of her being a world-class mountaineer, athlete - she's neither very tall nor very muscular. So the obvious question that comes to mind: summing the Everest is no ordinary feat; how did she manage it; where's the hidden physical strength? A smile lights up her face as she says, "Yes, you do need physical strength for such expeditions but more than that you need mental strength. It is the test of your indomitable courage and strong willpower to face the challenges and hurdles that come on the way." For Rathore going

treacherous slopes is exhilarating. To fulfil my dream of mountain climbing I signed up for the basic course at the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM), Uttarkashi, in 2002. These days, there is a lot of buzz around mountaineering as the media actively reports on it but when I wanted to pursue it nearly 15 years back there was hardly any awareness or information on it. In fact, no one in my family knew much, not even my father," she shares.

Naturally, there was a lot of apprehension in the family when she told them about her plans. Indeed, the immediate reaction was what if she met with an accident during training, who would marry her then? "All parents hope to find a good match and see their daughter settled in a happy marriage; mine were no different. But it was one of my father's friends who supported my decision and convinced them to let me give it a try. He told them that accidents can happen even at home and it shouldn't be the only reason they stop me from giving mountaineering a go," she elaborates.

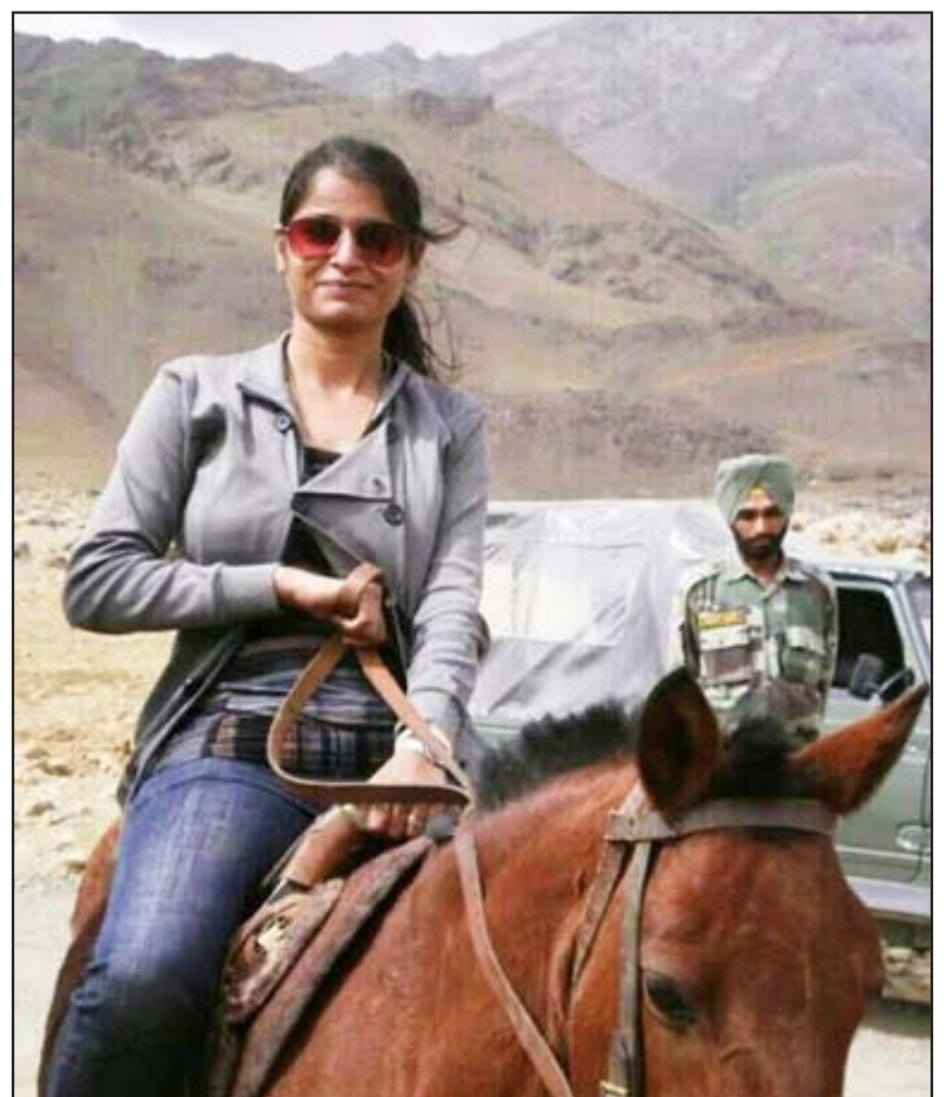
That was the turning point in her life. She still remembers the thrill she felt when she saw snow for the



fun-loving, warm... there are many words to describe Major Deepika Rathore, who recently became the only woman from Rajasthan - and perhaps from the Indian Army as well - to scale the mighty Everest for a second time, as part of the National Cadet Corps (NCC)

girls to give up their dreams and settle for a life of quiet domesticity, Major Rathore, who hails from the valorous but conservative Rajput clan, is glad that she has been able to set an example that busts the myth "that girls are the weaker sex and thus not fit for great feats".

ing down memory lane is always an emotional experience - her eyes brighten as she talks about the long, tough journey she has traversed to pursue her passion for climbing. "I come from a desert state so the mountains have always fascinated me. Exploring the



Deepika Rathore

very first time. As time progressed her stint at NIM was useful and rewarding; she got good grades and went on to complete the advance course with flying colours. Thereafter, she performed well in the expeditions as well. As luck would have it, in 2011 she also got married to Jitendra Singh Shekhawat, a merchant navy engineer, who has been backing her career ever since.

Shekhawat, who has flown in from Bangkok, where he is presently posted, to celebrate his wife's recent feat, says, "Deepika joined the army because she loved the idea of being in the services and also wearing the uniform. Moreover, she simply loves adventure and the army provides opportunities therein. She was the captain of Delhi area adventure team and the only woman in the country to have taken part in Army Adventure Cup, which included 11 kilometres of motor biking, running and water rafting. We married in March 2011 and she was off for training in June to prepare for her first climb to the Everest. She was posted in the Leh Ladakh sector when she came to know of the All Army Everest Expedition." Adds Rathore, "Truly, life in the services provides one with many different opportunities. I love mountaineering and thanks to the army I have had the privilege of scaling the Mount Everest, not once but twice."

Why scale Everest a second time? "Well, I had never thought I would get to go there again but I was approached to lead a batch of NCC (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career @ Marine World-II

We have published information related to career scopes in marine biology. This edition, we shall publish on some other subjects which is also related to marine world. Marine engineering often refers to the engineering of boats, ships, oil rigs and any other marine vessel or structure, but also encompasses oceanographic engineering. Specifically, marine engineering is the discipline of applying engineering sciences, and can include mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, electronic engineering, and computer science, to the development, design, operation and maintenance of watercraft propulsion and also on-board systems and oceanographic technology, not limited to just power and propulsion plants, machinery, piping, automation and control systems etc. for marine vehicles of any kind like surface ships, submarines etc. The mechanical ship operation aspect of marine engineering has relationship with naval architects.

It is also known as Ocean Engineering. Students may take admission in M Tech or ME after graduation in Marine Engineering. Some of the job profiles are Navy Weapon Engineering Officer, Marine Engineering Officer, etc. T S Chanakya, Mumbai, and the Marine Engineering Research Institute (MERI), Calcutta are the two main training centres for Marine Engineers. There are other colleges and institutes that offer courses related to marine engineering.

Marine Engineers are also employed in the areas

of designing, research and consultancy. They have opportunities in designing and building firms and even in the teaching or training profession. Some of the other courses are: B.E. Harbour Engineering and Offshore Technology, B.E. Marine Electrical and Electronics Engineering, B.E. Marine Engineering, B.E. Naval Architecture, B.E. Naval Architecture and Offshore Engineering, B.Sc. Nautical Science, B.Sc. Ship Building and Design, B.Tech in Marine Engineering, BS Marine Engineering, BS Nautical Technology, etc.

Updates:

CAT: Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) have announced the Registration for Common Admission Test

27th UES in Indian Army: Engineering degree students may apply for the permanent commission in Indian Army through UES. Last date for applying is 8th September.

Netherlands Fellowship Programme (NFP) for Developing Countries: Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the budget for development cooperation offers Netherlands Fellowship Programme (NFP) for developing countries' students. Fellowships are available for masters degree programmes, short courses and PhD studies at a Dutch higher education institution. The NFP aims to help increase both the number and the competencies of skilled staff at a wide range of government and non-government organisations. The Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP) promotes capacity building within organisations in 51 countries by providing fellowships for training and education for professionals. The NFP is initiated and fully funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the budget for development cooperation.

(The writer is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)

2016 (CAT 2016). The Advertisement for CAT 2016 has been released in newspapers across the country on 31st July, 2016 (Sunday). CAT 2016 will be conducted in two sessions on one day. The exam will be held on 4th December, 2016 (Sunday). The exam will be conducted in 138 cities. Online Registration: 8th August to 22nd September 2016.



Do you know that Asha Bhosle won the Filmfare Best Singer award of 1974 for a playback song that did not figure in the movie at all?

The award was for 'Chain se hum ko kabhi aap ne jeene na diyaa', the last song she sang for composer O P Nayyar which was supposed to be used in the movie 'Pran Jaye Par Vachan Na Jaye' but was not done.

This interesting fact figures in music historian Raju Bharatan's new book 'Asha Bhosle: A Musical Biography', published by Hay House.

Also soon after her marriage to Bhosle, Asha wanted to give up singing and just be a housewife.

"All that I sought, the, was to keep house and play the mother to my first-born: Hemant. But my husband would not hear of my giving up the mike. He forced me to continue singing. Left to myself, I would have definitely quit," the author quotes Asha as saying.

On the Filmfare award thing, he says, "In fact I don't think that this feat of hers has been matched by any singer in the world."

He terms the song as a torch song recorded as we were set to move into the Asha-OP 'cut-off' month of August 1972.

"It was recorded during an hour in which both Asha and OP knew that they were through. Yet, at the end of it all, there was always in this remorse that you could not retrieve....," he writes.

Soon Asha and Nayyar parted ways after an association of 15 years.

The song, penned by S H Bihari, was first played in November 1973 on Radio Ceylon and the film which was supposed to picture it was released on January 18, 1974.

And when the Filmfare awards ceremony came to be held in March 1975, Asha had no motivation left to receive her prize.

Bharatan cites another anecdote connected with

Asha's Filmfare winning song that was never picturised!

the episode.

Anticipating Asha's absence, Nayyar in a "malicious manoeuvre calculated to rile her" telephoned the Filmfare editor to say that he would be happy as the song's composer to receive the award on "behalf of his best lady singer ever".

Bharatan's book is woven mainly around Asha's musical journey with Nayyar, S D Burman and R D Burman.

So why a book on Asha with special focus on her association with Nayyar and the Burmans?

"From the outset, I was clear in my mind that this book intrinsically, is going to be about Asha vis-a-vis OP, SD and RD. Individually, OP, SD and RD have been written about extensively. But no one has attempted a book that places SD at the 'traditional' Asha core while having OP modernising her, in one era, and RD revolutionising her in another age. ...Therefore, a book on Asha Bhosle woven around these three - even while spanning the full range of film music and film music makers - has to be different. It necessarily has to offer personalised glimpses into a chain of events," the author says.

An Asha-OP recording had the look of a romantic interlude, according to him. "The two might not have been exactly ennobling to watch but they cared two hoots for what the world thought of them. Come to think of it, never



was Asha selective even about with whom she mixed in the recording room. Maybe such an approach was in harmony with Asha's audacious outlook."

Bharatan, who has previously authored 'Lata Mangeskar: A Biography' (1995); 'A Journey Down Melody Lane' (2010); and 'Naushadnama: The Life and Music of Naushad' (2013), gives enthralling behind-the-scenes happenings that shaped

the advance of Asha with a remarkable range and a noteworthy body of work.

This book captures Asha in her numberless shades. It is about how - in her silken rivalry with elder sister Lata Mangeskar - she moved with panache from Nayyar to the Burmans. It is about how she served a galaxy of composers; about how, in the end, she reached the pinnacle all by herself. Against odds that would have driven any other

All that I sought, the, was to keep house and play the mother to my first-born: Hemant. But my husband would not hear of my giving up the mike.

woman into quitting. No quitter ever, Asha, as the supernova supreme, just went on to underline the adage: 'No power like woman power'.

The book is also replete with a great number of statistics related to singers and musicians like Asha sang 324 Nayyar compositions, much more than Geeta Dutt's 62 and Shamshad Begum's 39.

Asha sang 840 R D Burman compositions and a staggering 880 songs with Mohammad Rafi and 656 duets with Kishore Kumar.

He also claims that Asha sang 7595 film songs, more than Lata's total of 6541 songs.

According to him, Asha's first film song is 'Gareebon ke data gareebon ke waali' rendered along with Zohrabai Ambalewali for the 1947 film 'Andhoki Duniya' and not 'Saawan aaya' from 'Chunaria' (1948) as is widely believed. (PTI)

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, August 21, 2016

Positive situations and developments will mark the year as Moon trine Mars on your solar return chart. You would be more expressive and as a skilful orator you get your point across with ease in one to one interactions as well as on a public forum. Solution of some pending problems can also be found as you would have enhanced abilities to get to the basics. Finances would stabilize and old dues can be recovered. Family get-togethers and celebrations bring in much joy and cheer and move out from a state of inertia. Travel will boost your morale and bring in some unexpected gains.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

Some associations can be competitive in business as you shine and work well in your field of activity. You initiate a current of forceful energy to achieve success in an important venture. You are likely to protest against domination by people at work. You may have to face egotistic people. This week brings love, romance and excitement in personal relations. Good luck in finances and new opportunities are encouraging. This is an excellent period for starting new regimen to improve your health and well being, such as regular exercise, more structured and productive use of your time, and so forth.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

You have the desire for love, harmony and a peaceful life. It is a gentle, considerate, and sensitive vibration. You are diplomatic, warm and sensitive. This week brings for you socializing, romance and stability at the work place. Love, friendship and relationship are emphasized. There are strong chances of materialization of friendship into a long term relationship during this time. Your social life may be restricted to business and family related obligations. Luxury shopping may make a hole into your pocket but makes your family happy and brings a smile to their face.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

Self-confidence and prompt action are highlighted. You are generous with friends, and loving in family situations. You come across as especially smooth, and your good nature is bound to attract some attention. You stand in the middle of a doorway in the middle of the week while making an important decision be it professional or personal. It would be better to listen to your own judgment and do what is good for you. People around you could be judgmental or manipulative. Do not forget to share your feelings with the one who loves and cares for you.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

You are loving, stable, and harmonious in personal relations. There is conflict within and discord outside. You may be divided about business and professional matters and finally come to terms with compromise which might be the best thing to do at this time. You may disagree mentally with your partner but the love between you allows peace and acceptance. Emotions and moods can swing to extremes and it is important to achieve equilibrium. You can get stressed and manifest a health problem as you worry about everything.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

You are practical, trustworthy, hard working, and helpful. This week influences your finances and material aspects, suggests that you are considerably more goal-oriented related to earnings. Your ability to concentrate and focus helps you to achieve what you set out to do. A new project or goal begun at this time has a good chance of being successful and long lasting. It's an excellent phase to make a lifestyle change. Self-confidence and action are highlighted. You may go in for a change of your image.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

You have intellectual vibration and ability to adapt to most situations. This period brings financial gains for those in banking, investment, hotel industry and those who are in the

teaching profession. There could be alteration in ideas or plans, increase and decrease in finances and fluctuation in business. You can be lead away by undue enthusiasm unless careful inner balance is maintained. Marriage, business partnership and collaboration can be strengthened through understanding and commitment.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

You are introspective and quiet. This week brings some changes in the way you look at professional goals and new interests are developed. You connect with fun loving people, artists and entertainers. Strong existing relationships are likely to grow and transform. Your finances could also improve as long as you employ a tried and tested strategy. Attending an important social occasion or festival may put you in the public eye. Meditation and introspection is the therapeutic and revealing as you intuitively get to the bottom of things.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

This phase brings youthful energy and you accept challenges in your life. You are diligent and pedantic at work and specialize further in your field of activity. You are on the threshold of a creative and inventive work that brings you name and exposure. Meditate on the constant changes happening around you and centre within. Good health and energy enables you to participate in sports and related pastimes. A pleasant surprise awaits you at the end of the week.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You would be more accommodating and compassionate in relationships and not take things personally. You would express your adaptability and persistent energy in professional projects. You deal with official and personal matters with calm authority. You possess great power to attract creative and charismatic people around you to make your social life enviable. You would be dynamic, forceful and assertive in professional ventures to establish a position of authority. Health and energy need to be conserved through a busy time at work.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

You are practical, hard working and helpful in personal and professional matters. New friendships and group associations are likely to come about and you will experience increased energy and a stronger ability to assert yourself. A new approach to friendships or new friendships altogether will pave a new path towards happiness and fulfillment. New associations or affiliations, or plenty of social activity are in store for you. This is an excellent period for beginning a new health regimen.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

This phase brings excellent work opportunities for sports persons and lawyers and also a favorable time to appear in written exams, handle court matters and attend to legal matters. Self-confidence and tremendous efforts are highlighted to attend professional goals. Financial benefits may come your way through investments. You need to be careful in your interpersonal dealings and you must avoid confrontations with your family. Your financial situation looks promising if you manage it well personally rather than look to others. Make sure that you do not get caught up in arguments as a simple and straightforward approach is all that's called for.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You may see the light in a friendship, realizing its importance in general, as well as the importance of acceptance and camaraderie. Circumstances may be such that you bring a new spirit of friendship into a romance or another connection in the next months. This can be invigorating. Surprises coming from children may be part of the picture. Your creativity, romance, pleasure, and children are involved. This could manifest, for example, as a romantic proclamation from a lover, a creative project bearing fruit, a child revealing something significant to you, and other such possibilities during this time.

Deepika Rathore: On the heights and highs of adventure

(Contd from P-VI) girls. I have been a cadet myself and owe much to the training I got there so this was a chance to give back. In the first expedition, I had to explore and concentrate on my goal. However, this time it was far more challenging because I was aware of the dangers and I had the additional responsibility of mentoring a group of young cadets," she explains.

This was NCC's maiden expedition for which 10 girls from across India were selected after a rigorous test. The team received training at Siachen base camp. Incidentally, the team left Siachen just a day before the deadly avalanche in which many Indian soldiers, including Lance Naik Hanumanthappa Koppad, were buried alive. News of the incident served as a reminder of the dangers of their mission. To keep their morale high Rathore told them, "If you feel you are strong, no one can stop you. If you think, you can. Brave soldiers like Hanumanthappa are a constant source of inspiration to us all." Rathore also paid him a heartfelt tribute on Facebook:

Tum zindagi se jeete nahin par lahe to the. Ye baat kam nahin ki tum zidd par ade to the. Ye gham rahaga hum bacha na sake tumhein. Varna hamein bachane vahan tum khade to the (You did not win but bravely fought for your life. It is no ordinary feat that you took the tough challenge. We regret not being able to save you. For you were always there to protect us). Farewell Hanumanthappa...

As Rathore's group undertook the tortuous journey up

the great peak they faced many rough times and hardships. She elaborates, "We had taken the traditional route from Jiri to the base camp that was also tread by the legendary Tenzing Norgay and Sir Edmund Hillary. Apart from the physical distress, loss of appetite, and the load on the back - the physical instruments are heavy and even the shoes weigh almost five kilos - the high altitude sickness

and the casualties one encounters on the way are enough to pull anyone down. For four days, I didn't eat anything. I was only on water and energy drinks. One time we were scaling up smoothly and suddenly we saw a water bottle, then a bag and some other belongings, followed by dead bodies sliding down, including five Indians and one American woman. I told my group: 'Salute the great mountaineers and move ahead.'

Back home, Rathore is pleased that they were able to realise their objective. Yet, she doesn't think she would be going back there again. "I don't think my family, including my husband, parents and in-laws, who have been super supportive till now, will be able to take the stress. They are the ones praying, wishing and spending restless moments till our safe return," she remarks.

As she accepts rich praise and felicitations, the proud officer emphatically says, "If a girl gets the right opportunity, encouragement and support, the sky is the limit for her." Rathore has certainly shown that for women the way forward only goes up. (Women's Feature Service)



Climbing the Everest is a "test of your indomitable courage and strong will power to face the challenges and hurdles that come on the way". (Courtesy: Maj. Rathore)

Cheers to beer

(Contd from P-VI) and produces small amounts of beer, characterised by their emphasis on quality, flavour and brewing technique. In Bengaluru, a city that has long loved its draught beer and wears the crown of India's Pub Capital, craft beer has taken off with brewers boldly using Indian flavours.



Till a few years ago, words like basmati, banana,

clove and coriander would have seemed out of place in a brewery, not anymore.

When the American craft brewery from Ann Arbor, Michigan came to India in 2012, it introduced signature varieties like Sacred Cow IPA, Brasserie Blonde, ChaiPA, Garam Masala Pale Ale and the malty Belgian tripel.

With aficionados loving the complexities of craft beer over regular bottled beer, the trend has established strong roots in cities like Mumbai, Gurugram, Chandigarh, Pune and Bengaluru.

Love for the amber fluid is quite strong. If you throw a stone, chances are you'll either hit an app developer or a microbrewery. INAV

"It hurts to find out that what you wanted doesn't match what you dreamed it would be."

--- Randy K. Millholland

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, MONDAY, AUGUST 22, 2016

NE connectivity

RAILWAYS arrived in the north-east as early as 1881. The Assam Railways and Trading Company began railway penetration in the region by laying the Dibru-Sadiya line connecting Dibrugarh to Margheritta for evacuation of coal and tea for dispatch to Kolkata. Fourteen years later, the line got connected to Assam Bengal Railways. Guwahati got on the railway map in 1901 and more than 100 years later in 2008, Agartala became the second north-eastern capital to get a link. The north east is at the top of the government's agenda to promote connectivity in the 7 states. Kohima, capital of Nagaland, is the last of the 7 north eastern capitals brought on the national railway map. The railway services are expected to move into Bangladesh and Myanmar. Railway minister Suresh Prabhu recently laid the foundation stone for the Rs 2.315 crore 88 km Dhansiri-Kohima railway track. Work on connecting 3 other capitals- Imphal, Aizwal and Shillong is progressing rapidly and is expected to be complete in the next 3 years.

The Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal line will have a special feature- the tallest bridge in the world on the river Iring. The railway line in Manipur will be a symbolic representation of the state getting connected to mainland India. What the entire north east is looking forward to is a direct railway line to Kolkata through the heart of Bangladesh. When complete, the project will facilitate movement of goods- particularly food grains, petroleum products and cement. Next year, approximately Rs 7000 crore will be invested in the railways in the north east. That will hike the region's per capita income to the highest in the country.

LOOKING BACK

February 26, 1989

Centre urged to end Bodo unrest

The North-Eastern Congress(I) Coordination committee has urged the Centre to take prompt action in defusing the situation in Assam arising out of the bloody Bodo movement. In a resolution adopted the general conference in Shillong at the Jawaharlal Nehru sports complex at Polo Ground on Tuesday, the NECC(I) warned the Centre that the situation was fast going out of hands threatening to put the entire North East in jeopardy. It also called upon the AGP Govt to settle the problem of the Bodos "amicably and peacefully."

Briefing newsmen the NECC(I) General Secretary Mr B B Dutta said that the conference expressed grave concern over the fleeing of religious minorities from Bangladesh into Tripura, Assam and West Bengal in the wake of persecution by the majority community. The Committee felt that the Centre should not allow the Bangladesh authorities to duck the issue by dubbing it as "internal affairs". The peoples of the two countries have been integral part of each other for centuries and therefore it would be naïve to relegate the matter as an "internal affair" of Bangladesh.

Mr Dutta said that the NE Chief Ministers resolved their determination to get the industrial subsidy restored for the region. It was felt that the "arbitrary" withdrawal of the subsidy would have adverse effect on industrial entrepreneurs.

The NECC(I) formed an eight-member sub-committee for chalking out election strategy. Nagaland Chief Minister Mr S C Jamir is the chairman of the body. The

five Cong-I Chief Minister and PCC(I) Chief of Assam and Sikkim are the members. The conference was attended by some 80 delegates. Barring the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Mr Gegong Apang all others CMs of the region were present. Besides, AICC(I) Jt. Secretary Mr A R Malla, Capt W A Sangma, Mr Hokise Sema and a number of MPs, MLAs and party chiefs were present.

Purno elected NECCC(I) chairman

Mr Purno Sangma was unanimously elected chairman of the North Eastern Congress(I) coordination Committee on Tuesday marking a departure from the earlier practice of having senior leaders for the topmost post of the party's apex regional body. On Tuesday at the general conference of the NECC(I), when Mr Sangma was saddled with the chairman's office, he easily became the youngest to hold the post. His three predecessors, Captain W A Sangma, Mr Hiteswar Saikia and Hokise Sema are much senior to him both in the party and in age.

It is learnt that the Mizoram Chief Minister Mr Lalthanhawla's name was seriously considered at one stage. However, he declined the responsibility for a number of reasons. Party leaders felt that with the Lok Sabha election being later this year, it would be prudent to have as chairman the young Meghalaya Chief Minister who was the advantage of being centrally located and wide acceptability.

Crime against women in a Matrilineal society

By H.H. Mohrmen

I had not applied my mind to this very pertinent subject, until a young lady from Jowai who is currently doing her Master's degree in Sociology from Madras University told me that she was in a dilemma as her colleagues question her tall claim of being from a matrilineal society when there is growing crime against women in the same society. Sajariaka Pde (in what can be called a distress call) told me that her friends were asking her how is the Khasi-Pnar society any different from any patriarchal society when there is an upswing of crimes against women in the society? I do not blame her; this is a difficult question for anyone, not to mention a young lady in her mid twenties.

She had also shared with me the other questions that her fellow students raised about the society and the rising crime against women in general and the girl child in particular. If the crime graphs with regard to crime against women in the state unceasingly heads north, then what is the point of following the matrilineal culture? The students also remarked that obviously the matrilineal society is no different from other societies. The young lady had no answer to this. These are all timely and relevant questions that we all need to ask ourselves. Why is this happening in 'ka Ri ba jeit ki blei' the beloved land of the Gods is another question?

There can be many causes to the growing crime against women and the girl child in the society of which the principal cause that we have estranged ourselves from the roots of our culture. The charm of modern society has severed us from the very foundations of our being - the children of the hynniewtrep hynniewskum. We are the community which considers that the well-being of the community (ka bhalang ne ka bha ka miat uba bun balang) is paramount to any individual interests, but that value system is slowly eroding. And yes I am not talking about dress and other external aspects of the culture but about something profound which are the basic principles of the

community.

Gradually we are distancing ourselves from being 'ka jaitbynriew ba tipbriew tipblei' (knowing nam and knowing God). We have no respect for anybody even for oneself. The idea that we need to respect others, so that others will also respect us is no longer popular especially among the young generation. The tradition of the Khasi-Pnar of being 'ka jaitbynriew tipbriew tipblei' is now consigned to the pages of history and only occasionally discussed at the workshops and seminars organized by department of folklore because the idea is not trendy anymore. We have also abandoned the other great value that we have inherited 'ka tip hok ka tip sot.' We are no longer honest and truthful with each other and sometimes we even engage in self deception. If even to ourselves. Everything we do it is for our own selfish interests, even if it is wrong and against the law as long as we don't get caught.

We hero-worship rich people and we do not question the means they use to accumulate wealth. We seldom ask whether they really 'kamai da ka hok' the wealth they have amassed? The goal is amass wealth and be famous no matter how and 'kamai iaka hok' do not even occasionally resonate in on our minds.

Another cause of the rising crime against women is the gradual fall on the role and function of the maternal uncle in the society, a modern Khasi-Pnar man is now caught between his family and the clan. My friend bah Fabian in one of his article pointed to the fact that traditionally maternal uncle plays a vital role in the society and his most important function is to represents the entire clan in the dorbar shnong. The maternal uncle dedicated all his time and energy for the welfare of the clan and (by tradition) it is the maternal uncle and not the father who is responsible for the welfare of the entire clan. In short according to the tradition; the maternal uncle is not only the representative of the clan in the dorbar but he is also the provider and the protector of the clan. The clan looks

to the maternal uncle for their needs and sustenance because he is also the manager of the clan's land and businesses.

The decline of the tradition particularly the functions, role and responsibility of the maternal uncle in the matrilineal society could be one of the reason of the growing crime against women in the society. In the current situation; womenfolk are left with no protector because the idea of a maternal uncle with all his subordinates (which includes all the male members of the clan) forming a formidable force to protect the clan is gradually diminishing.

The traditional system of the maternal uncle as a leader of the clan is an impervious system especially when it comes to protecting women members of the clan. This is specially relevance in case of a single parent family. In case of a single parent family, the mother would not have to face so much hardship when her husband divorced her; if we had continued with tradition. Though divorced from her husband; the woman still has the maternal uncle to protect her; hence the idea of a broken family is not there. A single mother would not have to fend for herself; if the tradition of maternal uncle is still intact in the society. And maternal uncle is also the symbol of unity and once he extends his hand to protect the woman (not that he have any other option); the entire clan will also be behind him.

The other reason of the growing crime against women in the Khasi-Pnar matrilineal society is the fact that we are still secretive and not comfortable talking about sex in the society. We are not open to discuss about sex in the family or the society at large. Sex is still a taboo and it had never been part of any conversation at any level of the society and in that sense we are no different from any society. As a matter of fact; in the Khasi-Pnar society mere mentioning the different names of sex organ is considered a foul word or in other words if one would name any sex organ, it tantamount to swearing because it is considered to be a bad word.

My wife who is a teacher,

while returning home from a workshop on a similar topic held at the District library Jowai, told me she noticed strange faces (especially among males) when the lady who made the presentation mentioned words like penetration, masturbation, ejaculation, in her presentation. The lady is comfortable giving her presentation because the workshop was in English but I don't even want to imagine the struggle she would have to make if the presentation was in Khasi. To begin with do we even have words in our Khasi vocabulary for English words like, ejaculate, masturbate, and do we even have names for the male and female genitals that are not 'bad' words?

We find it very easy to sing song with words like making love to you in English, but imagine translating that to Khasi or Pnar. Would it be acceptable and will one even sing that song in public? Sex is still consigned to the dark corners of the society and yes it is true; in this case we are no different from patriarchal societies. We need to be open and talk about sex because it is one of the most natural acts. And perhaps it is also not too late for those in charge of education in the state to consider introducing sex education in school after first training the teachers how to handle the subject. Hopefully this will help kids know about sex and not grope in the dark on this very important subject.

There are people who blame women for the crimes committed against them; they questioned their character and the way they dress. But if one looks at the statistics the number of crimes against the girl child are much higher than on elder women. So the question is how else would a ten, eight or even two year old girl dress? The problem is not with the victim but with the perpetrators of the crime, and this is more relevant in the context of the Khasi-Pnar society where all maternal uncles are expected to be protectors of women and not the perpetrators of the crime. And as the golden rule says; if we want people to respect our clan, we should also respect others. It is therefore incumbent on the uncles to protect the women because by protecting one woman we protect all the women.

TO THE EDITOR

High-handed behaviour of MePDCL official

Editor, I have to report the inappropriate behaviour of Assistant Executive Engineer Revenue Sub-Division I Shillong during my visit to his office on Aug 12, 2016. I met him in his office at around 2 pm on Aug 11, 2016 in connection with my unusually high electricity bill for the period July 8-Aug 6, 2016. While presenting factual data based on number of units consumed and my concern that this could be due to faulty meter, he refused to see any merit in my reasoning and instead asked me to come back the next day with 2 photographs and 2 readings of the said meter taken on two different days. I returned to his office the following day i.e; Aug 12, 2016 with the desired information hoping to find some solution but much to my dismay he refused to accept the factual data presented as well as my written complaint. After many arguments back and forth which included a

dare thrown at me to report him to any consumer court or authority and the usual arrogance, highhandedness and rudeness that is associated with officialdom, including the utter disdain and scorn with which they treat consumers, who incidentally pay for their salaries and lifestyle, I finally managed to turn the tide in my favour simply because the veracity of the facts presented made it untenable for the officer to defend his otherwise condescending position. I felt the need of reporting this incident in larger public interest as we encounter such arrogant, conceited and swollen headed officials all the time who though placed in public service are far away from the spirit of it. I hope the management at MeECL takes note of this and reprimands the officer for his inappropriate behaviour especially since he is handling a public utility (resolution of disputes) section.

Yours etc.,
Shaiq Parvez Kraipak
Shillong-3

Ferocious 'freedom of expression'

Editor

What will the parents do if their children start badmouthing their own family? What might happen to the family if the children start hating the family's norms and ethics? Could any parent allow the freedom of expression to their riotous children who condemn their family but praise the hostile neighbors? Could that family ever have a feeling joy, and a sense of security and peace? Absolutely not.

Needless to say, exactly the same kind of situations are being witnessed in India now. First, it was noticed in JNU, Delhi, when Kanhaiya Kumar rallied the crowd and shouted anti-national slogans. Thereafter roared Jadavpur University with such anti-national screams. With the total failure of the Government to deal with such treacherous cowboys the Amnesty International is now having a field day. It has seemingly chummed up with our strayed youths who with impunity shouted anti-India slogans in Bengaluru just the other day, "Amnesty says its employees did not raise ... " (ST, Dated 17th Aug). This international agency for Human Right is

dangerously selective. It expressed its sympathy for the terror brigand and separatists, but keeps quiet when hundreds of innocent civilians and army personnel are massacred in cold blood. Where is the most sensible award-wapsi group now when the mission of academia is jeopardized and the seat of knowledge desecrated?

What is so disgusting here is that all these anti-national activities are like a shower of opportunities for a certain section of top media houses and intellectuals. They take delight over such ominous development. Hardly do they hesitate to piece together the stories to defend such venomously diverse terror modules. Thanks to the 'freedom of expression' which is now widening its ferocious jaws to devour the major chunk of the Nation. Please wake up before we see the dawning of the darkness of frustration and horror.

Yours etc.,
Sali Gewali
Shillong-2

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

CTU's gearing up for general strike on Sep 2

By Nitya Chakraborty

The central trade unions of the country are taking massive preparations to observe a one day general strike of the workers and the employees of the country on September 2 this year in support of their 12 point charter of demands. Though the official announcement was made by the central trade unions from their convention in New Delhi on March 30 this year and the trade union leaders had continuously approached the Narendra Modi government for negotiations so that the strike which will paralyse the national economy for a day, is avoided, but the NDA government has not cared to start any meaningful discussions on the charter of demands, rather the union labour minister has passed on the buck to the states by mentioning that most of the demands fall under the purview of the state governments.

Earlier this year, the central leadership of the trade unions of the eleven national level trade unions gave enough indication that if the NDA government assured the trade unions that the centre would not rush with into the labour law reforms until there was unanimous agreement between the trade unions and the government, the central TUs would postpone the strike but the centre kept mum and the committee of five ministers set up by the PMO to deal with the 12 point charter of demands, took no follow up actions.

Just two weeks before the general strike day, there is all round preparations among the organized working class in the country including the staff, in banks, insurance companies and the central government and state governments, but there is virtually no response from the PMO. At a time when the economy is really not in a good shape and the employment market is sagging, the centre is allowing the strike action to be held by taking no initiative in holding negotiations with the leadership of the striking trade unions. Prime Minister is talking of his pet Make In India slogan but he seems to be making India without the participation of the real makers.

As the central trade unions see it, the Modi government is totally apathetic towards the genuine demands that have been continuously raised by the national trade unions through their 12 point charter of demands. The government's practice of bypassing the Parliament and implement pro-management measures through executive orders are continuing and the centre is totally ignoring the consensus recommendations of the Indian Labour Conference related to contract workers and minimum wages.

At the ground level, the situation is very grim for the workers in general and the unorganized workers in particular. The government has not taken any meaningful steps to curb price rises of essential commodities and to generate employment except making tall baseless claims through statements in the media. Instead of expanding the public distribution system, the NDA government is trying to scuttle it through the inherently anti poor targeting mechanism resulting in further exclusion of the common and needy people. The huge dose of additional duty on diesel, doubling of cess on coal and increase in indirect taxes in the latest budget as also hike in the prices of petro products, have only added to the woes of the working class.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is talking of acche din

but real buda din is there for the poor and the commoners. The rich are having a field day and the poor are bearing the brunt of the faulty pro-rich economic policies of this government. The government is mysteriously inactive on the question of retrieving the black money slashed abroad. Equally, this government is failing in recovering more than Rs. 7 lakh crore of bank debts owed to the rich and wealthy while the poor farmers are committing suicides because they are burdened with debts due to the failure of the crops.

In the name of speeding up so called reforms, the Modi government has been moving fast in demolishing the existing labour laws thereby empowering the employers with unfettered rights to hire and fire and stripping the workers and the trade unions of all their rights and protection so far provided. Though the centre talks of federalism and the rights of the states in respect of few areas, the PMO has given instructions to the chief secretaries of the states recommending the Rajasthan type labour law which is anti working class and pro-management.

The central public sector undertakings, the temples of modern India, are under attack by the Modi government. Not only the profitable PSUs are being divested and opened to private sector participation, they are being opened for strategic sale. The valuable land and the assets of the blue chip public sector companies, are being grabbed by the private sector sharks. The ownership control and management of the leading PSUs are being sought after by the private sector with the government support. Allowing 100 per cent FDI in a number of strategic sectors of the economy, has made the Indian economy vulnerable to the manipulations of the foreign investors. The American defence companies are being allowed in the Indian defence manufacturing sector for the first time.

For the trade unions and the Indian working class, this is a testing time. The trade unions belonging to all major political parties including the Congress are supporting the general strike on the basis of the 12 point charter of demands. BJP's trade union BMS is under tremendous pressure from its common members to support the strike. The BMS leadership is in two minds but they may finally opt out due to pressure from the BJP leadership. But there is every possibility that at the lower level, the BMS supporters will join the strike as the demands are in their own interests.

For the Modi government, still there is time to avoid the strike action which will cost the country's economy thousands of crores due to loss of industrial production. The ministerial committee of the PMO must take immediate action to start negotiations. The trade unions are ready for a compromise solution but their interests have to be protected. The working class interests are national interests and any positive gesture will only strengthen Modi's Make In India programme. The nation cannot afford a general strike for a day at this hour of economy. Prime Minister must address the points made in the charter and arrive at a solution. That will be true leader like. Modi must act like one who is the protector of the workers also. Time is running out. (IPA Service)

“Cultivate the habit of early rising. It is unwise to keep the head long on a level with the feet.”

--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

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From Rajan to Patel

THE resignation of RBI governor Raghuram Rajan threatened to expose the institutional weakness of Indian democracy. Rajan was a very competent governor and a highly respected economist. The international investor community placed great confidence in his vision. It is a good thing that the Centre has decided to maintain continuity and deputy governor of the RBI, Urjit Patel has been named to take over Rajan's position. Patel shares many of Rajan's ideas and has varied and rich experience. He has operated with multilateral bodies, domestic commercial finance companies and has also worked on government committees. Besides, he has been a consultant. Like Rajan, he is committed to rein in inflation which is hitting the poor extremely hard. Like his predecessor, he is also likely to press on with bank reform which should facilitate flow of credit to medium and small enterprises as well as generate employment. Banking licences will be granted with ease. New areas like wholesale banks and custodian banks should open up. The upshot will be ensuring policy stability.

What is great about Patel is that he has always maintained a low profile while Rajan was rather flashy. At the same time, his objectives and skills are beyond question. The result should be lessening of confrontations between the RBI and the government. Patel is not expected to be over-assertive about the RBI's autonomy. At the same time he has to see that the bank does not give in to short term or medium term policy goals of the government which may adversely affect the economy in the long run. Urjit Patel will hopefully fit the bill.

LOOKING BACK

March 1, 1989

Fresh taxes to yield Rs. 1287 crore Rs. 7337 Cr. Deficit budget

The 1989-90 central budget presented to parliament by Finance Minister Mr S B Chavan, proposes measures to net in an additional Rs. 1287 crore by levying more imposts on articles ranging from cigarettes and pan masala to television sets and computers and taxing higher income groups. Describing his budget as an anti poverty and growth oriented one, Mr Chavan announced a number of schemes to benefit farmers, the rural unemployed, the homeless pensioners and agro-based industries.

Of the total taxation effort, the net additional accrual to the centre would be Rs. 903 crore with the budget leaving uncovered a gap of Rs. 7,337 crore compared to an overall deficit of Rs. 7,940 crore in the revised estimates for 1988-89. The direct taxes will bring to the exchequer an extra Rs. 530 crore and indirect taxes a further Rs. 757 crore after taking into account the reliefs and concessions. Out of the yield from indirect taxes, the states will get Rs. 384 crore as its share in excise duties. The budgetary deficit for 1989-90 is estimated at Rs. 7337 crore after taking into account the hike in direct and indirect taxes yielding Rs. 9034 to the Centre.

The revised budgetary deficit for the current financial year is Rs. 7940 crore, as compared to the original budgetary deficit of Rs. 7484 crore. Following are the budget proposals at a glance: Direct taxes: the rate of income tax for individuals in the entry slab of Rs. 18000-24,000 reduced from the present rate of 25 percent to 20 percent. Existing surcharge of five percent on income tax for meeting conditions created by drought withdrawn from assessment year 1990-91.

Similarly, drought surcharge of ten percent on wealth tax discontinued from the assessment year 1989-90.

A surcharge of eight percent of income tax to be levied on resident tax payers with income above Rs. 50,000 from the assessment year 1990-91 to mobilize resources for a new intensive rural employment programme. This will yield Rs. 500 crores a year. Rate of expenditure tax relating to hotels raised to 20 percent. Items on which central excise rates have been raised are cigarettes, two wheelers, televisions sets, two-in-ones and computers. Articles which have been fully exempted from excise include jute yarn for handlooms, idli and dosa mix, imitation jewellery saltish preparations like bhujija, and ceramic tableware and kitchenware. Mr Chavan announced duty reductions on a number of items like matches, and skimmed milk powder.

Air travel would now cost more with imposition of 10 percent tax on basic domestic air fares. Foreign air travel would also be costlier with the proposed increase in foreign travel tax from Rs. 50 to Rs. 150 for neighbouring countries and from Rs. 100 to Rs. 300 for other countries. The budget also proposes a steep tax applicable to certain hotels from 10 percent to 20 percent. However those with a total income of upto Rs. 56,000 per annum will pay less tax now than before.

The Finance Minister has granted full exemption in custom duty to more life saving drugs and raw wool to be imported by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission and state Khadi and Village Industries Boards.

Shuttler PV Sindhu, wrestler Sakshi Malik and gymnast Dipa Karmakar were nameless non-entities. Just a part of the Indian contingent to the Rio de Janeiro Olympics 2016. Till a silver and bronze medals and fourth ranking changed their life for ever, paved their future in gold, brought glory to India and re-wrote the rules of how we will always view these Games.

A billion-strong nation came out like termites out of the woodwork to toast and sing paens over India's daughters 'Smashing Sakshi, Sindhu, Dipa'. But in the delirious cacophony of congratulations perhaps not many noticed that these three young lasses reflect 'Yuva Bharat' have struggled and clawed to reach where they are. By sheer grit and determination, believing in themselves, their never-say-die attitude, living their dreams and turning them into reality.

Today, as the Central and various State Governments open their coffers and dole out awards running into crores has anyone pondered to pause and think. What are they celebrating? That it took India 68 years to come this far? Where was the Government, federation heavyweights and sports officials' when these sportspersons needed them most?

Are we rejoicing that these victories are not thanks to the Government and the Indian Olympic Association (IOA)? Or, that despite all adversities these sportsmen did India proud?

Think. Pusarla Venkata Sindhu would travel 56 kms everyday, leaving home at 4am riding pillion on her father's scooter, to get to ex-badminton champion Gopichand's training centre in Hyderabad. Or the flat-footed Dipa Karmakar from Agartala who mastered the 'deadly' Produnova vault on a handspring with duct-tape, scooter parts and a little bit of spit. And Haryana's Sakshi Malik from Mokhra village who began her training in wrestling as a 12-year-old in a region where the sport was 'not for girls'.

Lalita Shivaji Babar,

TO THE EDITOR

Too long a strike!

Editor,
These days deficit schools will fall into chaos as teachers are on strike from 22nd August to 4th September. The other day a letter to the editor appeared in these columns raising concerns at the impending teachers' strike and its impact on students. Imagine a school without teachers for two weeks. What will be the environment in schools? What if any fatal accident or incident happens in the classroom? Who will take the responsibility? The management, the teachers or the government? Two weeks without class will be a huge loss to the students. Class X and XII have to complete their syllabi. Their Selection examinations are fast approaching. Students too have a right to education. Should teachers' rights precede children's right? Why such a long strike? Should students suffer in the fight (politics) between teachers and the government? Is a bandh by any organization for two weeks legal? I know for sure that majority of the teachers are deeply concerned at the welfare

only the third Indian woman to make it to an athletics final in an Olympic Games -- she ran the 3000 m steeplechase -- and the first to qualify since PT Usha in 1984, began running barefoot as a child to faraway wells to fetch water, realizing that winning races brought in precious prize money that could be used to help her impoverished 17-plus family in Maharashtra's drought-prone Satara district. And golfer Aditi Ashok.

This is not all. The authorities leave athletes to fend for themselves, with the meagre support of families and coaches, although many of India's best sports people hail from underprivileged sections of society compared to other countries which have higher regard for their athletes financially and culturally.

Official callousness was on full display when the Sports Authority of India rejected Dipa Karmakar's request to allow her long-time physio to travel with her to Rio. Apparently, the SAI considered it 'wasteful' expenditure. But after Dipa qualified for the final, her physio was rushed to Rio to keep the gymnast in top shape.

Adding insult to injury, sportspersons were meted out shoddy treatment at a dinner hosted by the Sports Ministry in Rio. Instead of Indian delicacies they were treated to peanuts! Why? The officials were too busy tending to the needs of Sports Minister Vijay Goel and his 'Selfie' mania.

Worse, Goel embarrassed the country no end by getting admonished and warned with revocation of his accreditation by the Rio authorities for trying to bully his way into sports venues. Nonchalantly dismissing it as, "The authorities are just making a big deal out of nothing." Sic.

Certainly, Indian sports are in a dismal state of affairs. Just see how our netas-babus, federation heavyweights and ports officials' chronic official indifference transforms in to ecstatic jubilation when a sportsperson scripts a success story. They scramble as if the victory

was due to their productive role.

Perhaps, one of the major problems is that we are not serious about sports. We talk of sporting events as an aside. Nothing more than a conversation point which sounds good. More. In keeping with our herd mentality we follow the fads with the changing season. Today badminton may be fashionable, tomorrow it may be back to cricket. Sindhu, Sakshi, Dipa, Dhoni, Kohli have your pick.

In this scenario, the Olympics naturally too get treated casually and cavalierly. Something of a hyped media event to be touted as the hottest brand for a limited period. A fortnight long circus where it is fashionable to be seen. A paid holiday for politicians, bureaucrats, managers etc. Nothing more, nothing less.

Olympics after Olympics the story is the same. India continues to remain "also ran" along-with poor infrastructure, entrenched political corruption and infighting, and chaos and disorganization. Money earmarked for Olympic training is often mysteriously sidelined, facilities for training are in poor shape and equipment goes missing.

This has been going on shamelessly, primarily because of the total failure of sports management system, leading to bad planning. Scandalously, various stadiums built for the Commonwealth Games in 2010 across the country are locked for sportsperson but are opened for non-sporting events.

Arguably, when our various sports federations are controlled by netas and babus what else can one expect? They exist on five star consumerism and vested interest. Ambitious people with powerful connections who have little to contribute to sports, but have everything to gain. Massage their inflated egos, make money and distribute patronage.

They take a battalion of their high-flying socialites to international sporting does as cheer-leaders. While sportsmen languish in dormitories with a stipend of

a mere US \$25 a day, a Haryana Minister spent Rs one crore for his Rio trip.

Add to this poor management of sporting bodies along-with favouritism. Officials are more interested in their re-election than working for the betterment of sports. Not only are they clueless about spotting talent, nourishing and nurturing it is a far cry. Whoever hits the spotlight is due to one's own merit, private coaching or by a fluke.

All this flies in the face of practice and norms in countries which produce a large number of Olympic winners. Sports there are managed by two categories of managers and, importantly, vested interests are kept out. One, those who have been former champions.

Two, sports patrons who have nothing to take from sports but everything to give. If we were to honestly follow their approach and catch'em young, then Olympic medal winners will start coming in automatically. Did you know that in Russia, coaches scout for swimming talent among three years old or gymnasts who are barely able to speak? Famous tennis player Monica Sales started playing at three thanks to coaches who recognised her talent early.

Finally, the million dollar question? How is the Government going to pull out the country from this sports morass? For starters keep politicians and bureaucrats out of sports and its federations. It is plain that rescuing sport from the Octopus-like grip of vested interests, pathetic management, bad planning deceit and money across the country will be a long and painful process.

Nevertheless, a beginning has to be made soon. We have to be clear about what we want to achieve and how? The true legacy of the two medals will lie in whether money can now be made available to build the training superstructure for all sports and sportspersons and start grooming young talents.

In sum, India desperately needs: healthy sport. Will we clean bowl sports or will we play it to the hilt? Else, reconcile to being spoil sports! -- INFA

effectively, been solved by introducing simple 'child tagging' method where a tamper-proof wrist band with mobile number of the parents is tied to every child in the ongoing Krishna Pushkaram fair in Vijayawada. It proves that a simple technology can do magic in overcoming tricky problems. Since missing, kidnapping and trafficking of children has become a national bane, technology should be used in such simple and effective ways to combat the menace. It is necessary to make a Web page of all the children of our country with the help of Aadhar and make it available to all the police stations. If an unidentified child, who is unable to provide its home address or parents' phone number, is found then its photo (face and iris pattern) is to be matched with an Aadhar photo in the Web page by using necessary software. Such an initiative can help bring many children back to their families.

Yours etc.,
Albert Thryniang
Tura

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

India's Daughters

Two medals don't total win

By Poonam I Kaushish

a mere US \$25 a day, a Haryana Minister spent Rs one crore for his Rio trip.

Add to this poor management of sporting bodies along-with favouritism. Officials are more interested in their re-election than working for the betterment of sports. Not only are they clueless about spotting talent, nourishing and nurturing it is a far cry. Whoever hits the spotlight is due to one's own merit, private coaching or by a fluke.

All this flies in the face of practice and norms in countries which produce a large number of Olympic winners. Sports there are managed by two categories of managers and, importantly, vested interests are kept out. One, those who have been former champions.

Two, sports patrons who have nothing to take from sports but everything to give. If we were to honestly follow their approach and catch'em young, then Olympic medal winners will start coming in automatically. Did you know that in Russia, coaches scout for swimming talent among three years old or gymnasts who are barely able to speak? Famous tennis player Monica Sales started playing at three thanks to coaches who recognised her talent early.

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In sum, India desperately needs: healthy sport. Will we clean bowl sports or will we play it to the hilt? Else, reconcile to being spoil sports! -- INFA

Wildlife protection in the time of Floods

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

The death of "Bangabhadur" (Hero of Bengal), a wild elephant, after four days of heroic struggle in Jamalpur's Sarisahabari Upazila brought much grief to the local villagers who had joined with forest department and other government officials in their bid to protect the animal. The wild elephant had been swept away by the strong Brahmaputra currents from the northeastern state of Assam to Bangladesh via Kurhigram border almost two months ago. Since then it had moved around the areas of Jamalpur and finally fatigue and fever caught up with it. The government had planned to release the elephant into safari country in the Garo hills once it had regained its strength, but the plan could never take off. Although the government officials were proactive in providing the elephant requisite food coupled with complete support of local population, yet it was not enough to save the poor elephant. Before reaching Jamalpur, the elephant had travelled almost 1700 kilometres on foot after falling victim to a devastating natural phenomenon of floods.

Bangabhadur's death brings into focus a problem that many forget to acknowledge. It is the threat that annual floods brings to the wildlife flora and fauna for the Northeast especially Assam, given the number of important national parks and reserve forests. Every year, the annual floods in Assam not only bring massive destruction to the state and cause a loss of exchequer, but also harm the wild animals that roam its national parks in Kaziranga, Manas, Pobitora among others. A cursory glance at the data of the floods that occurred in Assam during 2016 would give a fair idea. As of August 2016, floods in Assam have hit not only 1.8 million lives but also two large national parks of Assam -- Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary. Almost 80% of the Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary is under water. 300 animals have reportedly drowned, including 21 one horned rhinoceros. Locals alongwith forest officials have rescued almost 100 animals from drowning including nine one horned rhinoceros. People from across the country have supported the efforts to rehabilitate the animals. Facebook campaigns asking donations to buy food for baby rhinos have met with favourable response across the country.

Thus it is amply clear that floods indeed pose a major challenge to the wildlife of Assam. While the devastating effects of the annual floods in Assam has always been limited to the loss of human lives and the economic narrative, it is only in recent times that the annual occurrence is also being seen as threat to the wildlife. In the past few years, forest officials have aligned themselves with the new reality and are geared up alongwith local district administration. The large number of animals saved from drowning is in itself an indication of the good work that these departments have embarked upon. Yet a large roadmap has to be developed to handle this in the long run.

Floods are an annual phenomenon in Assam and in the past few years a number of steps have been taken in order to adapt and mitigate its conundrum. Apart from replicating a number of successful international practices, the government recently sent a delegation of engineers to China in order to study how

the Chinese have been able to control the Hwang Ho river. While most of these practices deal floods holistically attempts have to be made to include protection of wildlife in the scheme of things as well.

To understand the protection of wildlife during floods, one must understand the threat floods possess. The threats can be divided into direct and indirect threats. Direct threats would include drowning while indirect threats would include man animal conflict resulting from animal making a dash to the higher ground, which would often be a highway that cuts through or runs parallel to the forest. So any mitigation and relief efforts to rescue wildlife must address this twin conundrum. The first and the most vital step towards any mitigation efforts must be awareness. The awareness about floods and how it affects wildlife and how people could join efforts to save them is important. People should be made aware that wildlife is part of their wonderful heritage and they must make efforts to help the animals in distress. Secondly, night patrolling in the highways by forest officials and activists would ensure that if any animal reaches the highway in the night they are not hit by a speeding vehicle.

Thirdly, in order to understand the devastating effects, a small animal should be taken as an indicator of the damage. For example the IFAW-WTI run Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC) uses the Hog deer as an indicator of the damage that floods bring. Such an indicator would help authorities and wildlife activists to have a clear idea of the damage caused by floods and the roadmap to be built ahead. Fourthly, mobile veterinary clinics along with trained emergency response staff must be activated during floods. These clinics should be amphibian in nature which means they must also be able to travel in water so that animals which are saved from drowning are given first response treatment without losing any time.

Fifth, any financial grant and support that comes in the form of flood mitigation must also include a wildlife component. This could be used to build permanent hospitals for animals with special disaster response units. As the tragic photographs of baby rhinoceros would tell us, young animals have a far greater risk of falling prey to floods. Hence special care must be taken towards young animals which are rescued. The final step is to have a clear idea of the food habits of animals' alongwith their dietary charts, the amount of calories needed. A lot of animals suffer in the protective environment because the staff is not clear on the diet that the animals have to be fed. Proper training would ensure that this information asymmetry does not exist.

In retrospect, human lives would always be valued more over wildlife in the face of a common danger. Hence the first share of resources, strategy and fund have to go into protecting the people who are affected by it. But animals too are a part of the biodiversity and they too warrant similar protection from natural disasters as we humans do. Hence evolving a strategy towards animals affected by floods should be seen as an imperative towards achieving that goal. (Views expressed by the author are personal)

"Do not be too moral. You may cheat yourself out of much life. Aim above morality. Be not simply good; be good for something."

--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 14 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2016

Teachers' strike

THAT 14,000 teachers from 4000 Government aided schools in Meghalaya would announce that they would strike work for two weeks is perhaps unprecedented in the history of this country. There are arguments for and against strike by teachers. Those who see teaching as a vocation feel that teachers have got into the profession with their eyes open. They argue that those teaching in private schools get far worse salaries but produce better results. Parents feel that teachers are using students as pawns to put pressure on the government. As can be seen, students are whiling away their time and not doing anything productive. Very few students would study unless they are supervised. There is peer pressure on those who utilise their time meaningfully, to also follow the crowd. Considering that the academic year is about to end in a few months time, there is also the pressure of completing the syllabi. Two weeks is a long time in an academic calendar.

The right to strike should be a final option. When all other methods have failed to remedy a situation, address grievances and bring about change, a strike does get results. Most teachers and others who maintain essential services such as banking would prefer not to take this route and could be trusted to use it as a court of last resort. It is a dangerous precedent to deprive any group this method especially in a democratic country where the right to voice grievances is a fundamental right.

Education in Meghalaya has been a proverbial hot potato. That there are too many different systems under which teachers work and are paid for. One of the demands of the Joint Action Committee of All Teachers' Association (JACATAM) is that this should be streamlined under the system of provincialisation so that there is fairness and equity. While the demand is justified, the government's problem is to find the resources to scale up the pay of those who had fallen through the cracks. Interestingly, so far the government which has been the paymaster for teachers under the deficit system actually has no control over the teachers or the institutions where they teach. There is no system of accountability; no performance measurement system etc. Anyone who has got in becomes a teacher until retirement whether or not that person is teaching. To deny this is to deny the truth. Hence while teachers demand their rights it should be morally justified that they also produce results. There has to be value for money even within government systems.

LOOKING BACK

March 1, 1989

Governor stresses need of expanding library service

Assam and Meghalaya Governor Mr Bhisma Narain Singh today stressed the need for expanding the information network and library service to remote areas in the north eastern region. Mr Singh, who is also the chairman of the North Eastern Council (NEC) addressing a conference here "on the development of library services information system" said the public library services should be developed both in terms of quality and quantity. There was considerable scope for development of these services in the region, he felt.

The conference, organized jointly by the NEC and Assam Government, was attended by the Vice-Chancellor, the Education Commissioner, Secretaries and the Directors of Education of the seven state government. The Governor said the NEC was aware of the problems being faced by library officials in the region. The regional advisory committee, set up by the NEC, has already initiated

measures towards implementation of the recommendations made in the inaugural meeting on the development of library services, he said.

He appealed to the universities, departments of education and libraries, both official and unofficial, to extend their support in developing a regional information system. In his presidential address, Law Minister Mr S N Medhi said village libraries were being set up in the state and efforts made to expand the network further. He appealed to the NEC for help in this regard.

Earlier, in his welcome address Mr S P Bagla, Senior Planning Adviser, NEC, explained the objective of the conference and said it had been organized to ensure an exchange of views and ideas among the vice-chancellors, head of education departments and library services on various aspects of development of library services in the region.

Delhi, the nation's Capital, has been the biggest loser in the tug-of-war between Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Lt-Governor Najeeb Jung. This follows the recent verdict of the High Court, wherein the Aam Admi Party's dream of elevating the constitutional status of Delhi received a death blow with the court asserting that the LG is its "administrative head" and Delhi will continue to be a Union Territory.

The court has also set aside the AAP's contention that the LG should act "only on the aid and advice of the ministers". Thus, the LG's position is re-confirmed as the ultimate authority in the State - a position made more powerful after the establishment of the National Capital Territory by a constitutional amendment in 1991. The verdict was decisive as the court unambiguously stated that in matters in which the Assembly can make laws, the Ministry's decisions should be communicated to the LG, and implemented only if LG did not disagree.

The LG has immediately ordered scrutiny of all major decisions and appointments made by the AAP government, and all orders of the autonomous bodies, corporations and other institutions under the Delhi Government issued so far without reference to him and without his concurrence wherever it is required under the Constitution.

Like other metropolises, Delhi has various authorities, but under different masters. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is an elected body with Mayor as its head. The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) is governed by a Council with a chairman appointed by the Centre and includes the Chief Minister. The LG, who is the head of the National Capital Territory, is also the Chairman of the Delhi Development Authority, which reports to the Union Urban Development Ministry. Delhi Police falls under the Union Home Ministry. Six different agencies handle public amenities like drains, sewerage, and

TO THE EDITOR

Spate of crimes against women

Editor,

Gone are the days when news of a missing person would spread like wild fire in the locality (not for gossiping purposes) but with an intention to help the distraught family. The Headman, elders and members of the missing person's family would meet (in the house of the missing person) and they would chalk out a well-planned strategy to try and find the missing person. Search parties comprising boys with elders would start with the task at hand. Most of the time it would be a case of suicide (a disturbed person ending his or her life by jumping into a river or lake) but there were times when these searches yielded results, with the help of the police. I recall an incident of a mentally disturbed man found wandering somewhere in Assam. The recent happenings in Shillong have, however taken a horrifying and disturbing new trend, and almost all missing cases have ended in the death of the victim with very little chance of nabbing the perpetrator. In any case of a missing person, timely report of the

Yours etc.,
J.P. Massar
Shillong-4

Political Tug-of-War Delhi takes a beating

By S Saraswathi

water pipes, and five civic bodies, and the PWD maintains roads.

The division of power creates some problems in functioning and these get aggravated when political and personnel differences are allowed to interfere in development and welfare work. When parties are keen on fighting for power, public good takes a back seat yielding place to a political tug-of-war for primacy and power. Scoring points in verbal battle and legal disputes often becomes the preoccupation of political leaders.

The court also did not accept the plea that the present tussle is a "classic" federal dispute. The present tendency of State governments to present every difference between the Centre and a State as a federal dispute is overruled. There may be sound arguments for granting or not full statehood. These have to be debated and examined as a separate question. But, the present controversy is over the existing powers of the Delhi government and its administrative head -- the Lieutenant Governor. It is undemocratic to assert and act on that assertion that massive majority won in a General election grants massive powers going beyond those granted by the Constitution. Between elected legislative bodies and the Constitution, the latter is supreme. It can be amended, but not ignored or violated.

The Delhi government sought clarity on the ratio of power between its Cabinet and the NDA government at the Centre from the Supreme Court by filing a suit. But, the court refused to hear the suit and asked the Delhi government first to appeal against the High Court verdict before seeking clarification of its powers.

However, it has stated that UTs are administered by the Centre, but it doesn't mean they become merged with the Centre. Its observation that they "retain their independent identity" is crucial for further examination of Delhi's status. This came while dealing with the practice of exempting Central government properties in Delhi from

municipal taxation.

Kejriwal seems to be bent on getting full Statehood for Delhi - a demand which all political parties at one time or other and particularly during elections have advocated. Powerlessness is felt by the Delhi Government in lack of control over the police and lack of power to sanction land for various purposes. Indeed, administration of Delhi is run by different public authorities without a unified command. Some are elected, and others placed under the Delhi State or Union Government.

The National Capital Region (NCR) created in 1991 and given a special status under 69th amendment of the Constitution covers the metropolitan area of the entire National Capital Territory of Delhi including New Delhi and designated urban areas surrounding it in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. It is one of the biggest agglomerations in the world.

A survey of administrative divisions of Capital cities reveals a variety of arrangements. These are called State, city, town, district, region, special municipality, federal district, special zone, independent city, province, prefecture, autonomous commune and so on.

Australian capital Canberra is a capital territory, whereas Canada's Ottawa is part of the province of Ontario and Quebec. Indonesia's capital Jakarta constitutes a special capital region. Argentina's Buenos Aires is an autonomous city while Peru's Lima is a province. London is a capital region. In the US, Washington DC is a federal district.

Canberra governed by the Australian Territory Act (ACT) doesn't give full legislative independence as for other States. Laws are made in the Legislative Assembly that has both State and local functions. The Chief Minister, who is also a member of the Council of the Australian Government, is elected by members of the ACT Assembly. ACT has no administrator as in other States.

The administrative arrangement for the capital territory broadly falls into

three types - separate administrative district, dual status as city and province, equal status with other cities in the nation.

Conflict is not uncommon in capital areas over administrative jurisdiction. The local government of the Capital is said to be "in the shadow of the national government with more restricted powers and resources than those enjoyed by other cities". Capital cities have exposed two kinds of conflicts - one, regarding the extent of power and autonomy of the local government, and the other, over the method of resolving disputes.

Delhi is compelled to grow enormously in physical size due to conurbation and expansion of several activities and consequently of population size. Even sports, international film festivals and trade fairs and such big events prefer to have their show in Delhi. The city is the headquarters for many research councils and academic bodies which can be housed in any State in India. Even retired officials with no particular business in the Capital city like to settle in Delhi.

All such developments go against the spirit of building the nation's Capital as a special place with some special functions and end up making the Capital territory another State in the federation with additional responsibilities. The present tussle is mainly caused by allowing Delhi to grow without any check.

Some countries have multiple capitals in the form of distribution of functions in different places. Paris is the seat of Parliament, but joint Congress is held in the Palace of Versailles. In South Africa, legislative, administrative, and judicial functions have their headquarters in different places. In the US, Capital remains the seat of government and several cities have become centres for various purposes.

Surprisingly, no thought is given to the possibility of moving some activities unconnected with parliamentary and central secretarial work away from Delhi. Less congested Delhi will have lesser problems and fewer activities will reduce its attraction to power seekers! --INFA

(The writer is Former Director, ICSSR, New Delhi)

bother about it. Anyway, why should we give human beings like sports persons the centre-stage instead of technology and money? It will make us pessimists. We ought not to look at our also-ran sports persons or at our 40 million malnourished children with stunted growth (Public Health Foundation report) or at our 10.2 million child workers (UNICEF report) or even at India's 18.35 million slaves (Global Slavery Index). We should push all of them to the gallery from where they can cheer India's stellar performance in going to the moon, Mars and CERN. On the other hand, we all can enjoy gala wedding parties of Indian billionaires that can match inauguration and closing ceremonies at Olympics! At any rate, the future citizens of India must not occupy our attention for becoming skilled workers or champion sports persons. They are so small and more importantly they do not even have the voting rights yet! Let them enjoy our economic growth instead.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Name withheld on request

Pathetic cellular service

Editor,

Through your esteemed daily, I would like to draw the attention of the "powers that be" of the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) to the ridiculous and substandard quality of 3G connection and call facility that it is providing in my locality of Mawlai

Shameful all-round statistics

Editor,

This refers to the article, "Two medals don't total win" (ST, August 23, 2016) by Poonam I Kaushish. India with the second largest population in the world is used to having a high place at the Olympics medal tally. We need not

New RBI governor may breathe easy on inflation

By Anjan Roy

Now that the government has at long last named a successor for Dr Raghuram Rajan at the Reserve Bank of India, what are the major tasks before Dr Urjit Patel? Though a sound economist, Patel does not have an aura of global reputation rivaling Rajan, which overshadowed those of the political leaders. Removing Rajan was in effect throwing out a hot potato. Already outgoing governor Rajan had indicated some of the immediate ones. While asked about the lowering of interest rate during the last press conference after his monetary policy announcement, Dr Rajan had observed that he was leaving that decision to the next governor.

Surely, a rate decision might be the most immediate task. But that could be the least important for the time being. Dr Rajan had moderated interest rates several times last one year. His grouse had been that the bankers were not actually passing on the benefits of a rate cut to the borrowers. In fact, in a mild criticism the outgoing governor seems to have suggested that the bankers were putting forward specious arguments for withholding transmission of RBI's policy rate cuts.

The government would of course expect further rate cuts, which it was asking Rajan to do repeatedly. The belief is that a rate cut should encourage growth rate at this point of time. The government wants to show the efficacy of their economic programmes by presenting a buoyant economy. This might have further political compulsions in the run up to state elections in 2017 and 2018 and general election in 2019.

There might be a point of conflict there with the central government, as Rajan and his predecessor had earlier. While North Block actively expected the central bank to cut rates, the central bank dug in heels on inflation numbers. So the question would be: will Dr Urjit Patel be more accommodative to the demands of the central government in the context of the latter's political calculations?

There lies a difficult choice for Dr Patel. The intellectual edifice for Reserve Bank's current "inflation targeting" was worked out by none other than Dr Urjit Patel. He was made the chairman of the committee which went into the issue of "inflation targeting" and it was he who set the exact inflation targets for monetary policy formulation - 4 per cent, plus/minus 2 per cent.

He has been very much in the company of Rajan in his fight against inflation. As an economist he is known to have a conservative view on the issue of inflation targeting by a central bank. Maybe, a conservative approach towards this might not be so much in conflict with the position of the union government so long as he keeps out of making strong public statements on broader issues.

Where the government became uncomfortable with Rajan, despite the latter having reportedly developing a rapport with the prime minister, was the strident observations on issues other than economic management. He had emerged as what has come to be known as a "public intellectual". Rajan had often stated that the central bank could not be a "cheer leader" for the government. He had also stated that no one needs to crow over India's high growth rate when the rest of the world was languishing. His observation comparing the situation with a common Hindi proverb was not taken lightly by the government. Maybe, Rajan's misfortune was that in our public discourse, the country had lost all sense of humour.

Notwithstanding these sensitivities, for Dr Patel inflation targeting should

not be such a ticklish immediate concern. This is for two reasons: first, Patel is stepping in when inflation should stop being such a big spoiler of the party. Despite some pick-up in inflation last fortnight with consumer prices having reached highest in last two years, the overall pace of inflation might in fact slow down.

Indian inflation is sensitive to food prices and these have almost always shown softening trends between October and March of the following year. The winter seasons see far better production of vegetables and fruits, sometimes ending in incidents of glut, and these should drive overall prices down. With better monsoon this year, the prices should hopefully show distinct flattening from next month onward. Additionally, global prices of oil have also remained low and are expected not to rise sharply. With Iraq and Iran vying to raise their oil production and trying to capture larger slices of the global market and Nigeria promising higher production, the chances of any freeze in production is remote and oil markets expect the prices to remain depressed.

Secondly, setting the interest rates would be much less a personal responsibility of the RBI governor from now on than previously. With the government and RBI agreeing to set up the monetary policy committee (MPC), setting the policy rate would be a collective responsibility of the committee than the governor. Decision on interest rates should be on the basis of voting in which RBI and government have equal numbers. So the recrimination could be put behind between North Block and Mint Street as witnessed sometimes. Thus, to kick off his tenure, Dr Patel can breathe easy on the domestic front.

Where Dr Patel could face his biggest challenge and putting his foot into a big shoe left behind by Rajan would be in managing the external front. Rajan had come in when the rupee was facing extraordinary volatility and was depreciating mainly because of divergence between the Indian on-shore foreign exchange markets and overseas non-deliverable deals in Singapore and Dubai. The divergences in the exchange rates were putting pressure on the rupee's exchange rates.

Dr Patel has excellent academic background, having been groomed in some of the finest academies like the London School of Economics, Oxford and Yale. Patel might not have so much of an exposure to the working of the financial markets. Rajan coming from the Chicago business school and a background of tracking financial markets, had better equipment to handle the financial markets. He displayed this in his very effective tackling of the exchange markets for rupee in India as well as the informal overseas markets.

We can safely expect tumultuous financial markets in the near future. With the Federal Reserve bound to take some decisions on rate hikes, Europe turning increasingly uncertain with Brexit talks and China managing its domestic imbalances rather tenuously, any of these could set off disruptive forces. Dr Patel's test would be how he keeps the external headwinds at bay and maintains financial stability for India.

Reports have it that what swung the deal for Urjit Patel was prime minister's comfort level. It might just be that as a Gujarati he will have an instinctive understanding of finance and markets and this should be a good bet in uncertain times. (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.

"I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestioned ability of a man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor."

--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 15 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 2016

Centre-State relations

THE Indian Constitution provides for the rule of a federal-cum-unitary system. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasized the need for cooperative federalism. But over the decades the Centre has usurped increasingly greater power curtailing the powers of the states. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has rightly expressed concern over arbitrary decisions taken by the Centre. She has in mind New Delhi's decision to put an end to some schemes sponsored by the Centre. According to its fiat, restructuring of some of the schemes makes it obligatory for the states to be partners in twenty core projects and finance forty percent of the cost. Any state should have a say in matters relating to schemes meant to alleviate poverty, primarily in rural areas. The Centre should seek the states' views before restructuring the schemes. But it has long been used to issuing diktats. It is to be hoped that the Chief Ministers of other states will share Mamata Banerjee's views.

What is more important is that the Centre should be aware of the importance of a truly federalist structure of governance. Narendra Modi had in the early stage been eloquent about federalism. Large allocation of funds for states was a step in the right direction. But in recent months there has been a change. It appears that Modi is deviating from his own principles. The attitude to Centre-State relations which prevailed in the past should change. The economy is being liberalized and so the Centre should increase cooperation with states on land, natural resources and investment. In any case, powers of the state should not be reduced.

LOOKING BACK

March 1, 1989

Coal dumping hampers widening works of NH44

The Border Roads Organisation which is currently engaged in widening and improvement of the NH 44 from Jowai to Ratacherra, has been facing obstacles from the most unexpected quarters the people of Jaintia Hills themselves. Encroachment along the national highway, illegal dumping of coal along the highway and a surprising lack of support from the administration appears to have bogged down the BRO. The BRO Executive Engineer Mr Baldev Singh told a press party at Khliehriat on Monday that the Rs. 29 crore project was likely to get unusually delayed unless these obstacles were removed without further loss of time.

The BRO and GREF have moved equipment to deal with landslides and roadblocks near Sonapur which seriously affected movement of traffic and goods last year, resulting in hardships to three North Eastern States. The Department has already moved two heavy duty bulldozers on the slide point to meet any contingency. Preventive measures like terracing, spraying of bitumen on the slide area, and channelizing of the main water channel, and widening of the existing road width, under the guidance of BRO experts who have been working in the difficult terrain of Bhutan. The road from Jowai to Ratacherra has been repaired during the last three months, and surfacing of the existing carriageway to intermediate width (55 metres) is in full swing from KM 85 to KM 125 at a cost of Rs. 290 lakhs.

In order to give the road a smooth finish of international standards, expensive equipment like Hot Mix Plants and Paver Finishers, along with allied machines like tippers and

generators costing around Rupees 1.1 crore have already started arriving, so that users can ride over a silk smooth surface from Jowai to Ratacherra, a stretch of some 104 Kms.

It is however feared that all the funds and machinery pumped into the project will come to naught due to the attitude of the coal continue to encroach upon the National Highway despite repeated submissions by the BRO personnel to the District administration, Mr Singh said.

All along the roads from Jowai one can see mounds of coal piled up on both sides of the National Highway and spilling on to the carpet. This coal is dumped by coal mine owners in gross violation of the Ribbon Development Act. This is done to facilitate the easy loading of trucks with the coal. The mine owners do not want the additional expense of building tracks to their quarries, and openly flout the established norm that 60 feet of land on both sides of the central line (i.e. 120 ft).

These trucks are responsible for traffic snarl-ups, when they take up valuable road space for their lading operations. The Government of India approved proposal to upgrade the Jowai - Karimganj stretch to double lane National Highway specification may be staled if appropriate steps are not taken to clear the coal off the National Highway strips. A major worry is the sophisticated Hot mix and Paver Layer which carries hot surface mix that is laid automatically. Traffic congestion and hold-ups will seriously hamper the work as the ingredients have to be laid within the hour of their being mixed.

Is peace still elusive in Garo Hills?

By Albert Thyrianiang

In December last year United A'chik Liberation Army (UALA), led by its Chairman Novembirth Ch Marak alias Chiindik, signed a peace pact with the state government at Tura circuit house following talks with the government appointed interlocutors, thus ending their armed struggle for good. ANVC-B's splinter group, formed in 2013, formally bid farewell to arms on June 10, 2016 at a disbanding ceremony in Tura in the presence of Chief Minister Mukul Sangma and State Home Minister Roshan Warjri, amongst others. The Chief Minister gave hope to the people of the state that other militants would follow suit leaving the jungles and come to the mainstream to be productive citizens even as he promised rehabilitation packages to rebels who shun the path of violence.

Expectation of peace was high when on May 5 this year, the entire GNLA North Command laid down arms in a specially arranged surrender ceremony in Shillong. Termed as the biggest surrender of the year, 14 GNLA rebels led by area commander, Piliport D Shira, submitted themselves to the state government represented by home minister Roshan Warjri and Meghalaya DGP, Rajiv Mehta.

Prior to the North Command's decision to end violent activities, five senior members of the GNLA's finance wing, senior cadre Rakseng Ch Marak, deserted the dreaded banned outfit's camp and surrendered before Meghalaya DGP, Rajiv Mehta in April 29, 2016 in the state capital. The surrenderees revealed that they were the 4th batch of GNLA cadres who were trained by ULFA militants in the Durama Hills in making explosives including IEDs. The above surrenders are attributed to the intense operations of police termed Operation Hill Storm (OHS).

The Meghalaya Police which launched the third phase of Operation Hill Storm (OHS) against Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) militants in Garo Hills region (including the border areas of Assam and Khasi Hills) on February 25, 2016 enjoyed other successes. According to "Meghalaya Assessment - 2016" by South Asia Terrorism Portal OHS-III inflicted several reversals on militants including fatalities in encounters, more than 50 arrests and busting of several GNLA camps.

The operations seemed to have succeeded as there has been relative calm in the hills in the last three to four months. Violence free atmosphere was experienced by the citizens of the hills. Independence Day celebrations were observed peacefully with enthusiasm all over Garo Hills after almost a decade of bandhs and boycott by militant groups. Dikki Bandi Stadium in Tura saw a grand three hour long celebration (the longest so far) where school children, college students, civil society groups and the general public saluted the National Flag. In Chandmari, a unique live musical programme was held that attracted several young musical artists and dancers performing on the festive day. In the evening was the turn of Grik A'chik to organize a concert at the District Auditorium. Disbanded UALA and Surrendered GNLA militants even played a football match to join in the celebrations. Celebrations observing the 70th Independence Day were held peacefully in all district headquarters without any violent incident.

Just when everyone thought that militancy and violence was a thing of the past, the people of the region were in for a shock. Suspected GNLA militants brutally hacked a headmaster of a lower primary school to death and

assaulted several people in Jingamgre village in East Garo Hills on the night of August 16 after accusing them of co-operating with the government in the operations against them. GNLA is notorious for 'teaching' a lesson to 'informers' and police 'colluders'. The vivid example is the cold blooded murder of Josbina Sangma, a mother of four in Chokpot on 3rd June, 2014.

Garo Hills based organizations strongly condemned the killing. While terming the killing as "barbaric and immature", the Garo Student Union (GSU), Williamnagar also appealed to all militant groups 'fighting for Garoland' to refrain from such inhuman acts. The Post Graduate Students' Union (PGSU) too unequivocally condemned the incident calling it a "senseless killing of the school teacher". Other organization had similar words of condemnation.

The attack has once again sent shock waves across Garo Hills. The sense of insecurity might have just returned. We are reminded of the fear psychosis that prevailed all over Garo Hills not so long ago. Villagers, particularly in East Garo Hills across the Simsang river are under fear. They are caught between the devil and the deep sea. If they collaborate with the police or are perceived to do so, they will face the wrath of the militants. If they don't, they know the gun will continue to rule them (They want an end to militancy and violence). They are faced with this dilemma as they are left to themselves without the state's security day and night.

After the cruel murder of the village school headmaster and assault of the villagers police launched operations in Sasatgre village, 15 km from Williamnagar. The police claimed they found "crucial evidence" of the direct involvement of GNLA in the

terrifying incident. The police even asserted that they nearly had their prized catch of GNLA's chief, Sohan D Shira when commandos raided his mother's house at Sasatgre. According to the police, specific information informed them of the presence of Sohan in the house, but the elusive militant leader escaped from the clutches of the police yet again. He is still a free man.

Does this story lack substance? It does. If there was accurate information about Sohan's presence, why was the house not surrounded? Why let off the 'most wanted' outlaw? This is not the first time the police claimed they had narrowly missed the number one rebel in the state. Is his stronghold over so large an area that it is an impossibility to lay hands on him? What is preventing the security forces from capturing the dreaded militant leader even after 7 long years? Is it due to political interference or the ineptitude of the police? Or is it due to lack of state of the art technology of the police? Or is it a combination of all the above factors? Or is it simply the sheer smartness of GNLA's intelligence network that has kept its leader from the police net? The police also claimed they have seized Sohan's mobile phone. The 'valuable' gadget has photographs and videos of the assault of villagers by GNLA members. With the information that the device provides the state police should be able to locate him more easily. Will they do so? Or won't they? If not, why not? Outfits might have been disbanded, bunches of militants might have surrendered, individual gangsters might have been arrested or shot dead but as long as the GNLA is not brought to its knees peace will not return to Garo Hills.

As long Durama range remains a safe haven for armed men, peace in the region will be as elusive as the proscribed GNLA's leader. The Police have their role cut out but they seem to be lacking in actionable intelligence.

TO THE EDITOR

Provincialization

Editor,
Apropos the letter by Albert Thyrianiang captioned "Too long a strike" (ST 23rd August 2016) I would like to place before the readers the following points.

1. Teachers had presented their demand to the State Government for provincialization since August 2013. Three years have passed and the Govt. has not given any substantial assurance for the same, following which the Teachers' Associations had staged a 3-day dharna on the 27th, 28th & 29th July 2016, followed by a rally on August 5, 2016. All these mild agitational programs seem to have fallen on deaf ears. So the associations were compelled to take this drastic step - a two weeks strike - in the hope of gaining an audience with the Govt. which seems adamant to ignore our pleas. Therefore teachers are no more responsible for such a step.

2. Provincialization cannot be done overnight, unless a series of in-depth dialogue takes place with all stakeholders in the field of education. Hence, it is only right that the Govt. call sponsoring bodies, Govt. officials, policy makers, Managing Committees (MCs) and teachers' associations for a discussion on the matter. The Govt. needs only political will to do so.

3. As for the non-performance of non-missionary, deficit schools it is the Govt.'s duty to have a machinery in place to ensure that these ailing schools perform as expected - **Why should**

teachers' of performing schools take responsibility for their inadequacies and inefficiencies?

4. If missionary deficit schools wish to take education in the state to the next level, the teachers too want the same and the deficit system is certainly not a hindrance to that.

5. Provincialization according to the teachers' demand in the State has been totally distorted by the Govt. and fed to MCs. Of the different schools thereby painting a dismal picture of their demands.

Provincialization includes :-

a) Service Rules for teacher. Meghalaya is still following of the tenets of the Assam Aided School Rules 1965.

b) Transparency and accountability in all aspects.

c) Clear cut Management Rules, where the Govt. can come clear on the duties and responsibilities of the teachers and management. There will also be uniformity in all managements with regard to rules thereby making the system management friendly. It will actually empower the management with a set of rules which are not in place at present.

d) State Education Policy too comes with provincialization. The State is working sans this policy and education suffers greatly where the students are the worse sufferers.

6. Provincialization will not only benefit teachers but it would surely have a well defined positive impact on the educational scenario in our State. This will attract the best talent to the teaching profession - which hitherto is the last resort. The beneficiaries of this will be the students both in the

rural and urban areas.

7. 90% of educational funding in Meghalaya comes from the centre. **Will a mere 10% further burden the public exchequer?**

Albert Thyrianiang therefore seems to have poor knowledge of the type of provincialization that the teachers are demanding, thereby viewing the demand and its impact with a jaundiced eye. He has misinterpreted the intentions of the teaching community entirely.

Yours etc.,
S. Syiem
Organising Secretary
Khasi Jaintia Deficit
School Teachers
Association

Another jolt at Rio!

Editor,
Another Olympic come and gone. It's impressive to see how Olympians put their skills after years of sacrifice, for their country. Sindhu got silver but her performance was gold. Sakshi was unknown until she got her first wrestling bronze. Dipa Karmakar reminds India of the spirit of Olympic games. But at the end, we are at the 66th of the medal tally. Our dismal performance brought another jolt to 1.2 billion people. There is no doubt that India has sporting talent, where it holds world one-day T20 titles and Number 1 Test team in the world. Sachin is the country's passionate obsession and its glorious yester-years of six consecutive Olympic Golds in hockey. So why does it fail to translate this into Olympic success? Traditionally, sports have

always taken a back seat to studies for young Indians. In fact we have a saying - "Khelege kudoge to honge kharab, padhoge likhoge to banoge nawab". Although we have the best of the academic schools and universities, we do not have good sports facilities and good sports academics. Corruption, favouritism, apathy and bad management among sports governing bodies are other lacunae. London provided its best medal tally to 6 but it downs to one third in Rio. Will these business class travelling delegates do anything to improve sports or will they always consider this once in four year extravaganza a paid holiday?

Low medal tallies arise because the country has very few people participating effectively. Being the second largest country in the world, India should try to go all the events for more medals tally. In rural India, many sporting jewels go undiscovered. There is no friendly sports policy. Utilisation of fund allocation for infrastructure is a cause of concern. India still has a long way to go and sports in India is still in the developing phase. Can we follow the Chinese module? Young Indians are to be given opportunity from childhood. Will Sport as compulsory curriculum from KG to PG suffice? Nobody is expecting miracles, but success breeds success. There are hundreds of millions of youngsters ready to try and excel in sports. Olympics are just over. Tokyo is not far behind. Can India learn the lessons post Rio? Time has come to revolutionise sports in this country.

Yours etc.
Kamal Baruah,
Via email

Ujrit Patel to follow Rajan's roadmap

Reducing banks' NPA a major task

By G. Srinivasan

The successor to the charismatic current RBI Governor Dr. Raghuram G Rajan by an equally foreign-trained economist from renowned global institutions Dr Ujrit Patel early next month has not set the markets afire. As one perceptive observer said the difference between the two governors is that one was educated at the US and another in the UK with both of them sharing steadfastly their core dharma of preserving price stability as the sole and whole objective of the central bank, the markets' muted reaction is but understandable. Even as the proverbial chasm between the Mint Street in Mumbai where the apex bank is billeted and the main street in North Block where the mandarins of the Ministry of Finance sit continues to be distinct, the Finance Ministry's ready reassurance to the markets that the new Governor would be flexible betrays a sense of one-upmanship over the functional autonomy of the central bank.

Given the position that the new Governor is an insider who rose from a deputy governor to the top post and that he is too reticent to share his ideas with all and sundry that includes media meant that the ruling dispensation has zeroed in on the right person as it is loathe to get the governor of the central bank being a loose cannon or an outspoken thought leader.

On hindsight, it can be safely surmised that the bazooka and broadsides fired by the outgoing Governor in various public lectures on issues that went beyond his remit as the chief of the central bank but encompassed the broader macro economy and in the national interests had sufficiently hurt the amour propre of the establishment to its eternal chagrin! Once bitten, it has naturally become chary to opt for a successor who is not given to let his hidden and open thoughts known to even his closest associates, leave aside the larger audience away from the portals of the apex bank!

As the new governor is about to take charge from Rajan on September 4 to continue the prudent path paved by the latter during his three eventful years in RBI, the contributions Rajan had made and the consolidation expected of his successor need to be put in proper perspective. Rajan deftly managed the adverse fallout of the taper tantrum (the premature withdrawal of the ultra low interest policy of the US Federal Reserve in the summer of 2013) when Indian rupee plunged to its nadir with a flight of foreign capital to compound the economy's woes, was widely hailed as he restored the balance of payments situation to normality within a few weeks.

From then on, Rajan crusaded an anti-inflation strategy with missionary zeal even as the disheartened trade and industry with maverick member of the ruling party such as Dr. Subramanian Swamy rather viciously vilifying him. A saturnine and unfazed Rajan seldom lowered his guard, relentlessly trying to bring the wholesale price index inflation to the negative territory and the consumer price index (CPI), the widely used barometer for price rise impact, to less than six per cent from the double digit levels. Besides, he also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Finance Ministry for inflation-targeting monetary policy in February 2015.

The concept of inflation target-a nominal anchor in

central bank lingo was first favored by the high-powered Committee on Financial Sector Reform headed by Raghuram Rajan in 2008. With inflation widely construed as the cruelest form of taxation on the poorest, an institutional framework to keep inflation volatility under checks what the aam admi ardently wishes. In fact, no sooner he was appointed to the apex bank as its head, he announced in a statement the constitution of a committee under Deputy Governor Ujrit Patel to suggest ways to bolster the monetary policy framework. Now that Rajan leaves, the six members Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to be headed by his successor Ujrit Patel is in safe pair of hands to keep above succumbing to pressure for rate cuts and monetary easing, the mantra of growth-enthusiasts at any cost!

The most prominent impact of Rajan's epochal tenure in the apex bank was the steps he had set in motion to clean up the bad bank loan portfolio that may endanger the larger financial stability of the economy. He went wholly against the systemic weakness of balance sheet troubles of many a public sector bank, instituting by now the familiar Asset Quality Review (AQR). This way Rajan shifted the responsibility on the banks to classify loans that were detected during AQR as bad loans and duly make provisions to reflect the real value of the loan even as it paints their end-quarter balance sheets with warts and all. This is preferable to 'extend and pretend' habit the public sector banks were inured to all along these years that gave a false synoptic picture of things being honky-dory. The NPAs identified by RBI on account of AQR exercise as on end-March 2015 was Rs 1,21,686 crore. In a written reply in Rajya Sabha on August 2, the Minister of State for Finance Mr. Santosh Kumar Gangwar said the gross NPAs of PSBs as on March 31, 2016 stood at Rs 4,76,816 crore. This reflects the sinister hold of the NPAs and the need for 'surgical action' to get rid of them.

Though the concept of the NPAs had been dogging the banking sector for more than two decades, it was given to Rajan to recognize the canker of the NPAs vigorously to make due prudential provisioning and precautionary actions lest any laxity should jeopardize the financial stability. Rajan was also largely instrumental in undertaking a series of steps to minimize NPA burden that include among others formation of Joint Lenders Forum (JLF) for revitalizing stressed assets in the system, flexible restructuring for long-term project loans to infrastructure and core industries, strategic debt restructuring scheme and the Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A). Considering the fact that in sectors such as infrastructure (power and roads), steel and textile, the incidence of NPAs is both humongous and dangerous, Mr. Patel has his priorities cut out in faithfully following and consolidating the measures Rajan undertook to clean up the banking system. A lot is expected of the new Governor and how he makes do with striking the right distance from the Ministry of Finance while ensuring the role of banking industry's impartial regulator, will decide the pace, pattern and progress of the country's financial system over the long haul. (IPA Service)

“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams! Live the life you've imagined. As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler.”

--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

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Was Vemula a Dalit?

A one man judicial commission set up by the HRD ministry has suddenly come to the conclusion that Rohith Vemula of Hyderabad Central University was not a Dalit. The report clashes with that submitted by the Guntur District collector to the National Commission for Schedule Castes. It categorically stated that Vemula was a Dalit. Rohith Vemula who killed himself said in his suicide note that he was driven to the act by his Dalitness. His bereaved family also shared his feeling of humiliation. His suicide has triggered a Dalit movement and he is held up as a moving symbol of the misery of the Dalits. The NDA government is trying to break up the solidarity of the growing Dalit movement by claiming that Rohith was not a Dalit. It is a futile effort. The panel's conclusion is just a vain attempt to defend those wielding power who stand condemned for abetting Vemula's suicide under the SC/ST Atrocities (Prevention) Act.

The Vemula case has a parallel. A probe was made into the lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq in Dadri last year. What kind of meat was found on the scene of crime? Was it beef or something else? The probe was meant to be a smokescreen. The point is that a man was lynched by a mob on the suspicion of eating/storing beef. The panel evaded the main issue-that lynching is a crime, whatever the reason. Irrespective of whether Rohith Vemula was a Dalit, there is no doubt that he committed suicide in protest against caste discrimination. The incident was a disgrace to democratic India which should have wiped out caste discrimination in 70 years of freedom.

LOOKING BACK

March 1, 1989

Run-up to the poll

Inspired by the convincing victory in Tamil Nadu of the DMK, one of its constituents, the National Front now is poised for the contest in the next general elections to the Lok Sabha on a common programme and manifesto. There is hardly nine months left for the Lok Sabha poll and the National Front which has staked its claim as an alternative to the Congress(I) should have clearly formulated its programmes and placed them before the people much earlier. The claim of the National Front presidium which met recently at New Delhi that because of poll reverses suffered by the Congress(I) the latest being in Tamil Nadu the party and its leader Mr Rajiv Gandhi had lost moral and political right to rule the country may sound good be a substitute for the programme of the Front.

The National Front presidium has brushed aside the claims of splinter groups like the Lok Dal (B) and Jan Morcha (R) and for all practical purposes marginalized Mr Bahuguna and Mr Ram Dhan. The Front has thus taken a definite shape with five constituent parties - Telugu Desam, Asom Gana Parishad, DMK, Janata Dal and Congress(S) and has been emerging as a formidable challenge to the Congress(I). The Front presidium has entrusted the task of drafting the election manifesto to a committee with the former general secretary of the Janata Party Mr Surendra Mohan as convenor on the basis of the 71-point programme announced by Mr V P Singh after the formation of the Front. The presidium will meet again on March 4 to give political direction to the manifesto committee so that the draft is finalized by April 15 for final adoption. This

means that there is going to be further delay in placing the Front's programmes before the people in rallies and conventions which the Front propose to organize. It is absolutely necessary for the National Front to go in for the most extensive possible exercise to familiarize itself and the programmes it stands for the general mass of people to earn their trust as a contender for power in the next poll. The people have also to be convinced that the National Front like its predecessor the Janata Party is not going to break up soon after being voted to power.

One can, however, foresee difficulties during seat allocation to various Front constituents and on negotiations on electoral adjustments with parties of the left on one side and the Bharatiya Janata Party on the other. The foretaste of such problems is currently being experienced by the Janata Dal over appointments of its state unit chiefs in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. National Front is already a suspect in the eyes of the BJP for the former's earnest efforts to come closer to the Left Front and may find the BJP a hard bargainer during electoral adjugemtns. From all accounts, the BJP may claim larger share of seats in the Hindi-speaking state particularly in view of BJP's recent success in local bodies elections. If the seat adjustment with the BJP fails and if the BJP decides to go on its own, which at the moment appears more likely, the National Front's strategy of fielding only one combined opposition candidates against the Congress(I) in each constituency to avoid splitting of votes may come a cropper.

Non-alignment no longer a relevant movement

India should focus more on BRICS

By Nantoo Banerjee

Rahul Gandhi and his ilk in the Congress command may disagree but the non-alignment movement has lost much of its relevance in today's world where national interest is dynamic as also key to diplomatic wisdom. If Narendra Modi has decided to skip the long journey to Venezuela to attend the forthcoming 17th summit meeting of so-called 120-odd non-aligned nations there, it only suggests that the Indian Prime Minister believes in dynamic diplomacy and not in a static tradition. Barring Charan Singh, all Indian prime ministers attended NAM summits. Modi is different. He proved his point on the very first day of his assuming the office of prime minister by trying to engage Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and, thereafter, Chinese president Xi Jinping in order to improve diplomatic ties between India and its historically two hostile neighbours. Modi even attended a private wedding ceremony at the Sharifs'. If the prime minister's groundbreaking diplomatic efforts failed to improve India's political and economic relations with Pakistan, blame it on Sharif and not on Modi's diplomatic wisdom. Modi tried hard. In the case of China, the relationship is improving, though very slowly except in the trade and economy front. China has emerged as India's No. 1 trade partner, way ahead of the US, traditionally the largest foreign fund and technology investor in India. Xi and Modi have even agreed that economic relations should not be subjected to diplomatic differences, which are mostly from China's side.

Unfortunately, Congress higher-ups find nothing positive about Modi's moves - at home or abroad. Congress leaders

have been out of their wits to nakedly criticise Modi's foreign trips. Paradoxically though, Pakistan's opposition leader Imran Khan openly gave Modi the full marks for his well-chosen overseas travel to attract a continuous foreign direct investment (FDI) flow into Indian economy to benefit India by maintaining a high growth rate. Recently, Khan asked Sharif to follow Modi's ways to improve foreign investment in Pakistan to grow its economy. Modi may not be visiting Venezuela for the NAM meet, but the South American country is highly appreciative of the growing engagement of India's public sector oil firms, drug companies and others to help Venezuela tide over its current economic crisis. Few NAM members have so far stood so firmly behind Venezuela at its hour of crisis as India has.

NAM seems to have overstayed its welcome among its members. The last five-day 120-member NAM summit in Iran's Tehran on August 26-31, 2012, witnessed the attendance of only some 27 presidents, two kings and emirs, seven prime ministers, nine vice presidents and five special envoys among other lower ranking officials. At the summit, Iran, then totally anti-US, took over from Egypt as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) for the period 2012 to 2015. Founded in Belgrade in 1961, it was largely conceived by India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Indonesia's first president Sukarno, Egypt's second president Nasser, Ghana's first president Nkrumah and Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito. Cuban president Fidel Castro, a strong NAM champion for many years, said the purpose of the

organization is to ensure "the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries" in their "struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics."

The times have changed. The end of the cold war in the early 1990s; the temporary Russian occupation of Afghanistan, which is now under the US tutelage; disintegration of Yugoslavia; improving relationship among the USA, Cuba and Iran; Saudi Arabia and Kuwait receiving US military protection; Vietnam getting closer to the US; the growing tension between India and Pakistan and, finally, the rise of China as a super economic and diplomatic power have made the non-aligned movement practically toothless and also meaningless as the US-led military blocks such as the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) are diminishing in strength. Even the most powerful US-led 28-member North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is facing a challenge from its most trusted ally, Turkey. It was probably the most unthinkable development in NATO that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan could take the initiative to visit a long diplomatic rival, Russia, earlier this month to meet President Vladimir Putin at St. Petersburg to engage Turkey in a new military and economic relationship with Russia after last month's failed coup. US Secretary of State John Kerry was so upset that he said NATO would assess whether Turkey upholds democratic

values amid a wave of arrests tied to the attempt by a group of Turkish military rebels to overthrow Erdogan. Turkey has been a NATO member since 1952.

NAM may have been a good idea in 1961. It represented nearly two-thirds of the United Nations' members and contained 55 per cent of the world population. Membership is particularly concentrated in countries that were part of the Third World. But, not all members were non-aligned. Many were informally aligned with either the US or the then Soviet Union, the two super powers. The movement got fractured from its own contradictions. It struggled to find relevance since the Cold War ended. The emergence of "Arab Spring" that nearly convulsed West Asian republics affected several Nam members in the region directly. The countries that underwent the most significant changes - Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Syria - are all members of NAM. And, they are now less sure about how an anti-US campaign will help restore their economy and a viable political system.

The latest development in Turkey, which has pledged to help Russian-backed Assad regime in Syria, growing anti-Islamist sentiment in the US, Britain and EU and China's claim of the South China Sea are a blow to all old fashioned alliances, including NATO, the only surviving post-cold war military treaty. Honestly, old NAM has little role to play in the current world. India would probably do well by playing a more positive and cohesive role in an emerging economy block such as BRICS. Prime Minister Modi and India's external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj would do well to devote more attention to BRICS than spend their valuable time and resources on NAM. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

On JACATAM Agitation

Editor,

Apropos the response to my letter and that of Dashan Warshong by E.D. Nongsiang (ST August 11, 2016), the writer seems to be misinterpreting our letters and burying all the facts. The writer did not try to fully understand the contents of the letter in the first place. I don't know if it is their birth right to demand the so-called social security and rightful status from the government because the government has done its bit in helping, guiding and nurturing these schools in whatever capacity that it could but these very teachers felt that a salary of 20K, 22K, 24k is not enough. I bet an LDA post would not fetch them the above amount even in the forthcoming 6th Pay commission. The writer has suggested a revisit of the Higher Secondary, Secondary and Upper Primary School Management, framing policies for recruitment, etc. Fair enough. He seems to be talking about the future which is welcome but never mentioned about the people who were recruited in the previous years through an unfair recruitment process. So why can't one ask for a cut off year for provincialising the services of those teachers who fall within a particular cutoff date? The writer also seems to suggest that there are only two villains in this whole drama: (1) for the faulty recruitment process the blame should go to the SMCs and (2) for monetary benefits

(camouflaging and disguising it for provincialisation) the government should take the blame thereby absolving the teachers of any responsibility or accountability of any sort whatsoever.

If Nongsiang is in the dark about his own flock trying to get entry level jobs but failing miserably in the process, then he's living in a fools' paradise. If some JACATAM members gave up lucrative careers and opted for a teaching job then it's a conscious decision and a risk they took on. They simply can't blame the government for anything and everything under the sun for their predicament. It's only fair for them not to demand MCS and IAS pay structure. Well, no sane person would do that directly, would they? I've written that some schools did deserve provincialisation based purely on merit but a blanket call for provincialisation of every schools is selfishness and greed of the highest order.

Nongsiang accepted the fact that JACATAM highlighted the gains, benefits, welfare, losses of the students due to the ongoing agitations. JACATAM are indirectly using the students' sufferings to further their cause and gain public sympathy since the impact would automatically fall on the innocent students and we don't need rocket science to understand that. Regarding the funding pattern and comparison with the more developed southern states, I guess I had mentioned in my previous letter the reasons that the government is facing, so the less said on that front the better. Albert

Thyrniang ("Too Long a Strike" ST August, 2016) has rightly pointed out that provincialisation is not going to help improve or have any positive effect on the education scenario in the state, except, perhaps making a few faces happy all the way to the bank or shopping mall. May be its time for them to step out of their little cocoon and observe reality the hard way. While I respect the JACATAM views, they are not convincing enough. The recent online poll conducted by The Shillong Times (23rd August 2016) on the agitations presents us with a pretty fair idea that the association is receiving, with a thumping majority of over 72% NOT supporting their cause.

Yours etc
S. Kshiar
Shillong-5

PMS: the bitter truth

Editor,

It is good to see that parents are speaking their hearts out on the Pine Mount School (PMS) imbroglio and I sympathize with them. Speak mother & father speak but what astonishes me is that even these parents are divided on this issue, which can be easily gauged from the last few letters in this column. Also, it is amply clear from the Aug 19 letter by Evahunlin Ryndong that there has been a selective and targeted taxing of parents because she claims that her daughter wasn't charged with building fund, classroom fund, and sanitary fees by PMS. I am neither an aggrieved guardian nor a real/reel life villain with a motive to tarnish the image of this

school - which many say has dented over the years and more so in recent times. One does not have to be a guardian to comment on issues that are of public interest. My contention over the alleged illegal collection sans receipt by this school was purely based on the series of news reports in a section of the local media (including this daily), which the PMS never contested. It is indeed a matter of great concern how our schools in the state are resorting to some collection or other throughout the year. One can understand about money guzzling tactics of the private/denomination run schools but that this would slip into the government ones too, because the state government is unable to maintain them, is a worrying sign of education here. Just see the reality of school education today in the state. It is managed by publishers from the book lanes and alleys of Old & New Delhi. These traders come and grease the palms of the state ministers and babus and go back with the orders to introduce their textbooks, written by scholars who cannot even spell a word correctly. The inferior quality books are dearly affecting the academic development of our pupils. The students of PMS are at least better off in this regard since they are part of a national board. Undoubtedly, the good results produced by this school can be largely attributed to the hard work put in by students, their parents, unavoidable tuitions and last but not the least classroom coaching.

Yours etc.
P. K. Dwivedi
Shillong - 1

POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Nora Chopra

CONGRESS BADLY SPLIT OVER MODI'S COMMENTS ON BALOCHISTAN

The Congress leadership is confused and divided over the question of Balochistan. It has been doing a flip flop ever since the Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised the issue of Balochistan in his Independence Day speech. The party leaders are speaking in different voices. Congress media chairperson Randeep Surjewala right on the same day supported the PM on Balochistan, and even said that the PM should prove it in action. Anand Sharma also supported him saying India has always opposed human rights violations. But the same day the erstwhile external affairs minister Salman Khurshid opposed the PM. But Surjewala called it to be his personal opinion. Salman is however adamant over his stand. He, in an article has written that linking POK with Balochistan is a myopic move and could undermine India's high moral stance viz a viz Pakistan. Even P Chidambaram has supported Salman. Salman in an interview has justified his stand and has said that this is the party line. Contradicting Surjewala, he claims that he is the senior spokesperson and until he is sacked, what he is saying is the Party line.

CONGRESS TO HOLD BIG CONVENTIONS OF BRAHMINS IN UTTAR PRADESH

Prashant Kishor, the Congress election strategist, had convened a meeting of all the state level Brahmin leaders on August 21 in which it was decided to have state level conventions of the Brahmin leaders of Uttar Pradesh. The thinking is that since Sheila Dixit has been projected as the Brahmin leader of the Congress, the party should maintain its focus on the Brahmin leadership lest the BJP would succeed in splitting the Brahmin votes. At the meeting, it has been decided to hold state level Brahmin conventions at various places. This begins with the first convention at Allahabad, the birth place of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Even Rahul Gandhi is expected to join this sammelan to claim the legacy of Nehru and the brahmins. The next sammelan is scheduled to take place at Mathura. Meanwhile

TICKETS TO 13 CONGRESS LEGISLATORS IN UP POLLS

Prashant Kishor is supposed to have told the Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi that about 13 sitting Congress MLAs should not be given party ticket including CLP Leader Pradeep Mathur and former PCC chief Rita Bahuguna. According to sources close to Prashant Kishor, this is based on the findings of the survey conducted by him. Kishor has already identified five leaders in every district on whom he is putting all his energies. These five Congress workers have been given all the campaign material. Out of these, four would be eliminated and the strongest candidate would be given the party ticket. If the party high command goes by his recommendations, PK has assured a sure victory for the candidate.

BJP ENCOURAGING BETTER RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH

The bilateral relations between Dhaka and New Delhi are improving each day. Not only the Narendra Modi government but even the RSS and the BJP are very keen to improve their relations with Bangladesh. The information and broadcasting minister of Sheikh Haseena government Hasanul Haq Inu who was in Delhi was invited by all the RSS dominated organizations for one hour interaction sessions. These organizations are Vivekananda Research Centre, India Research Foundation, Observer Research Foundation. These are supposed to be the RSS think tanks, who have invited the Bangladesh I&B minister. Even the ABVP leadership of JNU has invited the Bangladesh minister. (IPA)

chief minister Vijay Rupani. COMPLAINTS LODGED TO GHULAM NABI AZAD AGAINST SURENDRA GOEL

Complaint has been lodged against the erstwhile Ghaziabad MP Surendra Goel with Ghulam Nabi Azad, the AICC general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh. Surinder Goel was made the chairman of the campaign committee of Meerut Mandal by Sanjay Singh. His job was to go to all the seven zones under the Mandal to meet people and campaign. But what Goel did was he went to Bulandshahr and went straight to one tainted Shivpal Singh, an accused in the tricycle scam of Salman Khurshid due to which he was removed from the post of district president. From Shivpal Singh residence, he called the district president and spoke to him and came without even visiting the District Congress Committee office or even meeting Congress workers or leaders of the district. This has given rise to resentment among the Congress leadership of the district.

FORMER BUREAUCLERK REPLIES TO CBI CHARGESHEET THROUGH FACEBOOK

Facebook is proving to be a rather potent tool. Anandiben Patel announced her resignation on FB and now a retired IAS officer, Veena Rao, has put out in FB a counter to a CBI charge-sheet against her in the Antrix-Devas 'scam'. In a long FB post, she termed CBI's move "shocking" and "ludicrous". It seems her name cropped up as she was additional secretary in the Department of Space during the period the deal was inked. But, the former bureaucrat points out, the Antrix-Devas contract was approved at the Antrix board meeting in December 2004, when she was not even present. And, this was within a mere two days of her taking charge - too short a time for her to have taken a call on it. Challenging the authenticity of some of the documents shown to her during her questioning, Rao has even put out her email exchanges with the investigation agency.

PK AGAINST GIVING

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"If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

--- Henry David Thoreau

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SHILLONG, SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 2016

Cabinet rejig – outcomes important

A cabinet reshuffle in itself is a futile exercise if outcomes of the newly inducted ministers and the existing ones are not measured. At the Centre the NDA Government has developed a system of keeping track of the performance of each minister.

It was on the basis of this performance appraisal that ministers were dropped, their portfolios reshuffled and others inducted. There was no personal consideration whatsoever in the reshuffle.

Since it cannot be expected that the state government here would ever have the moral courage to do its own performance appraisal it is important that civil society organizations develop these yardsticks in collaboration with the local universities. Failing such a performance appraisal, ministers will complete their five year tenure without being able to give an account of their achievements. There are many pending projects, some from as far back as 1986 – the Crowborough Hotel. Others like the State Assembly Building are also hanging fire. Then there is the home for the underprivileged at Nongmynsong which has been lying incomplete for over a decade and we don't hear these being discussed in the State Assembly.

The PWD Minister in the MUA-2 must be the worst performer. Roads in Shillong city look like they have been bombed. A bridge in Umsning, Ri Bhoi district constructed by the PWD Minister's company collapsed on August 25 and caused injuries to the workers and the junior engineer supervising the construction work. Who will hold the PWD Minister accountable even if that portfolio has been taken from him? And will the next PWD Minister be more conscientious? Or will he be in a greater hurry to make quick bucks for the 2018 elections? While one of the inducted ministers is a new entrant into the ministry, the other has a record of making off with public assets from the official residence he was allotted during his tenure as Speaker. Have we forgotten this incident? This is not a very encouraging sign as it indicates that the reshuffle was not done keeping in mind the track record of the appointee and the larger good of the state but purely on political exigencies. The reshuffle of portfolios too is not very inspiring. A minister who has not delivered in one department is hardly likely to succeed in another. But as usual in Congress-ruled states the Chief Ministers have to give more weightage to their own political survival rather than the larger good of the state. Politics trumps everything else in Meghalaya.

LOOKING BACK

March 1, 1989

Bandh disrupts life for second day

Life remained disrupted in tribal areas of the north bank of Brahmaputra in Assam for the second day today following a 48-hour bandh called by the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA). The PTCA, a regional political party, has called the bandh demanding a separate union territory "Udayachal" for the plains tribal people living in the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Official reports received here said the bandh affected the Kokrajhar district Udalguri sub-division of Darrang district, and in some area of Nalbari, BARPETA and North Lakhimpur districts where shops and business establishment remained closed and vehicles went off the road. Work in the government offices were also affected in the areas, the reports said.

Train services with the rest of the country also remained suspended following the bandh. Though no untoward incidents had been reported from any bandh bound area, about 300 trucks under police escort

were operated on the national highway number 31, according to Director General of Police Mr S V Subramanian. He said the police also continued combing operations in the trouble-torn Kokrajhar district and recovered five hand made pistols, one gun and large quantities of gun making materials during the past 24 hours. Four persons were also arrested, he said.

Meanwhile, security measures has been further tightened following the proposed 175-hour Assam bandh called by the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) from five am tomorrow, demanding a "Bodo land."

Opposition MPs end boycott

Opposition members of Parliament have decided to end their boycott of the proceedings of the two houses from tomorrow. The decision was taken at a meeting of opposition MPs here today.

India should seize the opportunity

By. Nehginpao Kipgen

Myanmar President Htin Kyaw begins a four-day trip to India beginning August 27. This is the president's first State visit to India and will be accompanied by his wife, Daw Su Su Lwin, several key ministers and senior officials.

President Kyaw comes to India at the invitation of the Indian President, Pranab Mukherjee, who will be hosting a banquet in honor of the visiting leader and his delegation.

During his visit, President Kyaw will have official engagements in New Delhi and also visit places of historical and cultural importance. The visit is expected to strengthen and expand ties between the two countries.

The visit comes four days after External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj paid a one-day visit to the Southeast Asian nation on August 22. It was India's first high-level visit to the neighboring country since the National League for Democracy (NLD) came to power.

During the visit, leaders of the Myanmar government told Swaraj that they would not allow any insurgent group to use Myanmar's territory against India. In return, Swaraj offered all possible help to the new Myanmar government.

Swaraj's visit happened just days after the Indian Army had an encounter with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-IM) militants along the India-Myanmar border. There were reports that the Indian army crossed over to Myanmar territory to pursue the militants but it was denied by New Delhi. President Kyaw's visit is important for the Indian leadership to engage in substantive talks on cross-border security issue and others.

The timing of the visit is good for both New Delhi and Nay Pyi Taw as the NLD government currently engages in

holding talks with several ethnic armed groups of the country.

One major goal of Kyaw's government is to end decades of armed conflicts in Myanmar, which is considered the longest in the world, by holding the 21st Panglong Conference starting August 31.

Though the NSCN-IM is currently not engaged in talks with the Myanmar government, the Modi government could use this visit to talk about the group. President Kyaw's visit also comes five days after Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's state counselor and de-facto leader, paid a four-day visit to China, a traditional rival of India.

During the visit, the two countries signed agreements on economic and technological cooperation, among others, that will result in the building of two new hospitals and a strategic bridge in Kunlong, 32 kilometers from the Chinese border in northeastern Myanmar.

Another important issue of bilateral talk was on trade and investment. China is Myanmar's largest trading partner with total two-way trade amounting to \$15.6 billion in 2015. In an effort to improve bilateral ties, Myanmar has agreed to review the several dam projects invested by China, including the \$3.6 billion Myitsone dam, and find a mutually agreeable solution.

The Chinese leadership assured the state counselor that Beijing would continue to play a constructive role in promoting a peaceful settlement to the decades-old armed conflicts in Myanmar.

In light of these developments, India, which is the world's largest democracy, should seize the opportunity of President Kyaw's visit to strengthen and enhance bilateral relations.

Besides the cross-border security issue, the three areas where India needs to focus are the education sector, institution-building and people-to-people relations.

First, the Indian government has taken initiatives such as the establishment of Language Laboratories and Resource Centre, the Myanmar Institute of Information Technology, and the Agricultural Research and Educational Centre, and the enhancement of the India-Myanmar Centre for Enhancement of IT Skills.

But few students from Myanmar, if any, attend Indian universities. The Indian government and educational institutions across India should do more to attract students from Myanmar, perhaps by offering scholarships or through exchange programs. Additionally, civil society organizations and the private sector should offer vocational trainings for short-term results.

Second is institution building which can be done in a number of ways. For example, the Indian government should invite Myanmar politicians who are new to democracy to give them first-hand experience as to how democracy works in a diverse and pluralistic society.

Myanmar politicians should be allowed to observe parliamentary proceedings, or attend courses offered by Indian universities and think-tanks on the theory and practice of democracy and federalism.

Third is improving people-to-people relations. Not only do India and Myanmar have a shared border but the two countries are also home to millions of people from the same ethnic community, separated during the creation of India and Myanmar in 1947 and 1948 respectively. Examples are the Kachin, the Kuki, the

Naga and the Shan, who live side by side along the India-Myanmar border.

Moreover, the two countries share about 1624-kilometre boundary in four Northeast Indian states - Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. But despite this geographical proximity, cross-border contacts among the ordinary people are relatively insignificant. During Prime Minister Modi's visit to Myanmar in 2014, India agreed to build 71 bridges along the roads used by Indian buses.

Bus service between Imphal and Mandalay, a distance of about 580 kilometers, was originally planned to start in 2012-2013 but Manipur Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh launched it only on December 9, 2015 as a trial run, which has not been resumed since then.

Similarly, the first flight service between Myanmar and Manipur was introduced in November 2013, but the service was not continued because of immigration and other issues. Though weekly direct Air India flights on the Delhi-Gaya-Yangon route and Golden Myanmar charter flights to India were launched in November 2014, the connectivity between the two countries still remain very poor.

Reliable road links, bus and train services, the introduction of visa-on-arrival facilities at the border, regular flights and the improvement of people-to-people relations are some key areas the Indian government should prioritize for the success of its Act East Policy.

Dr. Nehginpao Kipgen is Assistant Professor and Executive Director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University. His writings (books and articles) have been widely published in over 30 countries in five continents - Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, and North America.

TO THE EDITOR

On commercial surrogacy

Editor,
I found it very amusing to read the news report '28 households penalized in state for power theft' (ST July 5, 2016). May I ask the top officials of Me.E.C.L. if the same yardstick is applied to all parts of the state? How much revenue is the Me.E.C.L. generating from its power sector in Garo Hills? I have been travelling to and from Garo Hills every week, particularly East and West Garo Hills for the last five years. I have seen illegal electricity connection to the households directly from the lines and not even from the poles. If I do not mention the names of the villages, the officials might accuse me of bluffing. If the officials want to see this rampant power theft with their own eyes they should start their survey right from Nongchram, Rongjeng, Songsang, Magagre, Chiading, Jengial and so on. Needless to say that even in Williamnagar town in the localities such as S a m g o n g g r e, Kusumgolgre, Balsrigittim, Nogolawe, Komalsagre and some others localities that I have visited I see the same power theft. I was told that there are offices where the unpaid electricity bills have crossed 5 lakh rupees, yet they enjoy uninterrupted connection. Is this, the reason that power supply in Garo Hills remains disrupted most of the time as happened recently in Williamnagar and Baghmara?

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

MeECL's selective handling of power thefts

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MeECL's selective handling of power thefts

hospitals is disrupted? Why are these villages enjoying special privileges from the Corporation? If not, why has no action been taken against them? We can't accept that MeECL does not know what is happening as all these villages mentioned are on the main road of the Shillong-Nongstoin-Tura Highway. Everyone who passes by this road cannot deny this hard fact. Ironically MeECL is charging exorbitant rates in the Khasi Hills particularly in Shillong and is prompt at serving disconnection notice if bills are not paid for 3-4 months. This I'm saying not because I want to sow the seeds of hatred between the two communities, but because I want MeECL to use the same yardstick for all consumers. I am sure that I'm not the only one who notices this bias practised by MeECL so let us all air our grievances through the media if we want things to be rectified.

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Closure of wine stores necessary

Editor,
Many people are of the view that after the closure of wine stores would push many young people to drugs. In my opinion this is a false propaganda and misleading. We first need to analyse the type of drinkers who are likely to turn to drugs. In Meghalaya or elsewhere in India, we have three types of drinkers. Firstly, we have those who are called 'social drinkers' who are limited to their social drinks at homes, parties, weddings and within their

friend circles. These people are mostly educated and in control of what they are doing. They can't be drug users by any stretch of imagination.
Secondly, there are hard drinkers who drink to arouse the rebel in themselves or to trigger domestic violence. These are mostly uneducated and are live in the semi-urban and rural areas. They indulge in all kinds of nuisance but in the given situation prevailing in the rural areas, one cannot presume them to be drug users.
So why are the potential drug users? They are the type of people who drink regularly out of sheer frustration and are unable to control themselves while drinking. They drink in order to forget something or to develop a sense of power. They include both educated and uneducated lot who think that life is full of a bed of thorns and nobody loves them. They alienate themselves from their families and start drinking till they are broke. All their money goes in buying liquor. These men slowly become alcoholics which in turn leads to a diseased state of mind. Therefore becoming an alcoholic is a disease which needs prevention and cure. Alcoholics are most likely to turn to drugs which may cause more harm than alcohol.
It is therefore not correct to assume that all drinkers would ultimately become drug users.
Yours etc.,
L A Sangma,
New Tura.

People's Health Movement and Community Health

By Phrangsngi Pyrtuh

A workshop on Community Health in the North East was organized by the Bangalore based Society for Community Health Awareness Research and Action (SOCHARA) and the Fellows Collective -North East at the Pastoral Institute in Shillong on 19th and 20th August.

Thirteen organizations from across the country gathered to hold a series of discussions on community health and people's health movement. The workshop was organized by the nine alumni from the North eastern region who had completed their training programme with SOCHARA. The alumni had formed the Fellows Collective to continue their training experiences from SOCHARA. This initiative of the Fellows Collective to initiate the workshop on "Community Health" and "Community Action" for health in the North East is commendable.

A session on People's health movement in the North East was scheduled on the second day of the workshop. Among those invited are the Jan Swastha Abhiyan (JSA) members from different parts of the country. For the uninitiated the JSA is the Indian chapter of a global people's health movement emerging in 2000. The primary objective of the movement is to ensure "Health for all". There are different JSA Chapters/units all over the country occupied with health rights campaign. People's health movement in the northeast is at a nascent stage and the Meghalaya Campaign for People's Right to Health (MCPRH) formed in November 2015 is just one of the few people's health movement in the North East.

The Meghalaya Campaign on health rights violation which started in 2015. Health right is as much a part of human rights which is why the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has shown interest on health rights since 2004.

The Meghalaya Campaign on health rights violation is the first of its kind in the state. The primary objective of the campaign was to compile and document cases for the North East NHRC-JSA public hearing. The broader objective of the campaign is to initiate a people's health movement in the state along the lines of people's health movement in different parts of the country embedded in the People's Health Charter formulated and endorsed in the First People's Assembly in Dhaka in 2000. Since JSA is a network of organization engaged in health campaign and health rights, the workshop provided the perfect platform for MCPRH to engage and network with other organizations in the state and region. The conveners of JSA North East region shared their experiences regarding their mobilization programmes for the NHRC-JSA public hearing for the North East region which was supposed to be held on the second week of February 2016.

For the Public hearing the NHRC has issued specific guidelines. Some of these guidelines posed a challenge to the Campaign. For instance one of the guidelines requires that cases concerning health rights and violation should not be more than one year old. This provision is too narrow an objective for the broader people's movement on health rights. There are many cases which occurred beyond the required one year notified period. As a result the response to the campaign which was positive initially fizzled out

as soon as the one year time period is mentioned. It is clear that the NHRC is not interested in these cases. Nevertheless the Campaign had decided to document cases irrespective of the time of occurrence and submit them to the NHRC for its wider consideration. Recently with the notification of the Meghalaya State Human Rights Commission, presentation/submission of these documented cases would become easier.

The campaign hit a stumbling block when in February 2016, the NHRC for reasons known to itself decided to put the remaining series of public hearing including the North eastern public hearing on hold. Until this time there was only one public hearing held for the western region at Mumbai. The National Coordination Committee (NCC) which is the highest decision making body of the JSA met in New Delhi in February and decided to send a delegation to thrash out issues arising from the Mumbai public hearing. The delegation was told that the remaining public hearings would be kept on hold. This was disheartening news. The decision of the NHRC has jeopardized the progress made by the Campaign since it was felt that the Public hearing would have positive impact on people's health movement more so at the grassroots level, the timing of the NHRC's decision to put the rest of the public hearing on hold is unfortunate.

However, new developments have caught the JSA and everyone involved with the Public hearing by surprise. Recently at the sidelines of the national consultation on Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights organized by NHRC, the new chairman of the Commission Justice Dattu met members of JSA and expressed the Commission's interest to resume the remaining series of Public hearings. A formal notification is expected from the NHRC in this regard. For the JSA this news is something that it is unprepared for ever since the NHRC decided to keep in abeyance the remaining series of public hearings in February this year. The JSA has to take a call soon on whether to continue the partnership with the NHRC on these public hearings.

The SOCHARA workshop assumes greater significance in light of this new development. In the workshop the conveners of JSA of the region including Meghalaya have decided to petition to the central leadership of the JSA to avail the opportunity presented and proceed possibly under new terms of reference (TOR). The regional Coordinator of the JSA would intimate the JSA leadership of the same.

It is therefore hoped that pertinent issues which have hampered the partnership between NHRC-JSA would be resolved soon. Thousands of petitioners have reposed their faith on the NHRC on what they feel is violation of their health rights. For Meghalaya where the health sector and health delivery services leave much to be desired, the public hearing would be significant. It has a lot to gain from the public hearing where health rights are almost non-existent. The people's health movement has emphasized that right to health is a fundamental right. The public hearing is just one more step for a constitutional recognition of the same.

(The writer teaches Economics in Shillong College)

By Hardev Sanotra

As the curtains came down on the world's greatest sports extravaganza here, India goes back with one silver medal and one bronze -- consolation prizes for a nation of 1.3 billion people amidst dashed hopes of improving on London Olympics of four years ago, when six medals were won.

In the beginning, top officials of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) were hopeful that India would reach a double-digit in medals, an assumption which got shattered in the first few days here when athlete after athlete either did not qualify, or came up just short of a medal.

It was women power, though, which saved everyone here, and the nation, deep blushes as at one stage it appeared the Indian contingent would go home empty handed. Sakshi Malik from Haryana won the bronze medal in women's wrestling and was given the honour to be the flag-bearer at the closing ceremony. P.V. Sindhu from Hyderabad won a silver in badminton, missing the top honour after a very good fight. Gymnast Dipa Karmakar from Tripura did everyone proud when she reached within touching distance of a bronze, coming fourth in the vault event.

Another heartbreak was Aditi Ashok, who showed a rare patch of brilliance in the first two days of golf, only to end up at 41st position on the fourth, although the 18-year-old Bengaluru golfer was roundly admired and applauded for her determination and play. Lalita Babar from Maharashtra did her career best in 3000m steeplechase, though coming 10th and bettering her national record by three seconds.

The men, though, disappointed in almost everything they touched. Gold medalist Shooter Abhinav Bindra saw the bronze slip out of his hand at the last moment in a shoot-out. How is it that India failed to reach even the London tally of six, though it had sent the largest ever contingent of 117 sports persons to Rio?

Perhaps Bindra's coach Heinz Reinkemeier nailed it in his hometruth: "You send athletes from a country which doesn't have good training facilities, as they have in Europe and China, and you want a gold?" Perhaps it's not merely the lack of international training facilities. Sports need consis-



Thin silver lining in dark clouds

tent support from school to Olympics which is patchy in India, at best.

A little bit of ignominy was added to the near

medal drought when wrestler Narsingh Yadav was disqualified from Olympics after World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

went on appeal at the last moment against National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)'s clean chit to him. The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) sitting in Rio slapped a four-year ban on Narsingh a day before his scheduled bout, overlooking the "conspiracy angle" in the doping test failure.

Shooter Jitu Rai belied the hopes of several officials for a medal when he ended up eighth in 10m air pistol final after playing brilliantly throughout the qualifying round. He then crashed out of 50m air pistol, perhaps misjudging the wind in the last few shots.

Gurmeet Singh showed a bit of spirit in the 25m rapid fire pistol event, but eventually was left behind. Mairaj Ahmad Khan ended ninth in men's skeet event after missing three shots in the final round in a shoot-out. In the rarefied atmosphere of medal contenders, mistakes are not tolerated.

Indian boxers too crashed out of Olympics with Vikas Krishan took a major pound from his Uzbek

opponent in the 75kg bout.



Dipa Karmakar



Aditi Askok

Shiva Thapa in 56kg and Manoj Kumar in 64kg too left the arena without a medal.

Yet, Rio 2016 saw great heights achieved by legends which were a treat to watch. American swimming superstar Michael Phelps achieved something which may remain unchallenged for a long time. He an-

nounced his retirement from Olympics after collecting 28 medals, including gold in 13 individual events and 10 in team races. He wrapped up six in Rio.

Usain Bolt, the legendary fastest man on earth brought Jamaica additional glory (Contd on P-VII)

'Vampires got it right'

My daughters were not really listening to me so I told them that Justin Bieber had just been outed as an alien from the Helix Nebula here to kidnap Taylor Swift. Instant full attention.

My wife disapproves of my methods, but the fact is there's no proof he isn't. And no one thinks that guy's normal, right? The extreme weirdness of folks these days was brought home to me by a news report I just read that a woman named Tina Gorjanc is using DNA from her hero, late fashion designer Alexander McQueen, to grow his skin which she plans to turn into a jacket. Imagine her wearing it to a posh restaurant. Maitre' d: "May I hang up your jacket, madam?" Gorjanc: "Yes, but leave the cloakroom door open. Alex doesn't like the dark."

I wondered why she would make a McQueen-skin garment instead of growing a whole new McQueen? (I also wondered whether I could get some Taylor Swift to send me her DNA? "Hi, Taylz, instead of a signed photo, could you scrape the inside of your cheek on to this medical spatula and return it to me? Thanks!") I posted my first question on one of those websites that provide answers and some guy eventually wrote that scientists were not actively working on cloning human beings "except in China". This

following mine," Darkness told the Lancashire Telegraph.

Being British, Darkness is a bit too well-bred to bite his neighbours, so he orders packs of human blood substitute from medical suppliers. Forgive my cynicism, but that's not really the same, is it? If the Dracula legend had been about a guy sitting waiting for an Amazon delivery, the whole vampire scene would never have taken off.

One of my colleagues has just told me that she once interviewed a self-proclaimed vampire who said that blood tastes metallic. "When vampires need a snack, they suck coins," she said. The reporter also said the vampire "was a pain in the neck, and interviewing her really sucked". And now you know why journalists have bruises on their shins. Their addiction to corny puns makes them eminently kickable.

The really weird thing is that a financial reporter friend told me that science may support the vampire theory. A US company named Ambrosia (which means "food of the gods") wants to inject young people's blood into older folk. They were inspired by a group of scientists who injected young mouse blood into older mice and got "signs of a return to youthfulness". I assume this means the older mice instantly became addicted to sending

makes no sense. Do they not have enough people in China? The high level of weird-

ness in modern life was reinforced by a reader who sent a recent news report about a UK man who "identifies as a vampire". The 25-year-old has legally changed his name to Darkness and sleeps in a coffin every night. "Everyone has their beliefs and I don't believe I should be persecuted for

smartphones. Whatever. Anyway, if Taylor sends me a bit of her DNA, I'll try to grow my own and report on the results. My office door may be locked for some time. (The writer is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send ideas and comments via his Facebook page)

smartphones. Whatever. Anyway, if Taylor sends me a bit of her DNA, I'll try to grow my own and report on the results. My office door may be locked for some time. (The writer is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send ideas and comments via his Facebook page)

By Saumya Tewari

In the 2016 Rio Olympics, shuttler P.V. Sindhu became the first Indian woman to win a silver medal; Sakshi Malik the first Indian female wrestler to win a medal (bronze), gymnast Dipa Karmakar became the first Indian woman to feature in a gymnastics final, finishing fourth in the vault, and Lalita Babar became the first Indian woman to enter a 3,000-

metre steeplechase final, finishing 10th. Eighteen-year-old Aditi Ashok -- the youngest golfer from India -- also entered the final round of the women's individual golf event.

Women saved the day for India at Rio, and their growing presence was reflected in the 54 female Indian athletes -- the largest number ever -- at an Olympiad.

While those rising numbers indicate the progress made by Indian sports-



in particular, and Indian women in general, a quick look at five key parameters -- working women, education, maternal health, age of marriage and

abortion rates-reveals that India's women are routinely denied opportunities at education, work and even being born.



1. Working women: Lowest in BRICS, 25 million women leave workforce over a decade

Women's workforce participation in India is the lowest among BRICS nations. A host of other countries, such as Bahrain (39 per cent), Malaysia (45 per cent) and Somalia (37 per cent), do much better, as IndiaSpend reported in March 2015, using World

Bank data from 2014.

No more than 26 per cent of India's women in India participated in the workforce, according to a 2013 Labour Bureau report. The rate improved to 27 per cent in 2014, according to a 2015 International Monetary Fund (IMF) study that IndiaSpend reported in July 2016. This is a decline of up to 8 per cent percentage point over 14 years; in 1999, up to 34 per cent of women were a part of India's workforce.

2. Higher education: More women enrolled, out-

perform men, but drop out later

While more young women are enrolled in higher education than ever before -- and apparently more successful in clearing 10th-standard board exams than young men-they are either marrying early or not finding or not looking for jobs, according to an IndiaSpend analysis of various data.

The enrolment of girls in higher education increased from 39 per cent to 46 per cent from 2007 to 2014, but as data above show, female

participation in India's labour force declined to a low of 27 per cent in 2014 from 34 per cent in 1999.

Almost 12 million women are enrolled in undergraduate courses, but few continue to professional courses; 600,000 women were enrolled for diploma courses, according to 2013 data, the latest available. Even fewer women sign on for PhDs and only 40 per cent of PhD candidates are female.

In 2016, girls were more successful than boys in

Indian women struggle to rise

India's maternal mortality ratio -- 174, according to World Bank estimates -- is worse than countries in the neighbourhood, such as Sri Lanka (30), Bhutan (148) and Cambodia (161).

clearing 10th-standard exams of a national education board, a trend that has held

India does worst among the BRICS countries:



over seven years, we reported.

3. Maternal Health: Best ever, but worse than poorer countries

India's maternal mortality ratio was 167 in 2010-12, according to the latest government data available, a steady improvement.

Russia (25), China (27), Brazil (44), and South Africa (138); according to the World Bank's latest estimates, which differ somewhat from Indian sources' 167 but confirm the trends.

4. Median age of marriage: Rising, but 61 per cent married before 16 (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Career option in Anthropology

There are many career options around us and if we can choose our career with proper planning and with our passion then life would be always rewarding. One of the careers related to growth and progress of mankind is Anthropology. The term Anthropology has been derived from two Greek terms namely 'anthropos' which means human and 'logos' means study. Thus Anthropology is the study of human beings in its absoluteness.

It is science which deals with human civilizations, traditions, cultures, etc. In simple we can say it deals with study through which we could find changes that happened in the past and how people have progressed since early ages. Anthropology is about people, their relationships, and how they live together as members of society.

It contributes to the understanding and explanation of socio-cultural behaviour.

Anthropologists as social scientists study the language, traditions, beliefs, possessions, and values of people in various parts of the world and formulate hypotheses to explain their research and findings.

There are several branches of anthropology that deals with various aspects of human development i.e. Physical or Biological Anthropology, Socio-cultural Anthropology, Prehistoric Anthropology, Applied Anthropology, Linguistic Anthropology, etc. Students after passing senior secondary may opt for courses in Anthropology.

To be a professional Anthropologist one has to qualify B.Sc in Anthropology. The minimum qualification for B.Sc in Anthropology is 10+2 pass with science subjects. Some

universities/colleges also offer B.A and M.A courses in Anthropology. There are many universities that offer courses in Anthropology in India.

Some of the institutions offering B.A/B.Sc./M.A./M.Sc in Anthropology in India are as follows: North Eastern Hill University, Dibrugarh University, Gauhati University, Manipur University, Assam University, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal, etc.

In India, research jobs are available in organisations like the Anthropological Survey of India, Archaeological Survey of India, the planning Commission and international bodies such as UNESCO and others working for heritage conservation. Openings are also available with museums and NGOs working in underdeveloped areas.

Anthropological Survey of India: It is a premier national institution of repute and is the only one of its kind anywhere in the world to pursue Anthropological research in a Governmental setup.

The Anthropological Survey of India's genesis was from the Zoological and Anthropological section of the Indian Museum, which became the Zoological Survey of India in 1916. In 1945, Anthropology section of the Zoological Survey was carved out to become the Anthropological Survey of India.

Updates:
Chevening UK Government Scholarships: Chevening Scholarships are

awarded to outstanding emerging leaders to pursue a one-year master's at any UK university.

The scholarship programme provides a unique opportunity for future leaders, influencers, and decision-makers from all over the world to develop professionally and academically, network extensively, experience UK culture, and build lasting positive relationships with the UK.

A Chevening Scholarship offers financial support along with the opportunity to become part of the highly regarded and influential Chevening global network. Last date for applying is 8th November.

Online Course on Disaster Management: The International Federation of Red Cross and Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Tata Institute for Social Sciences (TISS) have established an on-line Certificate Course on Disaster Management. This online DM certificate course is designed to address the existing practice-knowledge gaps by developing humanitarian professionals with the right blend of academic and practical approaches to reduce vulnerabilities and risks to hazards while developing ways of building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters. Last date is 31st August.

(The writer is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjana@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)

By Mudita Girotra

Insurance would serve as a tremendous leg-up in ensuring that young artistes take up music as a stable profession, says noted Hindustani classical singer Shubha Mudgal.

"Younger people are committed to music but the issue is how to make it a full-time profession for them.

"As a society we need to be around for them and know what makes them happy. Not just the accolades, the artiste must also feel wanted in other ways. For example, where is the effort to provide medical insurance to the artistes?" Mudgal asked.

"People working in other organisations have medical insurance, but a lot of musicians in India may not have any medical insurance. Also, when we are on stage, are we provided any sureties? I think those are the areas which need to be looked into," she said.

Then, while the soulful sitar and sarangi mesmerise all of us, there seems to be a systemic apathy by insur-



ance companies in giving due recognition to these acoustic Indian instruments, said Mudgal.

"We don't have a system where we can insure acoustic Indian instruments. If I want to insure my keyboard, it will be done. But if I want to insure my tanpura, it can't be. I cannot do anything about it as I don't belong to

Can insurance help musicians? Yes, says Shubha Mudgal

the insurance sector. I don't have a voice there," Mudgal said.

"How are we going to ensure that every sitar, tabla, sarangi and other acoustic instruments gets due recognition and how the artisans who make them get properly looked after?" the singer wondered.

According to Mudgal, even though there has been a rise in the number of music festivals in the last 100 years, it's not easy for the younger artistes.

In this context she referred to the need to ensure that music becomes a stable

profession for the young artistes who are committed to the art.

Mudgal was conferred the Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award -- on the late prime minister's birth anniversary August 20 -- for her outstanding contribution towards promoting communal harmony, peace and goodwill.

Referring to the award, she said: "It's always very reassuring to get an award. When I look at the list of former recipients of this award, I am quite humbled as they are the people I have greatly respected and always looked up to. I wonder whether I am qualified enough as people like Lataji, Bismillah Khan sahab and Amjad Ali Khan sahab who have received it earlier".

The singer has been selected as the curator of the performing arts section for the Serendipity Arts Festival, organised by the Serendipity Arts Trust between



Shubha Mudgal

December 16 and 23 in Panaji.

Musicians, dancers, theatre artistes, craftsmen and culinary experts will come together for the week-long festival.

"Normally, festivals look at one aspect of art. Let's say things like visual art, craft, dance and photography. For music, we have separate festivals of various classical schools.

Serendipity is an important space because it brings a variety of arts together," she said.

"It will give the curators, performers and to those who experience it a chance to interact with various disciplines. This inter-disciplinary nature is a unique aspect of the festival," she noted.

On the concept of different genres coming together,

Mudgal said: "I appreciate it each time I am exposed to a new area. I may not pursue it for a very long time but the introduction or a handshake is very important.

"Rock and contemporary music are not my areas of specialisation but I work with a lot of people involved in electronic dance music and other popular music," Mudgal concluded.

(The writer can be contacted at mudita.g@ians.in)

Interview

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, August 28, 2016

Venus Parallel Jupiter on your solar return chart signifies that a good year lies ahead. You would have the clarity and determination to get the bottom or any unresolved issues and bring them to a logical conclusion. You take on the role of a leader or mediator in many situations. You may discover a latent talent and enjoy professional success. Relationships and home become more vibrant with open channels of communication. You benefit from social connections. You would be on top of things when it comes to investments and real estate dealings. Be aware of your surroundings and take extra care when travelling.

'This week for you'

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

You are individualistic brilliant and daring in professional aspects as new projects get under way. This is an exceptionally exciting time as professional and business opportunities are offered to you during this time. You could be impatient in love and relationships as you are overflowing with energy this week. Relationships take on a lighthearted aspect as children play an important role. You are more stimulated by all that is unconventional during this cycle, and your ideas are original and progressive now.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

You win debates, competitions and sports with your dynamic energy and power. Emotional attachments and relationships are rewarded with reciprocity. Some interesting people are drawn to you and invite you to work with them. This is a good time to attend to matters that require attention since you are received well by others. Think about the attachments you have-to things, people, and routines-and consider which ones are dragging you down. This is a time when competitive energies and the ego are on a bit of a break.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You would be able to face truths, deal with emotional choices or difficult situations. Your position of power and authority is maintained despite many changes all around. You can draw correct conclusions from previous knowledge of people you meet again personally when making important decisions. Business projects and associations are opening up and widening your horizons so you need to think expansively from now onwards. A new cycle begins with the old order finishing as inner and outer changes are on the cards. Health problems are resolved and your energy is restored.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

Personal relations are packed with emotions and feelings and you enjoy the company of loved ones. Practical details are to be dealt with clarity and efficiently. You may be involved in meetings with business associates, as financial and business dealings would bring good results and gains. You can count on your professional and personal partners, as they stand by you. You will work in a free and unrestricted space. Physical energy and good health allow you to tackle busy schedules.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

Your actions and emotions are balanced as you bring more accuracy in your work area. You connect with new people and discuss important business matters. Your professional skills wisdom and craft is appreciated and fresh opportunities for expansion are made available to you. Personal relations are satisfying and you have plenty of goodwill and friendships around you. Your partner is especially supportive. You could be attracted to new people and ideas as you are open and receptive. But you must conserve your financial resources for priorities that have to be met at the end of the week.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

The unpredictable is likely to happen and that too when you least expect it. Surprises are in store for you in professional and personal matters. It would be best to be open and receptive in personal relations and family situations. A

flexible approach in the work area is recommended. New people may come into your life and influence your decisions and direction. Don't be thrown by new developments. Balance in all areas and field of activities is recommended this week. You could be depleted of resources and forces if you don't manage them properly. Meditation and spiritual pursuits can be rewarding and worth pursuing.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

This week opens up a world of romance and love in personal relations. You are gracious with family and children. You are likely to be involved in creative pastimes. You would express yourself in a gracious and exalted manner and influence people in authority this week. You may handle more than one project at the same time with expertise and success. Commercial transactions and business deals could be conducted effectively this week. Money matters take priority, as some unexpected expenditures have to be met. End of the week brings fresh energy, love and romance in important relationships.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

You are likely to spend time in different places and work closely in new associations as you combine good luck and good management. You share some memorable moments with a loved one. You are in touch with an innocence that comes from a life lived fully, which also has a quality of wisdom and the acceptance of the ever changing wonders of life. It would be good to say what you feel as you would be appreciated for your honesty. Good luck in finances and opportunities is encouraging. You are restless and move from one task to the other and pay impromptu visits to friends.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You are bold, courageous and frank while dealing with controversial, professional and family matters. You are likely to meet well known authoritative people and share ideas and spend a fruitful time in their association. A stimulating project should be taken as a challenge that would further and promote your business prospects. Good planning and management lead to progressive and productive ventures. You may take a short break before starting on a new project to renew your energy. You are able to achieve a lot at home and at work with youthful energy.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

Your social life is expansive and a variety of people connect with you. You are stronger and wiser after having gone through trouble and difficulty. It would be wiser to face difficult people and situations rather than escape as there would be victory and success in professional ventures. Don't take the one you love for granted but show your love and appreciation. Communications from overseas are hopeful and exciting as business opportunities are extended to you. Meditation is needed for gaining deeper insight into personal relations and complex situations.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

You have the ability to stand alone and have strong positive energy. You are independent, creative, original, ambitious, determined and self-assured. Adopting a realistic, practical and disciplined approach towards life would bring harmony at home. You would have good support from family members. While you work on one project another suddenly gains more importance and demands more attention. A financial windfall is possible as some backlog is handed to you after a period of time. Sports and physical activities keep you fit and energetic.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You are fortunate as things turn out well in difficult situations at work and home during this period. Your financial situation looks promising if you manage it well personally rather than trust upon others. Personal relationships are warm and comfortable as you spend beautiful moments with your loved one. A relaxed and light attitude would help to overcome negative thoughts. Examining the past in order to improve the future is certainly worthwhile, as long as you don't expend all your energy. Creative opportunities should not be ignored as it is likely to bring substantial professional material gain.

Indian women struggle to rise

(Contd from P-VI) The average Indian woman is married at 21.2 years, according to Census 2011, an improvement from 19.3 years in 1990, according to a government report.

The mean female age at marriage in rural areas is 20.7; in urban areas, 22.7, according to the latest census data from 2011.

While education is an efficient contraceptive -- Indian women with a college degree have 1.9 children during their lifetime, against 3.8 for illiterate woman -- it appears to only marginally slow the inevitability of early marriage.

Nearly 12 million Indian children were married before the age of 10 years, as IndiaSpend reported in June 2016; 7.84 million (65 per cent) married children were female, reinforcing the fact that girls are significantly more disadvantaged. Eight in 10 illiterate children who were married were also girls.

Also, as many as 1,403 females never attended any educational institution for every 1,000 males who have not, IndiaSpend reported in November 2015.

5. India's missing girls: Child sex ratio lowest in 60 years

India's child sex ratio is the worst in 60 years, indicating that girls continue to be aborted, killed or otherwise fatally neglected.

If India's child sex ratio does not improve, there will be 23 million fewer women (aged 29-40) than there should be by 2030, according to a United Nations Population Fund projection.

Sex selection was introduced in India to control population growth, based on the premise that since girls are harder, all else being equal, more survive childbirth than boys. In 1975, a paper in the journal Indian Paediatrics argued that this excess of girls was "unnecessary fecundity and that elimination of girls would lead to population control", wrote Sabu M. George -- a member of a committee to monitor a 1994 law that banned sex selection -- in his February 2016 Indian Express column. But despite the law, rising education levels -- and more

female role models, such as India's latest Olympian medal-



lists -- the child sex ratio continues to fall. *(In arrangement with IndiaSpend.org, a data-driven, non-profit, public interest journalism platform, with whom the writer is an analyst. The views expressed are those of IndiaSpend. Feedback at respond@indiaspend.org)*

Thin silver lining in dark clouds

(Contd from P-VI) by bagging triple-triples, almost an Olympic immortality. His golden feat in 100m, 200m and 4x100m relay in three Olympics, Beijing 2008, London 2012 and Rio 2016 will lend him a space in the books which shall be an inspiration to generation to come. He too announced his retirement from Olympics.

Several Olympic and World records were broken in Rio, raising the bar yet again in several sports.

Indian athletes may aspire to reach Olympics height, but they end up falling short. On the last day of the greatest

sporting show on Earth, India's Yogeshwar Dutt lost out tately to his Mongolian rival in the 65kg freestyle wrestling and the athletics entries came nowhere striking distance of the top finishers.

All this means that there would be a lot of soul-searching in India on why Rio was a practical failure for such a highly populated country. Can one hope that Tokyo 2020 be different?

(The writer can be reached at hardev.sanotra@ians.in)

"In what concerns you much, do not think that you have companions: know that you are alone in the world."

--- Henry David Thoreau

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Trumpery

IN the race to the US presidential election, Democrat Hillary Clinton seems to be ahead of the Republican President designate, Donald Trump, in the opinion polls. Donald Trump has deliberately presented a very dark picture of the US economy to pull in Afro-American and Latino voters by alienating them from the ruling democrats. In Virginia, Michigan and Ohio, Trump has emphasized the failure of the US government and Democrats to look after the minorities and the areas where they are huddled. He says that they are less safe than the war zones where the US is fighting. Poverty, crime and unemployment have zoomed in the inner cities of the US under the Democrats. He knows why. But he has no real strategy. His message seems to be - "Vote for me and you have nothing to lose". That of course has a very negative tone.

Trump is backed by white racialists. His language is foul. To him, Mexican immigrants are rapists and murderers. He pretends to be championing Afro-Americans but his intemperate language has alienated many of them. A large number of African-Americans and Hispanics belong to the middle class and only 25-28% of them live in actual poverty. They do not answer to Donald Trump's description of them. Trump actually focuses on angry white men in his election speeches to address his core constituencies. His rallies in defence of minorities draw large white crowds. He may shed tears about the ghettos but it is obvious that he is aiming to garner their votes. At the bottom, Trump is a white supremacist.

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

A mixed bag

Like most other budgets in the past, Mr S B Chavan's budget proposals for 89-90 are a mixed bag. It has a good blend of populism and realism; it is both kind and harsh. Mr Chavan has shown, a predictable idea of sparing the weaker lot by not proposing any fresh taxation measures which would adversely affect this section. The thoughts behind this apparent kindness are not difficult to read. With the Lok Sabha election scheduled within this calendar year, Mr Chavan had to exercise discretion in respect of sugar, tea, POL, kerosene, vanaspati, beedi etc. Few will grudge this act of magnanimity of the Finance Minister towards the weaker sections. It is Mr Chavan's rather inconsiderate move in being harsh to the middle-class is the most amazing aspect of the budget.

The budget proposals show that barring reduction of the income tax rates in certain lower categories, more precisely the decision to provide relief at the lowest slab from Rs. 18,000 to Rs. 25,000 there is very little to cheer the middle-class. It is this segment of people who have by and large felt the punch of the Finance Minister's budgetary ugliness. This time too it has not been an exception. The hike in Central Excise duty on cigarettes, pan masala, cars, two-wheelers, television sets. Two-in-one cannot please the middle class. Mr Chavan, however, might have calculated that in a country of vast number of have-nots, the strength of the middle-class is relatively small, hence they may not matter much in terms of votes.

A welcome feature of this year's budget proposals is the slashing of Defence budgets, by a clean Rs. 200 crore. Although a marginal slash, it is a reflection of gradual improvement the country's ties with some of the neighbouring countries, including Pakistan and China. However, no country can in its right senses remain

philosophical about its defence preparedness programmes, especially since most countries have been laying increasing accent on modernization and sophistication of its arms and weaponry. However, the most disturbing facet of the budget proposals is considerable rise in non-plan expenditure. Fixed at Rs. 54,347 crore, the non-plan expenditure will be by way of salaries and wages for the vast army of government servants. How the non-plan expenses can be reduced effectively is what our economists must find out so that the burden of tax which seems to inevitable fall on the common man can be reduced to the minimum.

Traffic regulations for Mawlonghat Area

An official press release says that in order to ease traffic congestion in Motphran and Iewduh areas, the Sweeper Lane which includes the Sweeper Police point upto the Mawlonghat, will be opened for two-way traffic with effect from March 6 next.

In this regard entry from Sweeper Point towards Mawlonghat Point will be allowed for vehicles to travel both ways, with the restriction that there will be "No Parking" for vehicles from Sweeper Point upto Mawlonghat Point this was notified by the East Khasi Hills Senior Superintendent of Police, Mr W R Marbaniang. There will be also "No Entry" for city and mini buses at Sweeper Point towards Mawkhar Point. The concerned buses will directly proceed towards Mawlonghat Syndicate Bus Stand from Sweeper Point, instead of going via the Mawkhar Point, except in the case of buses going to Jaiaw side, the press release adds.

Lobbying for lifting of NGT ban on coal

By H H Mohrmen

Earlier it was only the MP of Shillong parliamentary constituency who had taken pains to move from pillar to post to get the ban on coal mining in Meghalaya imposed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT), lifted. Every now and then Pala would lead a delegation of mine owners to meet the leaders in new Delhi and a cursory glance at his Facebook updates will help one realize how serious Mr Vincent H. Pala has been on this particular job. No prizes for guessing why, since he himself is open about the fact that he is or was earlier in the coal business. But lately many political parties which include both national and regional parties have joined the band wagon to lobby for the lifting of the ban on coal mining.

The next party to lobby for the lifting of the coal ban was the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which is again not surprising since the president of the organization Mr Shibun Lyngdoh is not only from the coal mine area but he himself was earlier or is still involved in the coal business and it was also mentioned in the media reports that many of its prominent members were also in the coal business. But the last party in the queue to make a beeline for and demand the lifting of the ban is the Nationalist People's Party (NPP) the leaders of which had recently visited the coal mine areas in East Jaintia hills. On returning from the area the NPP leaders blamed Dr Mukul Sangma's government for purposely delaying the ban which has affected people who depend on coal business for their livelihood. It was also alleged that the state government's delay in coming up with a mining policy is the reason which prevents the NGT from lifting the more than two year old ban on coal

mining. There is no denying the fact that people have lost their livelihoods because of the ban, but it is also true that the bright side of the ban is that it has compelled many people to go back to farming which is a more sustainable livelihood alternative. In spite of the fact that the state government has done precious little to help support those who were affected by the ban, the good news is that people have on their own start looking for alternative livelihoods and also gone back to the mother of all livelihood providers in the state which is farming. They may have not been able to earn as much as they did when coal business was at its peak but at least the ban has forced them to explore other livelihood opportunities available.

Why are all political parties in the state competing among themselves to be seen as the saviours of the coal business? This is the most important question! Is it because of the influence that the coal money has in the state? Or to be precise, is the competition because of the apprehension of a dull 2018 election without the coal money? On his return from Khliehriat and Ladrymbai, the Tura MP, Conrad Sangma admitted that the ban has affected the livelihoods of many people, but when this writer asked him if he had ever visited the three dead rivers of Jaintia hills, the MP's reply was in the negative.

The crux of the matter is that the pollution of the waters of the river Kupli is what compelled the people of the Dima Hasao District to lodge a complain with the NGT against the rat-hole mining in the state. But what is surprising is that none of the parties which had lobbied for lifting of the ban had even tried to understand the problem, not to mention visiting the

mining.

villages affected by dead rivers. It seems like the parties which support the lifting of the ban do not even want to accept the truth that the rivers flowing from the coal mine areas are now lifeless because of the acidic water which flows from the mines. Conrad Sangma after being reminded about the dead rivers, with the benefit of the hindsight agreed that coal mining has damaged the environment and that the state needs to come up with a policy where extraction of minerals is sustainable and cause minimal damage to the environment. To use his own words, Conrad stressed on the need to find 'a middle path', wherein mining can continue with little or no damage to the environment. The question is, when it comes to mining, is there such thing as middle path?

It is a known fact that any extraction of minerals will cause damage to the environment. The main purpose of coming up with the policy is to see that mining is controlled and only bare minimum damage is caused to the environment. The question is when the government is not even involving other stakeholders in the process of formulating the mining plan, how can it assure the people of the state that the plan will cause least damage to the environment? How can the government make sure that the same thing will not repeat again in the new dispensation?

The two other pertinent questions are related to dead rivers and abandoned mines. Here the first question is: Is there any plan to revive the dead rivers in the government proposed mining plan? To reclaim the dead rivers should in fact be the issue that requires government's immediate attention, because it is the lifeline of the people. It is a common belief that if the river is left alone and people refrain from interfering with its activity, the rivers can

naturally albeit gradually recover its pristine glory.

That is what has exactly happened in some of the polluted rivers now. It has only been two summers since mining was stopped and we have reports of fishes coming back to the rivers downstream. Anglers have started fishing in the Leshka dam which was a dead water body a few years ago; villagers have spotted fishes along the river Prang and this is good news at least to the people living downstream if not for our policy makers. One will have to wait and see if the fish will stay for good or leave the river again as soon as monsoon ends and rain stops falling. It is a common recurrence that once the rain stops then water level in the river will recede and fresh and pollution-free water will also stop flowing, leaving only acidic water which seeps from both active and abandoned mines flowing to the river. This has been a regular occurrence which had killed all the fishes in the polluted rivers.

The other important question is related to exhausted mines. Questions can be asked if there is any provision in the mining plan with regards to exhausted mines. Exhausted and abandoned mines are other major problems which are also a threat to the people who live in the coal mine areas. Many a times huge craters are cut into the earth with deep shafts of hundreds of meters deep are left unattended when the coal is exhausted.

In conclusion, rather than just call for withdrawal of blanket ban on coal mining; the political parties would have been able to be of a service to the people and the future generation of the state if they would have raises these very important questions and brought the issue to its logical conclusion. Mining in the state will resume if and only when the state addresses all these pertinent questions.

TO THE EDITOR

Teachers' agitation

Editor,

Much has been written and highlighted in the media about the demands of the Joint Action Committee of Teachers' Association of Meghalaya (JACATAM) and its series of agitation which began in 2013. Since then, not much headway has been made in provincialization of teachers' services or other related issues. In this connection I would like to make the following observations and remarks:

1. Provincialization of Deficit School Teachers' services by Meghalaya Government was first demanded by the Khasi-Jaintia Deficit Schools Teachers' Association sometime during 1984-86. Since then till now the Government of Meghalaya has been maintaining the same stoic stance that this cannot be done due to huge funds' involvement, legal and constitutional issues and other hurdles.

2. It is a fact that in Meghalaya we have too many categories of Schools like Government Schools, Deficit Schools, Deficit Pattern schools, Aided Schools, Ad-hoc Grant Schools and Non-Aided Schools. Except for the first category, the rest are all private schools established, managed and run either by village durbars, private individuals, societies, NGOs, Catholic and Presbyterian missions, Church of God and other

Churches, Hindu Mission, Muslim Mission or others. Too many categories of schools make over-all administration very difficult and complicated. This could have been avoided had there been a sound education Policy in place. The age old Education Policy of 1981 is a sham and a big humbug. A well thought out and sound Education Policy will be a panacea for all the ills and infirmities in the Education scenario. Perhaps there was no need for teachers to form Associations and agitate had a robust Education Policy been there together with sound rules and guidelines. Moreover, there would not have been too many categories of schools (except government and private schools).

3. The Government cannot stop or ban people, individual or groups of individuals, minorities etc to establish, manage and run schools, colleges or universities but it can only regulate them through legislation, policies and rules.

4. I personally do not know whether the Government of Meghalaya will eventually be able to "Provincialize" the services of the teachers of the different categories of private schools in Meghalaya because of the obvious reasons given by the government and because they are not the government employees. To provincialise their services means all deficit, deficit pattern, Ad-hoc and Aided schools including non-teaching staffs will have to be provincialised which are

not the government's priorities. This will put the government into a lot of problems- financial, legal, constitutional and otherwise. Moreover, provincialisation cannot be a piecemeal exercise. It needs a holistic approach.

5. It will be great for the teaching and non-teaching community if the government can fulfill the promises given to the JACATAM representatives on August 24, last through the Chief Secretary. But, there will be a wide gap between promises and fulfillment.

6. Above all, the education scenario in Meghalaya will see a lot of change is there is a sound Education Policy in place together with well thought out Rules and Regulations, Guidelines etc and also the social and political will to rededicate our services for the cause of education. Even the wishes of JACATAM and that of one S.Syiem of KJDSTA will converge and be fulfilled in this final hope.

Yours etc
Philip Marwein,
Via email.

Why oppose development?

Editor,

Apropos the news item (ST Aug 2, 2016) regarding the decision of the KHADC not to grant NOC for the construction of the road to Mawthabab, I was wondering why in this part of the globe savages still exist. These clans do not want to march towards civilization. They would keep

opposing development initiatives be it the railways, roads, New Township and what next! On the other hand they are silent on destructive coal mining, sale of raw limestone to Bangladesh, merciless felling and burning of trees for extracting charcoal, smuggling of timber, etc. They never raise any concern whenever there are incidents of rape. I should term those who oppose the road project to Mawthabab as ruthless rogue elements and mindless people who for their own publicity, selfish interests and hidden agenda are obstructing development in the state.

In fact as civilized citizens one should welcome all developmental initiatives including the instant road project without asking whether the project is sponsored by Mr "A" or Mr "B". Now it is clear that the KHADC is a mere spineless, unprincipled body sheltering under the umbrella of the outdated Sixth Schedule that has succumbed to the intimidation of a bunch of mindless, savage and rogue elements.

Yours etc.,
B N Lyngdoh
Shillong-2

A Hospital in tatters

Editor,

The commonly known Robert's Hospital Jaiaw, is always in the news for the

Veteran BJP leaders being rehabilitated

By Harihar Swarup

After quite some time, the centre has appointed competent persons as governors. In the poll-bound state of Punjab, a senior and experienced BJP leader V P Singh Badnore has been installed to the gubernatorial post. The last governor of the state was a senior Congress leader and former home minister Shivraj Patil.

In Assam, another leader of long political standing, Banwarilal Purohit has been selected while in Manipur well-known Najma Heptulla, having long years of Parliamentary experience, has been appointed. Who are these leaders and what is their background? V P Singh has completed his Rajya Sabha term in July, this year, but denied re-nomination to the Upper House. This was considered unfair to him as normally a Rajya Sabha member gets the second term. Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje, for whatsoever reason, opposed second term for V P Singh. He has, however, been compensated with his appointment as governor of Punjab. He belongs to the royal family of Badnore, near Bhillwara, in Rajasthan. He is said to be a protégé of the late Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, a tall BJP leader who was a three-term Chief Minister of Rajasthan.

V P Singh had long inns as an MLA -- from 1977 to 1999 -- without a break when Shekhawat was the chief minister. He was cabinet minister from 1999 to 2004 during the first term of Vasundhara Raje as CM. He was an MP in the 13th Lok Sabha. He holds expertise in wildlife as he had led a Special Task Force to rehabilitate tigers in Sariska wildlife sanctuary.

Both Purohit and Najma were members of the Congress for long years but fell out with the then leadership and joined the BJP. They rose steadily in their new party. Seventy six-year-old, Purohit is a veteran politician from the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. He was two term member of Lok Sabha, representing first the Congress and then the BJP.

As far back 2007, he landed in controversy, when he claimed that he had arranged an-hour long meeting between the then RSS chief Balasaheb Deoras and the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1989. It was alleged that Rajiv Gandhi had entered into a secret pact in exchange for the RSS support to the Congress in the 1989 elections. Congress leaders vehemently denied that any such meeting took place and a pact signed; the matter ended there. However, this was the beginning of trouble for him in the Congress which led to his resignation from the party.

In politics, Purohit was elected to Maharashtra assembly on Congress ticket in 1989 and 1980, after which

wrong reasons. Time and again this oldest hospital in Shillong is attracting our attention to the ills it has accumulated that it seems to have gone beyond control. One day I visited this Hospital for reimbursement of medical bills. I reached at around 10.30 AM waited there for one hour but no one turned up at the office. Then I saw a gentleman by name Mr Rynjah. I enquired from him about my bills, but he referred me to the empty office chamber.

I told him that no one is available at the office and that I have been waiting outside since 10.30 AM. He told me to wait till they come and that he could not do anything about their late arrival to the office. He was also very rude in his reply. His body language was such that he felt disturbed if someone entered his Office chamber. I learnt from

party sent him to Lok Sabha twice—1984 and 1989. In 1991, when he was still a Congress MP, he reportedly took part in Kar Seva in Ayodhya, leading to his expulsion from the party. The same year, he fought unsuccessfully for the Lok Sabha on BJP ticket. He won his next Lok Sabha election in 1996, but lost again in 2009.

Prior to his appointment as governor, Purohit was managing editor of the Hitavada, published from Nagpur, having its editions in Raipur, Jabalpur and Bhopal. Founded by Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1911, the daily was run by Servants' of India Society.

Najma Heptulla, during her political career had occupied several positions. She has been a member of both the Congress and the BJP. After being in the Congress for more than three decades, she joined the BJP in 2004. As per reports, she left the Congress because of her sour relationship with Congress President Sonia Gandhi. It was believed that she was associated with BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee and hence joined the BJP.

As a Congress member, she held many positions. She was the party's general secretary and spokesperson in 1986. She was elected as Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha in 1985 and held that position for 16 years; she was elected to the upper house five times between 1985 and 2012.

Rising rapidly after joining the BJP, Najma, contested for the post of vice-president against UPA's Hamid Ansari. Though she lost the elections, her skills and qualities came to be recognized by all. During Nitin Gadhkari's tenure as BJP President in 2010, Najma was appointed as one of the Vice-Presidents of the party. She lost her position after Rajnath Singh took over as the party President.

The time when NDA was in power, Najma gained the position of head of the Indian Council of Cultural Affairs and headed many delegations abroad. BJP never lost its trust in her and hence, she was appointed as the Minister of Minority Affairs in the Narendra Modi government.

Born in Bhopal on April 13, 1940, Najma obtained a Masters Degree in Zoology and a Ph.D in Cardiac Anatomy. In 1966, she married Akbar Ali Heptulla and the couple is blessed with three daughters. Her husband passed away in 2007. Najma is a grand-niece of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, front ranking leader in India's independence movement. (IPA Service)

sources that this Mr Rynjah is an elder of the Church in Shillong. Is he not preaching sermons from the pulpit to others to behave properly, be disciplined, help people love the poor etc?

Rynjah's behaviour belies his preaching. But that's what our preachers, elders, church leaders do nowadays. They never practice what they preach. That's why there are so many churches nowadays and so many ills in the society. Repent, wake before it is too late, Oh thou church leaders!

Yours etc.,
Synsharleng Lyngdoh,
Shillong - 6

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

"If you would convince a man that he does wrong, do right. But do not care to convince him. Men will believe what they see. Let them see."

--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

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Message from Singapore

SINGAPORE is one of the shining examples of a developed island state in the world. Singapore's deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered the first lecture in a series on transforming India. Both of them rejected the idea of gradualism which meant slow progress. Using a cricket phrase, the Singapore Deputy Prime Minister said that scoring signals would not do. What is needed is rapid progress. Modi is committed to fast and dynamic change. He said that transformation could come only by modernising India's 19th Century antiquated administrative machinery. But the whole process has got to be driven by bright new ideas. His vision is indeed glorious. But the Indian government is scared of moving at jet speed. Old slogans about economic policy still prevail. Take Monsanto for example. It applied for genetically modified seeds to increase agricultural yield but its application was rejected. That was inimical to transformation. Governance in India is still prisoner of old fashioned shibboleth.

Tharman Shanmugaratnam asked India to take risks and speed up development. Using cricketing analogy again, he asked for 'more fours and sixes' to be hit by the Indian government. The return from risk taking may be great. The Indian economy's fundamentals are getting increasingly stronger. Gainful employment for millions of young Indians is a must. The unrealized potential of the country has to be fulfilled. That will entail the implementation of new ideas and their putting into practice. Micro management will not suffice. Singapore has made rapid strides inviting talent from abroad. This idea bears replication in India.

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

Hunger strike by NFPT

A two-day hunger strike organized by the National Federation of Posts and Telegraphs Employees outside the Office of the Post Master General on Wednesday was the first stage of Nation Wide agitational programme to draw attention to various demands including the scrapping of the Industrial Relations Bill and to protest against the abolition of the posts of Mail Overseer and orderly peons from March 1. Mrs Geeta Bhattacharya, a circle secretary of the NFPTA said that the Industrial Relations Bill, curtails their right to protest. The agitators are pressing for what they call a second time bound promotion, which amount to a rise in payscales. This is necessary, because the Government has put a ban on fresh recruitments resulting in stagnation they claim. They are also demanding that Reserve Trained Pool personnel, (people who are trained to act as substitutes) be absorbed into the regular service when the posts fall vacant.

Mr K C Biswas, also on hunger strike, said that Extra Departmental agencies, that is small village post offices run by private individuals, are to be shut down. This, according to the NFPTA is scandalous, as these small post offices have rendered valuable service in remote areas throughout the years. More employees are expected to join the sit in hunger strike on Thursday.

Naga Peoples Council may join National Front

The Nagaland Peoples Council is exploring the possibilities of associating itself with the National Front at the all India level. The NPC has recently formed a

subcommittee to work out a formula so as to enable them to function as either a constituent or an ally of the National Front without compromising its basic stand of retention of Naga identity within the national stream. The sub-committee headed by former Chief Minister Vizol includes senior leaders Vamuzo, Mr K L Chiah and Mr Chalie Kevichusa. The subcommittee is expected to submit its report for further discussion and deliberations by the party's central executive. A final decision is likely to be adopted the party convention to be held at Dimapur on April 11 and 12.

Mr V P Singh, the Convenor of the National Front recently indicated in Calcutta about some regional parties from the North East joining the Front. According to NPC sources the NPC leaders who recently met the front office bearers felt that their association would be mutually beneficial.

Assam CPI leader's plea with left forces

CPI leader Mr Promode Gogoi has asked the left and democratic forces not to undermine the role of Asom Gana Parishad in evolving a political alternative to Congress(I) in the state. In an article in the special issue of the Assamese of the party on the eve of CPI state conference Mr Gogoi conceded that the process of formation of an alternative was quite difficult due to lack of any consensus among the opposition parties over the main issues including those of foreign nationals, Assamese identity, tribal identity and minority rights. Mr Gogoi said that would be unrealistic to ignore the role to be played by AGP in the recent situation.

Debate around the Draft Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill in India

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

For long India has redeveloped itself as a country which encompasses medical facilities with world class facilities, at prices which was far lesser than most developed countries. Medical tourism is accepted as a crucial form of tourism in India. Many major hospitals in the country often provide sightseeing trips around the country as part of the "Indian experience". However, the proliferation of such an industry has exposed a few darker spots as well. And one such issue is the thriving institution of fertility tourism in India popularly called "commercial surrogacy". In surrogacy, a woman carries the child of intending parent/s via different techniques including IVF transplantation. When the same is done by a woman for monetary benefits, it is termed commercial surrogacy.

Commercial surrogacy was allowed in India for the first time in 2002 and since then it has grown into a massive industry within the medical profession. While no clear economic numbers are available, a World Bank study on the same conducted in 2012, estimated the business to be worth almost \$400 million a year with 3000 fertility clinics running across the country. However the legal complications with regards to commercial surrogacy came to the fore for the first time in 2008 when a Japanese couple contacted an Indian woman for surrogacy. But before the woman could deliver, the couple got divorced. Thus a child was born parentless as well as without citizenship. Though the child was finally handed over to the grandmother it opened questions towards a practice that had continued unabated for a number of years. The culmination of these resulted in the draft Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill that was approved by the Cabinet in 2016, but not yet released for the public.

The Bill provides for surrogacy as an option to parents who can't naturally have children, lack access to other reproductive techn-

ologies, want biological children and can find a willing participant among their relatives, and have been married for five years. This would come as a major blow to most of the fertility clinics in India as most of them have a thriving surrogacy unit which stands on the edifice of monetary benefits, with a few exceptions. The Bill also seeks to clarify the legal position of such a child and ensures that a child born of such surrogacy would have all legal rights as a citizen would. The bill seeks to restrict overseas Indians, foreigners, unmarried couples, gays and live-in couples from commissioning a surrogate child. The surrogate mother has to be a married woman who has herself borne a child and is neither an NRI nor a foreigner. Couples with biological or adopted children also cannot commission a surrogate child. Commercial surrogacy will result in 10 years rigorous imprisonment.

As expected, the Bill has generated a lot of debate around the country. Opponents of the Bill have argued that by classifying classes of citizens on the basis of their lifestyle, sexual orientation and life choices, the Bill seeks to violate the Fundamental Rights as laid down Article 14 of the Indian Constitution. However, the Bill seeks to be in consonance with the legal issues pertaining to the same. Gay rights are still and evolving issue in India. While the Supreme Court is sitting on a review petition pertaining to the status of gay rights, at the same time no clear legal loci stand on the same has emerged. Hence at this point, conferring legal rights on a surrogate child to gay parents would endanger the rights of the child itself. Only when the law can take an evolved stand clearly defining the rights of each individual in such a relationship, can the Surrogacy(Regulation) bill would work. For example, let us look at the fact that gay rights are not recognised in India as of now and surrogacy for a gay couple is announced. What if the couple decides to separate tomorrow, then who would

be entitled to custody of the child. What compensation would one partner pay to another? A similar situation may emerge in the case of live-in couples, unmarried couples among others. Hence at this point, restricting surrogacy to relationships which have a clear standing in the eyes of law protects the rights of the child and ensures consonance with Article 14 of the Indian Constitution rather than doing disservice to it.

The second major issue relates to the question of disallowing commercial surrogacy and restricting foreigners from availing the this in India. This is a step in the right direction if numbers speak. Since the inception of commercial surrogacy, a number of situations have come to fore which have brought unpleasant legal questions surrounding commercial surrogacy involving foreigners. In 2012, an Australian couple who had twins by surrogacy, arbitrarily rejected one while selecting the other. Such issues reveal the complexities that surround commercial surrogacy.

The factor that is closely linked to the issue of commercial surrogacy is the exploitation of women in the name of commercial surrogacy. In 2014, Al Jazeera had carried a story which documented how women were exploited in the name of commercial surrogacy. While they carried the child for nine months and nurtured the womb as its own, often fertility clinics pocketed more than fifty percent of the amount that was promised to them. Over the years a number of news reports carried the same stories which were in essence the story of the exploited. There have been few success stories of women who ended up being surrogate mothers and being paid what they deserved; most have ended in dejection and despair.

Thus, it is not surprising to read that most countries of the world have banned commercial surrogacy. Thailand, which was till recently considered the commercial surrogacy factory of the world, banned

the same after an Australian couple who had twins through commercial surrogacy decided to leave the child with Down's syndrome behind while accepting the healthy child. Today there is absolute ban on commercial surrogacy in most countries of the world, with complete ban on all forms of surrogacy in a few. Unlike The Hague Convention on Adoption, there is no clear convention on surrogacy worldwide either. Seen in this light, it is no surprise that the government has taken a step towards this in consonance with global norms.

The issue of commercial surrogacy also reveals the dark underbelly of obsession with one's own genetic credentials or genetic makeup of certain kind. A famous Bollywood star had become father of a surrogate child recently. While one cannot question the desire for absorbing oneself in the happiness of parenthood, yet the same star could have taken the route of adoption as well. Perhaps the question of genetic markers of a certain kind weighed on the star's mind. The banning of commercial surrogacy can perhaps open up doors for adoption as well. In a country like India where one encounters frequent stories of children being abandoned by parents out of poverty or social stigma, especially the girl child; banning commercial surrogacy would encourage parents to look towards adoption as a means of fulfilling their dreams of parenthood.

The draft Surrogate (Regulation) Bill thus seeks to comprehensively address the issue of surrogacy in India. While there are provisions that will definitely evolve with time, yet the heart of the bill is undoubtedly banning commercial surrogacy. This is indeed a step in the right direction. Commercial exploitation of a women's womb by exploitation her helplessness is the worst form of crime a society can commit on a woman. An evolved society is one that seeks to protect the right of all. A poor woman is undoubtedly the voiceless of the lot and the draft Surrogacy Bill, 2016 seeks to protect her.

(Views expressed by the author are entirely personal in nature).

Penalise law-breakers

Editor,
At the outset I wish to express my sincere appreciation to your esteemed daily for the services rendered especially to the citizens of Shillong. My immediate attention is drawn to the two photographs published in your paper dated Aug 23 and 24, 2016 focusing on the illegal and unruly parking of vehicle No ML - 05 M 7996 on the public footpath near the Malki point and the dumping of the construction materials on the narrow footpath at Sylhetipara in Laban respectively. Such illegal acts by any person should not go unpunished and such person or persons should be exposed publicly and their names and addresses should be published in all the local newspapers particularly in the Shillong Times which is widely read. Lastly, I would like to request the Traffic Police, the PWD, the MUDA and the SMB to take legal action against such culprits whether they are VIPs or common citizens as law is equal to all. I urge upon all the citizens of Shillong to join hands in fighting such law-breakers criminals who are a menace to society.

Yours etc.,
R.L. Soanes,
Raid Laban Dorbar

TO THE EDITOR

Education and Accountability

Editor
Through your esteemed daily I wish to highlight the plight of the education system in our state and the consequences that follow. As a parent there is nervousness about what lies ahead for our children. I would like to draw the attention of the Education Department about the differences in the quality of education offered by the premier colleges in the state and the other institutions. I am able to draw a comparison because I have children who could make it to the premier college and others who had to make do Sankardev College. The difference in the two institutions is that in the former most of the classes are taken by senior and experienced teachers even for morning shift classes. In Sankardev college however, most of the classes especially in the morning shifts and some even for the day shifts, are taken mostly by part-timers with very little experience. I have nothing against new comers as everyone at a certain point starts as a newcomer. But my question is why there are no senior teachers or

permanent teachers taking some of the subjects because when I went to fill the form for my children I was able to meet a lot of senior and permanent teachers. So where are these teachers? Don't our children deserve to be taught by these senior teachers?

When I paid the admission fees the fee structure is the same for both Day shift and Morning shift. So if there is no difference in fees why is there discrimination in the quality of teaching provided to different categories of students in the same institution? Further as an informed parent I am aware that there is a rule where teachers have to be in the college for at least five hours. His applies to all institutions especially government aided ones. I am aware that Sankardev College is a deficit college which mean government aided. Even students are aware that teachers have to be in college for a certain number of hours to enable students to meet them and clear doubts if any. In Sankardev College you hardly see any teacher as one would immediately leave as soon as his or her class is over. As a parent I would like to know why certain rules of UGC apply to certain college and not to others? This really concerns me as a parent, especially in

a highly competitive and dwindling employment avenues in a state like ours. I hope Sankardev College takes this as a constructive criticism and do the needful in the interest of the students.

Yours etc.,
B Lyngdoh,
Via email

Inefficient administration!

Editor,
Through your esteemed daily I would like to highlight the way staff is adjudged by the Chief Post Master General(C PMG) of N.E Circle, Shillong. Drunkenness during duty hours especially among the group D officials is a common phenomenon. The entire GPO compound is populated by "tenants" not serving in any office. The quarters have been rented out and this has added to the "population". Outsiders are free to roam about the locality and gamble in this so call rented house. This is causing great nuisance. Numerous complaints had been lodged in this regard but everything is set aside as 'baseless.' Is this how a Government servant should act? If not why has the CPMG not acted against the officials concerned?

Yours etc.,
Michael Thyriani,
Via email

Issues with Provincialisation

By Albert Thyriani

Thanks to I Syiem for the information on provincialisation of schools in her letter, "Provin-cialisation" (ST Aug 25, 2016) in response to my write-up, "Too long a strike!" (ST Aug 23, 2016). I candidly concede that the author has more knowledge than me on the subject. Hope the Organising Secretary, Khasi Jaiintia Deficit School Teachers Association shares her expertise more often to educate the public on this controversial issue.

With regards to my 'jaundiced eye', well, everyone has his or her own perspective, including, I believe, the letter writer. In my letter were major concerns that the long strike should not jeopardize students' interests and welfare, that children's right should take precedence above all else. These were not touched by the writer so probably my views were objective. There is no question of looking for cheer leaders but even deficit teachers I spoke to agree with me on these points. The editorial of this paper, "Teachers' strike" (ST Aug 24, 2016) seems to be on the same page with my concerns. In their heart of hearts even the Joint Action Committee of All Teachers Association of Meghalaya (JACATAM) knew that the strike was too long and had to be called off half way through the talks with government. It yielded no tangible gain.

Let me try to address the other issues one by one. I. Syiem says that teachers were forced to take the drastic step (a fortnight long strike) as mild agitations did not draw government's attention. So teachers shifted responsibility entirely to the government. How good is our government in accepting such a blame? Or is the government a banana government? The soft nature of this government was exhibited time and again in bowing over backward to agitating groups. Remember how this Government obliged the 3-star Shillong based organizations, and cancelled the construction of a two-lane road in the neglected and backward South West Khasi Hills snatching away the dream of the people of seeing the only one good road in the district. KHADC under the 'dual post' holder PN Syiem too played convenient politics.

Coming back to the subject in hand, responsible people don't blame others easily! The excuse that a fortnight long strike was to attract Government's attention is not justified. Why should innocent students suffer just because teachers want to get the attention of the government? Was there no other option before the teachers before they embark on the unpopular move? Should children's right be sacrificed at the altar of politics between two entities? If a PIL is filed, the court will likely come hard on agitations that interfere with children's learning.

Coming to the role of Managing Committees (MCs), leave aside technicalities, (and I speak from experience) whenever there is a strike teachers do not seek permission from MCs. Information is all that is 'required'. It is amazing that no MC has ever questioned/ challenged teachers on their pre-decided strike. Though MCs are employers they are powerless because teachers are paid by the Government. This is as strange as it can get. According to me the Government should issue show cause notices to MCs for permitting their employees strike work.

At no point did I say that teachers who perform their duties should take responsibility for laggards among them. It is certainly the duty of the government to ensure performance. In the present system the Government has miserably failed to ensure quality and performance. Let me point out the followings which common people too are too aware. In many deficit schools teachers are very irregular. They come in and go out as they like. If their first class is at 11 am, they come at 11 am or even later. If the last class is at 2 pm they go home soon after the class

or even earlier. Actually six hours is the minimum working hours. Many teachers are in the school for two or three hours only and with little productivity. I know some teachers in Khasi Hills have two classes a day and play carom-board the whole day. There are deficit/ aided teachers who subcontract their job. Should a responsible Government reward such teachers with provincialisation? Will provincialisation change these malpractices? I am convinced that old habits die hard! Where is the mechanism to eliminate these unacceptable practices? If deficit system has failed, will provincialisation succeed?

In my letter I pointed to the existence of many non-performing deficit schools rather than non-performing teachers in these schools. Though only 10 or 20 candidates appear (selected from 100 or more students) in SSLC the pass percentage is dismal. Should teachers of such schools be given as huge an incentive as provincialisation? Can Government be blamed for this non-performance? You can have a go at the DSEOs for neglecting their duties but if you are a teacher you need to be responsible and perform your duties. It must be placed on record that there are hard working, dedicated, committed and exemplary deficit teachers. Unfortunately there are others of the extreme nature (particularly in non-missionary run schools). Should performers and non-performers be rewarded equally? You don't need rocket science to answer this question. Common sense will do! No blanket provincialisation as S. Kshiar recommended in his letter, "On JACATAM Agitation" (ST Aug, 26, 2016). Hence before the government provincialises schools (subject to MC's compliance) a thorough assessment of each teacher is imperative.

Syiem readily declares that if 'missionary deficit schools wish to take education in the state to the next level, the teachers too want the same and the deficit system is certainly not a hindrance to that'. I wish it were true. My limited point is with so many strikes and boycott of classes how will the authorities take their schools to the next level? Will provincialisation end all agitations? Will provincialisation make teachers more responsible, committed and dedicated? Will they be more regular in their work? Will results in board examination improve? Will quality of education improve? Unlikely, particularly in rural areas! That provincialisation will have a positive impact on the educational scenario in our State is wishful thinking!

Syiem argues that 10% of the state's share in paying salaries to more than 14,000 teachers is not a burden to the public exchequer. There is no point in discussing this as the Government forthrightly conveyed to the agitating teachers that provincialisation is a burden on the state's exchequer. The fund starved state has to shell out an additional Rs 650 crore for the purpose per month.

It is common knowledge that many private schools are doing much better than deficit schools though teachers of the former are paid much lower than their counterparts in the latter. To me, the Government should reward these performing schools by upgrading them to deficit system and withdraw the grants from non-performing deficit schools. This will bring in accountability. It is learned that JACATAM also insists on non-transfer of services under the proposed provincialisation. If teachers value accountability they should volunteer to be transferred even in the deficit system. Accountability and a teacher assessment mechanism in place should be the norm. And this should be made amply clear to teachers.

“Do not hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for love of it.”

--- Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

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Distorting Indian Culture

MINISTER of state for culture and tourism Mahesh Sharma seems bent on causing a decline in the number of foreign women visiting India. The number has gone down since the notorious gang rape in Delhi in 2012 which has also been filmed by the BBC. The fall was three percent annually from 2013-2015. If it is due to the lack of safety of female tourists coming to India, it is the Indian government, especially the tourism ministry which should be held responsible. Telling female tourists from abroad that they should not wear short dresses and skirts is preposterous. It is like saying that Indian female tourists going abroad should not wear sarees. Foreign women come to India to get a taste of Indian culture. There is no doubt that Indian culture is different from Western. No erotica like Konarak and Khajuraho exist in the west. Besides, female tourists have been coming to India in groves wearing western dress and there had been no attack on them in the past. India is supposed to welcome every tourist with a smile. The present government believes in 'athithi devo bhava' (the guest is God). There is also an economic angle to it. Tourism has to be promoted to bring in foreign exchange. Homilies about what clothes the visitors should wear can only deplete such earnings.

Much too much is being said by some BJP ministers about the unique cultural values of India. The BJP has been in government in the past and there never had been such an unnecessary fuss. Besides, Mahesh Sharma who functions in a cosmopolitan city like Delhi should be aware of the social norms in the metropolis and other big cities. Women have to go to work, sometimes at night. And they find it convenient to work in western clothes. Short skirts may not be all that common but jeans are favoured by most of them. Excessive westernisation may not be a good thing but women cannot be forced to conform to an inconvenient dress code. It may be noted that some of them won medals in the Olympics not by observing traditional Indian values or following the dictates of the joint family system.

LOOKING BACK

March 2, 1989

PM sets up 3-man body on NE tribal institutions

The Prime Minister has set up a three-member committee headed by the Meghalaya Chief Minister, Mr Purno A Sangma, to prepare a paper on village councils, village development board and traditional tribal institutions in the hill areas of the North Eastern region as an alternative to Panchayati Raj system. The other two members of the committee are the Nagaland Chief Minister, Mr S C Jamir, and the Mizoram Chief Minister, Mr Lalthanhawla. The committee has been constituted since the panchayati raj system in the rest of the country would not be applicable in the tribal areas of the region. The Committee which met for the first time in Shillong on February 28, discussed the various existing tribal institutions and legislations available in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram.

Among other, the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act 1978, the Nagaland Village Development Board Rules, the Mizoram Village Council Act, the Garo Hills Village Council Act etc were among the important legislations discussed in the meeting. The Committee decided to visit the hill areas of Assam, Tripura and Manipur in the next two weeks. It is likely to submit its report to the union ministerial committee on panchayati raj by the end of the month.

ABSU denies link with Congress-I

The ABSU has denied any links with the

Congress(I) leaders and has reacted strongly to the allegation that the Bodo movement is being controlled and guided by the Congress leaders, in a press release issued here on Wednesday. ABSU vice president Mr Pradeep Kumar Diomary said that such allegations are an insult to the Bodo people.

Condemning the "sinister" and "politically motivated" game being played by the AGP leaders, Mr Diomary said that the reported statement of the arrested ABSU leader, Mr Sonaram Baglary to the police that the Union Home Minister, Mr Buta Singh had asked the ABSU to demand for a separate State was totally false and had, in fact, been fabricated by the senior Assam Police officials to malign the ABSU. Denying that Mr Baglary had ever met Mr Buta Singh or Mr Santosh Mohan Dev, Mr Diomary challenged the AGP leaders to prove the veracity of their statement.

Assam govt advised to talk to ABSU

Union Minister of State for Home Mr Santosh Mohan Dev said today that the Centre had advised the Assam government to hold talks with the All Bodo Students Union. After inaugurating the government sponsored book fair, Mr Dev told newsmen "we have advised the state government to talk to the Bodo leaders." He however, did not elaborate.

Signing LEMOA with US endangers India's security

New Delhi's strategic autonomy compromised

By Arun Srivastava

India and the US has given a concrete shape and face to their newly evolved companionship by signing the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) that will allow the two countries to provide logistics support to each other's fighter planes, warships and personnel. Indian defence minister Manohar Parrikar who is in USA has accomplished the task of signing the LEMOA as promised to the US defence secretary Ashton Carter during his visit to Delhi in April.

LEMOA is a tweaked version of the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), which facilitates the provision of logistical support, supplies and services between the US military and the armed forces of partner countries on a reimbursable basis, and provides a framework that governs the exchange of logistics. The signing of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) was the top agenda of Parrikar in the US capital. While the US is keen to have the LEMOA signed, India is pushing for forward movement on high technology trade. But unfortunately the US leadership has so far been non-committal about it. They do not intend to give India any positive assurance at this stage.

Significantly, with the induction into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) earlier this year, India is eligible for higher technology purchases. The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) is the centerpiece of three foundational agreements that the US sees as the basis of long-term military cooperation - the expression "alliance" being anathema to India.

While India would be

pushing for the drone, the United States will push its case for the manufacture of American fighter jet planed in India under the 'Make in India' initiative. Obviously USA is going to get far more than India will get. It would not be exaggeration to say that USA has been using the supply of drone as a mechanism of arm-twisting to get access to manufacture fighter jet. Only a couple of months back, the Lockheed Martin, a premier defence technologies company from the United States, announced the start of manufacturing F-16 fighter jets in India, in support of 'Make in India' initiative. This would be one of the largest projects under the 'Make in India' initiative. Surprisingly, manufacturing of F-16 aircraft in India will also be conditional to Indian government's contractual commitment to purchase the aircraft for its armed forces.

Ironically, Parrikar had indicated that India was not looking for assembly at all, instead it was more interested for a company to join with an Indian partner and to start manufacturing here by Transfer of Technology (ToT) in most of the items. Many defence experts and air force personnel were surprised and disappointed at the move as it would be ensuring that F-16, a 40-year-old design and fourth generation fighter, would remain in the IAF for another 30-40 years.

The manner in which Parrikar has been single-minded in handling the defence deals, it makes it explicit that he is determined to open up the Indian defence establishment before the US officials. The newfound friendship between Modi

and Obama will soon witness India formally joining the group of close friends and allies of the USA. India under Modi rule has already distanced itself from NAM. It has been shifting away from Russia towards USA in defence sector.

The USA on its part will offer India a gift for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. During his visit to Boeing facility in Philadelphia where the US aerospace giant manufactures its CH-47F Chinook heavy-lift helicopters, Parrikar would be offered the Boeing which will be inducted into the Indian Air Force in 2019. The Chinooks will fill a crucial gap in the Indian Air Force's heavy-lift capabilities as it currently operates a solitary Soviet-origin Mi-26 chopper to deliver payloads to high altitudes. The chopper can be used for secondary missions such as aircraft recovery, disaster relief, medical evacuation and search and rescue. India is the 19th country to have selected the Chinook. The Chinook helicopters were introduced in 1962 and earlier variants were deployed in Vietnam.

US Secretary of State John Kerry and Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker are visiting New Delhi for the second Strategic and Commercial (S&C) dialogue. The US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter will follow them. Senior officials from 12 different US agencies will be part of the S&C dialogue that will be co-chaired by the US Secretaries and their Indian counterparts. The US officials and leaders are quite ebullient of their possible achievement. However their only disappointment is their inability to end the Obama tenure without any progress on neither a Bilateral Investment Treaty and a

common vision or approach to key issues at the World Trade Organization.

Nevertheless one of the key takeaways from Parrikar's visit would be signing of the 'Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement' (LEMOA). The move will allow USA to use India's bases as well as assets for replenishment of supplies and refuelling. This will be the sixth meeting between the two defence ministers. In the past, the US has shied away from offering its armed predator drones to India, which has

Prime Minister Modi is also expected to meet President Obama at the G20 summit in Hangzhou, China on September 4-5, for what will possibly be their last meeting as heads of government. All these exchanges will coincide with holding of the NAM summit in Venezuela on September 17-18. Unfortunately Modi will not participate at the meet. Parrikar's visit to the US Capital was advanced to conclude unfinished business before the makeover in Washington.

Modi and his colleagues are not sure of the attitude and approach of the next President towards India which is why they strive that the crucial agreements must be signed while Obama is in office. The long-awaited bilateral military logistics cooperation is just one item that is expected to be ticked off in a US-India defense agenda. Undoubtedly in the present situation US is now India's number one defense partner in terms of hardware supplies and operational exercises.

It is really intriguing how could the government go ahead with this agreement being aware of the fact that it is "disastrous" and will hit the independence of India's foreign policy. With this agreement, India will become a "full-fledged" military ally of Washington and would amount to "compromising" country's strategic autonomy. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Government-owned public schools in Meghalaya

Editor,

I have read letters to the editor which appeared in The Shillong Times pertaining to the exorbitant fees charged by Pine Mount School a Government Public School and by other Government Public Schools at Shillong, Jowai and Tura. Having examined closely the various fees imposed by these institutions, I agree with those who are against the hike in fees' which they say are prohibitively high, considering that these institutions are established, managed and run by the Education Department, Government of Meghalaya. I was wondering why on earth parents of students studying in these schools and the vigilant public including the KSU, chose to keep mum or have maintained stoic silence till date, except for one Mr P K Dwivedi and a few. Dwivedi has received torrential lambast for raising relevant issues concerning the whimsical and unjustified fee structure imposed by PMS and also by above named schools. It was also alleged in the letters that over and above the school fees imposed, the schools kept asking students to contribute, from time to time, for other miscellaneous items of expenditure. Now the question is, what are the affected parents doing all

this while? Are they suffering silently and grumbling individually with futility? The Hon'ble Guwahati High Court has already issued strictures in 2001 to the Government of Meghalaya for hiking school fees indiscriminately in the above named institutions without consulting the stakeholders and without the consent of the affected parents. What prevents parents of students studying in the above schools to go to the active Meghalaya High Court to address their grievances, if they have any?

Now coming to the points raised by one Evahunlin Ryndong in the letter column of ST dated 19.8.16 and to the other points put forth by the so called "concerned parents" of PMS, I want to state that the voices raised by them are the same as that of the school authorities concerned. Why should parents sing the song of the school authorities if not to be in their good books? Or why should the concerned school authorities echo their voices through the parents? The issues raised by Dwivedi are not at all wild allegations or harangue as alleged but they are genuinely raised for the improvement of the school concerned and in no way meant to tarnish the image of the school or to affect the morale of teachers and students. The letters of Evahunlin and others came out as a result of defending the school authorities and clamping down on the truth. Nobody likes the truth for truth is bitter. Instead, we should thank those who offer

constructive criticism. Even criticism of any kind keeps people or institutions on their toes.

Again coming to the school buildings and other assets created at PMS and in other Public Schools, it is the government of Meghalaya that has created them. Their maintenance, expansion, alterations etc is the responsibility of the Government. It is the duty of the school authorities (Principals, teachers and the Managing Committee) to move the Education Department for funds required. If the MCs cannot do that then it is useless to have them at all. Why ask parents to underwrite expenses for such by paying building fees, development fund other related hefty fees? Parents should pay only reasonable and justified fees and not development fees or other whimsical contributions and fees imposed by school authorities from time to time without accountability to the parents who foot the bills. It is time to account for each and every paisa realized from students. Moreover, parents should not question only the fee structure and the academic career of their wards but they should constantly do reality checks on the manner of how these schools are run; the discipline and academic atmosphere prevailing therein etc., because, the Education Department is too busy with other things except nurturing its babies.

The fact that there are many complaints and criticisms in the media against these government institutions show that there are many irregularities that need to be immediately

rectified. Who will do that? Is it not the responsibility of the School authorities in whom the Government and the parents have reposed their faith? The school authorities and the Education department ought to thank those who point out shortcomings in these institutions and take necessary remedy to ensure that these institutions are managed and run in the best academic track in order to be an example to the whole country.

Yours etc.,
Philip Marweñ,
Shillong-2.

Delay in sale of cement from MCCL's new plant

Editor,

It is sad to see the sufferings of the employees of the first and the only big industrial unit of the state, the Mawmluh Cherra Cements Ltd (MCCL). Although some amount of money has been given to rejuvenate the sick unit as well as its employees, this will not help. The only solution is the normal functioning of the plant. It has been reported in your newspaper dated July 11th 2016 under the caption "New MCCL plant ready for commercial operation" that once the clearance is received from the Central Excise Department and Pollution Control Board, the sale of cement will start. The question is, how long does it take to get such a clearance especially in this case where there is an urgent need to start the commercial operations? If the Government can go from

Our Innate Daughters

By B M Lanong

What an agony to be born in the families, driven by the climate of gender discrimination where after birth, baby girls are dubbed as 'Nakosa' and 'Nakoshi' (unwanted). This was reported recently in the Maharashtrian family of Lalita Babar, an Indian athlete to Rio Olympics 2016, who, by dint of strenuous practice in a remote village, got herself to the 10th position in the 3000 meter Steeplechase discipline. Considering the Olympics, this is quite an achievement.

The many unaccountable hoary travails, where a large section of girls encounter in India, is spine-chilling indeed. Initially many baby girls foetus are destroyed in their mother's womb. The lucky escapees are primarily confronted and bogged down by poverty for schooling, followed by premature withdrawal of those who manage to attend schools, to add to the percentage of drop-outs and then quarantined for early or child marriage to start facing the music for life. What an indignation girls have to encounter from their tender age.

To top it all, the unfortunate ones fall prey to several physical abuses, the more vulnerable lot end up in many tragic criminal exploitations, including deaths to destroy evidence.

The barbaric rape incident of Jyoti Singh in the Delhi public bus in 2012, resulting in her death in Singapore hospital is still fresh in everyone's memory. This and many of such outrageous incidents expose the case of women's nemesis in India. Often we hear of other murderous parents who under the guise of honour killing, get rid of their daughters with the aid of some panchayats coterie and the self-acclaimed illegal KHAP groups and associates, oblivious of the shame and dishonour that would befall their families, besides the judicial jugglery that will haunt them thereafter. The infamous Indrani Mukherji episode is a case in hand.

Then the bizarre honour-killing of a Pakistani model, Qandeel Baloch last month, by her own mischievous brother smears an ignominious disgrace to the Pakistani society too. Many sensible persons have condemned this senseless and brutal killing of a popular celebrity. Today, it seems there is no more safety and security even in one's own family, alas!

In the face of all these tragedies and the malicious onslaught against women, it is this very despicable class which brought some honour for the country, when at least four women performed creditably well in the Rio Olympics, with P.V.Sindhu narrowly missing the Gold, to be honoured with Silver medal in Badminton and Sakshi Malik winning the Bronze in 58 kg Women's Freestyle Wrestling. Dipa Karmakar, with lack of international experience managed fourth in Gymnastics and Lalita Babar's case has already been cited above. The other all-time women sensations worth mentioning are Saina Nehwal, Sania Mirza and Mary Kom, among others.

Coincidentally, it sounds like another 'care-a-damn' attitude to another female athlete, O.P Jaisha, who collapsed after crossing the finishing line in the 42 km marathon, when she and her coach alleged that

throughout the entire route, she was not even provided with drinking water by the Indian officials, which prima-facie and from all accounts, appears as valid.

Kudos to all the female athletes and other star performers! It should be noted by all and sundry and particularly by the conservative anti-women groups and individuals that the society cannot grow only in the hands of men, for it always takes two hands to clap.

Comparatively however, in the state of Meghalaya the Khasi-Pnar and the Garos follow the matrilineal system where the daughters and womenfolk fully enjoy and share equality of status with the sons and men folk and women reserve special respect and position in the society. Meghalaya girls are spread out all over the country and abroad, manning numerous callings and professions as bureaucrats, technocrats, academicians and diplomats among others. So are Meghalaya men.

Miss Dolyne Kharbhih is a world record holder in mountaineering who had climbed Everest in the Himalayan mountain with an Indian team of 11 girls. She is also the first mountaineer from the Girls Cadet Instructor. Other girls from Meghalaya include Wansuk Myrthong, Lucy Jyrwa, sisters duo Kelipetra and Enifer Nongkynrih and others who have all reached above 20,000 ft climbing.

Wallambok Lyngdoh is the only male from Meghalaya who had gone to Siachen for imparting training as a freelance Instructor. He is one of the national judges in Rock Climbing, and had himself climbed 16 different routes of the Himalayas. Bening Lyngkholi from a remote village, an army marathoner who is an Indian Army Champion, had won accolades in the International Army meets.

For brevity, the cosmopolitan society in Shillong and other parts of the state have mellowed together in the social life of the state, where hardly any discrimination against women exists.

I was impressed by one Bengali married man who proudly carried on both shoulders his twin daughters at the news stand in Shillong recently. Many today, are fond of their innate daughters, together observing the Meghalaya tradition. Meghalayans have no beggary or dowry and class systems are unknown and daughters do not join the in-laws after marriage, for men are providers of family needs and so men follow the wife and together man the family.

Crimes as in everywhere else, are perpetrated on the sly by anti-social and criminals from all sections of people, who do not spare women folk either. These are stray and isolated incidents, committed by individuals, not however, as institutionalised crimes, never even against the avowed criminals. Some failed to distinguish between crimes committed by individuals and institutionally sponsored ones. This is Meghalaya and its socio-cultural unique traditions which, those who now begin to sing the slogan 'Meri Beti' should take a leaf from to provide succour, sobriety and solace to all without any gender bias.

door to door to fight against the ban on coal mining, why is it so hard to get a clearance at the earliest for this new MCCL plant? If the clearance has been received then why is there a delay in starting the commercial operation? Will there be more excuses for this delay? Or is there another factory of excuses hidden from the public eye that produces more excuses than cement. If the government cannot manage a single industrial unit, then we do not expect it to run the whole state. This is manifested in how it has failed in all fronts. These questions will stare at the faces of those who run the Government in the election campaign of 2018. I hope the government wakes up late from its slumber before it is too late.

Yours etc.,
M Lyndem,
Via email