

*“A crowded society is a restrictive society; an overcrowded society becomes an authoritarian, repressive and murderous society.”*

--- Edward Abbey

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.170 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2019

### CAB and election pitch

THE contentious Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016 needs to be defeated in the Rajya Sabha since it defies the popular will of the people of the North East. The BJP does not seem overly concerned by the protests from this region. The Party sent its senior functionary Ram Madhav to Assam to placate the people there but to no avail. Assam has borne the brunt of illegal immigration for decades, so much so, the demographics have changed in several districts of that state. While Muslim immigrants have become a majority in many constituencies in Assam the CAB now wants to offset that Muslim population by granting citizenship to Hindus from Bangladesh on the plea that they are being persecuted in that country. To allay the fears of the people of Assam and the North East, Home Minister Raj Nath Singh has said that citizenship would be granted to Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and Buddhists, persecuted in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh based on certain conditionalities. A prime condition is that the person would not settle in the any of the North Eastern States but would have to settle in some other state of India. This is easier said than done. There are already many illegal settlers in the North East and they are biding their time to become legitimate citizens.

Two years ago when the Rohingyas were persecuted in Myanmar, India took a stiff stance that they would not be accommodated in India but would be deported immediately. So why the empathy only for Hindus and other religious minorities? And how can a country that opted to be secular because of its inherent contradictions, now grant citizenship on the basis of religion? This is defeating the very core of the Indian Constitution.

The BJP leaves no one in doubt as to the purpose of the CAB. It is purely for the purpose of garnering Hindu votes; nothing else. Now that poll surveys by creditable firms predict a downslide for the BJP, there is even greater fervor to consolidate Hindu votes. Other political parties are being labeled as catering to religious minorities at the cost of the majority Hindus. This polarization of the electorate is extremely dangerous in a country with a mixed demography. But the BJP is unconcerned about the dangers that such electoral pitches can unleash. Politics that uses religion as a catchword and jettisons the development plank is fatal for a country that has prided itself on the fundamental principle of unity in diversity and has tried to live up to this principle for a long time.

#### TO THE EDITOR

### Ruthlessness of BJP

Editor,

It is quite apparent now that the BJP led NDA Government at the Centre is hell bent on passing the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016, in the Rajya Sabha, despite enormous protests and agitations across all the States in North Eastern parts of the Country. Even NDA partners like JD(U), Shiv Sena, and Akali Dal are opposed this Bill, besides BJP regional partners in Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Nagaland. This implies the ruthlessness of the BJP to fulfill its political agenda of winning the next general elections, by any means. The aim is to consolidate the Hindu votes, and hence, the BJP has also initiated steps to hand over a large part of land in Ayodhya to the Ramjanabhoomi Nyas for construction of the so-called Ram Mandir. These moves would have serious adverse consequences in future.

Narendra Modi, in one of election speeches, in earlier times, had ridiculed Ram Vilas Paswan (incidentally,

now his partner at the Centre) for proposing similar moves of allowing minorities in Bangladesh to get Indian citizenship. He had stated then that if this is allowed, these foreigners (??) one day in future would become the MLAs, MPs, Chief Ministers, and even Prime Minister of the country. The sad tragedy is that in order to retain power, the BJP is hell bent on taking opposing, but drastic steps that would be harmful for India.

Yours etc.,  
A Bhuyan  
Nagaon

### Shaheed Diwas: Time to reflect

Editor,

India celebrates Martyrs Day (Shaheed Divas) every year on January 30 and March 23 to pay homage to those who fought for the country's freedom, welfare and progress. On January 30, 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by a rabid fanatic. And on March 23, 1931, Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar were

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) never made any bones about wanting to pass the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB). The Bill was proposed in the Lok Sabha in July 2016 and was finally passed on January 8, 2019. According to the Bill illegal migrants belonging to the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian religious communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan would not be imprisoned or deported but would be eligible for Indian citizenship. Moreover, these citizens gain permanent citizenship after six years of residency in India instead of 11 years - as laid down in the Citizenship Act (1955). For the BJP this is an electoral ploy to consolidate the Hindu vote bank because Christians, Parsis, Sikh, Buddhist et al put together are a negligible number in the above-mentioned Muslim countries.

After the Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha the North Eastern states as a whole and Assam in particular protested vehemently. There have been debates and write-ups galore in the region about why the CAB should be opposed. Some groups from Assam staged a naked protest in front of Parliament in the January cold. Pressure groups across the region under the banner of the North East Students' Organisation (NESO) have rallied together to protest the Bill which is seen as a dangerous ploy to populate the North Eastern states with Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh because Hindu immigrants from that country would naturally choose to settle in this region, for the same reason - kinship and linguistic ties. The argument is that Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists etc., from Afghanistan or Pakistan would choose to settle in northern India because of their cultural and linguistic affinities with people there.

According to Wikipedia, Bangladesh is the third largest Hindu nation in the world after India and Nepal. According to an estimate from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) there were 17 million Hindus in Bangladesh as of 2015. History is a cruel divider of nations and peoples. In 1905 Bengal was divided into East and West Bengal. East Bengal had a Muslim majority population while West Bengal was largely Hindu. The British peddled a lie that the Partition of Bengal would improve administra-

tion and by garlanding the picture of his assassin and then circulating the video clip. Hey, Ram! We still have miles to go.....

Yours etc.,  
Sujit de,  
Kolkata

### Check your facts

Editor

Apropos the news item "Ex-Cong leader against ticket to 'outsider' (ST Janu-ary 30, 2019), I, the undersigned wishes to clarify that I am the candidate of Indian National Congress candidate from 28 Rambrai-Jyrngam to the KHADC Election 2019 and I am not an outsider to the Constituency. My wife is from Rambrai and on attaining my voting age I first cast my vote in "31-Rambrai Polling Station" in the election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly 2013 and subsequently voted in the election to the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council 2014, election to the 1-Shillong (ST) Parliamentary Constituency 2014, Bye Election to the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council 2016 and the Election to

the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly 2018. I am a candidate of the INC and will be contesting and casting my vote in the election to the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council 2019 at the Rambrai Polling Station. My EPIC Number issued by the Election Commission of India dated May 2, 2012 is SIF0046540. This is to request your newspaper to kindly cross check and confirm the actual status of a person - and whether he is from the constituency or not, before printing erroneous information.

Yours etc.,  
Bajop Pynproge Rambrai  
West Khasi Hills  
**Editor replies:** The allegations of your being an outsider were leveled by the former President of the District Congress Committee, West Khasi Hills, JTS Thongni, who has since left the Party and joined the NPP along with his supporters. We report what was being alleged)

the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly 2018. I am a candidate of the INC and will be contesting and casting my vote in the election to the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council 2019 at the Rambrai Polling Station. My EPIC Number issued by the Election Commission of India dated May 2, 2012 is SIF0046540. This is to request your newspaper to kindly cross check and confirm the actual status of a person - and whether he is from the constituency or not, before printing erroneous information.

Yours etc.,  
Bajop Pynproge Rambrai  
West Khasi Hills  
**Editor replies:** The allegations of your being an outsider were leveled by the former President of the District Congress Committee, West Khasi Hills, JTS Thongni, who has since left the Party and joined the NPP along with his supporters. We report what was being alleged)

the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly 2018. I am a candidate of the INC and will be contesting and casting my vote in the election to the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council 2019 at the Rambrai Polling Station. My EPIC Number issued by the Election Commission of India dated May 2, 2012 is SIF0046540. This is to request your newspaper to kindly cross check and confirm the actual status of a person - and whether he is from the constituency or not, before printing erroneous information.

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.

# CAB: Making a pact with the Devil Why have we been sleepwalking?

By Patricia Mukhim

utive efficiency. East Bengal was tagged to Assam to form the Eastern Bengal and Assam province. Dhaka became the capital of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Chittagong, Dhaka Divisions, Rajshahi Division (excluding Darjeeling) and Malda District were separated from Bengal and transferred to the new province. Hill Tripura came under Eastern Bengal and Assam province.

There was a huge reaction mainly from the Hindus against the separation of Bengal. Leaders of the Congress Party launched

tics of communal hatred and bigotry.

Coming back to Meghalaya and the North Eastern states, since the BJP never even tried to hide its intent about passing the CAB, why did the regional political parties agree to align with it? In Meghalaya the NPP-led MDA government is a coalition comprising the NPP, UDP, PDF, HSPDP and BJP. Before the formation of the Government, Himanta Biswa Sarma, the Convenor of the BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), made a big splash and it appeared as if

*“According to Wikipedia, Bangladesh is the third largest Hindu nation in the world after India and Nepal.”*

massive agitations to end the Partition which was termed as the Policy of Divide and Rule. On Partition Day - October 16, 1905, the people of Bengal observed a day of mourning. The Partition of Bengal resulted in a major political crisis and triggered agitations and boycott of British goods. In 1911 the two Bengals were reunited but the Bengali Muslims remained antagonistic to the idea. It was in 1947 during the Partition of India that East Bengal was ceded to Pakistan because it had a Muslim majority population. This Divide and Rule Policy of the British has left India with a thousand cuts which this country is still trying to resolve and with Pakistan being the one inflicting the cuts every single day.

There is a feeling today among a section of Hindus, particularly those in the BJP that if Pakistan was partitioned from India because it had a majority Muslim population then India with a Hindu majority population should legitimately be a Hindu nation. But the architects of India's Constitution, despite their many frailties, understood the huge racial and religious diversities of this country and sought to make it a secular nation. India is stronger today because it is inclusive and tolerant. It's a different matter that today political parties cash in on the poli-

tics of communal hatred and bigotry. Coming back to Meghalaya and the North Eastern states, since the BJP never even tried to hide its intent about passing the CAB, why did the regional political parties agree to align with it? In Meghalaya the NPP-led MDA government is a coalition comprising the NPP, UDP, PDF, HSPDP and BJP. Before the formation of the Government, Himanta Biswa Sarma, the Convenor of the BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), made a big splash and it appeared as if

the BJP with two MLAs was the kingpin of the Alliance. There was no protest from any of the pressure groups back then. What were we thinking? Were we sleepwalking and hoping that the BJP would change its stripes?

While blazing the election trail prior to May 2014, Narendra Modi had spoken of "Vikas" (development) everywhere. The country's economic growth under the UPA -II had slowed down considerably and there was a general sense that Modi would inject new blood into a moribund economy and that he would tackle corruption with new fervour. A disillusioned electorate saw in Modi a charismatic leader who would take the country to new heights and restore India to its rightful place in the comity of nations. Indeed in the first two years Modi scored many political points but the RSS with its agenda of reviving Hindu pride has taken control of the Government. The BJP without the RSS is incapable of winning elections. Modi knows this, hence his attempts to placate the fringe which is now mainstreamed.

We in the state and region too should have known that the RSS's Hindutva agenda would subsume all claims and intentions of good governance. But the worst point in the BJP's political trajectory was when it appointed a temple priest Yogi Adityanath as the Chief

Minister of Uttar Pradesh. After this religion and politics got completely enmeshed and there was no looking back. Cow vigilantism resulted in lynching of people suspected to be keeping beef or consuming it. The refrigerator which is a private domain became open to the public scrutiny of the cow vigilantes who were essentially linked to the BJP-RSS. Uttar Pradesh is now a state where law and order have reached their nadir with police officials being attacked and killed for investigating crimes relating to cow vigilantes. Hindu pride is now being primed as a badge of honour to be worn with pride. So much so, Rahul Gandhi the Congress President too had to follow in the BJP footsteps and go temple hopping during the election campaign in Gujarat Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and even declare that he is a not just a Hindu, but a 'janeu-dhari' Hindu (one who wears the sacred thread)," just to win votes. For the Gandhi scion it was a case of, "if you cannot beat them, join them."

So what does the MDA Government intend to do at this critical juncture? Does it dare to snap ties with the BJP-led NDA Government? Can it drop two of the BJP MLAs from the alliance? Or will Sanbor Shullai and AL Hek both resign their MLA seats and contest from some other party? That would have been the ultimate form of protest from Meghalaya. And these MLAs knowing very well that the agenda of the BJP is to pass the CAB come what may, should have the moral courage to resign from the Party. The CAB may not pass muster in the Rajya Sabha but when elections arrive after a few weeks, the BJP will go to its Hindu constituents and say, "We have tried our utmost to pass the CAB which would have made several million Hindus from Islamic countries, genuine citizens of India but the enemies of Hinduism have put paid to this Bill. Give us one more chance to prove our commitment to make India a nation where Hindus are safe and secure." That precisely is the BJP ploy. Did we not know it? Of course we did! So why did we sleepwalk and believe that we were safe sleeping with the enemy? Nay, making a pact with the devil himself? Any answers?

the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly 2018. I am a candidate of the INC and will be contesting and casting my vote in the election to the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council 2019 at the Rambrai Polling Station. My EPIC Number issued by the Election Commission of India dated May 2, 2012 is SIF0046540. This is to request your newspaper to kindly cross check and confirm the actual status of a person - and whether he is from the constituency or not, before printing erroneous information.

Yours etc.,  
Bajop Pynproge Rambrai  
West Khasi Hills  
**Editor replies:** The allegations of your being an outsider were leveled by the former President of the District Congress Committee, West Khasi Hills, JTS Thongni, who has since left the Party and joined the NPP along with his supporters. We report what was being alleged)

the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly 2018. I am a candidate of the INC and will be contesting and casting my vote in the election to the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council 2019 at the Rambrai Polling Station. My EPIC Number issued by the Election Commission of India dated May 2, 2012 is SIF0046540. This is to request your newspaper to kindly cross check and confirm the actual status of a person - and whether he is from the constituency or not, before printing erroneous information.

# The 15 or 16: Buried in a rat hole

By Nabamita Mitra

It is an eerie coincidence that I watched The 33, a movie based on the true incident of 33 trapped miners in Chile in 2010, at a time when Meghalaya is facing an almost similar crisis. Thirty-three miners were trapped in a Chilean gold mine, 2,200 ft beneath the surface, in August 2010. After a tenuous rescue operation, all the 33 were brought out alive after more than two months. The emancipated humans were showered with hugs and kisses as they came out of the refuge in the mine, which was precariously placed beneath a chunk of diorite, in a capsule lugged up by a trolley.

There are several differences between the two incidents as have been pointed out by reports so far - the

to hush up the tragedy and local police initially denied that such incident had taken place on Day 1, that is December 13.

But as the stench of wrongdoings spread, the government went on the back foot. The chief minister suddenly developed amnesia and continued to change his statements on illegal mining. Mr Chief Minister, a busy man with hundreds of responsibilities, was too tied up to find time to visit the mining site though he holds the portfolio of mining department. He, however, sent his commanders who went to the site as VIPs, spent enough time for the media to cover the visits and returned like VIPs.

The deputy commis-

*The 15 miners or maybe 16 (claim of one more family has not been officially confirmed), who were trapped in the illegal mine in East Jaintia Hills, were dead long back, and this, everyone knew - the government, the families, the media and the rescue workers. But hope was floating in the water-filled 350-foot coal pit.*

most important is that the Chilean mine was not flooded and the miners there had supply of food for a few weeks. There is another stark difference between the two incidents separated by miles and oceans. It is that of sensitivity and alacrity. These can be attributed to one, lack of sincerity, and two, lack of infrastructure, or in other words, failure of successive governments.

Yet, as I watched several similarities too, more emotional than practical. The families' hope and dejection, which kept altering depending on

as he was bound by duty but apparently he did not forget to get dressed to the nines every time he made an appearance. On the day the miners, or their bodies, completed a month inside the airless claustrophobic pit, the chief secretary went on a courtesy visit. It is not that in this one month Meghalaya saw a drastic transformation on all fronts, including development, but the chief minister and his coterie kept acting as if they had little time to spare. None, especially the mining minister, bothered to spend even a day at the site just to

*Mr Chief Minister, a busy man with hundreds of responsibilities, was too tied up to find time to visit the mining site though he holds the portfolio of mining department. He, however, sent his commanders who went to the site as VIPs, spent enough time for the media to cover the visits and returned like VIPs.*

the government's response, are similar. The pressure on the government to perform too is similar. What is strikingly dissimilar is the response of and the sense of responsibility among those in power.

The 15 miners or maybe 16 (claim of one more family has not been officially confirmed), who were trapped in the illegal mine in East Jaintia Hills, were dead long back, and this, everyone knew - the government, the families, the media and the rescue workers. But hope was floating in the water-filled 350-foot coal pit. Why? Because it is difficult for any person to accept the death of a loved one!

Down there inside the rat-hole mine, which according to the head of the state never existed, were the loved ones of someone or the other though none of the dead miners is related to any minister or police or the head of the district administration. Probably this is the reason why those in power wanted

supervise the rescue or retrieval operations. In fact, so much was the scepticism in the government that the media was walled off.

Meghalaya, over the years, has made headlines for illegal mining. The recent incident could have been a turning point to better its image. The government could have acted fast and brought out the bodies in time. It could have won accolades for exemplary efforts had it shown more concern. But the entire operation turned farcical as the best of the country's experts failed.

What is more pitiable is the authorities' stark apathy to even understand the families' sentiments. They were more worried about how to lift the existing ban on coal mining than bringing back the dead, at least. If this is the attitude of the government led by a young chief minister, then should the common have faith in his authority?

"Common sense is judgment without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire nation, or the entire human race."

--- Seneca

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.171 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2019

### Populist Budget

THE Modi government performed a magic of sorts by announcing massive schemes for welfare of the poor, the farmers and the middle class. They together form the bulk of the population which is crucial in electoral terms. But the problem is that the budget lacked conviction. This government has a life of no more than four months, before the next Lok Sabha polls are held and a new government takes charge. It could be Modi again, or someone else. The introduction of a Rs 3000 per month pension scheme for the large army of poor labourers in the unorganised sector, or a dole of Rs 6,000 per year to farmers, is both largely populist. The huge burden the government thus bears could seriously affect fund-raising for developmental projects and infrastructure schemes. Progress could virtually stop in its tracks. Those with a vision for the future would think twice before enlarging the scope of doles and subsidies - for which huge funds were already set apart. The subsidised rice scheme cost the nation a bomb, yet it appreciably aimed at poverty elimination. Now, what the poor could expect is also pocket money. Instead, governments would do well to spend judiciously on developmental efforts and thus create job opportunities for the poor in urban and rural sectors. In electoral terms, this might be less advantageous, though.

The budget has a lot of fancy schemes, but whether they will materialise or are set to be ignored or scrapped by the next government with a different mindset after May is a big question. The decision to raise the income tax ceiling from Rs 2.5lakh to Rs 5lakh will be of immense satisfaction to large sections of the salaried class based mainly out of cities. This is also done with a view to earning their goodwill even as the exchequer stands to lose heavily. The attempt, in specifics, all through the budget proposals was to win the support of various interest groups to enable the BJP to return to power this year. To that extent, this can be safely termed as a populist budget; one that does not address the urgent need for economic growth. Question also is why the government slow-pedaled so far on all these packages for the poor and the middle class, and gave a surprise now, unless its aim was nothing other than to win the next polls or to outwit the Congress' loan waiver for farmers.

### LOOKING BACK

June 13, 1989

### Scrap proposed Rail Link through Bird Sanctuary, says scientists

The Institute of Scientific and Technology Research (INSTER) has strongly opposed the proposed railway line through the famous "Dipor Beel" a bird sanctuary, near here. Construction of the railway line would have a direct harmful effect on the aesthetic natural surroundings of the Dipor Lake, jeopardizing the serene seat up in the nearby Jalukbari area. INSTER general secretary Mr Achinya B ezbaruah told newsmen here on Saturday.

He said the natural lake situated at a distance of about 18 km from here, housed 122 bird species including many rare varieties. A recent census on an aquatic birds found that while during the past two years the total bird count varies between 600 and 700 this year more than 7000 birds flocked to the lake the significant increase in bird count was due to absence of any disturbances.

### No further talks with Assam Govt: ABSU

The All Bodo Students Union Vice President Mr Prodeep Kumar Daimary

denied that ABSU would sit with the Assam government for talks on the "Bodo land" issue after the 350 hour bandh, in a statement issued in Shillong on Tuesday.

Reacting to press reports that the ABSU was likely to sit for talks with the Assam Government after the 340 hour bandh, he said "the news is baseless and false, planted by the intelligence department and is politically motivated."

Mr Daimary said the question of holding talks with the Assam government on the issue was over once and for all and that there was no difference among its leadership over the issue. Appealing to the people not to give credence to such mischievous and false propaganda he urged them to cooperate during the proposed thirtysix hour total Assam bandh starting from 5 am on Thursday.

The bandh call which has been given in protest against "police atrocities" on Bodos and other people would exempt only medical and Electricity services from its purview the release said.

# BJP-RSS plays temple card to swing general elections its way

By Shobha Misra

In a disparate move to create a Ram wave to win the coming electoral battle, the BJP-led NDA dispensation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi moved the Supreme Court to grant permission to hand over most of the 67.703 acres of land acquired by the government 25 years back to its original owners.

The original owners are Ram Janambhoomi Nyas (RJNI)-a trust set up to build a temple at the "disputed" site by the protagonists of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). The two organisations have been at the vanguard of the Ram Janambhoomi movement and have been exerting pressure on the Modi government to make a temple possible either through legislation or an executive order. The move has come after the visit of BJP chief Amit Shah to Prayagraj during the ongoing half-Kumbh congregation to take a dip in the Sangam and meet saffron clad saints and seers who have been asking the government to facilitate the construction of a grand temple at the birth site of Lord Ram in Ayodhya.

The government's move needs to be viewed in the background of the Prime Minister's categorical stand taken during his interview to the ANI that was published on January 1 this year. Modi had made clear that any decision on an executive order on the Ram temple issue cannot be made unless the judicial process is over. The BJP government is only trying to circumvent the route of an executive order by approaching the Supreme Court.

"Nobody can deny that those sitting in the government in the last 70 years have tried their best to stall a solution to this (Ayodhya) issue", Modi said trying to blame the Congress.

The Prime Minister had chosen to elaborate on the issue of Ram temple three days before the Supreme Court was going to fix a date for hearing of appeals challenging the Allahabad High Court order in the Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit.

If the Supreme Court agrees and grants permission to the

government to hand over the land then Modi would emerge a popular hero in popular perception brightening his chance to return to power and if not then still his government would be perceived as having done the best for the cause.

Earlier, the RSS and its affiliated outfits had started to prepare the grounds for the government to act. RSS Sarsangchalak Mohan Bhagwat in October had asked the government to bring in a law for the construction of a Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya and urged the Supreme Court, where the hearing on the title suits was to resume later that month, to expedite its verdict.

Bhagwat's demand came during his customary annual address at the organisation's headquarter in Nagpur to his followers. Bhagwat had timed his move few weeks before the five assembly elections and couple of months before the general elections to swing the public opinion in the BJP's favour. The BJP lost three Hindi heartland states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

"The place of Janambhoomi is yet to be allocated for the construction of the temple although all kinds of evidence have affirmed that there was a temple at that place. There is an obvious game plan of a few elements to stall the judgment by presenting various newer interventions in the judicial process. It is in nobody's interest to test the patience of society without any reason" Bhagwat had said in a seemingly warning tone in the presence of Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari and K Alphon, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Nobel laureate Kailash Vidyarthi.

"The construction of the temple is necessary from the self-esteem point of view; it will also pave the way for an atmosphere of goodwill and oneness in the country. The matter of national interest is being obstructed by some fundamentalist elements and forces that play communal politics for selfish gains. Despite such machinations, the decision regarding ownership of the

land should be expedited, and the Government should clear the path for construction of the grand temple through appropriate and requisite law", the Sangh supremo said.

While Bhagwat stressed upon the need to bring in a law, others in the saffron family have suggested taking recourse to issuing of an ordinance for facilitating the path of construction of a grand Ram temple at the disputed site.

By repeating its very old argument that Ram temple is an article of faith that cannot be challenged in a court of law, Bhagwat had struck at the very roots of the Constitution of the country. Every community has its faith not only Hindus. Modern civilisations and contemporary societies are built upon logic, reason and rule of law and not on issues of faith, Bhagwat must know.

Bhagwat's view that temple construction is necessary for the sake of "self-esteem" is bizarre. It does not stand the test of a microscopic scrutiny. RSS does not represent all practicing Hindus. While the RSS's membership is not known as it is purported to be a trade secret, the BJP had polled 31 percent odd votes nationally in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls that was the best it had ever polled. By no definition, the BJP has the support of the Hindu community. Then how can he claim to be the representative of all Hindus?

In fact, society has become more polarized and divided ever since the Sangh sponsored VHP-led and BJP supported Ram Janambhoomi temple issue gained momentum in late 80s and early 90s of the last century. There are more fissures in polity and society than ever before. A large section of Hindu society rather the silent majority that follows tenets of Sanatan Dharma has felt a terrible let down by the aggressive Ram Janambhoomi temple movement. There is a strong feeling among Hindus that forces of Hindutva have forcibly hijacked Santan Dharm.

The Modi government had come to power in 2014 and demanded a law for construction of a Ram temple at the Janmbhoomisthan in October 2018 or moving to the apex court to handover the acquired land is nothing but an attempt to influence the electoral battle in favour of the BJP.

The need to play the Ram temple card arose and became urgent because of the abjectly poor performance of the Modi government on economic parameters. Unemployment is high, touching unprecedented levels. Social security and communal harmony are fragile. Social peace is disturbed and is reflected in popular perception. People coming to attend rallies and meetings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders including BJP chief Amit Shah are being seen getting restless and bored. Growing disillusionment among the non-RSS and non-BJP sections of the electorate emitted panic signals that required urgent attention.

The BJP and the RSS, in their own calculations, had succeeded in isolating liberal, left and centrist ideological stream and had discredited them in popular perception as anti-nationalists. That is why now a decisive push was the need of the hour.

Sharpening of communal and religious polarization was in the Sangh calculations the only way through which the BJP could return to power in the Hindi heartland states that is a door to New Delhi. Mob lynching, love jihad, cow slaughter, urban naxals, helped in creating a suitable environment for creating religious divide. Now with the Ram temple the BJP under the Modi-Shah duo is trying to build a national narrative in the fervent hope that it would not remain confined to north India and Hindi heartland but would also mobiles opinion in its favour in the south too.

The RSS's strategy is still to pass the test of time. Whether it finds the approval of the electorate or not would only be known when ballots are counted after the Lok Sabha elections and results are announced.

## Japan and Us: What's the connect?

By Avner Pariat

I don't usually write about foreign policy matters but there have been certain developments in the recent past which have prompted me to do just that. That being said, has anyone else noticed the sudden flowering of all things Japanese in these hills? In just the span of a few months we have had a large Cherry Blossom Festival funded by the Japan Foundation, a film workshop aided by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the City of Yamagata in St Anthony's College and one must add to this the ongoing infrastructural work presently funded by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for the improvement of NH51 and NH41. And of course there is the inter-personal connection building up which is crucial to foster good ties. The Japanese seem very interested in promoting artists and intellectuals from the state and possibly starting fellowship programs and residencies with locals.

My friends, Tarun Bhartiya and Samrat X, were in Japan recently for some cross-cultural events aimed at dialogue and relationship building. Now all this is fine, but I have to ask myself: why now? Why are the Japanese suddenly interested in the north east? Mind you, they do a lot of work in the rest of the country as well but aside from developmental assistance much of the cultural programs are done within the large metros of the plains. Yes you can argue Shillong and Aizawl are also metros in their own right but then again there is a case for the opposite as well. I am not suggesting anything sinister or conspiratorial, of course, but why now and why I reiterate. Why not start similar events like the Cherry Blossom Festival in say Orissa or maybe Jharkhand?

If they have had something along those lines in those places, media certainly hasn't covered it and I am unaware of any events as I write this. So with some liberties, I will try to dissect this new phenomenon as I understand it. But first a little background. I might say that this is all new and recent but actually Japanese involvement in the North East has been around for a while. One notable example is the iconic Umiam Hydro Electric Project (Damsait) which was created by the Japanese as part of their War reparations towards India. This was in the early 1960s and the project recently turned 50. It still produces more energy today than the stupid, money guzzling Leshka Myntdu HE project. Anyway, that is all a part of History. But the recent resurgence in Japanese interest in the NER is quite thought provoking. Firstly, we must accept that this is no mere coincidence. At some high level of policy-making this decision was consciously taken. After all, nothing of this sort can take place without mutual understanding. In a sense, the moment the floodgates are opened, a host of activities and actors can come through.

Now the Japanese are most assuredly acting on the Act East policy which our Central governments have been trying to promote for a long time now. This would explain why JICA is funding road projects in the region. That being said, what's in it for the Japanese though? This is not simply charity work after all. No developmental agency anywhere in the world is involved in charity work. Not just charity anyway. Else they'd go bust in a matter of months. Likewise with the Japanese! This is not some project that they need to spend money on because some law of theirs makes it mandatory to spend or do CSR. This is of course

about power and influence for the long run. So are the Japanese interested in the roads themselves? I doubt this and I don't think we will be seeing any Japanese people manning toll-gates here any time soon. So this is probably about something else. Maybe they are interested in the projected trade and commerce that these roads could bring. They could be interested in commodities from Meghalaya but I really don't know what would be so special here that they might want.

I think these roads are a "gift" in order to parley favour with the Indian and Bangladeshi governments over time. The Japanese already have a strong influence in Myanmar and a South East Asian corridor could be very lucrative for Japanese companies and firms. But alas, I am but a tiny ant in this immense fabrication of plans and projections. I cannot see beyond what is shown to the public. However, I will say this, many people talk a lot about this vaunted Act East trade route but unless the local people get something out of it, it would be pointless and doomed to fail. I mean the small and medium players, not the officers and ministers. All these players in the region especially foreign need to actually sit down with local people and sort such things out properly. If not, there will be more harm than good that is done to us.

Now, besides the infrastructural development that the Japanese are helping us with, there is also the notion of soft power which is perhaps much more important. This never sees the type of money infra sees but it is more powerful at building bonds between communities and people. Inter-cultural events, creative and academic fellowships, writer's residencies all serve to enhance a country's soft power. But why is the question. Why would it be so important for a country that is funding a project to also reach out to the people? It is not a mandatory condition. After all, of all the road projects we have seen in the past few years, we never saw any sort of need for the hired firm or implementing agency to be seen as a friend and a benefactor. Most of Meghalaya's road projects are self contained systems. Workers and machines brought in from outside with almost no local help required save for certain building materials like stone and sand. But the Japanese are interested in the long run and so need to be in the good books of the local people they encounter, as I see it. That's probably one reason for them funding cultural exchanges. The other reason which is perhaps much more interesting has something to do with Japanese society itself. It is ageing rapidly and has the lowest birth rate in the world. These factors contribute to a dangerous decline in the workforce. Japanese industry and indeed the economy itself is in real peril. If they cannot get workers fast enough and in abundant enough numbers, they will suffer an economic catastrophe. This is where the NER comes in, I suspect.

Our pre-existing love of Japanese culture makes us the ideal candidates for a new substitute workforce. The cultural agencies of Japan have been actively promoting Japanese language and culture in many institutions and among many individuals. It seems clear that they are laying the foundations for a Nippon-sensitive and Nippon-conscious demographic which may prove useful for their home country in the next decade or so. Again this is just theorising but it still makes for fascinating stratagem.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Education jinxed in Meghalaya

Editor,

The news about the leakage of question papers meant for the recruitment of teachers to the Lower and Upper primary schools is yet another shocker. First, it was the Education minister herself who intervened and played around with the results of the earlier exams by pushing in undeserving candidates and weeding out the ones most qualified for the posts. Now even before the exams can be conducted the question papers are circulated on WhatsApp. What's with this state? Can't anything ever go right for genuine job seekers here? It is presumed that the question papers for the Meghalaya Teachers' Eligibility Test (MTET) were set by the Directorate of Educational Research and Training (DERT) then it would be fair to assume that the leak happened from within the DERT. Hence all the employees of this branch of the Education Department should automatically be under suspicion, particularly those under

whose safe-custody the question papers were.

If the questions were leaked by someone from the firm engaged by the Education Department for printing them out then, that too, requires an urgent probe. The investigation should not take years with the culprits never being punished. It is this slow progress of the law that encourages wrong-doers in our State to continue committing crimes. It is difficult to imagine just how difficult it is to conduct an examination to recruit teachers. One examination was cancelled; another one is completely messed up with leaked question papers. We should be thankful to the advocate Sofi Kamrul Hassan for bringing this matter to light and bringing it before the court for adjudication so that the prospective candidates get justice. So this examination held on February 1, will once again be rescheduled and be subjected to bureaucratic delays unless the Court gives clear directions to hold the exams under its watch. But isn't this a shame for whoever is in charge of the Education Department, that they cannot even do one thing right?

We have also been reading about the poor quality of the text books prescribed by MBOSE. May I ask if the State actually wants the younger generation to remain intellectually and mentally stunted because those running the Government don't send their children to schools under MBOSE? And if the State is going to play around with the future of children by messing around with the qualifying examination for teachers then our future is doomed. Where do we repose our faith when all round there is only ineptitude? Sadly, the state of education in Meghalaya is on a downward slide and no one really cares. Will any group take out a procession to protest this major scam in the teachers' recruitment? I doubt if such issues even matter because education is not a politically savvy tool. We should hang our heads in shame before our young ones whom we have failed time and again!

Yours etc.,  
PR Mawlong,  
Via email

### Why no action?

Editor,  
The Supreme Court had

in its order notified to all state governments that there shall not be any misuse of red beacons and sirens as a 'matter of privilege' and that only emergency rescue vehicles, law enforcement agencies, ambulances can utilize them as and when necessary. As per Central Motor Vehicle Rules 1989 only emergency vehicles can use their designated colour coded beacons and sirens which was reinforced by the Apex Court. However, we still find that many cars with private number plates and government ones too, continuing to blare sirens. This is illegal and also a contempt of the Supreme Court's ruling. Some even have black tinted glasses. Is the Police Department sleeping or unwilling to enforce the law? The Home Department here needs to pull up its socks before it is hauled up for contempt by the Apex Court.

Yours etc ..  
Dominic S. Wankhar  
Shillong

Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of *The Shillong Times*

# Cooking beetles, Majuli style

A 'Pestaurant' in Majuli has taken a stab at showcasing the potential of insects as a culinary delicacy

By Sahana Ghosh

**B**eetle fry, anyone? A 'Pestaurant' in the remote and rapidly-shrinking Majuli, world's largest river island in northeast India, has cooked up a unique method to prevent pests from attacking crops in the region - eating them before they devour the crops.

With insect farming creeping into discussions on sustainable food systems across the globe, there is an untapped potential of insect-eating for pest control that is now being explored in this region of Assam.

The seemingly innocuous white grub beetle (*Lepidiota mansueta*) which feasts on potato, colocasia, green gram and a range of crops in Majuli in Assam is up for grabs in fried and roasted forms in the soon-to-be inaugurated outlets of pest-restaurant 'Pestaurant' besides other pestilent but protein-rich insects such as field crickets and mole crickets.

The origin of the concept eatery lies in research that not only detected, reported and nutritionally-profiled the beetle endemic to Majuli but also mobilised indigenous communities to consider the pest as food. The research and extension activities were carried out as part of the All India Network Project on Soil Arthropods Pests (AINPSAP) funded by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi.

"We will officially launch the outlets in April this year (2019) in Majuli. We are trying to link up tourism to entomophagy and showcase how insect-eating can be sustainable and help deal with pests," Badal Bhattacharyya of Assam Agricultural University and principal investigator of the project told Mongabay-India.

The multiple award-winning concept was recently honoured with the HK Jain - Central Agricultural University(CAU) Award for Excellence in Agricultural Research for Bhattacharyya.

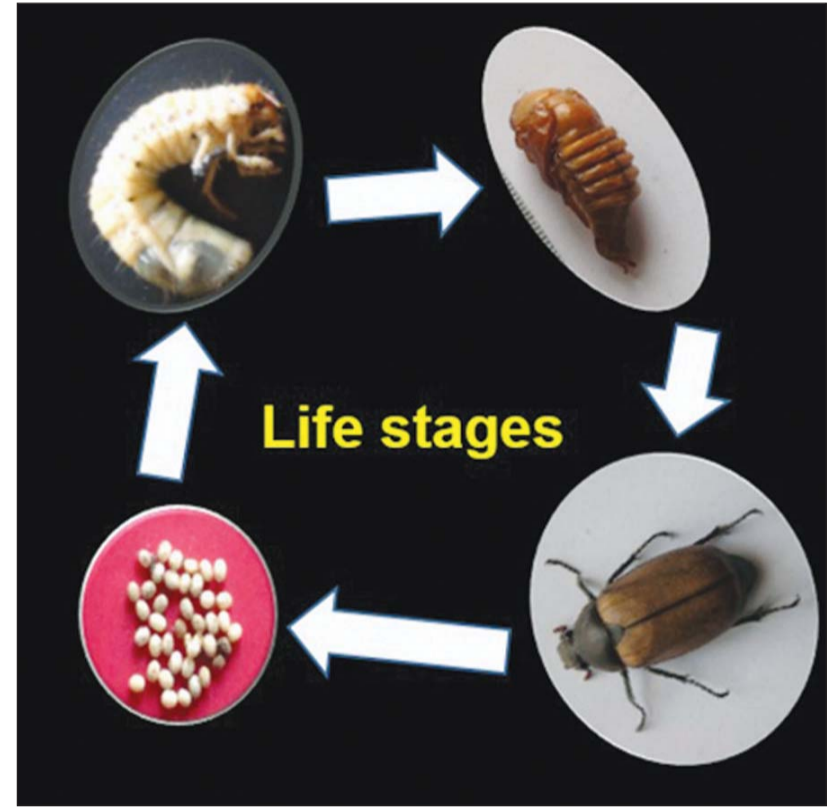
The island with a population of over 1,60,000 has a crop area spreading across 300 sqkm. Up to 35 to 40 percent of this is attacked by this pest.

Grubs of *L. mansueta* (locally called 'hati-puk') were first recognised in some sugarcane fields of Uttar Pradesh, India during 1960 as a root feeder. However, this species did not receive due attention because of its remote incidence and unpredictable occurrence.

The light brown beetle is an unusual species of scarab beetles, in the sense



(Left) Plates of beetle fry served in Majuli. The insect contains around 77 percent protein and no toxins; egg, larva, pupa and adult stages of a white grub beetle



that it transforms from an egg to an adult insect via the grub (larva) stage, in two years. This biennial beetle species is the first of its kind reported from northeast India, pointed out Sudhansu Bhagawati, an entomologist with the AINPSAP.

"Local farmers knew about the presence of the beetle but till 2005 they were not ravaging crops in large numbers. We believe that climatic changes such as erratic rainfall and early onset of summer led to a drop in the arrival of their seasonal predators, the Sarus crane. This, in turn, pushed the beetles' numbers up in the absence of predators," said Bhagawati.

Other factors that are believed to have contributed to its infestation are the conversion of sandbars (virgin low grasslands) into farm plots by flood and erosion-affected villagers, high organic content of the soil and abundant thatch zones in the endemic pockets on the island.

Majuli is the nerve centre of Vaishnavite culture and is home to ethnic communities such as the Mishings, the Deoris, the Sonowal Kacharis, the Ahoms and the Nepali communities.

The verdant green island landscape stretching for 80 km is a dollop of sand in the middle of the Brahmaputra river's

upper reaches in Assam. It was created by the river's changing courses, events that were triggered by earthquakes and floods. Erosion has shrunk the island from 1,256 sqkm in 1891 to not more than 515 sqkm.

### Unravelling the 'grub(by)' picture

As the scientists kickstarted their work on the beetle under the project, their studies threw up interesting nuggets of information that helped them devise methods to deal with the pest.

It is the larval-stage, beetles and grubs buried beneath the earth which mostly spell trouble for the farmers.

"The adults do not feed on plants. The grubs feed on roots and tubers beneath the ground while they mature. So the species has the unique distinction of being the first Indian plant-eating white grub species with non-feeding adults," Bhattacharyya, the principal investigator of the project said.

The grubs are resilient: they thrive well in wet soil conditions of the riverine island and can withstand prolonged submergence/flood.

The beetle can be regarded as a rare species because it spends its entire life cycle under the ground except for a short period during which adults

emerge from the ground for mating, which is why the use of insecticides does not offer a way out. They make an appearance during dusk (6 pm to 9 pm) for about two to three weeks during pre-monsoon season.

The team took advantage of this unusual emergence behaviour of beetles. Instead of hunting for the grubs, if they could eradicate the adult beetles when they emerged then they could nip the problem in the bud.

"Since it is very difficult to search for them, we thought of scouting for them and trapping them by luring with solar LED lights and other light traps as part of a large community mobilisation programme. Our research showed us the insects were attracted to lights," said Snigdha Bhattacharjee, a junior research fellow with the project.

So in 2012 mass training campaigns began in a social engineering drive and as many as 400 farmers in groups of 10 were coached to collect and destroy the insects.

In 2018, the project created a record of "Most Beetles collected in 3 hours" by trapping 73,700 specimens of white grub beetle, in collaboration with 100 farmers of Majuli at Maharichuk village.

"The management approach is eco-

friendly and cost-effective since, without applying a single drop of insecticide, the beetles were caught and killed. This chemical-free method was important because Majuli by default is organic," observed Peter Shyam a junior research fellow associated with the project.

Bhattacharyya highlighted that this endeavour will lead to a huge economic benefit to the tune of approximately Rs. 30 million (Rs. 3 crores) to the farmers of 10 white grub-endemic villages around the site of execution during 2018-19.

From 2010 to April 2018, a total of 900,000 beetles have been collected, informed E. Bidyarani, a junior research fellow associated with the project.

### Beetle fry, anyone?

Local tribal people relished the cooked or fried adult beetles as protein-rich food, opened up a new avenue for research on its nutritive and nutraceutical value.

Researchers found the adult beetle had 76.83 percent protein content, 10.93 percent carbohydrate content, 5.15 percent fibre and 4.10 percent fat and is also completely free of toxins.

"Processing, refinement and value

addition to roasted and fried beetles not only became popular among the ethnic tribes but also among the other communities of Majuli. Initially, many local community members were hesitant to consume the beetle but we demonstrated by cooking the beetle with basic ingredients as to how easy it was to whip up a tasty dish," said Khanin Pathak a junior scientist (biochemistry) associated with the project.

In fact, Bhattacharyya himself has donned the chef's hat several times to popularise the cuisine with the slogan "Eat it before it eats your crops."

Roasted beetle fry with tomato, plainly roasted beetle and beetle curry soon became a hit not only among locals but also with tourists leading to the formation of a small eatery backed by AAU in Kuli-Chapori village.

"Those who did not want to consume the beetles can use them as feed for pigs and poultry," Bhattacharyya said.

Bhattacharyya assures the initiative is sustainable. "We can't kill all the beetles. A significant percentage will thrive and will regenerate so the concept will be sustainable. The outlets will stay open only during the time the beetles emerge and are available for trapping," added Bhattacharyya.

(Mongabay India/IBNS)



# Innovative effort brings laurels

**T**he state election commission recently won the national award for best electoral practices. The recognition is a pride for the state no doubt but most importantly it is testimony to the growing awareness among voters, especially the youths, on democracy.

Frederick Roy Kharkongor, the chief electoral officer, or CEO who received the award from President Ram Nath Kovind in Delhi, says he is "honoured and validated" by the decision of the Election Commission to choose Meghalaya from among so many big states.

"It is a collective effort and I give the credit to voters who came out in hordes, the polling officials who dared every adversity and the staff who worked very hard, among many others who were associated with the process," says Kharkongor, with a pride written on his face that is devoid of any pretension or gloat. He also attributes the success to outstanding campaigns and imaginative ways.

The election commission, with Kharkongor at the helm, has walked an extra mile to take a small state like Meghalaya, with around 19 lakh voters, to the national platform in terms of voters' right and encouraging the

electorate to have independent views.

It was not an easy task to achieve the feat, says Kharkongor, who along with his team have tried to be innovative to connect to today's effervescent youth. Music and art always took the centre stage in the run-up to the Assembly elections in February 2018.

There were regular shows and revue and the commission roped in local artistes and celebrities to pull in more qualitative crowd. Recently, it organised musical programmes, marathon and photography exhibitions on National Voters' Day on January 25. "We made every effort to tap the energy of the youth," Kharkongor says with conviction.

The commission forged "effective partnerships" with educational institutes and the creative community to spread awareness on voting and the whole process involved. Road shows, skits, graffiti, stone art (in South West Khasi Hills), peppy slogans in local languages as well as English, and prominent icons (celebrities like Usha Uthup were part of the campaign) were intrinsic part of its campaigns.



FR Kharkongor receives the award from the President in Delhi

voice concerns over malpractices prevalent during polls and how to fight against those.

The last election saw around 85 per cent voters' turnout, which is "very high and healthy". However, the last election, and the subsequent byelections, witnessed urban apathy for various reasons, long queues being one of them.

"We will have a queue management app where voters can have information about respective polling stations and the crowd assembled there," says Kharkongor while talking about the commission's plan to extensively use technology for accessibility and transparency.

There was a human touch in last year's poll campaign and this year too, it will be practised. Polling officials were trained in sign language with the help of Meghalaya Deaf Association last time and this time, before the Lok Sabha polls, they will be "extensively trained".

There will be an app for poll officials and persons with disabilities to communicate. However, certain grey areas still remain in the process. Despite intensive campaigning, money power continues to be 'the factor' during election in many areas. But the poll panel is taking the objective of fair election seriously and has already launched a citizen vigilance app where any citizen at any point of time can take video clips or photographs of wrongdoings and upload them. "These videos and photographs will be time-stamped and geo-tagged for authenticity," says Kharkongor.

The CEO is confident that when muscle power and violence could be checked, cash-for-vote will also be contained in the state in the next election. Dedicated surveillance teams had made record seizures of money before the last election and this time too, there will be hawk eyes on illegal methods to buy votes.

The commission has not only successfully competed against big states but through its dedication and hard work, exposed the talent that the state has. It hopes to perform equally, if not more, sincerely in the upcoming Lok Sabha election.

~ NM



(Top left) A poll panel campaign against cash for vote; (above) a graphic way of spreading awareness on EVMs

# Order beneath the chaos

**Sadhguru, Isha Foundation**



**Q**uestion: Should I stick to my culture or follow somebody else's culture?  
Sadhguru:

First, you need to understand that what somebody did yesterday is today's culture and the mess that you create today is tomorrow's culture. Cultures were not engineered towards a purpose. It generally happened according to the requirements of the land and the time and the situation that existed at that period.

Don't choose any cultures. Act intelligently in your life, without identifying with any culture. Every culture has something to offer. If you have chosen to take your life in a particular direction, a certain type of culture is advantageous. If your life is all about enjoying the external of life, turn West. If your life is about knowing the inner dimensions, turn East.

So, the choice is not about which culture. The choice is about what is it that you want to do with your life? What is suitable for your search and your longing, you arrange your life intelligently around that.

If you have chosen to walk the spiritual path then you need to create a certain type of culture. Wherever there was genuine spiritual process, uncannily you will see, generally they developed a similar kind of culture everywhere in the world, unconnected. If there was a realized being anywhere and he spoke about how to be, you will see it is almost word by word, the same. But over a period of time, those things get distorted, and influenced by the local cultures and organized forms of religion.

At one time, the whole sub-continent had a culture like how we are trying to create in Isha: a well-balanced state of chaos and order. It is very difficult to manage these two things at the same time. If we want to make every-

thing orderly, it is very easy. Everything will work properly but spirit will die. If you make it very chaotic, people will become very spirited but things will collapse. Once things collapse, people also fall apart.

When we say a rollercoaster, people usually think it is a wild thing. Not true. A rollercoaster is more controlled than your car. If you drive your car, it may go off here and there a little bit. Any moment you can go off the road and back on the road. A rollercoaster is fixed on its rails 100%, always on the track, never going off for a moment. Perfect order, but in experience, on the surface, it is total disorder. Only people who are sitting in it think it is a wild thing. People who are managing it think it is a perfect machine, in proper order. It never goes off the track.

Spiritual culture is always like a rollercoaster. One part of it is perfectly on rails always. The rest of it is going wild. It looks like you don't want to have anything to do with it because it is so crazy. At the same time, another part of it, the bottom line is fixed so perfectly well, that it never goes off the track. It takes a steady stomach to take that ride. If you don't have a stable stomach you cannot even sit in it. So if you bring this culture into yourself, whether it is a footwear or a crown, you handle it with the same care, with the same concern. Whether it is an ant or an elephant, you treat it with same concern. Whether somebody is a king or a beggar, you treat them the same way within yourself. If you learn to do the simple tasks of your life and the most important tasks of your life with the same involvement, if you don't make a distinction, something that is dear to you and not dear to you, that is a conducive culture for a spiritual seeker. No other culture is good for you.

*(Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary and bestselling author. He was conferred the Padma Vibhushan in 2017 for exceptional and distinguished service)*

## A WRITER'S IDENTITY; A POET'S QUEST IN NORTH EAST

# No boundaries here

# Poets come together



Janice Pariat interacts with participants at the workshop in Gangtok

**J**anice Pariat, the author of *Boats on Land, Seahorse and The Nine Chambered Heart* was recently at The People's Studio at ARTEM to conduct a workshop on 'How to read as a writer'.

The workshop was organised to present to the participants a deeper look at the process of reading. Dissecting assigned readings for the workshop, the participants were taken from decoding choices made by the writer who becomes the narrator — from whose perspective the story is written — to literary motifs and language.

The workshop was followed by a reading session by Pariat of selected stories from *Boats on Land* and her most recent work, *The Nine Chambered Heart*.

Speaking to Roshni Chetri, the digital editor at ARTEM, Pariat was critical about the practice of labelling writers from the region as a "northeastern" writers since "there are no northeastern writers, just as there are no North Indian writers", she asserted.

The last programme for the eve-

ning was a conversation with the author during which the structure of her novels to the presence of same-sex relationships in each of her books was explored.

Reflecting on the two readings assigned for the workshop and talking about good writing, the

**Good writing takes the familiar and makes you see it in a new way**

Janice Pariat | Writer

winner of the Sahitya Akademi Young Writer Award said, "Good writing takes the familiar and makes you see it in a new way. It's about taking every-day mundane life and making you see it anew."

Adding further nuances to the familiar notion that to be a good writer, one must be a reader first,

Pariat informed the indispensability of "reading as a writer". The two-hour workshop aimed at enhancing both the reading and writing skills of the participants.

"To read as a writer is to ask why. Why this and not that? This way and not the other? This piece of information here and not there? We need to ask why because writing is intention. Figuring out this intention, sometimes in the quiet privacy of our rooms, teaches us more about writing than any classroom can," she said.

The evening ended with a question-answer round with the audience.

The People's Studio is a multi-functional space for hosting art and photography exhibitions, writing workshops, poetry readings, film screenings and other artistic events in Gangtok. ARTEM is a magazine that celebrates the works of artists from the eight states of northeast India, and any work-of-art inspired by the region. At a time when there is a boom of creativity in the 8 states, we choose to tell our own stories.

**A**'Poet reads Poet' programme was organised at 'NETHing' in Guwahati recently where Namrata Pathak read out from Shalim M Hussain's latest poetry collection 'Betel Nut City'.

Shalim, a multi-talented personality, has been working on the literature and culture of the char-chaporis (river islands of Assam) for a long time. In 2010 he co-directed a short documentary film on 'Lathibari' and has been instrumental in founding a protest movement that has been given the name 'Miyah Poetry'. He is one of the founders of Itamugur, an art collective that is focussed on promoting the literature and art from the char-chaporis of Assam.

Namrata herself writes poetry and teaches English at the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong. Shalim M Hussain writes poetry and prose with equal sway.

He was selected for the 'India Foundation for the Arts' grant 2017-18. The grant was sanctioned for four short films on 'Nau Khela', 'Lathibari', and 'KobiBayat', three performative arts from the char-chaporis of Assam and 'Gasshi Rati', a semi-religious ritualistic performance.

On being asked what inspires him to write and whether he prefers prose over poetry, Shalim stated, "I think that the desire to tell stories inspires me to write. I use both prose and verse but the impulse has always been to tell stories. However, I choose the medium based on the story I want to tell. If it's deeply personal or anecdotal, I prefer poetry."

According to him, if the story is based on characters, he would prefer the short story. However, this is highly tentative and occasionally he would start writing a story in verse and if he thought that it's better suited for prose, he would make a detour.

After the poetry reading session, Hussain replied to Pathak's queries.



## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, FEBRUARY 3, 2019

A change in career matters is possible which would help you bring out some hidden talents as Venus trine Uranus on your solar return chart. You would be able to tackle challenges that may crop up with élan. Your confidence will be on the rise and will be evident in your interactions. Your approach will be more assertive and you would be more decisive. A lucky break will affect your family and you may then modify plans accordingly. This year will put the spotlight on matters of the heart. You might have recently met someone who takes your breath away.

**Aries: (March 21 - April 20)**

A more intense approach to relationships can be expected in this period. It is time to cut the fat by eliminating activities that aren't fulfilling your needs. Halfway measures will not be enough, so dig in and decide where you are going to invest your energy and where you need to pull back. When you concentrate your forces on one task or with one person, you can reach levels of fulfillment you haven't previously known. You would discuss issues objectively with those close to you. You would reach out and make new connections. You may visit and spend time in the company of your family and relatives. This is a favorable time to go for higher learning and join new courses to improve your professional skills and efficiency.

**Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)**

You would realize that unsolved issues and puzzling situations are now becoming clear. All that is really needed is action, and you have plenty of energy to utilize. Your social life is likely to increase and bring you in contact with more influential, powerful and helpful people. This phase highlights friendship, love, romance and children in your life. Your emotional brilliance will shine through as long as you do not react too quickly. This is a good time to build your skills, to get organized, and to attend to your health and your well being. There are strong chances of a pilgrimage; you may visit places of worship and holy places. A sense of humor allows free expression without anger or wounded egos.

**Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)**

Realistic levels of optimism and confidence are with you, and you are able to attract fortunate circumstances into your life. Making progress can be difficult but not impossible. You could even feel trapped by your daily routine with the emphasis on getting every task done right. You would rather be doing more exciting things. Someone enters your life on a whirlwind of emotional intensity. Take advantage of the stabilizing results you can obtain just by being extra helpful and caring. The pleasure is in the journey ahead of you, rather than merely in the conquest of the summit. You may feel as if you are running out of time in your quest to free yourself from a challenging situation, but you have more time than you think.

**Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)**

New responsibilities are likely to present themselves and you would take them more seriously now. You would learn about your own personal strength. You may have to deal with willfulness and issues of power and competition - in others and in yourself. There are likely to be times when you feel on edge, volatile, or even threatened. You may be able to get in touch with your internal motivations. A tendency to want to control your life through some form of manipulation would be strong at this time. Meeting with obstacles in your path, however, can force you into the position of using all of your resources to fight back, and you can discover resources you never knew you had in the process.

**Leo: (July 23 - August 23)**

Matters related to higher education, religion, and publishing proceed smoothly. This is an excellent time to seek advanced training and further your education. You would work in association with well-experienced people and would use your best talents and efficiency. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering. Financial benefits are stronger than any other time now. Duty and work commitment could come before pleasure, and a tendency to work more or harder is likely. As long as this doesn't reach workaholic levels, you will be just fine. You find yourself more accountable than ever when it comes to your work and output. Brisk walks and timely eating would be helpful.

**Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)**

This phase sees your energy and confidence increase dramatically. Things will not go in your favor if you resort to tactics to get what you want. At times, you could have problems staying calm,

cool, and collected. Buried resentments come to the fore and demand to be dealt with. It would be favorable to have good team spirit and be more tactful and obliging with your co-workers as this brings harmony and team spirit at the work place. You spend time with your beloved and go on trips, shopping, fun or even a journey. Intimacy and warmth are powerful stimulants for you during this phase. This is a favorable time to invest in shares, fixed deposits and insurance.

**Libra: (September 23 - October 23)**

You would be able to see the world in practical terms and structure your life and ambitions accordingly. Opportunities to travel arise and adventure tends to seek you out. Some restlessness is likely, mainly because of a deep feeling of wanderlust. You are more able than ever to see the "big picture" and less inclined to sweat the small stuff. You may be asked to state your intentions or urged to get serious. A strong period for romance and fun is indicated. There would be new associations and beginnings as new opportunities and changes are on the cards. Your family would be more supportive and harmony and pleasant interactions in your relationships would make you feel comfortable.

**Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)**

The planetary configuration brings more physical and laborious work. You could be stressed while meeting people's expectations and approval. Outdoor activities appeal more than ever, and an opportunity to travel somewhere exotic could drop into your lap. You have a greater desire to get away, expand your horizons, and broaden your life experiences. This influence often correlates with a time when you are more able to get away from the daily routine—more options open up, or you have more free time to do so. Do not isolate yourself when you're feeling down. People will support you, or at least listen, when you share your feelings.

**Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)**

You are artistic, stylish and your judgment is sound and you would participate in glamorous events. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental and caring. Your domestic life is comfortable as you make the family relaxed and secure and devote time with them. You are full of energy and indulge in arts and crafts. Try to compromise and adjust and take a soft approach when meeting people. You would be recognized and your work would be praised and rewarded. Take advantage of the smooth and magnetic energy. Give yourself a new fitness routine and healthy diet program to build on your energy.

**Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)**

You would maintain a balance between emotional feelings and practicality. You might have a more materialistic view of life and are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of comfort and status. You probably should be on the lookout for a tendency to create your own financial stress due to extravagant spending habits. You would insert your creativity in an artistic way into your work. A sense of humor allows free expression. Your cultural and spiritual awareness increases. Confidence is the key-faith in the universe and in your ability to do the right thing instinctively will take you places now.

**Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)**

You may need to re-adjust your plan of action. Errors in judgment made now are likely due to impulsiveness and in overlooking crucial details. You could have so many new ideas that you do not have time to implement all of them. Cooperation and a focus on harmony and understanding benefit you professionally and enhance your reputation and public standing. You would have the ability to work on financial and monetary pursuits. Good returns from overseas business are on cards. Your style of communication and efforts bring favorable results on your romantic life. You may feel restless at times; eat health food, yoga and meditation are recommended.

**Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)**

You could seek distinction and strive towards perfection in your work. Efficiency should be your goal now. Relationships are dynamic and when a difference arises, you are quick to settle it, and have little patience for sweeping matters under the rug. Your close personal relationships are lively and full of conflicts and resolutions or reconciliation. You would express your sympathetic and compassionate side. The seeds you plant now, you will reap later. Surprises surrounding intimate matters, shared finances and resources and financial support may be in store. You could pay attention to various ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one avenue of monetary gain.

## Framed moments



Former footballer Bhuban Chatterjee (extreme left) releases his book 'Bhuban-er Bhuban', a collection of poems and lyrics, in Kolkata. Veteran footballers Shyam Thapa (second from left), Gautam Sarkar and chess grandmaster Dibyendu Barua are also seen in the picture



A collage of photographs of migratory birds spotted at Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam. The winged guests were captured on camera by Michael Shylla, a former director of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (Photo Division).

*"An actor is totally vulnerable. His total personality is exposed to critical judgment - his intellect, his bearing, his diction, his whole appearance. In short, his ego."*

--- Thomas Mann

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.173 SHILLONG, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2019

### Modi's Trapeze Act

WITHIN days of the introduction – not passing, yet – of the Union Budget, a change in the nation's political mood is perceptible. The Modi government stole a march over its rivals, taking the poor, the farmers and the salaried middle class on a journey they could only dream of in the past.

While many are at a loss to figure out how the government would raise enough funds to meet the promises like the Rs 3000 a month dole to over 10 crore labourers in the unorganised sector, or a 6000-rupee payment through instalments a year, this pessimism is overshadowed by a sense of hope among the lower and middle income groups. They are seeing light at the end of the tunnel. Yet, one might argue that there's a trust-deficit when it comes to promises made by Modi or his government. After all, he had made "funny" promises during the last Lok Sabha poll campaign that, if elected, he would put Rs 15 lakh in the bank accounts of each of India's large army of poor -- from the black money he would seize from those who have deposited it in tax havens abroad. Nothing of the sort ever happened; rather, the poor became poorer and the rich richer under his watch – as had been happening ever since Independence. India is a nation famously lorded over by its one per cent rich, which keeps to themselves some 90 per cent of the nation's wealth. Governance by politicians, perhaps, is just a puppet show guided from behind by the filthy-rich.

India's poor, fed on a regular diet of hope, might still cozy up to Modi. He gave free LPG connections to six crore BPL families; he has started the Ayushman Bharat health scheme that offers an insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh per annum to the poor for health care. This, over and above what the Sonia-Manmohan era offered them: subsidised rice. Raising the income tax ceiling to five lakh from half its size is by itself a huge reassurance to the middle-class. Modi is not stopping at what he has promised in this budget; he says it's just a trailer – meaning, bigger things for the poor are on the way. In the end, much might not come from the government if at all Modi is elected back to power. Winning polls is what prompted Modi to try and loosen his government's purse strings. For now, Rahul Gandhi and the Congress, not to speak of Mamata, are crest-fallen and are at a loss for words.

# Natural Farming the answer to farmers' problems

By HH Mohrmen

A group of Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) in the Khasi Jaintia hills area of Meghalaya under the leadership of Bethany Society are embarking on a new endeavour to help the farming community improve their livelihoods and enhance their incomes. The objective is to improve the skill or re-skill the farmers of the state particularly those who are engaged in agriculture, livestock and other allied activities to enhance their production by introducing a new farming practice known as 'Natural Farming.'

Carmo Noronha, Executive Director of Bethany Society is a pioneer in introducing Natural Farming in the state and he is also solely responsible for bringing the various NGOs together under a joint venture partnership to embark on this challenging project. One may ask what Natural Farming is. Carmo in one of his lectures to the learners of the new farming practices said that Natural Farming is emulating forests; it is farming which involves learning from Nature. The trainers were reminded that the forest floor has since time immemorial been producing natural manure and food for the plants and animals for millions of years on its own and it has help feed and sustain life on earth for generations together and this relationship flourished till the advent of modern man on the surface of the earth.

Natural Farming which was developed by Dr Cho Han Kyu at Janong Natural Farming Institute in South Korea is based on the principle of interdependence among all living things. Natural Farming is learning from nature; it is a kind of farming which looks at nature as the teacher. In fact this farming practice is also akin to the indigenous farming practices that our ancestors have been doing since time immemorial and similarly our ancestors consider nature as the mother of all teachers and eternally learns from it.

To a question as to why there is a felt need of introducing Natural Farming in the state, one of the answers is that it will address the immediate need to enhance the skills of farmers and also ensure production of healthy food products for the society. It is not only natural and learning from nature but most importantly it encourages the use of locally available material

and using indigenous resources available for production.

The project initiated by Bethany Society is an integrated farming with a difference because it is cyclical in nature where the agricultural produce feeds human and animal and the animals in turn produce compost for the plants all using nothing but natural resources available locally. Therefore it is a never ending process in which dependence on outside resources is minimal. The farming process also help reduces the use of chemicals and other harmful ingredients in the farming practices by learning from the environment and also from practices that our ancestors too have been doing for so long.

Natural Farming ensures that products are healthy

**Natural Farming which was developed by Dr Cho Han Kyu at Janong Natural Farming Institute in South Korea is based on the principle of interdependence among all living things. Natural Farming is learning from nature; it is a kind of farming which looks at nature as the teacher.**

because they are produced naturally without using any chemical fertilisers or adding any artificial ingredients. It seeks to follow tradition where the farmers continue with their relationship with mother nature; where soil is like mother and the entire creations are like its children. She not only gives birth to children but continuously feeds them too. Natural Farming is looking at the soil as an organism which is alive and not merely as a factor for production that one can manipulate to suits one's needs. It not only helps feeds the soil it also ensures that nature continues the process of manufacturing soil to feed the increasing numbers of mouths.

In recent times, this relationship was snapped and farmers started treating soil as a commodity or factor for production. This is particularly obvious in places where broomstick is grown where chemical herbicides are being used to clear the undergrowth around the plant. This has had a negative impact on the health of the soil. This is

being practiced by many broomstick cultivators. This despite the fact that there are complains from farmers who used chemical fertiliser that there is gradual decrease in the productivity of the land they use. The project will therefore go a long way in helping solve the soil problem that the state is facing now.

In many farming villages in West Jaintia hill, local and traditional seeds are hard to find. The market in the area is flooded with commercially produced, high-yielding variety of seeds which have replaced traditional seeds. Traditional seeds in the area which the farmers have been using for ages and which has adapted with the climate in the area and passed the test of time is being replaced by

commercial seeds. While traditional seeds are believed to survive climate change because they have been able to adapt to change that happens in the local environment, the commercially produced high-yielding variety are vulnerable to climate change. But once lost the seeds are lost forever and it will a great loss for humankind.

Natural Farming is healthy because it does not interfere with the growth and development of the plants or animals and neither does it use any method to force the crop to yield more than what they can. It is natural because the only technique used to increase production is natural.

Industrial farming or commercial farming has already had a drastic impact on soil fertility, the diversity of seeds and even diversity of domesticated animals is at stake now. It has also impacted on the skills of the farmers which always depends on learning from nature. Whereas Natural

Farming is doing the opposite of what the commercial farming is doing. Natural farming has a nurturing impact on the environment which is opposite to what commercial agriculture is doing. Instead of promoting commercial and genetically modified species, it tries to encourage farmers to breed local species of chicken and pigs which are healthy and which are sadly gradually being replaced by the other breed.

In its effort to address these challenges Bethany Society hopes that this training will help reverse the negative impacts of commercial farming on the soil and farming practices in the area. This farming method will also help farmers respect crops and animals and more importantly the natural cycles of life. The project initiated is to train farmers on integrated farming using natural farming and the project will include training on agriculture farming, livestock rearing and other allied activities like mushroom cultivation and beekeeping to help enhance farmers' income.

Natural Farming is Zero waste farming said Carmo, precisely because there is nothing to waste in this farming process. Waste from one unit can be used or would rather be a resource for another unit and the cycles go on like that. For example livestock rearing is many a time being criticised as being environmentally unfriendly or that the activity has drastic impact on the environment and the major factor is because livestock farming requires huge amounts of water and other natural resources, but in Natural Farming very less water is used in rearing animals.

Natural farming ensures that natural diversity is maintained and even for making compost natural farming makes sure that only locally available micro-organisms are used rather than using methods and organisms that are foreign to the land. It is environment-friendly because it not only walks hand in hand with the nature but it continues to learn from nature. But the most important aspect of natural farming is that it uses only locally available resources therefore it is low cost and easy on the pockets of farmers. Since it is natural and the farming practice is based on the principle of nature, it can therefore be adapted in any environment.

## I am And I will: Heal the world

Dr. Caleb Harris M.Ch.(Surgical Oncology)

WORLD CANCER DAY  
Feb 4, 2019

Growing up in the pre-internet era, we did not have the luxury of iTunes and other online streaming services for accessing music. It was the humble audio cassette, which I don't think many of today's youngsters would have seen. Nor were there as many artistes as today, with fewer acts, and scarce availability of their music in India. He was popularly known as the 'King of Pop', and he was truly the king. Michael Jackson, though controversial, was known for his philanthropic efforts, especially for the children of Africa afflicted by wars and famines. He crooned,

"Heal the world, make it a better place

For you and for me and the entire human race"

Now you might be wondering what is ailing the children of Meghalaya and what you can do to Heal their world.

World Cancer Day, observed on February 4 annually, is an initiative of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), based in Switzerland. 2019 marks the launch of the 3-year 'I Am and I Will' campaign, which is an empowering call-to-action urging for personal commitment and represents the power of individual action taken now to impact the future.

So what is this personal commitment?

Northeast India has a higher incidence of cancers as compared to the rest of the country, but most of these are preventable. More than half of these cancers are due to tobacco, which has no positive benefit to mankind, except, of course, the profits to the tobacco companies. While most people will blame the government for not banning this noxious substance, we need to understand that it is easier said than done. Banning has not been an effective solution to such problems and considering the strong tobacco lobby, it would be politically impossible to achieve this.

But it is really heartening to know that India has very good laws to curb the use of tobacco. Unfortunately, though, its implementation is rather poor. It is here that we as citizens can make a difference by enforcing some of these laws. The Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 or COTPA, 2003 provides the legal basis for curbing the use of tobacco.

I was buying vegetables last month when a gentleman stood next to me, smoking a cigarette. The wind was blowing in my direction and the smoke was all over my face. I politely, but very firmly requested him to move away and not smoke there, and he complied. I am sure many of you would have travelled in a bus or a taxi wherein a co-passenger or the driver would be smoking. We need to take a stand and ask the person to stop smoking, and if the person refuses to comply, we can complain to the police. Under section 4 of COTPA, smoking in public places is banned, with a fine on the person who smokes. All owners of public places like restaurants, theatres, shopping centres, etc should display signs saying Smoking is prohibited and they are liable to be fined otherwise.

While the law respects the right of an individual to choose to smoke, he should not endanger others, who are likely to be exposed to the smoke he exhales (second hand smoke). This contains carcinogens (cancer causing toxins) and is also called passive smoking. Its important to understand that women and children are the ones who are at risk of disease due to passive smoking. This is something which we the public have to enforce, as it is not possible to expect police personnel at all

public places.

Nicotine, which is found in tobacco, is considered the most addictive substance. Once a person uses tobacco, it is nicotine which causes the craving in him, thus thus enslaving him to tobacco. Once enslaved, tobacco hastens the death of the person, by causing cancer, respiratory disorders and other diseases. Since the lifespan of the tobacco user is reduced, the tobacco industry focuses on efforts to bring in new users every year. Their primary target is adolescents and youngsters, as they are in a susceptible frame of mind and they are bound to be slaves for life.

Many tobacco users feel that they can kick the habit at will, after they have tried it out, but learn it the hard way that they have been enslaved. Tobacco Cessation Clinics are specialised centres wherein doctors, psychologists and other experts offer special treatment to enable tobacco users get out of the habit, and tobacco users can seek help. Such a clinic is being run in NEIGRIHMS. However, even with professional help, only about 4% are able to get out of the habit.

Since quitting tobacco is difficult, we need to ensure that children and youngsters are prevented from getting into this harmful habit. Section 6 of COTPA says that sale of tobacco to minors (<18 years) is a punishable crime and that tobacco should not be sold within 100 yards of all educational institutions. This is all around the perimeter of the campus. Also, the heads of these institutions are expected to put up signages indicating the prohibition of tobacco sales. The onus of checking the age of the buyer is with the seller. Children should not be allowed to sell tobacco too. Many children start tobacco when they were sent to buy for their parents or other elders. Hence this should be strongly condemned. The Act also prohibits the advertisement of tobacco products, by both direct and indirect means.

Now, coming back to the personal commitment. Every individual can prevent smoking in public places and thereby make these places safer. John F. Kennedy said, "Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see". Children learn from what they see rather than what they are told. If a child sees her teacher use tobacco, she is likely to explore and experiment with it. Those of us who are parents and educators or others who are come in contact with children, should ensure that we are good examples. This is our responsibility toward the society.

The heads of schools, colleges and other educational institutions can take steps to declare their institutions as "Tobacco Free Educational Institutions"(TFEI). A sign needs to be displayed outside the institution indicating that the premises is a "No tobacco zone" and that sale of tobacco is prohibited within 100 yards of the perimeter. Most importantly, none of the staff of the institution should use tobacco inside the premises.

Shillong has a high density of educational institutions, and if each and every institution takes the initiative to make its premises free of tobacco, this will really Heal our World and reduce the risk of cancer to which these students are likely to be exposed. To quote the world cancer day website, "Whoever you are, you have the power to reduce the impact of cancer for yourself, the people you love and for the world. It's time to make a personal commitment."

P.S.: For more information on this and for assistance in declaring your institution as TFEI, the author may be contacted at [surgonco@outlook.com](mailto:surgonco@outlook.com)

(The writer is Associate Professor and i/c, Department of Surgical Oncology, NEIGRIHMS, Shillong)

### TO THE EDITOR

## Khasis in Bangladesh

Editor,

What an ageing, soon to be retired politician said about the indigenous Khasi population living in Bangladesh at the recent rally at Madan Student, Jaiaiw is totally absurd and unacceptable. He said that we will all be happy if the Khasis living in Bangladesh return to India. That argument is devoid of logic and common sense. First and foremost if they are happy living in present day Bangladesh, then the question of them coming back to India does not arise. Secondly, India today is the most powerful country in South Asia; it is way up there at the top when it comes to the most powerful countries in Asia and is certainly on its way to becoming a global superpower. So India does wield enormous influence in the region as a whole. It can definitely use its soft power

pross to put pressure on countries like Bangladesh to treat its minorities, especially the indigenous tribal population with dignity and respect.

When my forefathers decided to return to their village from present day Bangladesh after partition(Bangladesh was formed in 1971),they were not put under any sort of pressure from either the Indian government or the Pakistan government at that time. It was all about timing and it was a calculated decision since the vast economic opportunities and the livelihoods that the orange plantation provided for them were no longer there. By the time the partition happened, the orange trees were dying so there was no point for them to continue staying in those plantation areas since they have their own homes in Mawsynram. They were also provided economic

compensation for the land that they ceded to East Pakistan. So my forefathers' decision to return to India was taken after they had weighed all the options available for them. So the question that we need to ask ourselves today is, whether the indigenous Khasi population living in Bangladesh at present have those options that my forefathers had?

I can say with a fair amount of certainty that the thousands of Khasi living in Bangladesh today have very little to look forward to if they return to India. Present day Bangladesh has been their home for hundreds if not thousands of years. So the Government of India must use its soft power to ensure that the Khasi population living in Bangladesh today are treated as equal citizens and that their rights are not in any way trampled upon by the authorities in that country.

Yours etc.,  
Gary Marbaniang  
Via email

## Education imperilled

Editor,

The leakage of questions papers meant to test teachers for recruitment as Lower and Upper Primary School teachers shows that we can no longer trust the Education Department and its various directorates of training and research. It also means that the recruitment test will have to be held once again even if many of those who appeared for the test never got the leaked question papers. This is very unfair for those prospective teachers who had prepared themselves to appear for the exams. This time the Government should show that it means business and ensure that the person or persons responsible for the leak are punished. The

Education Minister of the MDA Government should take this matter seriously because if the leak had not become public then many undeserving candidates would have been appointed teachers while others who slugged and studied would have lost out. Meghalaya cannot allow itself to turn into a lawless state where criminals go unpunished.

Yours etc.,  
TG Momin,  
Via email

## Will BJP drop the CAB?

Editor,

Apropos the news item, "BJP leader hints at CAB being put on backburner," (ST Feb 3, 2019), the BJP ST Morcha leader H Bill Lotha seems to suggest that the Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016 will be shelved as it has not been listed in the current budget session.

However, there are other reports which say that the matter will be listed for discussion in the Rajya Sabha on February 7-8. If the matter is not discussed within the tenure of this Government then it is good news for the North East, particularly for Assam where the protests against the Bill were the loudest and the BJP knew that it was losing its popularity in this region. The CAB has created so much disenchantment that slogans in Mizoram read, "Bye bye India, Welcome China." These are dangerous portends and the CAB could further alienate the North Eastern states completely from the rest of India.

Yours etc.,  
John D Wahlang,  
Shillong-6

Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of The Shillong Times

“ Sometimes I think that a parody of democracy could be more dangerous than a blatant dictatorship, because that gives people an opportunity to avoid doing anything about it. ”

--- Aung San Suu Kyi

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.174 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2019

### Mamata's Political Spectacle

MAMATA Banerjee is a street fighter and no one does this better than her. Mamata's indomitable fight against the entrenched Communist rule in Bengal where she squarely defeated them in 2011 is legendary. She fought the Communists for nearly three decades despite threats and intimidation until she finally dislodged them. But Mamata's Trinamool Congress has only replaced the Communists. The Saradha and Narada Scam that hit the state of West Bengal saw Mamata's Trinamool being tainted by it as some of her ministers and MPs were involved. Rajeev Kumar the Commissioner of Police was directed by the country's premier investigating agency - CBI to probe the matter but he took his own time and refused to appear before the CBI despite several summons. It is a different matter that the CBI overstepped its brief by trying to enter the Kumar's official home on Sunday to question him over the multi-crore chit fund scams. The CBI claims that Kumar had incriminating evidence against the Ponzi scheme offenders, such as laptops, pen drives and diaries with entries but was holding on to those and refusing to hand them over to the Agency.

It is unprecedented for a Police Chief of any state to join a political protest. Kumar forgets that his loyalty is to the Indian Constitution. This has cast a shadow over the police force not just in Bengal but across the country. The politicization of the police has been a worrying trend in this country. Attempts to bring in Police reforms have met with resistance from the political establishment because politicians of every hue use the police to further their nefarious aims.

Mamata Banerjee has been sitting on a dharna to redeem the Constitution. This is the point of contention. In her eagerness to demolish Narendra Modi and the BJP, Mamata has pulled out all the stops including that of turning the police force into her minions. Mamata is using this incident as a political stratagem. Meanwhile the CBI has approached the Supreme Court on the matter. The apex court has stated that if the CBI could produce even a single piece of evidence against the West Bengal Government or Police then it would, 'come down so heavily on them that they would regret it.' Very strong words from the Court which will hear the case again today!

Meanwhile all anti-BJP political parties have converged to share the stage with Mamata. She is, after all the glue that binds them until May 2019. It remains to be seen what happens after Tuesday's Court hearing.

Last year a European visited Tura. After someone shook hands with him saying, "Welcome to India", he immediately remarked, "This is not India. This is South Asia". He went on to explain that the people in the North East are completely different from the people in the rest of India. Culturally, linguistically, ethnically, geographically and physically the North East is not North or South or West or Central India. In the North East you have the feeling you are in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines or any of any those countries in the South Asian region. The North East is unique concluded the visitor.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) 2016 that was passed in the Lok Sabha last month is a pre-determined agenda to undermine, if not destroy the uniqueness of the North East. CAB comes from an obnoxious mind of the RSS and other fascist groups, the masters and the foot soldiers of BJP. These groups stand for one culture (Hindutva), one language (Hindi) and one religion (Hinduism) in a country they want to call Hindustan. These groups are aliens to pluralism and diversity. They are foreign to tolerance and much less to acceptance of others different from them. CAB is certainly not to promote, preserve, protect and safeguard the tribes of the North East and their cultures.

On February 1, a news portal in its 'breaking news', quoting unnamed sources claimed that the Rajya Sabha Chairperson had finalized the agenda for the Budget Session and Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 was not listed. Apart from it, a Google search did not yield any result. So, for the moment it is presumed the Bill will be tabled and might even be passed in the Upper House in the current Budget Session as indicated by the President's Address on the last day of January.

One major and natural, fall out of CAB will be the rise of extremism or unhealthy regionalism in the North East. The evidences are already on display during the series of unprecedented protests against the Bill that proposes to give a blanket invitation to Hindus, and by compulsion, also to other non-Muslims migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Rights activists, Akhil Gogoi has already stated that the Assamese people should quit India if the Bill was passed. Assamese

# CAB: It's long term repercussions

By Albert Thyrianiang

Literateur, Hiren Gohan and journalist Manjit Mahanta allegedly made similar statements. All three have been booked under sedition sections of IPC. Such charges won't deter angry people of the region because they feel fighting against CAB is fighting for their very existence.

In Mizoram protesters even had banners that read, "Hello China, Bye Bye India". In Shillong slogans like, "Khasis by birth, Indians by accident" rent the air. In Nagaland where people feel their 'country' is being occupied by the Indian forces, the call for independence might have vibrated the air. All over the North East similar sentiments were expressed by youths who fell terribly let down and betrayed by the BJP government at the centre. On social media sections of the people even demanded that North East India be one country. A Shiv Sena MP even predicted that if the Citizenship Bill is passed the situation in the Northeastern states would turn worse than Kashmir.

CAB will give an excuse to young people to take up arms. It might give a fillip to the various underground groups operating in the region. They may claim 'legitimacy' for their unlawful activities. There has been an overall improvement in law and order in the last few years. The NSCN (IM), North East's most powerful underground outfit is under ceasefire with the Indian government, ULFA in Assam has been considerably weakened, NDFB in Bodoland has come over ground, HNLC in Khasi Hills has almost disappeared, GNLA in Garo Hills has surrendered. Other groups have either joined the mainstream or have been subdued. This has been possible because civil societies and the people in general no longer supported these groups. It will not be a surprise if the whole region goes back to the situation it was 10/15 years ago. The feeling of alienation and oppression in the region will now increase. Who is responsible for this if not the BJP, the RSS and other right wings groups?

The allies of the BJP in the region are also responsible. They need to be made accountable. They embraced the BJP for power, money and false promises. The NDPP in Nagaland, the AGP in As-

sam, the IPFT in Tripura, the NPP, NPF and LJP in Manipur and the NPP, UDP, HSPDP in Meghalaya are also answerable. Did they not know that since its inception the BJP has been a communal party? Did they not know about the narrow ideology, divisive philosophy and dangerous agenda of the RSS, the parent of the BJP? Were they ignorant that the BJP is but the political arm of the RSS? Who can enlighten them that the saffronization of the bureaucracy, the country's institutions and the whole nation is the agenda of the RSS? Were they unaware that the RSS never accepted the tricolor, rejected the green and white colour (read Muslims and minorities respectively) in the tricolor and never hoisted the National Flag for 55 years? Had no one educated them that Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the early ideologue of the RSS who popularized the term Hindutva and who was implicated in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi pleaded for mercy from the British so that he would be set free from prison? Had no one warned them that the RSS considers all tribals as Hindus?

The Government of Nagaland has rejected the CAB and claims that Nagaland is protected by ILP. Manipur has prayed for exemption in case the Bill becomes a law. The AGP has pulled out of BJP led government in Assam. The different parties under the leadership of Conrad K Sangma, Meghalaya's CM might have resolved to oppose the Bill and other political fall outs have happened but the damage has already been done. Moreover, there was no decisive stand like an ultimatum to sever ties with the saffron party from the allies and of quitting the party from BJP CMs, ministers and legislators prior to and even after passing of the Bill in the Lower House. What held them back if they care for their states and the people?

In Meghalaya why did the NPP deny that they had a nexus with the BJP prior to the election last year? Why did the party form the government with the BJP? Why did the UDP and HSPDP join hands with the BJP? Why did they all gracefully allow the likes of Amit Shah and Himanta Biswa Sarma to act as 'felicitors' in the state where they had just two members? Why did the ministers take oath against a saffron back-

ground? The UDP has accused the BJP of using CAB as a 'vote investment' but why are they still hands in glove as partners? A cabinet resolution opposing the Bill might have taken place and the entire cabinet rushed to Delhi to unsuccessfully meet the PM; the ministers might be attending rallies and protests but they are too little to stop CAB from sailing through in the Rajya Sabha.

The PM whom they greatly revere and admire has ignored them and will continue to ignore his negligible partners in the state. It is election time. Points are scored. CAB has improved the chances of the NDA to return to power in spite of the fact they have almost zero to show in terms of development and delivering on the mighty promises made in 2014. Let us stray too far history will blame the BJP's allies for the passage of the CAB.

The PM has assured that Assam and North East will be protected. The assurance is unconvincing. He has not spelled out how. Are there amendments in the Bills to address the concerns of the regions? What are those amendments? Are the amendments sufficient to allay the fears of the people of North East?

Clearly CAB's sinister objective is to create an anti-Muslim sentiment. The creators of this Bill hoped to pitch Muslims against non-Muslims. Since in the North East illegal immigrants are perceived to be mainly Muslims, CAB was thought to unite non-Muslims against Muslim. But rightly it back fired. The threat to the indigenous people of North East is the non-Indians from Bangladesh, irrespective of religion. However, the BJP will think it has achieved its goal of polarization before the General Election 2019. Hope the electorate sees through this worrying design and vote wisely to preserve the valued secular and pluralistic fabrics of the nation.

Should the Rajya Sabha pass the Bill violence, unrest, turmoil and bloodshed might return to 'Seven Sisters'. We might go back to the dark days of militancy and arm struggle. We might have to witness the ugly face of unwanted regionalism. CAB might cause emotional alienation of North East India. If that happens the BJP and its allies in the North East are solely responsible.

Albert Thyrianiang  
Umswai, East KarbiAnglong, Assam

# Will populist Budget help Modi in the 2019 polls?

By Dr Satish Misra

In a determined bid to win the next general elections, Union Finance Minister Piyush Goyal presented a full budget though labeling it as an interim one to please voters belonging to lower middle class, unorganized sector and farmers.

Goyal, who was given the Finance portfolio only a week before the presentation of the budget on February 1, presented the budget document in the Lok Sabha that proposes an expenditure of Rs 27.84 lakh crore-an increase of 3.42 lakh crore over the last year.

As one of its final act in office, the Modi government preferred to abandon yet another bipartisan tradition of not presenting a full budget in the election year because Goyal has listed spending giveaways but has not informed where funding is going to come from.

Goyal, in his speech, announced the creation of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Saman Nidhi Scheme that is aimed at providing income support of Rs 6000 annually in three equal instalments of Rs 2000 to vulnerable farmers whose landholding is up to two hectares.

With any eye on the coming general elections, the Finance Minister has taken care that farmers receive the money in their accounts in this financial year only just before the voting takes place and he has made provision of Rs 20,000 crores in the revised estimates of 2019-19 making it effective from December 1, 2018.

The interim Finance Minister also announced a new pension scheme for young workers in the unorganised sector. Workers, with incomes up to Rs 15,000 per months, can join this by paying a monthly amount varying from Rs 55 to Rs 100 depending upon the age of the worker. Enrolled workers would get a pension of Rs 3000 per month after attaining the age of 60.

The budget has provided tax relief to that section of middle class whose annual income is up to Rs 5 lakhs. This provision is going to provide tax benefit of Rs 18500 crore to an estimated three crore middle class taxpayers.

Such and other sops like that to real estate developers who have been permitted to hold unsold inventory for two years from the date of project completion without paying tax on notional rent have been offered in the budget this year.

Allocations to education defence and health sectors have not gone up as the Finance Minister has provided only that much amount that can take care of the inflation. In the process, the Modi government has bid good-bye to fiscal prudence. The Finance Minister informed that fiscal deficit would be 3.4 percent of the GDP for both 2018-19 and 2019-20, compared with a target of 3.3 and 3.1 percent respectively.

The Government, on the eve of the budget presentation, had revised the GDP growth rate upwards otherwise, the fiscal deficit would have been higher. It is indeed noteworthy that the Modi led NDA government has a penchant for playing with statistics. In the beginning itself, the Modi government had changed the calculation methodology and had shown its GDP figures in much better numbers and that of the predecessor government in a poorer light.

The budget has been presented with a view that

if the BJP loses the election then the next government would find it impossible to fulfill the promises that have been made by the Modi government. In military lingo, this approach is called a scorched earth policy that was followed by retreating armies who used to burn crops so that winning armies do not have anything to eat.

If their highly irresponsible budget mathematics and giveaways win Prime Minister Narendra Modi the election, then they are back in power. In addition, if the BJP-led NDA government is voted out, then the next government would have an impossible task. The BJP, then in opposition, would have an excellent opportunity to attack the next government from day one.

No other government has done it before. The UPA government, in the case of farm loan waiver, did not post the cost forward.

There is nothing in the budget for the unemployed youth while it tries to please the middle class by raising the income tax exemption limit to five lakhs. On the one hand, the Modi government is trying to hide and suppress employment data; on the other it is not doing anything to create employment. It could have been done by taking steps to boost investments but nothing has been done.

In fact, the Modi government had promised in 2014 that corporate tax would be reduced to Southeast Asian levels to render Indian companies' workers competitive with its peer countries. Possibly, the ruling party is thinking that young unemployed could be fed on emotions and are employable at Ramjanambhoomi mandir movement or in cow protection. They can be wooed by showing them films like 'Uri-the Surgical strike'.

The Government had come in 2014 with the promise of creating two crore jobs every year and with that objective 'Make in India' programme was launched with lots of fanfare. It seems that the Modi government has bid farewell to it.

Goyal, who was supposed to be an interim Finance Minister until Arun Jaitley returns from the US, has done wonders in presenting a budget, which he called a road to development.

Another first of this budget was the slogan raising in the house. The BJP MPs supported by its allies shouted "Modi- Modi Modi" after the budget had been presented in the Lok Sabha. Modi was himself seen thumping tables at least over two dozen times.

The budget is full of propaganda and is going to be publicized well. In a lighter vein, the exercise is to save the prime ministerial chair. Every government tries to retain power and so has the Modi regime done it by offering sops but whether people will treat them as genuine or not will only be known when ballot boxes are opened.

Many governments have presented populist budgets but those have not proved to be guarantees for coming back to power. The budget, undoubtedly, has lessened popular anger against the government making the electoral battle open and even.

(Dr. Satish Misra is a Research Journalist & Research Associate with Observer Research Foundation).

## TO THE EDITOR

### Alas! North Eastern States

Editor,  
What a waste of precious working hours, bandhs, rallies, meetings - all with a pre-decided agenda. Let it be understood by one and all that these so called agitations are nothing but video games played by political masters sitting inside their plush office chambers. Well, one may ask why do they do so? The reasons are aplenty but one significant reason is to destabilize the government by the power/money hungry predators both inside as well as outside the Government. When these political masters play games, they do it secretly but alas the innocent public gets instigated and starts lending support to the so-called cause of the agitation - they don't even fully understand. They start lending support because something bad is going to happen to our Jaitybnriew and therefore we have to lend support to the slogan makers on the streets and eventually beat up and burn some non-tribal on the pretext of fighting for our Rights.  
Do we even see any rea-

son when we blindly jump into the agitational mode? Do we wonder why anyone with legal documents would want to settle in any part of the unwelcoming North East? Statistics show that the original 20% non-tribal population of Meghalaya has been reduced to 12% and these are official figures. So do we really think that because of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) the migrants from neighbouring countries will actually all want to migrate to NE and that too with proper documentation and do we also believe that we will allow them to settle here officially? Buy my word brothers and sisters we will not allow anyone to settle officially - we have already driven away 8% of the non-tribals who were officially citizens. But our eyes are closed when the unofficial ones have been illegally crossing the borders and settling permanently. And they don't need our permission. They come here with an agenda, marry our women, father off springs who are more theirs and less of the mother's. We are already having hordes of

them in our state and now into 3-4 electoral constituencies are fully theirs. What did we do about them? Nothing, because we did not want to do anything or are we too scared to do anything? So our might is shown on the rightful citizen of our state because he is vulnerable.

May I also ask why we think that the ultimate solution to every problem is the ILP. Do we understand that ILP can never be imposed and therefore whenever we want to create disturbances, ILP is the easiest and most, "saleable item"? Haven't we raised this forever and ever? What do we want our state to be? Why do we want to destroy the Tourism sector where the entire state is now a huge stakeholder? Do we understand that ILP will be disastrous for the state in every imaginable manner? Do we even understand that its implementation would create monopoly in all businesses thereby resulting in sky-rocketing of prices of all commodities? We have living examples in the state of Mizoram and Nagaland. Oh! Mizoram and Nagaland

did I say? Why are they opposing the Citizenship Amendment Bill when they already have the ILP? So what's their agenda?

I am a son of the soil and see and understand the true picture. Please understand the dirty politics in the background and let us not act like puppets in the hands of a select few who make us dance to their tune and have the last laugh!

Your etc.,  
Malcom Lyngdoh  
Shillong-14

### Cleaning up the Lukha river

Editor,  
I personally congratulate the Sonapyrdi Tourism and Economic Development Society (STEDS) for the recent festival organised at Lukha river which aimed at the preservation and conservation of the pristine state of famous Lukha river. Yes, this well known river of East Jaintia Hills, which is one of the biggest rivers of Meghalaya has been subjected to pollution by coal mining and giant cement

factories of Jaintia Hills. I also congratulate the Synjuk Ki Rangbah shngong of Sonapyrdi and its adjoining areas for trying their best to combat the evil forces which have polluted this same river. In fact, the Synjuk has had several meetings and conducted many awareness programmes for cleaning the river and for combating the pollution of the Lukha. As it is, this river is still subjected to pollution, especially during the monsoon months. There is the need to root out pollution altogether right at the source which is the coal mining activity and the release of effluents from the giant cement plants. It will be a great challenge for the STEDS and the Synjuk ki Rangbah shngong of Sonapyrdi to combat the pollution of the Lukha river but we all wish that the two NGOs with the help of government authorities and the public at large will defeat the evil forces that pollute this once great river

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Via email

### Why a BJP functionary in Govt program?

Editor,  
The 2nd ASEAN - India Youth Summit is being held at Guwahati from February 3-7, 2019. It is definitely a welcome initiative. However, what is worrying and very odd is that Ram Madhav, the National General Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is participating in the program, and unfortunately too the event is blatantly advertised with his photograph, to promote and create awareness about the program. While participation from various walks of life is desirable the role of a political functionary is not at all desirable. In fact it is condemnable to have a political party functionary in a Government function, involving many nations. We must understand that Government programs and party politics do not go together.

Yours etc.,  
A Bhuyan,  
Nagaon

*"A negative judgment gives you more satisfaction than praise, provided it smacks of jealousy."*

--- Lionel Trilling

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.175 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2019

### A balanced view

THE Supreme Court has taken a balanced, yet restrained, view of the shameful drama that unfolded in Kolkata since Sunday following a CBI attempt to force its entry to the official residence of Kolkata Police Commissioner, Rajeev Kumar. By asking the top cop to appear before the CBI for investigations into the Saradha and Rose Valley chit fund scam, in which several close chums of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee are involved, the court backed the CBI. By fixing Shillong as the venue for the meet, the court has also given an ear to the Commissioner's posturing that he cannot report to the CBI in Kolkata. The matter would come up for detailed hearing again on February 20, by which time the state has to explain to the court about the obstructions caused to the CBI by the police and the Chief Minister herself -- who went to the extreme of rounding up and detaining the team of CBI officials.

Dirty politics was seen at its worst in Kolkata and the fresh damage it caused to the CBI as also the federal structure of the nation is immense. The CM exceeded her brief. Here is a senior cop who headed the Special Investigation Team (SIT) that probed the chit fund scam and is accused of hiding vital, incriminating information including recordings in a pen drive and a "red diary". That he has evaded CBI summons for the past two years is itself a violation of law. Yet, the way the CBI slept over the matter so far is a sad commentary on its style of functioning. If a summons is defied repeatedly, arrest follows. The street-smart chief minister would need to explain why she has gone this far in the case of a police official, while she chose to remain silent when several of her party leaders including ministers were set upon by the CBI in the past in connection with this case. It shows that she feared the outcome in an interrogation of the Commissioner. The obvious inspiration for this high-voltage drama, which raised serious questions about the federal structure of the nation and the Constitutional provisions thereof might also be an attempt by the CM to promote her image in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls. It's no secret that she wants herself to be the fulcrum around which the Opposition should rally round, so as to enable her to stake claim to be the next PM. But, she has gone too far. National interests are at stake.

# Budgeting Welfare Funds availability critical

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

The interim Budget presented by stand-in Finance Minister Piyush Goel putting thrust on rural industrialisation possibly fulfils the dream of Mahatma Gandhi in the year of his 150th centenary celebrations. The focus on the farm sector has obviously been kept in view of the large-scale farm distress that has been plaguing the country, opening opportunities in rural areas and appealing its vote bank.

Though the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, announced assures income support for small and marginal farmers, they have been somewhat disappointed at the amount offered as also there has been no announcement on loan waivers in the Budget proposals. There is no denying that it is beginning, expected to benefit 12 crore farmers with the money going directly to their bank accounts, but the scheme would possibly exclude the most vulnerable sections of the farming community namely, tenants and landless labourers which, in 2011, were estimated to be 14.43 crores.

One can expect that the amount may possibly be increased in the coming years. Even this meagre amount, Rs 6000 to be paid to farmers would entail an expenditure of a massive Rs 75,000 crore, which Piyush Goel pointed has no match with Rs 52,000 loan waiver granted in 2008. One cannot justify the criticism by a section of experts regarding the uptrend in prices of inputs as this is just a support price and cannot overcome distress per se.

The announcement of assured mega pension plan of Rs 3000 per month for unorganised workers with Rs 15,000 income is also a significant step as over the years the government paid little attention to this sector. While organised sector employees have been well protected, those in the unorganized side have been at the receiving end. This may appear to be a 'repackaged version' of the Atal Pension Scheme, but it is expected to go a long

way in giving new life to around 10 lakh unorganised sector workers.

The allocation of Rs 60,000 crore for the flagship scheme, MGNREGA, increased by Rs 5000 crore, compared to the current fiscal has been higher but it would be difficult to finance programme for the full year. At a time when unemployment has reached a record high of 6.1 per cent, at least an additional sum of Rs 5000 to 8000 crore should have been allocated to ensure employment to the rural poor for the whole year. This year also the allocation fell short by a large number and this may be repeated by the end of the next fiscal.

Expectedly, it is a populist budget with an eye on the impending General election. There has been little justification in not only doubling the zero tax limit, but ensures the middle class does not have to pay any tax for those having income of Rs 6.5 lakhs, if one invested in saving instruments. The loss in this regard would be difficult to make up. At least this section should have been imposed an education and health cess.

Similarly, increasing the defence budget to an all-time high of Rs 3.05 lakh crore may not be quite rational, keeping in view the valuable resources required for infrastructure demands of the country. Though it is agreed that defence needs of the country cannot be ignored, still spending such a huge sum of our valuable resources may be difficult to justify. Obviously, the cross-border terrorism that Pakistan continues may have forced the political leaders to go for such a massive allocation. However, it is expected a part of the money would be used in indigenous production of arms, fighter planes and ships, which may lead to economic growth.

Regarding digitalisation of one lakh villages as contemplated it may help their overall growth. Moreover, the benefits of artificial intelligence and advanced technologies are to be explored for which a

national programme has been rightly envisaged. Other measures for revival of the rural sector like setting up a separate ministry for fisheries, two per cent subvention for farmers pursuing husbandry and fisheries or hit by natural calamities, and three per cent interest subvention for farmers who repay loans in time, is encouraging.

Keeping in view, the 10-point vision pan, there has been a quantum leap in transport infrastructure, specially highways and railways. Goel predicted next generation infrastructure of roads, railways, seaports, urban transport etc. While allocation for highways increased to around Rs 83,000 crore, Railways went up by 21 per cent to Rs 66,768.67 crore. Construction and doubling of new lines, gauge construction signalling and telecom are the major areas of expenditure.

Regrettably, there is hardly anything significant for the health sector which needed special focus to bring down communicable and non-communicable diseases, both of which have been growing at a fast pace. Though the allocation for the scheme that covers hospitalisation of the poor - PM -JAY launched last year - has more than doubled, there has been lack of increase in primary and preventive health care programmes. There is no announcement for extending help to the States say for setting up hospitals in sub-divisions or adding another district hospital in every district or in at least the highly-populated 100 districts of the country.

It has been reiterated that the Government stands for the poor and the middle class which, in fact, is a reality considering the present Budget. But more than the poor, the lower and middle income sections of society have benefitted from the proposals and the

Government has tried to shed its pro-business image.

However, in highlighting the Modi government's achievements, Goel cleverly did not say anything about job creation, but insisted that the concept of employment had changed to make 'job seekers' 'job creators'. He claimed the government's self employment schemes, including MUDRA, Start-up India and Stand-up India, were working well, though official data contests this claim.

Resource generation for the huge expenditure contemplated has been debated by a section of experts who feel that it would be extremely impossible to execute the plans announced. The fiscal deficit projected at 3.4 per cent may be an understatement, according to many an economist and financial analysts. Innovative off-budget borrowings and strategies to roll over expenditure if added to the fiscal math could queer the picture. Already the outgo of interest payments has gone up to Rs 5.88 lakh crore in 2018-19 from 5.29 lakh crore in 2017-18 and is expected to further increase to Rs 6.65 lakh crore.

Meeting the disinvestment target of Rs 80,000 crore of the current year and Rs 90,000 crore in 2018-20 are rather impossible targets. So far, the government received Rs 35,533 crore from disinvestment proceeds and with two months left, realising another Rs 44,467 crore may remain an impossible task. The same scenario may prevail in the next fiscal.

Finally, the Government has to ensure that welfare plans are not affected due to paucity of funds as it had happened in this fiscal in the case of MGNREGA programme, which, as is well known, provides employment to the poorer sections for a part of the year. Thus resource generation has to be a crucial area needing attention of the government or the next one which comes to power. --- INFA

## Arun Jaitley has erred on why there's no social unrest Lok Sabha elections will answer ailing 'blog minister'

By Amulya Ganguli

Although Arun Jaitley has not been in the pink of health, he is still an indefatigable blogger for the BJP.

With the use of catchy phrases such as "manufactured dissent" for those who returned their awards, to the "lies, short-lived lies and now further lies" of critics of the Rafale deal, to the CBI's "investigative adventurism" for a probe of which he did not approve, the Union finance minister, who could not present this year's budget because of indisposition, has been on an overdrive with the expression of views on nearly all important topics.

His latest is on the National Statistical Commission's leaked report on joblessness. Jaitley doesn't give any credence to it because such a situation, according to him, would have led to considerable social unrest. His opinion is obviously based on the belief that distress and deprivation would automatically lead to an upheaval of the kind that was seen in Russia and China in the last century.

The social and political scene in India is different, however, from what it was in those countries in 1917 or 1949. First and foremost, Indian democracy gives the discontented the chance to

brought about peacefully.

At the same time, it will be wrong to believe that there hasn't been any show of discontent. The recent farmers' marches in Maharashtra and Delhi, and earlier the violence which took place in Mandasaur in Madhya Pradesh where the farmers were agitating, showed that anger may be simmering under the surface. There is little doubt that some of this anger found expression in the BJP's defeat in the Madhya Pradesh elections.

The attempts, therefore, by Jaitley and others in the government to pooh-pooh the statistical commission's report about the level of unemployment being the highest in the last four decades are an unwise endeavour to push inconvenient facts under the carpet.

Even worse, even laughable, is the assertion by the prime minister's economic adviser that new official figures will be put out which will show an increase in employment. What is evident behind the claim is the Orwellian mindset where a decrease in the price of a commodity in George Orwell's futuristic fiction, 1984, changed to an increase within a day in Big Brother's regime.

The government's

**It is fatuous to believe, therefore, that all is quiet because there is no distress. The quietness is due to the fact that the people are waiting for their next visit to the polling stations. Besides, since elections at various levels - local bodies, by-polls, assemblies, even student unions - are taking place almost round the clock, they give an indication of the mood of hoi polloi, whether they are showing their unease with the existing dispensation or are satisfied.**

change their rulers through the ballot box, which wasn't possible in Russia or China.

Secondly, the Indian state is militarily too strong to be overthrown easily as the insurgents in the northeast and elsewhere have found out despite the assistance which they may have received from foreign powers.

And, thirdly, these changes - the possibility of dethroning would-be dictators by pressing a button on the voting machines and the government's military prowess - have made even those parties which were ideologically committed to a violent upheaval change their line to a more moderate, parliamentary one. Only the Maoists continue to chase the chimera of replicating Mao Zedong's peasant revolution, but with little success.

It is fatuous to believe, therefore, that all is quiet because there is no distress. The quietness is due to the fact that the people are waiting for their next visit to the polling stations. Besides, since elections at various levels - local bodies, by-polls, assemblies, even student unions - are taking place almost round the clock, they give an indication of the mood of hoi polloi, whether they are showing their unease with the existing dispensation or are satisfied.

It is these straws in the wind which play a part in assuring those who are politically restive that they may not have to wait for long before the change desired by them can be

penchant for fiddling with the figures has been evident for quite some time as when Subramanian Swamy, BJP M.P., said that the Central Statistical Organization's claim that there was no impact of demonetization on GDP was "bogus". Not surprisingly, the agriculture ministry was directed to change for the better its report of an adverse impact of demonetization on the rural economy.

What Jaitley's claims in his writings and the government's attempt to play hide and seek with the truth underline is the BJP's desire to live in a make-believe world where everything is hunky-dory. The wish is probably motivated by an eagerness to return to the glory days of the 2014 general election when everything was going swimmingly for the party.

But now that the underwater rocks and shoals in the political waters have begun to hamper its journey, the BJP is quite patently trying to pull the wool over the public's eyes so that they do not see what the party does not want them to see.

It is not a tactic, however, which can stand it in good stead. Very little can be kept under wraps in an open society and a federal polity. Since the truth is bound to emerge sooner or later, it can not only embarrass the prevaricator, but also fatally diminish his or her stature, especially if the person is in politics or, indeed, in any other profession. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Mercurial Shylla

Editor,

Though Hispreachingson Shylla gave himself the moniker of "High Speed Shylla" in a recent public meeting of the CoHSO at Students's field, the appropriate term for him is "Mercurial Shylla." This is one man you can't trust because of his fickle-minded nature. Since his foray in the public domain, HS Shylla started with fiery speeches without proper reasoning and with the intention to garner cheap popularity among the masses. We still remember that he even promised that his head would fall down at Malki ground if demands were not met; then Shylla mercurially switched his position from one party to another to suit his interests. His supporters in the last MLA election were not mistaken when they composed a song befitting his traits as, "Bahdeng la kum u shrieh, kynthih na 'nat sha 'nat. Fondly called "Bahdeng" they portrayed him as a monkey jumping from branch to branch without managing to pluck any fruit.

One cannot imagine that within a span of three years, Shylla defected into more than three parties i.e.

UDDP,PDF and NPP, not to mention his previous association with other national parties. He made his inroads into all parties but in the end all proved sore for him. Our memory is not that short to recall what Shylla had done during his first tenure as CEM of the KHADC when he took a stand on Uranium mining. In a photograph he is shown grabbing a piece of yellow cake in his hand to declare that Uranium is not harmful to humans, only to contradict himself by taking pressmen to that same area last year and to declare that Uranium was harmful and that he has clipped the wings of UCIL at Domiasiat area.

On the other hand, his clarion call to the public to shun all political parties and to choose an independent MP in the next general election shows that Shylla still nurtures hopes to be a candidate for the MP elections. However, it may be recalled that before he leapt into political arena yet again, he had publicly declared that he would quit politics as he has a higher calling in God's ministry but only to go back on that declaration. His closest rival, Ardent Basaiamait when asked about Shylla's backtracking said, "Why do

you believe him, a man who dares to fool God? Do you think he will spare innocent people?" Shylla has proved that he lacks credibility and people should not be swayed by his insignificant oratory.

The Hynniewtrep people need leaders with a sound mind to lead at this point in time and not the hot-headed types. We need leaders who think twice and thrice before they leap into any issue and not vice-versa.

Yours etc.,  
Maximus Strongman  
Shadap  
Via email

#### Anti-defection & Dist Councils

Editor,

If we have the Anti-Defection Law for parliament and state legislatures then what's the politics behind not having the same in the District Council. The electorate is exasperated and betrayed in every Council Poll. It is our experience that during the election campaign the candidates promise many things that their Party will do if elected. This they do only to receive the support of voters. Most of the voters, choose their candidates because they

agree with the ideology of the Party they are contesting from and its programmes and manifesto. But soon after they have won they abandon the Party, forget their vows to the people and associate themselves with other parties for their selfish interests.

The absence of the Anti-Defection Law in the District Councils has added to their instability. We see the formation of 5-6 Executive Committees (ECs) with 4-5 Chief Executive Members (CEMs) heading the Councils within five years. Since members are constantly defecting from one party to another this severely affects the working and functioning of the District Councils.

There has been a strong demand by the people from every nook and corner of the State for implementation of the Anti-defection Law in the District Councils as is being applied in the State Assemblies and Parliament where any elected member will be disqualified on the grounds of defection to another party for the lure of office.

Few weeks back the Union Cabinet approved the Constitutional Amendment to the Sixth

Schedule in order to strengthen the District Councils. The main motive of this Amendment is to stir up the financial resources and other powers and functions of the District Councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of the North Eastern states. But the Union Government failed to fulfill the desires of the people to implement the Anti-defection Law in the District Councils. If the Anti-Defection law is not implemented then the District Councils have already lost their credibility. In any case we cannot deny that the District Councils are mere platforms for intending politicians who nourish their aspirations to contest Assembly elections in the future.

Yours faithfully,  
Ban P Marwein  
Via email

#### Election time gimmicks

Editor,

It is election time and in this highly charged atmosphere, each political party in different formation is raking up issues, many of which were not in the radar for last 5 years or so. The Ram Mandir at

Ayodhya is an example as to how BJP is making efforts to entuse its core constituency; it has also promised to dole out cash to the farmers before the elections, along-with reservations to the economically weaker sections among the general castes. The Congress, on the other hand, is talking about farm loan waivers and minimum income to the poor. How these play out after the elections is anybody's guess. Many political promises are made before elections, but these are hardly acted upon, and remain mostly as promises.

With a literacy rate of about 70%, Indians should wake up and hard check facts and data, before making a decision as to whom to vote. After elections, it is also the responsibility of the citizens to hold the government and the party in power to accountability. Else, the citizens of the country would continue to be fooled with "jumlas" even in next few elections

Yours etc.,  
A Bhuyan  
Nagaon

Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of The Shillong Times

*“It's the place where dreams end and nightmares begin—it's the world of Intimate Partner Violence.”*

--- Mallika Nawal

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.176 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2019

### Pope in the UAE

POPE Francis made waves in the land of the Arabs this week, and its impact would touch down on the shores across the world. In what history would record as the first visit by the head of the Catholic Church to the Arabian peninsula, the Pope and a top Islamic cleric jointly signed a document titled 'Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together'. They also called for freedom of belief. Notably, Pope Francis is progressive minded, as is testified in several of his unconventional actions. His three-day visit to a land that hitherto displayed a mental barrier to the Church's high priests marks a major shift in the attitudes of the Islam-centric Gulf region and of the Church to a more progressive level.

What was supposedly in the making after the end of the Cold War was, as noted American thinker Samuel P Huntington visualized, a Clash of Civilizations -- or clash of cultures based on religious and cultural divides. The Al Qaeda attacks in the US were a turning point in history. The Iraq War, in which the Americans reduced Baghdad largely to dust, reinforced such a perception. Thereafter, having learnt their lesson, America toned down its rhetoric against the despots in the Arab world, though a few such dictators were pulled down from the ego-centric edifices they built over generations.

The Islamic despots and dictators in the Arab world had given little room for religious freedom and are still a rule unto themselves. The oil wealth gave them a high profile and considerable dash of arrogance. As vestiges of the old British era there, churches are very much in vogue and limited religious freedom is allowed to Christians, mainly out of fear because Americans and the British are still breathing down their necks. But, it was after a long time and much persuasion that a Hindu temple could function in a normal manner in the UAE - thanks perhaps to pressure from the Modi government.

For humans, there has to be life beyond religion. This, even as the good side of religions cannot be lost sight of. Co-existence is the way forward for humanity, be it in the liberal West, conservative Islamic nations, or tradition-bound India where streaks of fundamentalism are evident of late in the garb of Hindutva. A modern society would need to rise above barriers of religions, race and caste. Pope Francis has taken a big step forward towards ensuring global communal amity.

# National Games 2022: Are we ready?

By Benjamin Lyngdoh

When one thinks/talks about sports and games across disciplines, one cannot help but factor in the Olympics. Across its grandeur and being a showpiece event, the inherent truth of the Olympics remains; it states, 'the important thing in life is not to triumph but to compete, not victory but combat, not to have vanquished but to have fought well, not winning but taking part' which is the famous quote by the father of modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin. As we filter down towards other sporting events, we come to our national games and for all intents and purposes it is one of the Indian showpiece events. At the outset, I am not comparing the Olympics to our national games for that would mean comparing 'a peanut' to 'apples'; that being an illogical and unfair comparison. Nonetheless, the crux of it being 'games across disciplines' is not to be impugned or even demeaned in the slightest manner. In the Indian context, it is the apple of all sporting events and with that comes the prestige and honour of hosting it. Accordingly, in the year 2022 the national games will be held in our state which also brings a sense of sporting 'anticipation and excitement'. However, along with that come a 'bunch of issues and concerns'. Accordingly, I place the following pointers for our collective consideration.

Firstly, the moment we talk about sports in Meghalaya the issue which creeps into people's mind is the physical infrastructure. Fair enough, as it is indeed important. Keeping this in mind, a casual look around the state in terms of assessing our sports infrastructure one can sadly see anything significant. We do not have standard stadiums and training facilities; add to that the poor maintenance practices. As a case in point, the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium at Polo is the only stadium of some standing and it too is not free of critical issues (which can be experienced when one goes to watch the I-League matches). Amidst this quagmire, our state is faced with the challenging task of hosting the national games in 2022. In the face of such a mega event, 2022 is not far off. A status check will tell us that we are not even close to hosting the event successfully. Thus, now there is a rush to construct stadiums and related infrastructure. Importantly,

this brings into focus a question; can we construct a standard stadium in two or even three years? If we factor in the process to construct such a huge structure then it is plain impossible. But of course the government will argue that it is possible. Worryingly, what sort of stadium would this hasty construction result in? By all means there is a very good chance that it will be another poorly constructed stadium which will enter into dilapidation in no time. Is this the way to go about our national games? We are not only starting on the

ership is important. Hence, its brand creation and marketing must begin now. Over the course of 2019 this must be the focus and the starting point can be the specification of the national games 'logo and slogan'. Here, the youth may be involved as individuals/teams for charting out the 'logo and slogan' through a games promotion competition. From here, other bigger things can gradually follow. The point being to get the people in to see it out.

Thirdly, the performance of Meghalaya in the national games has always been below average. In most

mean nothing for us if we give a dismal showing as a host. If anything, it will bring more disappointment and downright frustration. To this end, we do not have to go far and indulge in some expensive foreign sports learning tour; rather we can learn a lot from Manipur (which has been consistently doing well) itself and look upon their best practices.

Fourthly, there is a fundamental question covering the national games; what is it to us? Is it just a one time event/a one off sideshow/a travesty of sorts? Or is it a milestone towards something great and tangible in our sporting horizon. In reality, we have to answer this question first. This is because how we approach the games will depend upon the type of answer we give. If we are looking at the 'national games 2022' as a one off thing, etc; then it is better that we do not hold it in the first place. That way it will save a lot of people a lot of headache. However, if we are looking at it as a 'milestone'; then the battle is already half won. In actuality, that is the crux of holding the games. It is not about Meghalaya turning 50 years and related attachments. It is pure and simple and downright obvious that it is just about creation of a new sporting future for the state; a sporting future based on a renewed culture, passionate work environment, unmatched desire, ruthless dedication and the thriving for champion performance. As such, the game is not about 2022 alone; rather it is for the years after that.

Lastly, the majority of the people want to see the games hosted by us. However, there is apprehension amongst many quarters lest we be led into embarrassment at a national scale. The eyes of the nation will be on us for around 10 to 15 days in 2022. Moreover, national media houses (like NDTV) are known to run a show of 15 minutes every morning on the earlier versions of the games. They will do the same in our case. In addition, do not rule out live coverage of the games by streamline sports channels like Star Sports, etc (in addition to Doordarshan which will be providing compulsory coverage). Alas, what will be our performance come the actual day is the real wonder (combined with fear!)

(The Author teaches at NEHU)

*“As we filter down towards other sporting events, we come to our national games and for all intents and purposes it is one of the Indian showpiece events. At the outset, I am not comparing the Olympics to our national games for that would mean comparing 'a peanut' to 'apples'; that being an illogical and unfair comparison.”*

wrong foot but are also on the back foot!

Secondly, physical infrastructure is not everything; people and their involvement is the key. In the true sense of the term, the success of the national games must be seen in terms of participation and contribution of the host population. To this end, a great deal of sensitization is required. To date many are skeptical about the games. There is no clarity over its holding and how things are going to pan out. It must be noted that the national games are indeed a 'mega event' for a state like Meghalaya. Hence, the people must stand up and give their full support. However, currently it is seen as a programme of the government detached from the sentiments (and sometimes even knowledge) of the people. As such, a holistic PR exercise is required to instill a sense of belongingness towards the games. The practice of giving free entry into the stadia during the games (which has always been a common practice) is not enough; own-

disciplines we do lag far behind. 2022 is the chance to correct and reverse this trend and the process begins now. Glaringly, till date there is very little mention (or no mention) about the athletes and their preparedness and more importantly their preparation. They are sidelined and marginalized as if they are not significant in the entire scheme of things. There is no athlete promotion. Moreover, it seems there is no plan on how we are going to approach the other national games leading up to our national games in 2022. All that is happening right now is the depressing mention of physical infrastructure and its construction. Wake up Meghalaya! We are not going to win any medals for stadium quality (except for a small bunch of people who will be taking accolades over their timely/untimely construction). The real heroes of the games are the athletes who will be giving their all in the field of competition. In fact, priority must be given to athletes and everything else is secondary. The national games (and 50 years as a state) will

## #MeToo# amidst Guwahati Queer Pride

By Samhita Barooah

It was the 6th Guwahati Queer Pride on February 3, 2019. I was gearing up for the Pride this year as usual like all the earlier 4 Pride walks I had attended since 2014. Pride is a time to celebrate diversity, freedom of space, thought, socialisation and sexuality without any inhibition and reservations. I tried sharing about the Pride online and also prepared myself to be part of the walk despite the fact that it was more for people younger than my age. This year was an exception though. People from diverse age-groups joined the Pride which was a welcome move. I was also happy to see elders walking along with all others. I was happy to see senior colleagues, collaborators, ex-colleagues, activists, media persons, social workers and people familiar to me apart from students,

been ruthless to women on the streets or city buses otherwise but during Pride Walk, it was different. I was also disheartened with the public apathy and the sense of indifference of all so-called sensitive activists whose intersections probably didn't match mine. So some consoled me with hugs and showed solidarity but none could understand the violated self I felt. I raised my voice through media to make people alert and aware of such incidents and also that Pride is not only a space for celebrating freedom of love, life and liberty but it also has to ensure support and space to people with consent. Any intimate action without consent is abuse and cannot be undone or equated on the pretext of age, sexuality, gender, disability, religion, region or ethnicity.

*“There were many supporters and empathisers who messaged, mailed and called me more to find out what happened and how it happened and why couldn't I slap the person during the act of abuse. Some family members said may be the man was out of his senses and a fault which triggered the incident. Some asked me if the man was from a particular religious community and many uncomfortable questions. All the prejudices came out in the open.”*

friends and other people walking all along. One of my old school friends also joined the Pride walk for the first time and I was sharing with her about our experiences of being part of the LGBTQIA+ movement.

After walking for about half the distance, near Cotton University, I could feel a pinch on my back and then suddenly a hand grip around my right arm and a quick bearded peck on my left cheek. It was an elderly man with long beard and hair and traditional off-white kurta pyjama and spectacles who kept holding my right arm very tightly and rubbed it vigorously. I was taken aback by the bad touch and I engaged in asking the man's name and sharing mine. Then I realised he was trying to feel me without consent. I asked him to remove his hand very sternly without getting violent keeping in mind his elderly disposition. He moved away very quickly and I could see him feeling others right in front of me. I quickly informed the organisers from Xomonoy, Xukia and GQP and asked them to keep a close watch on the man and make sure that Pride walkers are not intimidated. My friend who joined me for the first time also felt the same and moved away from the same man. I felt a sense of angst, disgust and violation which is when I raised my voice through the microphone available in front of the Guwahati High Court. Then when I looked back I saw Dr. Monisha Behal from North East Network and Sheetal from UN Women and many more. I shared my plight to them and Dr. Behal rushed to the man and warned him verbally to behave or else police will be informed. He said he was an old man. I was shaken up and kept an eye on the man's movements for a long while till the end of the Pride Walk. He got alarmed and kept walking on the side but kept staring at all of us.

This year Pride gave me a sense of insecurity and insensitivity which was not expected from the Pride Walk. Guwahati city has

I was proud to be part of the Pride as a gender queer person but my experience has revealed the vulnerabilities of a female bodied queer person. There were many supporters and empathisers who messaged, mailed and called me more to find out what happened and how it happened and why couldn't I slap the person during the act of abuse. Some family members said may be the man was out of his senses and a fault which triggered the incident. Some asked me if the man was from a particular religious community and many uncomfortable questions. All the prejudices came out in the open.

I am aware of the fact that Pride Walk is an act of courage and struggle and people refuse to acknowledge the violations without being aware of the forms of the abuses and sometimes out of sheer indifference. I was compelled to think if I was old fashioned and tradition bound in India to get violated due to touch, feel factors. I was also cross checking my own disposition of casual wear which could have triggered a tradition attired person to abuse me. All thoughts kept rolling and I got calls from colleagues from Gauhati University who shared that they saw the same person abusing others and how others didn't complain and some edged their elbows and moved on.

These incidents should not impact the Pride walk as it gave space to many people who otherwise face exactly the same situation which I faced. I thought it was a staged experience to make someone feel miserable as they would face every day in their lives. Hence there seems to be a culture of silence around the issue. The organisers did not even announce or share a word on such experiences. Public spaces for people with alternate gender identities seem to be shrinking and even more for people within the community.

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Politics of vengeance

Editor,  
Apropos the news item, "Citizens unhappy over transfer of TCH specialists" (ST Feb 5, 2019), as a citizen of Tura who frequents the Tura Civil Hospital for treatment, I am shocked at the brazen transfer of the few generalist and specialist doctors from the Hospital just because the ruling dispensation believes that their relatives are supporting the Opposition party.

I am asking the question everyone else is asking: What was the Chief Minister thinking when he signed on and agreed to the transfer orders? Was he so dumb not to know the repercussions or was he too busy that he had no time to look into the matter and blindly signed on it? Or did the Health Minister keep him in the dark? Perhaps this is the direct consequence that the electorate of Garo Hills have to bear for not having Cabinet Ministers to represent the Garo Hills region, apart from the two brothers who are too engrossed with their own party work that they fail to see beyond it.

What was the logic of transferring the specialist

doctors when there is a dearth of specialists in the Tertiary Referral Centre, Garo Hills? Then there is talk of implementing the Adarsh Policy by bringing in specialist doctors from outside! Really? Does Govt think that the specialist doctors from other states will actually come and work here when they are handsomely paid outside? Or does Govt intend to bring in the Diploma holder specialists with doubtful credentials from outside and play with the ignorant and poor patients of Garo Hills? Rather the government should upgrade the only Tertiary Referral Centre, Tura Civil Hospital, where the local doctors and specialist doctors can serve with satisfaction. When the Government effects transfer orders at short intervals the working environment is also disturbed. This will reflect on the quality of services provided to the patients. It disturbs their mental peace when they work with the anticipation of a transfer order every now and again. It must indeed be exhausting to work in such an environment. Mind you these local specialist doctors returned to serve their people in spite of the options they have of working out-

side with perks and salaries that are too tempting to resist!

Lastly, please do appreciate and recognise the services and sacrifices rendered by these doctors for our people before more doctors and specialist doctors are discouraged to serve in Govt Hospitals and join elsewhere. Tura Civil Hospital has already witnessed the resignation of half a dozen specialist doctors in the last few years. There is need to create a warm working environment in the hospitals and to upgrade the existing Tertiary Referral Centre so that the poor and the needy can benefit from it. The Govt should stop using its vendetta politics of transferring honest, sincere, hardworking doctors to satisfy inflated egos. It shows nothing but frustration driven by hatred and revenge!

Yours etc.,  
Jennifer Momin,  
Via email

#### Terrible condition of Govt Fruits Garden

Editor,

The Government of Meghalaya inherited a massive orchard stretching from Motinagar to Risa /Cleave Colony, complete with a processing unit and sales depot, much before horticulture and floriculture were identified as key sectors for Meghalaya's economic growth. This Fruits Garden, had numerous kinds of trees and plants such as apples, pears, plums, chestnut, peaches etc and a host of seasonal flowers. Its sales outlet did brisk business in fruits and processed fruits such as jams, jellies, fruit juice, pickles, and seeds and saplings. The upkeep of the gardens was excellent and often, tourists were seen making a beeline to see the beautiful gardens. Alas, No more! In the last few years, the maintenance of the garden has been the most terrible. No new saplings have been planted and the existing trees are being regularly cut to be used as fuel wood and to construct pigsties by dubious individuals who are living in make shift houses all over the garden. Is there a Government decision to convert the beautiful Fruits Gar-

den into a piggery farm? Who is responsible for the terrible condition of the Fruits Garden? Instead of using the infrastructure as the hub of the horticulture, floriculture and bee keeping initiative of the state it is being systematically destroyed. Will the Minister concerned personally inspect the gardens and ensure corrective measures? Yours etc.,

Concerned citizens,  
(Names withheld on request)

#### Action and Powers of Police

Editor

The Police is given statutory powers to properly do its work. At the same time, Police is part of the society, and ultimately, the Police is for the benefit of the citizens of the country. However, it is observed that the Police is more than willing to bend its back to please the powers at play, whether its local, state or national. While the opposition accuses the CBI, ED, etc for harassment, the same people when in power,

act to the contrary.

Police may learn from institutions like the Defence Services, and must feel secured that enough safeguard is provided to them to act as per their service conditions. It is when they do not that they start getting pressurized into submission. The recent case of the CBI trying to make a case by sending about 40 of its personnel to grill the Commissioner of Police of Kolkata is a case in point. The CBI could have handled the matter in a more appropriate way, including knocking the doors of the courts (as it did a day later), but perhaps it followed urgent instructions from its political bosses, who wanted to score brownie points over its opponents. The CBI is again brought to disrepute by this act of theirs, and it has brazenly gone beyond what is expected of it.

Yours etc.,  
A Bhuyan  
Nagaon

*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.*

*“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear.”*

--- Jean de la Bruyère

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.177 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2019

### All eyes on Rajya Sabha

All eyes now are on the Rajya Sabha which will adjourn on February 13 following which the Lok Sabha polls will be held in April-May this year. For the North Eastern states the Rajya Sabha will decide whether the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) 2016, is passed or checkmated. Currently, in the House of 245 members, the BJP and its allies in the NDA which comprise the Shiromani Akali Dal, Janata Dal(U) and other smaller parties has 86 MPs, after the Shiv Sena with 3 MPs broke off ties with the NDA. The other political parties including the Congress with 50 MPs and others with smaller numbers that have formed the Mahagatbandhan to fight the BJP has 159 MPs in the Rajya Sabha. So clearly if these 159 MPs stand united there is no way the CAB will be passed. But during the passage of many contentious Bills there have been slips between the cup and the lip. The BJP is very keen to pass the CAB which would give citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists who are persecuted in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Those against the CAB contest it on the basis of India's secular credentials and wonder why citizenship should be granted on the basis of religion when the architects of this country's Constitution had envisaged a nation that would be secular and not be defined by any religion.

What is evident is the vote-bank politics of the BJP and its Hindutva agenda of turning the country into a Hindustan or the land of the Hindus. Apologists for the CAB point to the fact that many Hindus were left behind in Pakistan, Afghanistan and former East Pakistan, now Bangladesh and that the BJP owes it to them to grant them entry into the country of their faith, more so because they are persecuted for being Hindus in these countries. The counter argument is that while Afghanistan and Pakistan may be Islamic nations, Bangladesh is a secular Muslim majority country. There are about 17 million Hindus in Bangladesh with close kin in Assam, Meghalaya et al. The population of the North Eastern states is just 45 million (4.5 crore). If the 17 million are given citizenship in India over a period of time they will overwhelm the local tribal population of which Tripura is a case in point. Hence the stiff opposition to CAB! It remains to be seen if the united opposition can defeat the NDA.

### LOOKING BACK

June 13, 1989

### ABSU calls 300-Hour bandh

The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) and the Bodo People's Action Committee have called a 300 hour Assam bandh from June 26 to press for central intervention in finding a political settlement to their demand for a separate state. An ABSU spokesman said in a statement here today that the two organisations would not sit with the Assam government in the presence of a central observer for talks tomorrow.

What the organisation had been demanding was a separate state and direct negotiations between them and the centre on the demand, he added. The matter could only be discussed with the centre as the state government was not empowered to take any decision in this regard as Assam Chief Minister Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta had repeatedly reject their demand for "Bodoland" he added.

# Status of Policing in Meghalaya

By Patricia Mukhim

The drama played out in Kolkata in the tug of war between the CBI and West Bengal Police and the shallow award ceremony thereafter, leaves us with no doubt at all that the Police today owe their allegiance to the political executives and not to the Constitution of India to which they had sworn allegiance upon their entry into the service. This leaves us in Meghalaya with a question: Is the police here acting independently or kowtowing to the diktat of their political bosses?

Meghalaya experienced turbulent times when militancy was at its height (1994-2001) (2010-2016). Meghalaya Police rose to the occasion and many officers and men rendered commendable services then. But that does not mean that there were no rogue policemen even at the time who instead of hot pursuit of militants, were hands in glove with them. No wonder the late Sohan Shira had several narrow escapes because he was invariably tipped off by sources within the Police. What is regrettable is that many from the Police including some bright, young, dedicated officers lost their lives fighting militancy. The name of Raymond Philip Diengdoh comes to mind. He was the first police officer from North East India to be conferred with the Ashok Chakra India's highest peacetime gallantry award in 2008. Raymond showed exemplary courage fighting militancy and died on duty. Those were challenging years for the Meghalaya Police and many tough battles were fought then with the HNLC and the GNLA. But one must also admit that the Police then were given a free hand to tackle the militants. There was no backseat driving. As the Home Minister then, RG Lyngdoh used multiple strategies but never sent this men out with their hands tied.

Now we have entered the era of peace. This is actually the time to put in place systems to sustain the peace. The state police leadership had succeeded to a great extent in neutralizing organised criminal gangs disguised as militant outfits. Thanks to the political and police leadership peace now prevails. Hence the Meghalaya Police leadership needs to focus on sustaining and strengthening this hard-earned peace through institutional approach. Alas! The current police leadership under Mr Chandranathan doesn't seem to have such a vision. The DGP is limited by lack of in-depth knowledge about Meghalaya. He has never served here in his three decades of policing. What is not easy to understand is why he was para-dropped by the present MDA government

to head the Meghalaya Police.

As a people we too have no clue about Chandranathan's policing prowess that earned him the top job here. All we know is that he was the Home Minister, James Sangma's personal choice. Can we therefore ask the Home Minister to educate us as to why and how Mr Chandranathan scored over other officers and why he is considered DGP material?

Peace time policing is as tough and as demanding as policing during troubled times but we have not heard Chandranathan come up with any initiatives to strengthen peace-time policing. As things stand today, it is distressing to note that corruption has crept back into the Meghalaya Police rank and file after Chandranathan took over as the Police Chief. When corruption is institutionalised and systemic, the leader should be held accountable. Many plum postings are given to the highest bidders. Some private suppliers from Shillong are deeply engaged in managing postings and transfers in the Police department. This is a new trend that was kept under check by Dr SB Singh but has now resurfaced. It's unclear whether he is in the know of these developments or whether he thinks it's safer to turn a blind eye to these goings-on. And he can well get away by saying that he did not know of past misdemeanours in the Department since he never served in Meghalaya.

Peace-time policing demands concerted efforts from the DGP and his close-knit team. The conviction rate in heinous crimes like rape, dacoity, robbery, murder is abysmally low. Police presence at odd hours at crime prone areas is non-existent; police patrols on the highways is more about collecting money from errant truck drivers carrying coal illegally, than in crime prevention. The unabated coal mining and transportation of the extracted coal shows the tacit support of police for people engaged in these unlawful activities. Mr Chandranathan perhaps lacks imagination and initiatives to contain organized collection by police from coal barons. Or was he brought in on the condition that he would not interfere with this carefully oiled machinery?

A professional, non-nonsense cop is known by his team. A good team also means professional commitment and ability to function without political pressure. Today the DGP is surrounded by police officers of questionable integrity and doubtful professionalism. From the transfer orders issued by

the Home Department, it is evident that good officers have been quietly sidelined from pivotal posts like administration, operations etc and loose-limbed, incompetent officers are put to man these crucial posts. This is a clear indication of the direction of policing under the present DGP. The Police as a force comprise the good, bad and ugly. There are a few with missionary zeal and others who are hard core mercenaries; more so those that entered the service after paying money and this has been going on for a long time in Meghalaya. Choosing mercenaries of doubtful integrity as team members speaks volumes about the kind of policing we now have in Meghalaya since March 2018.

Discreet enquiries reveal that an officer who was suspended for serious misconduct when he caused an accident in Nagaland in an inebriated condition is now one of the core team members of police leadership. This officer was shunted out of Police Headquarters for nearly six years, to insulate the Department from unhealthy influences. Now the same officer is calling the shots. Another two officers, whose professional commitment was compromised because of their political affiliations, are now part of the DG's closed circle. With such a crack (ed) team what can we, the people of Meghalaya, expect from the Meghalaya Police?

But should the public keep silent and allow the Police to continue with poor policing with shamefully low conviction rate even while drawing handsome salaries? Sometimes we wonder if there is any policing at all considering that the investigations are nearly always botched up and torn apart by astute criminal lawyers. But time has come for civil society to hold the entire police fraternity accountable to the people through the following measures.

1. A quick response Dial 100 system and commitment from the DGP that police will attend to all distress calls 24X7 and bring down the time for police to reach a crime scene to the barest minimum in all the district capitals to begin with. There is no such commitment from the DGP as on date.

2. Publish the current conviction rate in cases of rape, murder, dacoity, robbery, assault, theft and other heinous crimes. And then give a commitment that conviction rate will be reduced to 50% or more across all the crimes to

begin with.

3. Traffic management with a committed team to enforce traffic rules. Please publish the traffic accident data and make traffic police accountable to the state. As of now the Traffic Police boss in the district seems to monitor traffic movement on the computer screen at the Police Reserve. Several times the irresponsible parking of traffic on both sides of the Rynjah-Umpling Road has been brought to his notice but there has been no perceptible change. People continue to violate parking rules because there are no traffic cops to man the traffic on this stretch.

As a newcomer to Meghalaya and posted at the helm of policing affairs, this DGP has huge advantage of changing the rules of the game provided he has the will to do so.

Of course we citizens don't expect miracles from the police. Our expectations are basic and elementary. If the DGP cannot fulfill these elementary expectations then what is policing all about?

Our basic expectations are:

1. Courteous behaviour from cops working both in the Police Station and on duty.

2. Prompt attention to phone calls in PCR and ensuring that cops attend to distress calls/situations in the least possible time.

3. When an FIR is registered, the complainant or his/her relative should be informed of the progress made in the investigation. Whether the case is finally resolved or not matters, but a progress report is what a complainant expects.

4. Police should refrain from using filthy, unparliamentary language against people as well as the accused (who is not guilty until proven so).

5. To uphold human rights by informing the accused the grounds of his/her arrest and his/her rights to inform a lawyer or relatives.

6. Last but not least we expect a prompt registration of FIRs at the police station

From the investigating cops we want a time-bound investigation of all crimes leading to an iron-clad **c h a r g e - s h e e t**. Investigating a crime is serious business requiring an incisive mind; not one turned blunt with alcohol. The investigation into the attempted murder of Agnes and Amita by Nidamon Chullet and his mob shows just how blunted our policing system is; how can cops give credence to what an accused is saying and put the blame on the victims of his crime. We don't deserve this shoddy policing!

## Importance of being Kolkata Police Chief Rajeev Kumar Mamata defeated a BJP plan to demoralise State Police

By Arun Srivastava

Why the Commissioner of Kolkata Police Rajeev Kumar suddenly acquired the importance in the political establishment of Delhi as well as Calcutta is really intriguing. Rajeev is supposed to be an intelligent and no-nonsense person. But this is certainly not the reason that everybody should be after him. What has been the reason that Mamata Banerjee, who after coming to power in 2011 was reluctant to retain him, hit the Calcutta streets on Sunday to protect him from questioning by the CBI.

One thing that ought to be mentioned is that Rajeev Kumar is known for his impeccable investigating and electronic surveillance skills and was the blue-eyed boy of former West Bengal Chief Minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharya.

No doubt his elevation during Mamata's rule has been really fascinating. In 2012 he was made the first Commissioner of Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate. When in 2013 the Saradha chit fund scam was busted he became the head of the SIT. By May 2016, Kumar had earned her trust, and was made Kolkata Police Commissioner. After the BJP and Congress accused Kumar of tapping their phones, the Election Commission told the state government to replace him. He was removed during the assembly polls, but later reinstated.

While he was being identified as the most trusted police officer, the state BJP leader, former number two in TMC, Mukul Roy, who has been witness to his ascendance, started putting pressure on the central BJP leadership to remove him along with five more officers from West Bengal as with them in command the BJP will find it tough to win the Lok Sabha elections from the state. Last September one clip which went viral revealed that Roy had asked general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya to talk to BJP president Amit Shah and get CBI to keep a watch on "four IPS officers" and "scare" them.

"Jo char IPS hain, unpe CBI ko thoda nazar dalna hoga. Isme agar ek baar dhyan denge, toh yeh IPS log dar jayenge (CBI should keep a watch on these four IPS officers. If we focus on this, these IPS officers will get scared)," Roy ostensibly told Vijayvargiya. Incidentally some IPS officers who were part of SIT formed to probe the Saradha chit fund case have been on the CBI's radar and were earlier also called for questioning. Kumar, as the head of the team was also called for its summons.

It goes to the credit of Kumar that his team arrested Sarada boss Sudipta Sen and his partner in crime Debjani Mukherjee from Jammu and Kashmir on April 18, 2013. It was during those years that his proximity to the political establishment was severely criticised by the opposition parties. Nevertheless a CBI probe into the Sarada scam was ordered by the Supreme Court in May 2014 on a petition by senior Congress leader Abdul Mannan. The state government had decided to hand over the case to the CBI on March 18, 2015. But before the CBI could lay its hands on the perpetrators, Kumar arrested the first accused on March 26.

What happened on February 3 is nothing but the

manifestation of the panic reaction of BJP. Working on the feedback of Mukul Roy, the CBI was used to defuse Rajeev. The BJP was working on the presumption that he has huge amount of incriminating documents and evidences which lead to the residence of Mamata and secondly laying hands on Kumar will demoralise the entire police rank and file. They will lose the guts to check the BJP and help TMC.

Though the BJP leaders refuted that CBI had gone to Kumar's residence to arrest him, some senior CBI officials conceded that deployment of such a large number of CBI sleuths was primarily to thwart any untoward incident once he is arrested. Kolkata was left in a state of unprecedented crisis on Sunday, 3 February, when a group of 40 CBI officials allegedly turned up outside the house of Kumar, in connection with the agency's probe into the Saradha and Rose Valley ponzi scams, and were detained by the local cops.

For Mamata it was a do or die situation. She took advantage of the overzealous zeal of the CBI. No doubt they are free to arrest anyone. But in this extraordinary situation, they should have moved the court or informed the DGP of the state. But as they nursed an ulterior intention they did not follow the correct line. Mamata knew that allowing the CBI to interrogate Kumar in this fishy manner would demoralise the police force and allow the BJP to have an upper hand. Any political party aspiring to rule Bengal must have the police on its side. While BJP was working on this thesis, Mamata was desperate to protect her forte.

Following the row, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee stepped in and declared a 'Save the Constitution' dharna, to protest against what she called an attack from the BJP and also defended Kumar, calling him the "best in the world". On their part the BJP justified the CBI action on the plea that Kumar "has not been cooperating with CBI in handing over all the documents and a lot of evidence has been destroyed or caused to disappear."

The hurry of the BJP and the Modi government to get Kumar at any cost could be gauged from the simple fact Home ministry shot off a letter to West Bengal, asking the state government to initiate disciplinary action against Kumar for "indiscipline and violation of service rules." The Home Minister accused him of sitting on dharna with Mamata. The face-off between West Bengal and the Centre is set to snowball into a major political issue, bringing back into focus the Centre-state relations and rights, which have always been a debatable issue.

But on their part she and her comrade in arms AP chief minister Chandra Babu Naidu emphatically denied that Kumar had committed any impropriety and said being the Commissioner he was under legal and executive obligation to be by the side of his boss, the chief minister. It is worth mentioning that on February 2, just a day ahead of the crisis a News TV ran a report quoting anonymous sources that said Kumar was about to be arrested by the CBI and was absconding. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

### ABDK Soba & Tura Cleaning drive

Editor,  
Kudos to the citizens of Tura town for taking upon themselves the task of cleaning Tura town which now looks extraordinarily clean. Yes cleanliness is next to Godliness. Tura looks clean now just because this town of Garo Hills is hosting the 145th ABDK Soba. If not for this religious event nobody would care to clean this old rugged town which is famous for its heap of dirt and filth. We all want to see a new Tura with a new image which is well kept and neat. This will come about only if the civic authorities of the town together with the Government Departments, the citizens of Tura and most importantly the local MLA who is now the Chief

Minister join hands and lead from the front in this quest. Let us all hope that Tura town will always remain clean even after the Soba and let cleanliness be observed always right from the homes of every Turaita.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marweñi,  
Via-Email.

### Mamata Didi and her tantrums

Editor,  
How does one describe the tantrums thrown by W. Bengal CM, Mamata Banerjee? Much has been heard of her insincere rhetoric. But they are just accepted as politically correct. She has larger elite fraternities who have fallen for her, and her "likes" and "dislikes". Therefore, there was no outcry when

Rohingyas were welcomed by Didi. Instead, many hearts melted and sympathies were expressed. They are tortured and deported from Myanmar, so India should be kind to provide them shelter - this narrative of humanity was tactfully put forth while other activists kept mum. Here smart people know well how to juggle between, "silence and noise".

A few days ago Didi began a sit-down drama with her gaze towards the Centre. The West Bengal CM in flip-flops has now willfully stepped on the very Constitution of the country. She also unchained the police forces and set them on the CBI! What does one call the sit-in strike by the CM and the Police officers against the Central Government? This strange dharna has been dubbed by Mamata's allies

as a Dharma. Never was the chit-fund less or no fun for the Bengal CM and her followers though it brought countless poor people to grief. Lakhs of families have already fallen into ruin. SIT is just an eyewash.

If one sincerely analyzes the posture and gesture of Mamata in her tenure of the past 15-years, one is deeply apprehensive. Her intense love for votes has long soiled her blue and white Sari. And her love for the pink and green notes has apparently driven away her saintly soul which she often claims to carry. Without any sense of regret, she had sent the brute force to the Hills in 104 days of bandh that left 15 Gorkha citizens dead. Many of those killed were also the siblings of the soldiers that are now protecting the nation from the enemy, standing day and night along the rugged and icy Indo-Pak borders.

The Bengal CM could not yet identify who really "protects" the country and who actually really endangers it. But the irony is that all her unconstitutional misdeeds are hardly brought out and discussed to question her. Well, Didi has taken many such steps that have already started to pose potential threats to the original Bengali. It is quite clear now that she has "sowed" the seeds that are going to be grow into a jungle of nettles. They will surely sting not only the body but the heart and soul of the citizens of West Bengal and other states. What with her TMC Cadre? They are legitimized goondas. Hardly any FIRs are accepted against TMC's misconducts.

Now coming back to the present case, today Mamata is emboldened to challenge even the

enforcement machinery from the Centre. She vehemently misinterprets the constitutional guidelines. No wonder, she has a brigand of other colleagues who carry the same ideas, same agenda, and the same mission. True, soon after the unprecedented standoff between Police and CBI, Didi has received bountiful wishes from Rahul Gandhi, Sitaram Yechury, Chandrababu Naidu Mayawati, Mulayam Singh, Kejriwal et al. Her well-wishers also include those forces that want to see India being broken to pieces. One wonders when we could tell apart Didi's Sanyasini outfit and her true character. Let's be smart before it is too late, else the country will not be in safe hands.

Yours etc.,  
Salil Gwali,  
Shillong-2

"At twenty years of age the will reigns;  
at thirty, the wit; and at forty, the  
judgment."

--- G. C. Lichtenberg

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.178 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2019

### Vacillation over Vadra

THE interrogation of high-profile realtor Robert Vadra - husband of Priyanka Gandhi -- is currently under way by the Enforcement Directorate in Delhi on allegations of money laundering and benami real estate deals in the UK. If the ED is trying to get at the truth, that too after a court directive now, it will be well-appreciated. But, there are also those who see the hand of the Modi government to possibly embarrass the Nehru-Gandhi family at a time when the nation is at the doorstep of another Parliamentary poll. At a time when the credibility of various government institutions are touching a new low, even well-intentioned actions on the part of officials could be interpreted in different ways and motives attached. There, overall, is a crisis of confidence.

The allegations against Robert Vadra and his real estate firms started gaining currency after the UPA-II government remote-controlled by Sonia Gandhi was voted out and the Narendra Modi-led NDA government took charge. Even during the UPA period, there were hush-hush talks about alleged usurpations of land in various states at the behest of Vadra and his firm by using government influence. A major allegation was that the Hooda-led Congress government in Haryana at that time went out of the way to give prime government land in various urban areas to Vadra's firm for a song. After Modi came to power, it was expected that these matters would be fairly investigated and guilt fixed on those who did any wrong. Nothing much has happened in this direction. It could either be that Modi didn't have the courage to take on the high-profile Nehru family, or that he vacillated in the matter, or that there was no truth, or at least no proof of wrong-doing vis-a-vis the allegations. Some related cases are pending in courts, which might take ages to be disposed. Now, those around Vadra are sure to project this as a witch-hunt. The fact that Priyanka Gandhi dropped Vadra at the ED office on her way to take charge as AICC general secretary on Wednesday, and picked him from the ED office after interrogation too, is hint of the way this issue could now be turned into another political weapon to attack Modi and the BJP in the coming hustings. Questions as to what Modi did in this respect all through his term would require clear answers. Likely, as in the Saradha case, the CBI and the government as a whole vacillated over serious issues for too long. This is not governance.

### LOOKING BACK

June 15, 1989

### AGP Manipulation cause of Saikia's Defeat

The Congress(I) has made strong allegations of "manipulation" and "tempering" of Rajya Sabha election counting process in Assam with a view to stonewalling Mr Hiteswar Saikia's victory. In a joint statement issued on Wednesday in Shillong two NECC(I) General Secretary Mr B B Dutta and Mr H Bora it was alleged that ruling AGP "cohorts extracted victory by intimidation and illegal rejection of two votes."

Mr Saikia, it was claimed, secured the requisite 42 votes but three votes were subsequently invalidated by "shameless manipulation." Politically it was a victory of Congress (I) for having secured 42 votes despite the fact that it has a mere strength of 23 in the House of 124, the statement further said. The Statement said the AGP suffered its first defeat when in order to marshall all the forces to check the Congress(I) candidate Mr Hieswar Saikia "surrendered" its claim to the second seat and withdrew its own candidate jointly

sponsored by its arch enemy the United Minority Front (UMF) faction lead by Mr Golam Osmani and the Congress(S).

In spite of all these, Mr Saikia secured the required 42 first preference votes to win the second seat close on the heels of the AGP which secured 45 first preference votes with a strength 72 in the house of 124, the statement said. "Having found this result unbearable, the AGP leaders then resorted to what they did in Nazira by election and that is known to every man and woman of this region.

Two AGP ministers, Mr Atul Bora and Mr S N Medhi, two AGP MPs, Mr Dinesh Goswami and Mr Bhadravans Tati and Mr SC Sinha MLA and others entered the counting hall in violation of the counting rules and started what amounts to intimidation to hold up the declaration of results while large number of other AGP leaders with their musclemen were waiting outside the hall.

# The BJP-CAB Controversy

By Bindo M Lanong

Today's BJP-CAB synonym cannot be sundered from anybody's lips. The two acronyms are inseparable. That is how the fate of the BJP depends on its brainchild, the CAB-2016, worth several lakhs of votes as investment. This is the reason why CAB becomes the prime agenda of the BJP in the ensuing Lok Sabha poll run-up.

As a matter of fact there should not be any two opinions as to who should be in the cockpit. All right-thinking Indians will agree that the majority Hindus should be in the Bharat Cockpit. Make no mistake, this does not however mean for the BJP only, for the BJP never inherited Bharat as its exclusive ancestral property. Hindus of other political parties and all and sundry, reserve equal claim, unlike what the former Congress President late Deb Kanta Baruah who in his euphoric tone, asserted that India is Indira and Indira, India.

But make no mistake again, this refers to the cockpit only. The vast Bharat compartment belongs to all Indians, Hindus and non-Hindus, under the unflinching guarantee of the Constitution of India. Strictly speaking, what the Modi government is pursuing in order to welcome foreigners from the three countries, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who originally are of Indian origin, to migrate to India is problematic on several counts. It will add to the burgeoning population of the country and is a queer attempt which calls for a serious legal and constitutional debate, taking into account the mandated Foreigners Act and the Citizenship Act of the Central government, which subject vests in the apex court which has the

authority to examine and interpret those Acts.

Another factor which cannot be sidelined, is the violation of the model code of conduct governing elections which bans the use of money power, though the code has not been promulgated as yet. Wooing people to immigrate with the lure of facilities is for the Election Commission of India to decide whether this case attracts the EC provisions. Hence the government decision on such an issue, appears to be malafide ab-initio and in excess of jurisdiction.

It may also be recalled, to add teeth to the argument, that when a similar protracted nationality demand of the Chakmas and Brus who are already scattered by occupation in several parts of the country for decades is in suspended animation, where is the justification for the executive authority to circumvent the law and the Constitution by a brute political decision, emanating from a vitriolic Parliamentary debate. BJP failed to see reason and to show mutual respect to the plea of leaders from other parties.

Another aspect that the Modi government should seriously consider is the socio-economic burden that the country has to bear. Where will lakhs of foreign invitees be accommodated? What will be the economic packages for them, which should perhaps include housing in decent housing colonies, employment and other engagements etc involving huge budget, when a large section of poor unemployed and homeless people in India are reeling under extreme austerity, with many farmers and job seekers

killing themselves on a daily basis?

What are the mechanisms to meet such an alarming situation that awaits the passage of the contentious CAB? The only consolation probably would be the rejection of the offer, especially by those invitees themselves who are in foreign land, who have made gainful settlement and live a luxurious life to remain where they are for now, rather than gamble to save BJP, and in the bargain risk their own lives in India. There is no guarantee that they may even have to be temporarily accommodated along the many river banks of India, where there is no dearth of water supply, of course, to first solve one major problem at least.

In a gamble, anything is possible, for many in India have faced serious consequences of the much hyped Demonetisation agenda of the government.

Politics for some does not seem to have any barrier. The BJP is unconcerned about the calamity that the CAB will bring with it as long as it serves their purpose. In the process, it only exposes the true colours of such leadership.

Considering the widespread opposition to the Bill, many political parties and organisations have called for public agitations which could involve the breakdown of law and order, in various parts of the country. If no suo-moto order comes forth from the judiciary, this is a fit case for political parties, NGOs and others concerned to prefer judicial petitions without much delay and watch for the outcome.

In the North-East, leaders of regional parties met in Guwahati recently

and in their considered view of the CAB, they foresee the detrimental effects the legislation will cause to the country and the north east in particular, where in Assam alone the burden caused by alien population entering the state after 24 March 1971 in violation of the Assam accord is seriously felt.

The meet while demanding abrogation and withdrawal of the Bill, also vowed to intensify opposition to the Bill even at the cost of parting ways with the NDA, since many questions have been raised that the regional leaders are running with the hare, but for obvious reasons, they are also hunting with the hounds.

It is also high time for the Indian society to revisit the stereotyped concept of the Hindutva philosophy and the notion that India is the natural home of all Hindus, for it does not bode well at all times and in all situations.

In the context of societal existence, the class society followed in India is found to be the major factor in creating divisions and dissensions. Many a life has vanished in various kinds of exacerbations, with many ending their lives due to frustrations and pressures from their own families and clans.

We have the dowry demands, which the poor cannot afford; then the honour killings, the acid attacks on women who resist overtures from men they don't want to marry and all forms of killings to fulfil the flimsy desires of biased clans and local committees. When population dwindles, to maintain the balance, foreigners have to be imported, because the small-family planning practice also hinders, by following its own course.

look into this matter seriously.

Yours etc.,  
Name withheld on request

### Stop congesting Shillong city

Editor,  
We are well aware that the elections to the Autonomous District Councils are being held this month. But why do common people have to be put through traffic snarls on a daily basis because candidates come to the DC's office to file their nominations, accompanied by innumerable vehicles? Is this show of strength necessary? The entourage of vehicles accompanying every candidate has brought traffic to a standstill and hampered the movement of commuters pursuing their daily activities. The outcome of this avalanche of vehicles descending on Shillong city is that there is a ripple effect across the city. I believe such occurrences should not be repeated in the future and the Shillong Traffic Police should make rules disallowing vehicular processions within city limits to accompany candidates filing their nominations. One understands the sentiments of the supporters but they have no right to inconvenience the public of Shillong. While it may be too late to implement such rules now since the filing of nominations for the Council elections ended on Friday, one hopes that for the ensuing MP election the authorities concerned address this grievance.

Yours etc.,  
Jenniefer Dkhar,  
Via email

## Prime Minister has now no escape route from Rafale scam Supreme Court has to recall its judgment after Hindu report

By Nitya Chakraborty

The die is cast. There is no escape route for the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to come out unscathed from the Rs. 58,000 crore Rafale scam. The report in The Hindu newspaper of February 8 makes it abundantly clear that it was the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) which conducted the crucial negotiations for finalising the deal relating to the purchase of 36 Rafale jets from the French company Dassault overruling the prolonged negotiations carried out by the Defence Ministry and also the PMO finalized the deal by ignoring serious objections made by the Defence Ministry.

The critical observations made by the Defence Ministry officials against the PMO intervention make it clear that the Modi Government misled the Supreme Court by stating in its submission in the sealed cover that the deal was made by observing all procedures under the Defence Procurement Policy and no intervention was made by the PMO and the Prime Minister himself. The very basis of the Government submission has now found to be untrue and this

Defence Ministry protested that the position taken by the PMO was "contradictory to the stand taken by MoD and the negotiating team." The then Defence Secretary, G. Mohan Kumar, made this official notation in his own hand: "RM may pl. see. It is desirable that such discussions be avoided by the PMO as it undermines our negotiating position seriously."

The Defence Secretary's firm opposition was recorded on November 24, 2015 on a note prepared by S. K. Sharma, Deputy Secretary (Air-II), and endorsed by the Joint Secretary & Acquisition Manager (Air) and the Director General (Acquisition) in the Ministry.

The new Rafale deal, which bore little resemblance to the original deal under prolonged negotiation, was announced in Paris by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 10, 2015. This was followed by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between India and France when President Francois Hollande visited Delhi on the occasion of the Republic

### The critical observations made by the Defence Ministry officials against the PMO intervention make it clear that the Modi Government misled the Supreme Court by stating in its submission in the sealed cover that the deal was made by observing all procedures under the Defence Procurement Policy and no intervention was made by the PMO and the Prime Minister himself.

Day in 2016. The inter-governmental agreement for 36 Rafale fighter jets was eventually signed on September 23, 2016.

According to the Defence Ministry note, the details of the parallel negotiations conducted by the PMO came to the Ministry's notice only from a letter of October 23, 2015 from General Stephen Reb, the head of the French Negotiating Team. The letter "made mention of a telephonic conversation between Shri Jawed Ashraf, Joint Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office and Mr. Luis Vassy, Diplomatic Adviser to the French Minister of Defence, which took place on 20.10.2015."

Citing "a glaring example", the Defence Ministry note pointed out that General Reb in his letter had stated that "taking into consideration the outcome of discussions between Diplomatic Adviser to the French Defence Minister and Joint Secretary to PM, no Bank Guarantee is provisioned in the supply protocol and the letter of comfort provides sufficient assurances of the proper implementation of the supply protocol by the industrial suppliers."

This, the note stated, was "contrary to the position taken by the MoD and conveyed by Indian Negotiating Team that the commercial offer should be preferably backed by Sovereign/Government Guarantee or otherwise by Bank Guarantee." Another instance of a contrary stand taken in the parallel negotiations was on the arbitration arrangement, the note pointed out.

Thus it is clear that on all crucial issues, the PMO took a position contrary to India's national interests overruling the concerns of the Defence Ministry. What more proof does the Supreme Court want? (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Policing in Meghalaya

Editor,

First and foremost, I ought to congratulate Ms Patricia Mukhim for the daring and incisive write-up on the status of policing in Meghalaya (ST Feb 8, 2019). I sincerely hope that the article will help straighten the goings-on in the Police department as well as policing in Meghalaya which are found wanting in almost all aspects. Constructive criticisms in the functioning of the Police Department and policing, from the public at large and from the media is most welcome and that is exactly what Ms Mukhim did in her column. I earnestly appeal to the public at large to constructively bring forth their criticisms against the style of functioning of the police and the Police department in the media or in other public fora. We need excellent policing in our state and we all want to see straightening and strengthening of the Police department. In this connection I would like to offer the following suggestions for better police functioning in our state.

1. The DGP, ADGP and other top ranking officials should be selected from the corp of men and women of integrity, impeccable character, trustworthy and the best disciplinarians.

2. The Police Recruitment Board should consist of not more than five police persons not below the rank of DIG and they ought to be men and women of integrity, trustworthy and an unblemished character.

3. Educational

qualification for recruitment to the posts of followers and constables should be not below graduation.

4. Newly recruited constables and followers should undergo rigorous and stringent process of screening and training before induction into the police force. The process should be prescribed by the Recruitment/ Selection Board.

5. Training for the new recruits should be streamlined perfectly and the training itself should be stringent and rigorous so that only the fittest will be inducted into the force.

6. Strengthening and streamlining the District Executive Force is of imperative because as it is now the District Force is badly lacking in manpower. The present strength of the Police Force is hardly 30,000. The Police-Public ratio today is 1:500. The Police Station, Police Outpost, Police Beats and the Police Check Posts lack the man power (ill manned).

7. The Investigation wing and Executive wing of Law and Order should be strictly separated so that there will be proper focus on the respective duties and to promote efficiency.

8. There should be regular in-service training for police personnel to infuse efficiency and to update policing skills. Training on investigations should be streamlined and should be rigorous so that those police personnel in-charge of investigations will be highly efficient and justice will be given to the victims.

9. Meghalaya has no Forensic Laboratory though the Police claims that it has one, but for all cases that involve forensic

examinations the tests and examinations are sent either to Kolkata or Hyderabad. Therefore there is the urgent need to have our own fully functioning Forensic Laboratory here itself.

These are some of the points and suggestion I can offer as of now.

Yours etc...  
Philip Marwein,  
Via email

#### Delay in MCS Mains Exams

Editor,

The Meghalaya Civil Services (MCS) Preliminary Examination was held in August 2018, after a gap of more than a decade. The result was declared in September 2018, but it is unfortunate that even after a span of over 5 months (and counting), the Mains Examination has not yet been conducted. We are all aware that the state government had declared in the past that this particular exam would be conducted on the UPSC model. By UPSC standards, the MCS Mains Examination should have already been conducted in November 2018 (that is after a gap of 2 months). It is very unfortunate that this delay is happening, as it affects the hundreds of successful candidates who will be burdened with the piling current affairs as the days and months progress. Also, it is not fair for many as they would have been age-barred with the passage of time. We appeal to the State Government not to play with the lives of the many serious candidates and to conduct the Mains Examination as soon as possible. We also appeal to the different NGOs to please

# 'India still not a single nation'

**Lord Meghnad Desai, a British economist and a Labour politician in the UK, was the guest at An Author's Afternoon presented by Shree Cement Ltd and organised by the Prabha Khaitan Foundation in association with Taj Bengal Kolkata. Souvik Ghosh brings exclusive excerpts of the conversation between Lord Desai and conversationalist Esha Dutta where he spoke not only about his book The Raisina Model but also about the present Indian and British political developments...**

**The preface says the book celebrates the 70 years of Indian independence but it is not a celebratory book. Why? Nothing much to celebrate after 70 years?**

A celebratory book is very often uncritically celebrated. But in this book, apart from celebrating independence, I also pointed out the problems of the country. The book does not state India is the greatest and something like that. Yes, we have a certain year of independence and there are certain unique things about India. It is one of the most stable democracies (in the world). In the 2019 General Elections, we will have a billion people casting their votes, which is something, not a bad record to have. But at the same time, I am very well aware that there are issues and problems. I still think India is below its potential and could have done much better.

**Post-independence, the model of Indian democracy is a Westminster model. But given the diverse condition in India, it had to be Indianised. So that leads us to the title of your book, 'The Raisina Model'? Tell us something about it.**

In the first few years (after independence), people, who were in the parliament, in leadership or in power, very often behaved like as if they were in Westminster. If we look at the thing in a methodical way, we will find the way they conducted the parliament, the conventions which were followed were from the British parliament. Then I think for various reasons, from the mid-60s onwards, the thing hits the crisis. The Emergency was a very interesting experiment because it is the most absolutely legal way of having a dictatorship and all the laws that Indira Gandhi (then Prime Minister) had used were in place even before Independence. All the emergency rules were established by the British so it is the continuity of the colonial Raj (regime). The response to the Emergency was the Janata government, which was purely an Indian response. It was totally an ideology-free coalition. And then the Mandal Commission happened. Mandal completely Indianised the country's democracy. At present, democracy is a vast sea of a little caste politics, coalition and things like that. But it is a de-

mocracy and it works a particular line which the Westminster democracy taught us.

**So you think the Janata coalition shaped the Indian democracy?**

I mentioned in my book that without anybody explicitly saying it, Mandal is a report entirely on the Hindu majority. It was about social, economic deprivation of Hindu majority and not about India. Until then, the discussion of poverty was based on economics. It changed the map of Indian politics. 2019 is a very crucial election because if some BJP or NDA combination returns to power, then there will be a fundamental change with the Congress losing two consecutive elections for the first time. I think has learnt the importance of not losing the next election terribly badly. The 2019 election is not only about getting rid of Modi because Modi could go but BJP might stay. I think it is a very crucial phase right now. The Congress has also realised that the only game to beat BJP is Hindutva. The Congress has dropped everything to become a liberal Hindutva as opposed to BJP's hardline Hindutva. The secularism is gone. Without winning the two elections (back to back), the BJP has changed the Congress very fundamentally.

**Democracy has been threatened time to time and disintegrated the country. The northeast, which has been completely alienated, don't even consider to be a part of the mainland.**

Absolutely. In India, each linguistic state is a separate nation and it has a history. India doesn't have a national history. Shivaji is a hero in Maharashtra but not in Gujarat and Bengal. Tamil Nadu, for instance, has been an independent country for the last 50 years. Since 1967, no national party has been able to establish its control in Tamil Nadu. It has its own two parties which are running the state. So Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister is almost like a Prime Minister. On the other hand, north India doesn't know anything about south India's history. The whole nationalist picture is run in north India. So I think India has done well to hang together and democracy is the one thing which has tied the whole country together.

**Why do you think the Naga insurgency or the Maoist violence did not capture the public's attention as much as the Kashmir issue?**

I think Indians only care about terrorism where Muslims are involved. Nagaland is fighting since before independence. Nagaland battle is still not over. But Nagaland was technically not a part of British India. Nobody knows how many people died in Nagaland. Kashmir matters to us because Muslims and Pakistan are involved. So we have perception problems.



Meghnad Desai with (top) Prashant Bangur and Esha Dutta

**How do you see the farmers' distress and farm loan waiver policy?**

I am against loan waiver. It is no longer equitable to make an ordinary taxpayer pay for an inefficient farmer. If the farmers are in debt and can't pay it back, he should be declared bankrupt and his land should be seized. I think it is the time for the urban taxpayer to say

that they will not put up with this because the amount of money going into the farmer's distress is enormous and we could have much better use of it in health or education or transport sectors. In urban areas, there is a need for a serious injection of money. In the last six months, every party has gone bizarre in loan waivers. Can we imagine Rahul Gandhi (Congress president) asking

the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) to cancel all farmers' debts without examining? I think he needs to know something more than that to become a Prime Minister.

**What do you foresee for the Indian economy? Do you think GST is a good thing but bit too late?**

It took 30 years! I think there was a tendency on part of Narendra Modi to hurry things for dramatic effects. He didn't have to unveil GST on July 1, 2017. Nobody was waiting for it. They could have done that after some test runs. It is a complex system because the federal finances of India are very complex. The whole financial structure comes from the 1935 Government of India Act. But the fact that the states have very limited financial resources as compared to the Centre. Neither the financial structure was simple nor GST was tried out. I think GST will take two years to sort it out because it is a good thing to do. Also, Aadhaar took some time. I think Aadhaar is convincingly an ambitious thing to create a billion identity cards. I think the same hurry on part of Modi was there in demonetisation. The new currency was not ready entirely. The country could have had a foreign currency printer hired. Not having new currency ready on day one caused the misery.

**How do you react to the dangerous trends of cow vigilantism and attacking the beef-eaters?**

It reflects a profound ignorance of what cows do among the cow lovers. They have absolutely no realisation what happens to cows after they stop giving milk. It becomes so costly which farmers can't afford. The farmers, who have a cow, wants to get rid of it when it becomes useless. It is a profound ignorance of what a cow does. I think what happens to ideological parties is that their core doesn't want to do *Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas* (development for all). The core is only interested in pursuing ideological programmes. Cow vigilantism is only happening in the Hindi heartland. People outside the Hindi heartland are more sensible.

**Are women moving towards gender equality?**

After a certain age, women get gender equality. Seriously. But young women have to struggle. There is a barrier to gender equality which shouldn't exist. However, in the financial market and also in politics, more women are at the top positions. Not necessarily women, who are in politics, came through family connections. Though Mayawati (former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister) had patronage, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has reached this position without having any family connection in politics. I think between the age of 25 and 45, women go through very difficult time in this country. Es-

pecially in urban areas and in the lower middle class, life is very hard for working women.

**Triple Talaq has been declared unconstitutional. Rightly a positive step?**

Yes. I really fail to understand the resistance (towards the bill ending the instant divorce given to women in the Muslim community). I am not judging Quran (religious text of Muslim) but the practice is outrageous. I mean we can't frame laws on the basis of ancient texts. I read Rig Veda but it is not practical. I hope the triple talaq bill gets passed.

**Do you see India as a superpower?**

India is still not a single nation. It has not found a narrative. Part of the reasons is the first generation sought that the solemn head will unite the country and that was sufficient ground for having a single country. I remember in the mid-50s, when the linguistic states were created, Nehru (Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister) was very worried. I think making linguistic states would probably make India more stable because that will recognise multiple nationalities in India. We will have to create a new narrative. Right now there is no way India can take on China. Absolutely no way.

**Any predictions for the 2019 General Elections? Do you think Narendra Modi magic will win?**

I think the most probable outcome is that the BJP-led NDA will return to power without a single-party majority. If the BJP gets more than 200 or 225 seats, Modi will survive (remain as the Prime Minister). I don't think there is any serious alternative to Modi if the BJP-led NDA comes back. The next-most-likely thing is BJP might come back without Modi as the Prime Minister. In that case, other parties will join the NDA. The less probable is a Congress-led coalition with a variety of partners. If the Congress gets 150 seats, Rahul Gandhi will be the Prime Minister.

**How do you view the ongoing Brexit crisis? What may it lead to ultimately?**

I expect the deal to go through, maybe with very narrow majority. Let's assume it will not go through. Despite Jeremy Corbyn's (leader of the Labour Party in the UK) demand of an election, there is no need to call the polls because we have a fixed Parliament Act. There is no chance of an election unless Theresa May (UK Prime Minister) calls a no-confidence and asks her party as well as the Labour Party to vote against her. That is an absurd thing to happen. Least thing can happen is a Brexit without a deal but I don't think Brexit will be cancelled. (IBNS)

## Time to refocus on basic infra

By Taponeel Mukherjee

With 2019 underway, it would serve us well to look at some of the most pressing needs of Indian infrastructure. Trends in global capital markets and the needs of Indian infrastructure have broadly remained the same, but so have the challenges.

Recent news that the euro 399 billion Dutch pension fund ABP has lowered the expected investment returns over the next 10-15 years at five per cent a year on average from the earlier six per cent (Investment & Pensions Europe) shows the pressure the global pension fund community is under to deliver investment returns.

Additionally, a quick look at the Q4 2018 report of another Dutch pension fund, PFZW, shows a reduction in the current funding ratio from 103.4 per cent to 97.5 per cent. In layman's terms, the value of current and future outflows from PFZW is higher than the value of the assets.

The data yet again drives home the point that in the face of constrained investment returns, the demand for annuity-type structures is even higher amongst the global capital providers.

While India has been aware of these trends and has made a concerted effort towards facilitating the flow of capital, now is the time to further provide impetus to the idea of "utilising global capital towards building Indian infrastructure". The agenda for 2019 must be to build on and deal with issues that have slowed infrastructure creation in India. The core issues that need attention remain the same - local market funding to facilitate foreign capital inflows, a more efficient land acquisition strategy, better linkages in policies across infrastructure segments and, to the extent possible,



allowing market prices to prevail.

India needs to find a better solution towards providing local market credit to infrastructure projects to facilitate foreign capital inflows. For a capital provider, it is vital that local players partake in the risk-taking regarding infrastructure projects.

While Indian banks have cut back from infrastructure lending, a complete pullback is not feasible given the size of the balance sheets that banks wield and given the infrastructure funding requirements. The key for banks is prudent risk management and effective project selection. Additionally, other local funding sources such as the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) and revamped Development Finance Institution type structures will be crucial.

The fundamental reason why local

funding in infrastructure projects gives foreign investors greater confidence is that knowing local capital has "skin in the game" implies more protection for their money.

Land acquisition remains a significant challenge for infrastructure creation. Recent issues that specific solar projects faced with getting access to land further elucidates this fact. The critical step here is to gradually tie-up land allocation and project allocation through the sector-specific agencies at work.

Bundling project and land allocation implies that for instance, when solar tenders are allocated, the planning on the associated land required is done concurrently with the tender and not after the tender process. While the issue around land acquisition is complex, land is the most crucial component of infrastructure

creation in possibly every segment. Therefore, urgent attention is due.

Co-operation within infrastructure segments, especially through policies that consider sectoral interlinkages is crucial for the infrastructure ecosystem to deliver value. Power generation adds value when transmission and distribution assets can assist in giving the power to end users. Biofuels can add value when the water required to generate the raw material for them does not impede other more critical water needs in an economy.

Continually asking questions and ensuring that policy consistency is maintained across interlinked infrastructure sectors is the only way for infrastructure to indeed create value for all.

While infrastructure assets vary significantly on the level of regulatory purview, it is essential that regulations are prudently used and do not stifle risk-taking and value creation. Asset returns need to be adequate to compensate for the risks involved to get both global and local capital to fund Indian infrastructure. Therefore, it is essential that greater focus is paid to tariff pricing, especially to the drivers of tariff rates. One size fits all solutions will lead to inefficient outcomes in the long-run.

Now is the time to further push forward with policies that can help further facilitate the flow of capital into Indian infrastructure. It is also essential to realise that such changes are gradual, small iterations in the right direction can have significant positive lasting effects. (IANS)

(The views expressed in this article are personal. The author heads Development Tracks, an infrastructure advisory firm. He can be contacted at taponeel.mukherjee@development-tracks.com or @Taponeel on Twitter)

## Time-shift TV not to hit ad

Time-shift television, a technology that allows people to watch TV shows they missed without presetting devices to record content, may not reduce the amount of time people spend watching live TV and the advertisements on the shows, suggests new research.

The findings, published in the journal Management Science, showed that people with time-shift TV watched slightly more TV overall than they did before having the technology; they did not watch less live TV, and they did not watch fewer advertisements.

"Advertisers have been concerned that using time-shift TV would decrease the amount of time people spend watching live TV, which would reduce their exposure to ads," said study co-author Pedro Ferreira, Associate Professor at Carnegie Mellon University in the US.

"Our findings should interest advertisers as well as cable companies and producers of TV content," Ferreira added.

For the study, the researchers used a randomised control trial that involved cable customers from more than 50,000 households.

Some of the households were given premium TV channels, which includ-

ed popular movies and shows without commercial breaks, for six weeks.

In some of those households, consumers were also given access to time-shift TV, which allowed the researchers to observe the effect of the technology on consumers' consumption of TV.

The study found that on average, having access to the premium channels with time-shift TV increased households' total consumption of TV through viewership of both live and previously aired programmes.

Having time-shift technology did not change the amount of time consumers

viewed live TV but boosted the concentration of total TV viewership because viewers used the technology disproportionately more to watch popular programmes.

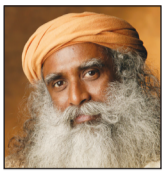
The study also found that time-shift TV was used more frequently for watching TV programmes and movies, and not as frequently for watching sports and news.

The technology did not change the consumers' behaviour towards watching advertisements when they watched the original TV channels live, suggesting that consumers did not use the technology to strategically avoid advertisements, the results showed. (IANS)



# The planet's finest machine

Sadhguru, Isha Foundation



When it comes to a dimension beyond your present level of perception, the mind is a horrible guide because it says many things which make you believe things that do not exist, and it makes you miss things which are right there in front of you. This is the reason why yoga adopted a comprehensive way of approaching the spiritual process through the

body, the energy, the breath, the emotion and, of course, the intelligence – but not depending upon the intellect, because intellect is always coming from whatever perspective it is in; that perspective looks like the absolute for the intellect.

There is a whole science and technology as to how to evolve this body from being just a heap of food, just an accumulation of what we have taken from the earth, into something beyond flesh and blood, beyond the compulsions of our chemistry. The body is the most sensitive and capable instrument on this planet – there is no other instrument like this. If you know how to use it, it can tell you everything that is here and beyond. That is why the fundamental yoga starts with the body.

The process of yoga is just towards realizing and retrieving this machine for your use. Right now for most people, it is rusted and cobwebbed in such a way that they cannot use it the way they want to. It does its own things. You must keep this machine, this body, such that, it must be on for whatever it needs to do. If it has to stay for three days without food or sleep, it is just on. Then it is not a compulsive process, it has become a conscious process, it will just do what you want it to do.

One simple release that this body needs is, if you can simply sit here without being identified with the physical process that is on right now, not identifying this either as a man or a woman, as this or that and allow it to reverberate the way it should and can, it can become the very center of the cosmos. If you reverberate with sufficient energy, you become the center of the cosmos because there is no one center for this cosmic manifestation so the opportunity to become the very center of the existence is always wide open to you.

This science of getting there, this dimension of making this happen to yourself is what we are referring to as yoga. But the reason why it looks so far away for many people is simply because they have tied their boat to one shore but are working hard to get to the other shore. It is a simple understanding, a simple intelligence that if you want to go from this shore to that shore, if you want to make a journey from the physicality to a dimension beyond the physical, unless you cut this rope, you won't get there.

So we are asking you to bend your body, hold your breath and do these things because slowly, it will cut the ropes of the physical and create a distance between you and the physical. You have to just keep a little distance from whatever enhances and reinforces the physicality in your life. You identify all those compulsive aspects of the physicality and stay away from them. In a small way, this is going beyond the limitations of the physical.

Once there is a distance, rowing your boat away is very simple; just the current or the breeze may take it. Even if you sleep, it may still make it to the other shore. If you row hard, you will definitely get there very quickly.

(Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary and bestselling author. He was conferred the Padma Vibhushan in 2017 for exceptional and distinguished service)

# 'Difficult to sustain as artist'

Farnaaz Islam is a young painter from Guwahati. But calling her painter would be undermining her multi-faceted talent as Islam is a poet and writer too. She is also an engineer and was an assistant professor at Regional Institute of Science and Technology in Meghalaya after completing her M.Tech from Tezpur University. Is it difficult to juggle art and science? It is, but Islam did it with aplomb. In the process she chose her first love, painting, to bloom as a creative person.

Islam was born and brought up in Assam. The 30-year-old artist says both her parents were instrumental in making her an artist. "While my father would take me to various competitions, my mother always brought me books with illustrations. I started painting before I could even speak and the first prize I received was when I was in kindergarten. Later, Guwahati Artists' Guild helped me a lot to grow as an artist. Debananda Ulup sir (painter) was a great inspiration," says the painter on phone from Guwahati.

Islam, who works as an art teacher at Guwahati Artists' Guild, has already been part of many exhibitions in Guwahati and in 2016, she held her solo exhibition. Talking to *The Shillong Times*, Islam says how difficult it is to survive as an artist, especially in the northeastern region, and how people need to change their perception about art.



## TALKING POINT FARNAAZ ISLAM

### How do you manage being an engineer, into work and painting?

I am not into engineering for the last three years. I left after I realised that juggling art and engineering is not my cup of tea.

### How is the art scenario in Assam?

It is not very good actually. I wish people had more interest in art and bought more paintings. The market is not very good now. In Kolkata and Mumbai, it is still okay but the overall domestic market is in the downhill.

### Why did you take the risk then?

I like taking risks. I am also preparing for government examinations but currently I am focusing on art. Ulup sir and Aminul Haque (painter) are guiding me, they are my mentors.

### What do you want to achieve as a painter?

I plan to hold more exhibitions and send my work to Mumbai and Kolkata. Once I have enough money I will hold an exhibition at Jehangir Art Gallery (in Mumbai).

### Who are your inspirations?

I admire Pablo Picasso's works. Ulup sir is a big inspiration. I admire his paintings more than Picasso's. I feel they have a tribal touch and homely feel. They have folklores and magic realism is woven in his paintings. He is a star in his own right.

### Your works too have a fairytale-like feel...

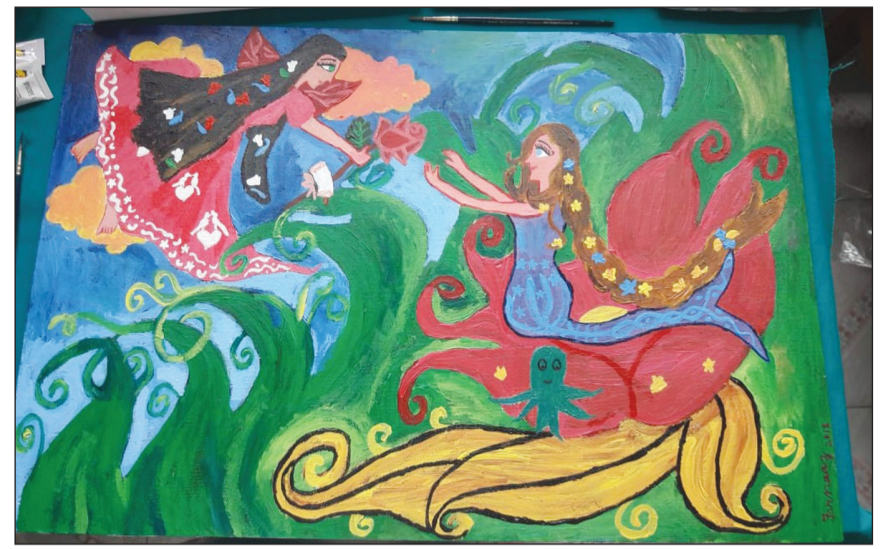
Yes, I read a lot of magic realism books. As a child, I was obsessed with drawing parks and Durga Puja pandals (laughs).

### Are you planning any exhibition outside Assam?

Yes. Ulup sir has recommended my name and he will send one of my paintings to Kolkata for an exhibition in August. There will be another exhibition at Chitrakoot gallery in Kolkata. I have a few paintings ready but they are not enough to fill up a whole gallery.

### What are the different media that you work with?

Glass painting, acrylic on canvas, 3D art and water colour. Acrylic is my favourite but water colour is also a good medium.



### Is it possible to earn a livelihood through art?

It is difficult for artists to sustain. They must work in some school as art teachers or do private tuitions. Some backup must be there.

### You are a poet too. Is it a hobby?

It is a hobby. Whenever I feel like, I pen down my thoughts. I have written a few short stories as well.

### How is the art scenario in the North East? What is lacking?

People should take art seriously and not consider it as a hobby. In today's world it is easier to learn from YouTube tutorials. The world has come into a nutshell with globalisation. Anyone can learn art. But

the mindset needs to change about art. It is not just a hobby or only a rich man's luxurious thing.

### How contemporary situation affects an artist?

It affects a lot. One of my glass paintings had a theme of revolution with fish and two bulls as motifs. It showed progress and prosperity... India and Pakistan are pawns in the bigger scenario. There are bigger bullies. I also delve into these themes. The war between good and evil is the current theme in my painting.

### What is your message for young artists?

You should take yourself seriously. Consider art as a passion and give your heart and soul to it. Nothing can stop you.

## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambri

Sunday, FEBRUARY 10, 2019

There is a promise of a good innings as Moon trine Jupiter on your solar return chart. You will be singled out for prestigious responsibilities at the work place. Long standing contacts will help open doors to positive developments and your image will enhance as your progress will be marked by achievements. Your individualism will set you apart as you take bold yet balanced decisions. You make a conscious effort to connect on a personal level which will reflect in improved interpersonal relations.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

You are industrious and earnest in all that you do. This attitude bodes well for making good progress at work as the focus is on working relationships, partners, and colleagues. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation from others. This is a good time to promote harmony and good relations with friends and family members. Monetary matters seem to weigh you down with their complexities. You are blessed with intuition and foresight that take you in the right direction.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

Family matters as well as monetary concerns move smoothly but not at the pace you would like them to. Advice from older people in the family or someone close to you would help you finalize your financial plans. You plan for your career, setting goals and objectives and planning the right moves with the larger picture in mind. You cultivate your friendships and revel in the intoxication of a new love or a love re-kindled. At home a number of fine developments take place.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You establish your authority and take the responsibility. Self-confidence and action are highlighted and you follow your instincts as you seek to enhance your spiritual strength too. You focus on inner growth to keep pace with the assertion of authority and responsibility. This holds true for your personal life too - you realize the strength of the mind. At times you feel fun loving, energetic, and willing to explore new ideas. You discuss these aspects with your soul mate as you look to give a practicality to your new learning. Investments and speculation are favoured.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

This is an excellent phase in which you bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships with loved ones as suffering and negativity will be eliminated once you make a significant change in personal relationships. You would expand your social circle and make more contact with groups and friends. Avoid hasty and rash decisions when it comes to change. The matter will need thinking through not procrastination. A can do spirit will help overcome any obstacles that you may encounter.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

You are ambitious, authoritative and courageous. This period brings for you socializing, romance and stability at the work place. It's an excellent time to make a lifestyle change and you will also improve infrastructure of the office. Any unresolved argument may create rifts in your relationships, take a softer approach in your interactions when comes to the family related matters. Your actions and emotions are balanced as you bring more accuracy in your work area. Economy at home and management of business and work are important issues.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

You tend to entertain people with your conversation and sense of humor. You may change your personal style to present a glamorous and unconventional image. Your social life would be busy as you would popular among this people. Domestic relationships and the home environment would be harmonious and peaceful by self-efforts and care. Communicative abilities will largely be applied to professional world ambitions where knowledge and education

are pursued in order to enhance career prospects and financial matters.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

This period brings entertainment, communication and popularity among people and harmonious relations in personal and professional life. Your main focus is love, harmony and unity in family. This is a very significant phase, when you are inspired creatively and emotionally. Love and emotional bonds keep the family and loved ones together. You are more attractive when you show your responsible, managerial, ambitious, and constant side.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

People in fine arts, creative line and communication related fields would give a non-traditional blend to their creations and gain popularity through their work. Communicative abilities will largely be applied to professional world ambitions where knowledge and education are pursued in order to enhance career prospects and financial matters. You tend to entertain people with your conversation and sense of humor. You may bring about some changes in the image that you present. Your social life would be busy as you would popular among friends and family. Domestic relationships and the home environment would be harmonious and peaceful by self-efforts, love and care.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You would face new circumstances, changes and unfamiliar situations. A positive approach and well-spoken words would benefit as you gain favors from people in authority and power. You may take up new assignments and projects that would bring creativity and innovation 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. Being more loving and appreciative relationships with your children may also figure prominently.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

Authority figures, elders, parents, or influential people in your life tend to support and respect you. They are more willing to help you on your road to success. An event may occur that expands your career or professional interests, and you derive more pleasure from these activities. More freedom is likely to be experienced in your career. Integrity and honesty will get you everywhere now.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

You are likely to take your hobbies and talents more seriously. This is an excellent week for materializing a personal hobby and turning it into a business. You are bold, courageous and frank while dealing with controversial, professional and family matters. You are likely to spend time in different places and work closely in new associations as you combine good luck and good management to each other. Self-confidence and action are highlighted and you tend to instinctively know the right course of action to take in most situations. Stress may crop up at unexpected turns and this would require you to look at some lifestyle changes and even incorporate some techniques like exercise and meditation.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You would be able to give an unconventional look to your work and creativity. Your beloved ones, children and hobbies are in prominence. Pleasure and amusement play an important role in personal relations. You would be more sensitive and dedicated to your professional life. You focus on having fun, enjoying romance and expressing yourself creatively. Your hobbies, leisure time, moments spent with family and children, all come into focus. You find joy in expressing your views and ideas with people around you. You are likely to feel good in general, and you tend to spread the joy and happiness. You work hard to meet the goals. This is a good time to build your skills, to get organized, and to attend to your health and wellbeing.

# Today's life & style

By Lopamudra Gogoi Bora

The recent visit of one of my relatives has wheeled me in a way to take up this writing.

That day after dinner as we went up to bed there was this awful horrendous sound that gave me a sudden jerk from the initial stage of my unruffled sleep mixed with a creepy feeling altogether. I mused my guts and followed the source of the sound and was surprisingly amazed what I sited next. The sound was delivered by my guest who let all hell break loose with his snoring. Even in my wildest dream I could never ever think of someone making such scariest sound while sleeping! More than the atrocious noise, my jaw dropped on seeing the physical demeanor of my guest wherein his system stopped breathing for almost a minute before releasing the air making that horrific noise. With the air release, his whole body had such a quake that I was taken aback for a moment. Here I must reveal the physicality of my guest who is obese with a bulging tummy that has tilted out so much so that you can actually spot it from afar.

Coming back to that night, my brain was still coping to that horror, when my guest again stopped breathing, his tongue out a little, his head slightly lifted from the pillow and choked noisethat surged my palpitation into another level. And then his noisy air gets blown out giving another quake. The diverse nature of whistle snoring was unfamiliar to me till that date. It took me a while to get back to my normal mind frame and to accept the fact that my guest was doing fine. Assured of what was going on, I went off to bed but occasional snuffling did keep me jolted in between.

Next day I was updated by my guest about his various wheezing related tales that kept expounding owing to his augmented weight. Of course those tales were filled with hilarious moments but underneath I felt an urgency to warn my guest of the alarming hazards on health that our "lifestyle" throws on us. I could clearly sense, he, being one of the victims. Inadvertently, though, we are doomed into a world that would otherwise be called "hellstyle" instead of "lifestyle". Yes, this "style" of ours is nothing but an opener of the doors to hell. And what

## We tend to behave as if by making a healthy food habit we are but doing a favour on food rather than on ourselves.

without breakfast, specifically aimed for a flawless completion of working hours throughout the day. Upon reaching our offices, we are glued to the monitor and dumped with our files only to realize the break time when your better half calls in to check with your lunch. Most of the time we grab our food in such a hurry that we do not realise what food we are eating. I have met people who eat food for the sake of eating and living.

Our food is meant to be eaten with ease and relishing each bite. But we have made our lives such, as if cooking and eating healthy food is the toughest job than those 9 hours at grilling work place. We tend to behave as if by making a healthy food habit we are but doing a favour on food rather than on ourselves. Well, to talk of healthy food, simply I can put that there is no second thought given in eating that piece of pizza or a burger packed with calories but our mind

does shrink from buying that kg of apple for that matter. We keep saying fruits are selling very high but if we count our expenses spent on fast food, it is much more than some healthy options that otherwise we would have spent.

Food apart, if you ask any office-goer about the time he/she devotes to some physical activity, be ready to get that awful expression with an equally grating answer, "where do I have time on earth? I am so very busy."

Yes, lack of physical exercises and effort in carrying out any activity is what helping gear up those weighty issues. And the result gets reflected in various weight related health problems. A hectic day schedule does drain us of the left over energy but it cannot be an excuse in not keeping ourselves hale and hearty.

How many of you get up in the morning browsing Facebook/Twitter/Instagram and WhatsApp messages? I am sure most of us do. Addiction to smartphone has become a lifeline from which even the elderly are not spared. The amount of time spent in checking out other's post and pictures if put together is no less than the time we can actually spend on any outdoor activity. Taking out that half an hour for a brisk walk or some free hand exercise would actually make a lot more difference altogether. In course of our busy schedule we tend to disregard our health and a healthier way of life but believe me a healthy life does not cost much. What you need is some extra dose of determination and you need to expand your life a little more. By "expand", I mean to accommodate few more things in life besides the regular stuffs. Let's say for example, getting up half an hour early than the usual time or cutting short some casual things to make up for a walk etc. Small adjustments and small rectifications can really lead us to a new beginning.

Remember, a healthy body reverberates a healthy mind. I hope my guest is reading this and does his bits with little changes and little adjustments.

I also hope that we understand life better soon and lead a life without regrets.

(The author is a Mumbai-based travel blogger and costume stylist)

"At twenty years of age the will reigns;  
at thirty, the wit; and at forty, the  
judgment."

--- G. C. Lichtenberg

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.180 SHILLONG, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2019

### Democracy and India

RETIRED judge of the Supreme Court Markandey Katju is noted for his tongue-in-cheek remarks which are generally grim truths not necessarily palatable to many. His latest take is that democracy is not suited to India. Indians in general might be tempted to agree, though politicians as the main beneficiaries of this system here are bound to frown upon this statement. It's worth analysing how the situation in India is evolving in ways that raise serious concern over the nation's future. The political class as a whole is giving a bad name to democracy and derailing the system from the basic principle of according power to the people. Democracy, as famously defined by Abraham Lincoln, envisages a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Under democracy, India ran for seven decades. Some people, including middlemen and corrupt hands, became richer by the day while most others are reeling under poverty and injustice. This has partly to do with India's huge population bulge and partly with governmental failures. By contrast, China grew by leaps and bounds, took better care of its people under rule by one party with no claim to democracy. So too with Singapore and Malaysia in our neighbourhood.

Katju points out that democracy and elections here are guided by factors of religion – prescribed by the Sangh Parivar – and by casteism, both used as tools to win elections by several parties. This includes even the Congress party, not just the Lalus and the Mulayams. By contrast, as the learned justice noted, China grew by concentrating on matters of national development – not on sectarian issues like cow vigilantism, Ram Janambhoomi etc, which are seen as rightist agendas. When politicians speak up, they hardly show interest to touch upon matters of national development. They either try to whip up sectarian passions in ways that would help them win more votes, or resort to populism, to score political points. Democracy is also facing odds in the way some politicians act in a foot-loose manner. Consider the harm a street offensive by Mamata Banerjee caused to the federal structure of the nation when she made bold to arrest a set of CBI officials probing a chit fund scam of epic proportions. This, even as her own men were deeply involved in the scam. She gained brownie points from the media for her courage to take on Prime Minister Modi. Sadly, democracy in India is defeated by its irresponsible and immature politicians.

# Challenges ahead for the BJP in Meghalaya

By HH Mohrmen

The result of the general elections to the Shillong parliamentary Constituency in 2014 was a major surprise even for the Bharatya Janata Party MP candidate because he did not expect to garner those many votes. I know this because I was with Shibun Lyngdoh at the DC's office in Jowai when the results of the last Lok Sabha elections were declared. From his expression it was obvious that he did not expect to get so many votes, because in the last election the party was still at its nascent stage. And since then with the BJP at the helm of power in Delhi, it has been smooth sailing for the party in Meghalaya. No doubt the landslide win at the Centre also gave impetus to the growth of the party in the state.

There is no denying the fact that in the last election, the BJP candidate from Shillong Parliamentary constituency was basking in the glory of the Modi wave because Shibun Lyngdoh has neither contested the Legislative Assembly or the Parliamentary election before the 2014 general election. He was a businessman and it is not unusual that the business of a businessman in Khliehriat is none other than the coal business. But to his credit Shibun has been able to build the party from scratch until it became a major contender (or so it looks) in the last election to the state Assembly.

Then the Assembly elections were declared and the truth came to the fore. Despite all the efforts made by the Party's leaders both at the state and the national level, the BJP was able to win only 2 out of sixty seats in the assembly. And it has been reiterated that the credit for the victory of Alexander L Hek and Sanbor Shullai cannot be credited to the Party. The two were on a winning streak and would have won anyway, from whichever party they contested. The duo have defected from many parties before and won from whichever party they have contested, so the BJP as such has very limited role to play in their win. As a matter of fact the

duo had joined the BJP only few weeks before the election, so Hek and Sanbor won because of their own personal ability to attract voters.

The major surprise was the fact that even the sitting Independent MLAs, who joined the BJP before the elections lost their seats when they contested from the Party. And some of these politicians have since quit the party and are going to contest the Autonomous District Council election from a different party. Others have now gone into hibernation even in the local politics.

The Party leadership should be worried because of the startling situation that the BJP is currently in now. It has reached a point when it could not even find a single candidate to file

of the BJP performance in the ADC election? Sanbor Shullai's nephew Rocky Shullai is contesting the ADC election from the United Democratic Party ticket; Ricky Hek nephew of AL Hek is contesting the election as an independent candidate and Violet Lyngdoh the cousin of Shibun Lyngdoh and sitting MDC in the Jaintia Hills ADC is fighting to retain her seat as a candidate of the National People's Party. The question on everybody's mind is, why is this happening? Is this the beginning of the demise of the BJP? What will its image be after the ADC election?

Is it because of the mess that the Party is in now, that quite a significant numbers of candidates, who contested the ADC elections now, were active members of the BJP in the

leaders themselves in doubt about the prospects of the party to win the ensuing election to the ADCs? Is this then a case of the Party being backstabbed by its own leaders? If so why? Many will suggest that the Party is in such a situation because of the decision of the BJP-led NDA government to implement the Citizenship Amendment Bill. They may blame the Centre's way of tackling the issue in the aftermath of the Bill being passed by the Lok Sabha as the cause for the embarrassing situation, but is the Party faring any better in the last LA election? The BJP has not done any better in the last four years and the CAB could be the guillotine hanging over the neck of the Party in the state and an excuse for deserters to leave it.

The most important development will come if and when the NDA tables the Bill in the Upper House because that will be like opening a Pandora's box in Meghalaya. The leader of the NPP and Chief Minister of the state had made a public statement that NPP will withdraw from the NDA if the bill is tabled in the Rajya Sabha, which means that the NPP-led MDA government in the state will have to drop the BJP from the alliance. The other consequences is the BJP MLA themselves have made it public that if the bill is introduced in the house, they will resign from the Party membership. This means that they will cease to be MLAs and not only will BJP lose the only two MLAs that they have but, there will be a bye-election, the outcome of which we will have to wait and see.

The point is, if the party goes ahead and introduces the Bill in the Rajya Sabha it will lose the confidence of not only the people of Meghalaya, but the people of the entire North East. The state and regional leadership of the party knows this very well, but is the national leadership willing to listen? Is this the beginning of the end of the BJP in the state? If the Party leadership in Delhi refuses to budge to the public demand, then it definitely is the end of the road for the BJP at least in Meghalaya.

**The most important development will come if and when the NDA tables the Bill in the Upper House because that will be like opening a Pandora's box in Meghalaya. The leader of the NPP and Chief Minister of the state had made a public statement that NPP will withdraw from the NDA if the bill is tabled in the Rajya Sabha, which means that the NPP-led MDA government in the state will have to drop the BJP from the alliance.**

nominations for the election to the three district councils in the state. This is a huge setback and major embarrassment for the national party. The Party leaders may give many excuses for not fielding candidates in the coming election, but the question is what is the raison-d'etre of a political party of the stature of the BJP if it does not contest the election?

This is not the only reason for the BJP to be alarmed, but it is also a major embarrassment for the Party when even the state leaders themselves refuse to let their relatives contest the MDC elections on a party ticket. Are the leaders who are at the helm of the Party not confident

last legislative assembly election? The question that the Party leaders should ask is why did they leave the Party and why are they contesting the elections from different party tickets? The last few months also saw not only a large exodus of leaders from the BJP to other parties and the equally surprising happening is that the party leadership remained a mute spectator to all that is happening around. And if this is not evident enough to prove that the BJP is on a downside, then read the local papers both English and vernacular and one will see that there is large scale defection of the BJP rank and file to other parties before the ADC elections.

Obviously, we have

## Centre has flouted norms by deploying crpf in Kolkata State government permission needed for any requisition

By Sanjiv Krishan Sood

A jubilant Mamata Banerjee declared the Supreme Court order on Rajeev Kumar episode to be a victory of people of the nation. She also said that any decision on continuation of "dharna" will be taken by her after consultations with the leaders of opposition parties. The magnitude of the face-off on display through "dharna" by Mamata Banerjee, has been unprecedented in the history of 72 years of India's independence.

Triggered by the highhandedness of CBI, allegedly at the behest of the central leadership of the BJP, the episode is unlikely to fade from the public memory soon. Having become another rallying point for Opposition parties to come together against the BJP government, it has put Central Government and BJP on the defensive. The episode had its echo in the Parliament which was disrupted repeatedly.

Cacophony of high voltage discussions on TV channels about what has been called as "demonetisation of democratic institutions" by some has obscured one important issue from public discourse — that is unilateral order by the Central Government for deployment of CRPF to guard the CBI offices in Kolkata after the fiasco on February 3.

CRPF is an organisation with offensive capabilities to operate against militants and insurgents, besides assisting civil

assistance in times of emergency. This is where the role of force like CRPF comes into play to tackle problems beyond the capacity of the state police force.

In order to tackle such situations, the States requisition the services of the PMFs/CPOs. If the problem still does not come under control, the state can requisition the assistance of the armed forces as a last resort, to restore order under relevant provisions of CRPC.

The provisions described above raise few important questions in the context of deployment of CRPF on February 3 to guard Central Government offices in Kolkata. First, whether the situation in Kolkata was so serious that there was a threat to the safety and security of CBI office and officials? The answer obviously is in the negative.

In fact, the CBI officials who had gone to the residence of Commissioner Police Kolkata were allowed to go their own way after they had told the local police that they were there on a secret mission. There were no indications of any public anger against CBI requiring upgradation of their security. In brief the situation was well within the control of local police and any developing situation could have been easily controlled by them.

The second count on which the present deployment of CRPF fails, is absence of any emergent situation warranting such deployment. Deployment of

**The Constitution of India mandates that maintenance of law and order is a state subject which they perform with the help of Police Act of 1861. The Union list of VII Schedule of the constitution of India however, indicates several spheres of police works in which the Centre plays a vital role. Thus, Central Police Organisations (CPO) derive their constitutional validity from these provisions.**

administration in maintaining law and order. The role and tasks of CRPF are unique and these include: maintenance of law and order; counter Insurgency and Counter Terrorism operations; and anti-Naxal operations; Rescue & Relief Operations during natural disasters etc. CRPF also has played an increasingly large role in India's general elections.

Deployment of CRPF for such mundane tasks like guarding an office or for that matter any static installation is without any doubt wastage and misuse of the capabilities of CRPF. It is the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) or the local police who are responsible to give security cover to government offices located all over the country.

The Constitution of India mandates that maintenance of law and order is a state subject which they perform with the help of Police Act of 1861. The Union list of VII Schedule of the constitution of India however, indicates several spheres of police works in which the Centre plays a vital role. Thus, Central Police Organisations (CPO) derive their constitutional validity from these provisions.

The term "aid to civil authorities" (ACA) is a British imperial usage referring to the process by which local authorities can request the Central Government to lend

central forces directly by Centre can occur only in emergency after informing the State concerned or when there is a constitutionally declared emergency. Third, the question is whether State Government had requisitioned CRPF? Again the answer being in the negative, what prompted the Centre to take the unilateral decision to deploy them?

The procedure mandates that the local administrative authorities requisition Central Police Forces through the prescribed channels. What was the emergency that prompted the Centre to abandon the prescribed procedure? Argument that CRPF was not deployed in aid to Civil Authority but to protect an office complex therefore does not hold good.

It is apparent that the deployment of CRPF in Kolkata in the instant case is patently unconstitutional. The blatant illegality of the act is a blow to the federal structure of India. The act once again highlights the impatience of the Narendra Modi-led Central Government with constitutional niceties. CRPF can now be added to the long list of institutions of democracy which have been "demonetised" by the present Government of India. (IPA Service)

*The writer is a retired Additional Director General of the Border Security Force.*

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Victim of gender discrimination

Editor,

Rina Mitra an IPS officer had a brilliant academic career. She stood first in Pre-University in Arts stream of Calcutta University. She is a post-Graduate from the University of Calcutta and M.Phil from the University of Madras. She is an alumnus of the National Defence College. As a sports person she had participated and represented the State of Bihar in the National Level Sports & Athletics meet bringing laurels to herself and the state. As an IPS officer of Madhya Pradesh cadre (1983-batch) Rina Mitra (nee Mukherjee) has served in various key positions for both the Union Government and the Government of Madhya Pradesh (Police).

Mitra joined the Ministry of Home Affairs as Special Secretary (Internal Security) on March 1, 2017 and had handled successfully a key position within the Government dealing with internal security till her last working day. In her 35 years of dedicated service to the nation during her career in the Indian Police Service, she has, in various capacities, served in Madhya Pradesh as District Superintendent of Police of three districts, DIG & IG CID, Inspector General (Legal/

Personnel), Special DGP(Training) and Spl. DGP, PHQ. In Government of India, she has served in CBI, Railway Board, Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (WCCB), IG BPR&D and Director NICFS. She has been awarded with 50th Independence Anniversary Medal in 1997, Police Medal for Meritorious Service in 1999 and President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service in 2008.

Rina Mitra, the senior-most IPS officer who met all the criteria for the CBI Director's post, did not make the grade when the selection committee meeting was deferred to the day just after her retirement. As the first woman IPS officer from West Bengal while Rina gradually rose up through various positions she had to relentlessly assert herself to balance professional and personal fronts and proved herself a capable and worthy officer.

She had a firm belief that she would overcome life's trials and tribulations as a woman, a wife and an officer. Close to her retirement, scaling the 'glass ceiling' was her biggest challenge and those last few months had been truly unsettling. With no wish to misappropriate this word from feminist discourse, in her service, she had learnt

the hard way that there does exist a "glass ceiling" for honesty and uprightiness that is not short of an insurmountable challenge.

In fact Rina qualified on all parameters to be considered for selection to head the premier investigating body of the country, the CBI. Going by convention Rina was indeed the senior-most officer fulfilling all the four essential criteria, including experience in CBI and a clean track record. Unfortunately an easily avoidable delay of just one day in the selection process saw her out of the race and no longer in contention. She was stunned by the last glass ceiling she encountered in her professional career. As the SP of a district she had indomitable courage and stoic determination in dealing with the vagaries of local politics, leading investigations against influential people from well-connected families. Indeed Rina had guts and every shred of courage to stand for what is right even in the face of personal damage without making compromises with her convictions.

Despite her academic brilliance, and adequate qualifications, outstanding performance records and in her professional career, it is very unfortunate and

shameful that even today women need to additionally deal with the gender bias that exists in every profession that is dominated by men.

Deliberate deprivation of Rina's deserved ascendance to the zenith of her career by the ruling dispensation at the Centre is a crass violation of fundamental rights as enshrined in the Constitution of India under Articles 14, 15 & 16. Can this unethical act be called "emancipation of women or women's empowerment"? Certainly not and Rina Mitra is a victim of a male-dominated service. But she is not deterred. Mitra is convinced that the greater the number of honest people in this world, the more honesty will be appreciated and rewarded. Just as love begets love, honesty too begets honesty. But how long must the honest struggle in order to discharge their duties?

Yours etc.,  
Samares Bandyopadhyay,  
Advocate, Kolkata  
High Court

#### Of rail accidents

Editor,  
Are we supposed to

travel by train ignoring fractures in rail - tracks? A few days ago, at least 6 people died and 24 injured when nine coaches of Delhi - bound Seemanthal Express derailed in Bihar's Vaishali. Railways have said that a fracture in rail-tracks caused the derailment. On many occasions, track fractures are the cause of derailment massacres and old ICF coaches add insult to injury. The Kakodar Committee on Rail Safety as well as the Sam Pitroda Committee on Modernization of Indian Railways have recommended complete migration from ICF to LHB coaches as the latter can ensure enhanced passenger safety in case of derailment. Presently, LHB coaches are restricted only to Shatabdi, Rajdhani, Duronto premium trains. But it needs to be extended to all other trains immediately to ensure safety of the passengers.

The irony is that while the Ahmedabad - Mumbai, bullet train project will cost Rs. one lakh crore; financial constraints hinder track renewal, a total replacement of coaches from ICF to LHB, modernisation of signalling systems and building flyovers over all important railway crossings. Then, why on earth must we give

priority to bullet trains? Indian Railways cannot afford to undertake such a costly project while compromising on safety standards.

When we have a speedier alternative in air transport, there is no reason why Indian Railways must compete with airways. Railways cannot make their bullet ride a cheaper option than air travel. Bullet train is indeed a glaring example of misplaced priority. Without spending more money on it, the government needs to make existing train journeys more punctual and safe. Moreover, there is an urgent need to expand and modernise railways and also to fill the vacancies on war footing not only to give more jobs to Indian youths but also to improve the safety standards. It will be dangerous if train drivers are made to do double duty as a result of personnel shortage. It will be equally dangerous if there is a lack of man power in the field of track inspections and maintenance.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Viaemail

**Articles and papers appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of The Shillong Times**

*“It shouldn't take extreme courage and a willingness to go to prison for decades or even life to blow the whistle on bad government acts done in secret. But it does. And that is an immense problem for democracy, one that all journalists should be united in fighting.”*

--- Glenn Greenwald

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.181 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2019

### MP elections and a shaky coalition

THE Lok Sabha elections are slated for April this year. Before that come the elections to the three Autonomous District Councils this month. If the morning shows the day then the Council elections will give a pretty good idea as to which way the political wind is blowing. The National Peoples' Party (NPP) which leads the present coalition government comprising the UDP, PDF, HSPDP and BJP, had just announced that it would set up a candidate for the Shillong Parliamentary Constituency despite the fact that their coalition partner the UDP had announced their MP candidate months ahead. The BJP as a national party is unlikely to pass off the opportunity to contest the Shillong or Tura seat. Hence this coalition is purely a marriage of convenience with no common objectives to serve the state and its people. On the face of it, it appears to exist primarily for the sake of power. All the political parties that are part of the coalition nurture a selfish interest to prove their popularity in the Lok Sabha polls. For the voters this is a confusing scenario as they are made to believe that a coalition is built on the basic premise of give and take and a common minimum programme that is agreed to by all the parties. It is, in fact meant to be a shared agenda for bringing political stability since no single party is able to get a clear majority.

Every political party has its ideology and elections are fought and won on the basis of such ideology. The NPP is a regional party striving to become a national party. The BJP is a national party with a clear agenda of serving the interests of Hindutva; the state level parties such as the UDP, PDF, HSPDP etc., are overtly committed to promoting the interests of the ethnic minorities they represent, who while they may be a majority in their own state are minorities within the larger context of the country. Political parties with such disparate aims and objectives, converging as a post poll alliance merely for the sake of wielding power do great disservice to the voters. The larger interests of the state and people are sacrificed in order to serve the petty political interests of the coalition partners.

If the Congress Party decides to field Vincent Pala and Mukul Sangma for Shillong and Tura respectively while the other parties are fragmented, it is clear that Congress will walk away with the trophy, more so because of the Citizenship Amendment Bill which hangs like the Sword of Damocles above our heads.

# Laughing (and crying) with Meghalaya's best

By Avner Pariat

If you can look past the obvious tragedy, the antics of our beloved political leaders are actually quite hilarious. Take the example of the National People's Party for instance. Firstly, what separates this organisation from being just a Congress B team or BJP B team? If you look closely at their manifestos these guys seem to look suspiciously like the Congress and yet as we all know they depend on the BJP for support (financial and otherwise). Such is politics as we have come to know it today. It is tragic and yet comedic as I said in the start. However, have we ever asked ourselves why this is the case? Why do all these guys from across the political spectrum seem confused and befuddled about the way forward? Nothing they do seems to have a popular impact or to be of real long-lasting value. One of the major reasons as I see it has to do with the fact that these established political parties are obsessed with being "winners". By this I mean that all these groups are more interested in winning elections rather than actual politics. If it always seems that they have a bad case of myopia it is because they are not really interested in politics. Real politics is left to the executive i.e. the bureaucracy. Politicians are just "face showers" (nong(pyn)mihkhmat).

When all you care about is winning, you will do whatever it takes to win. You will not care about legacy or beliefs, you will only care about winning at any costs even if you manage to stay in power just for half a term. You will take money from dubious people, you will call anyone who can make you win (no matter how chequered their reputation might be) and when they are there, you will do whatever they want you to do. This is as true for the NPP, BJP, INC as it is for the local parties. But this is an empty politics. And is intensely selfish and deeply Machiavellian at its core. The politics of "winning" is also a politics that immediately favours the big over the small, the rich over the poor. After all, such a politics can only be fought and won when you have the richest, the loudest, the biggest as your champions. This is the politics that the BJP and INC have taught us and it is readily lapped up by different regional and sub-national organisations throughout the length and breadth of this country. If we were to categorise our politicians based on the key consideration of political

beliefs, I would have to say that we'd scarce have more than 4 or 5 professional politicians. The rest are either hell-raisers who must always be the centres of attention, sweet boys who spout beautiful words from their perfectly moisturised

looking at is politics and not a farce then there is nothing left to say. Vaudeville substitutes for debate, a circus has replaced the political arena. I call it a circus because the people therein act like clowns. But don't take my word for it:

*“However, have we ever asked ourselves why this is the case? Why do all these guys from across the political spectrum seem confused and befuddled about the way forward? Nothing they do seems to have a popular impact or to be of real long-lasting value.”*

lips or the low profile types whom you never hear about and who are more interested in accruing personal wealth through their office.

In an environment lacking any real politics, what can we say about our predicament today? Well it is (and will probably continue) to be dominated by people who excel at mak-

1. “What will you do about the problems faced by farmers?” <incoherent babble> Suddenly someone across the hall shouts “I have a PhD!”

2. “Alexander the Great came to Nongkhaw now take this ambulance.”

I am paraphrasing of course but these are events that actually took place and I must say that these are fine

*“By this I mean that all these groups are more interested in winning elections rather than actual politics. If it always seems that they have a bad case of myopia it is because they are not really interested in politics. Real politics is left to the executive i.e. the bureaucracy.”*

ing issues out of non-issues and who exist solely to rile people up. This is because they have no vision about the future and so react to what is happening now. This is hardly the goal for progressive politics which must be at once transformational and aspirational. A politician without a vision is like a fish without a tail: useless and doomed to drown. I know what you're thinking. How can I say this when most of the 'tailless' politicians are all thriving and continue to enjoy success? Well if we continue to believe that what we are

examples of Absurdist literature.

Another one says, “India will be celebrating 150 years of Independence.”

Now that is all fun and games but there are real problems too. As a policeman, if you penalise an MLA for wrongful parking you get beaten up. If you are a taxi driver and can't get out of the way of a politician's envoy, you get beaten up. These events also took place but no one was laughing. Abuse of power is so common these days that we have grown thick hides and shrugged it off as customary. But was this always the

case? Gone are the days when politicians brought people together and in doing so attained a certain immortality. Most of the leaders we have today, sad to say, are easily forgotten. That is why they rush to get their names on various marble plaques and foundation stones. Because secretly inside they know no one will remember them otherwise. Do we regard Gandhi as a great leader because his name was on a marble plaque then? How many foundation stones did Ambedkar have in his lifetime? Even our own JIM Nichols Roy didn't have his name next to every footpath or building. So why do we still remember such people after all these years? Simple. Because they changed people's lives. Sometimes directly through laws and their work but more importantly they made people re-imagine the world around them in a totally different way. They infused Hope into the people around them and together they changed their world.

How many of these current leaders do that? Does Sniawbhalang Dhar bring you hope? Does Metbah Lyngdoh? How about the CM, Conrad Sangma? I know you will say it is too early to judge this government but I am asking you about how you feel. Do you feel like these people (and those in Opposition) will bring light to dark times? May I remind you that our unemployment rate is terrifying, our economy is stagnant and our educational standards are failing. Mainstream politicians today are more interested in coming across as damage controllers rather than genuine change bringers. And there are many problems to this way of being. Foremost, the ship (Meghalaya) is sinking. It needs to be overhauled completely not held together by cello-tape and driven around. That means we need people who are brash enough to do the dirty work of overhauling.

This is why we need people like HS Shylla who are clamorous, but of course more introspective, reflective, insightful, thoughtful, calm, humble, peaceful, slightly self-deprecating (did I mention calm?). Anybody can be trained to go harangue a crowd and raise their spirits for a little while but Hope grows within and it doesn't need reminding all the time. Hope drives people ahead on their own accord and doesn't need a stick to shepherd them around.

him who will suffer the same fate in their turn!

Yours etc.,  
Jerome K. Diengdoh,  
Shillong-2

### Party hopping in full swing

Editor,  
The so-called regional parties like UDP, HSPDP, PDF, KHNAM etc., have never really been able to assert their popularity beyond a few constituencies. The report in your newspaper today captioned, “UDP suffers jolt as Umroi Circle dissolved” (ST Feb 11, 2019) is yet another blow to the UDP which is fielding an MP candidate for the Shillong Parliamentary constituency. From what one can gather the central leadership of the UDP is dictatorial and takes unilateral decisions which anger the grass-roots workers. Consultations with those at the primary unit level is important since they know the strength and weaknesses of the party. For several decades we have been waiting for a united front

among the regional parties so that they can effectively counter the national parties. Instead, more and more regional parties are created and unity seems like a distant dream. I wonder sometimes if the Khasi DNA is at fault because it is so difficult for politicians to come together on common issues that affect the public. The only time they come together is when they see an opportunity to win votes because of the forthcoming elections. The word 'public service' is alien to the vocabulary of politicians.

Politics, as your columnist, Toki Blah very presciently put it has become a 5-year business where money is invested and the amount recovered with interests at the end of that 5-year term. People like PN Syiem who rose to fame for standing up to Mukul Sangma, became a Khasi hero and was even compared by a section of the media to U Tirot Singh, the Syiem of Hima Nongkhaw. They spoke too soon. PN Syiem will soon become a non-entity if he fails to make it to the District Council this time.

Syiem has jumped parties and constituencies. Only the naive and uninformed voters would elect him to serve his own vested interests. But yes, Meghalaya is full of such ignorant voters who are lured to vote for money and other material goods. Where is, “ka tip brier tip Blei?” Where are all the Khasi values that we throw up like some old coin only at public rallies?

If this Jaitbynriew does not stop to think and continues to drift into an uncertain future, the state of Meghalaya is doomed. As for the regional parties, they have lost their credibility. No wonder people tend to gravitate towards the national parties which have some discipline and a recognisable leader.

Yours etc.,  
MK Syiem,  
Umsning

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.

## Severe unemployment Govt denial is of no help

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

Notwithstanding claims of the Modi government on having generated jobs given the 'vast development' that has taken place, a recent report reveals that unemployment rate is predicted at 6.1 per cent, possibly the highest in 45 years with urban unemployment peaking to 7.8 per cent. The report particularly has found that youth unemployment was at 'astronomically high' levels of 13 to 27 per cent.

And while the Government chooses to deny the figures and refuses to release the official data, most experts believe that there can be no denying that there is serious job drought in the country. The situation becomes further complex with two members of the National Statistical Commission (NSC) having resigned recently for not making the report public. The situation does warrant a serious introspection by the government.

Plus, though sources point out that the report has not been vetted by the Cabinet, Pronob Sen, former Chief Statistician and Ex-Chairman, NSC, stated that there is no system of getting government approval for such surveys and the government has never approved such reports. The question to be asked is then why undertake a study in the first place? Obviously, the Government is worried that putting its stamp on the report will expose its failure on the job-crunch front existing in the country.

While politicians talk about high GDP figures, is it not a problem if this does not match employment rates, so very essential in a country with rising educated youth population? One can easily state that job creation has not kept pace with the country's GDP growth over the decades. In fact, a recent report on the State of Working India 2018, a report by the Azim Premji University, comes as a damper on the euphoria generated by India's improved position in the World Bank's latest ease of doing business rankings. A section of economists admit that GDP growth has hardly any correlation with job creation and that, if anything, several periods witnessed an inverse relation between rates of GDP growth and employment growth.

The report pointed out: “It is also worth noting that a rise in the productivity of labour, or the amount of value generated per worker, implies a faster GDP growth than employment. Higher growth has raised aspirations but failed to generate the kind of jobs that will allow people to fulfil those aspirations.”

Most jobs, as is well known, are created in the micro, small and medium enterprises sector. This sector has not done quite well since demonetisation as also the imposition of the goods and services tax greatly affected the small traders.

In the early 1980s, a sum of Rs 1 crore of real fixed capital (in 2015 prices) supported around 50 jobs in the organised manufacturing sector. By 2010, this had fallen to 10 jobs, the report pointed out. Presently, estimates reveal that this may have further gone down to 8 jobs. Obviously this is due to the increase in the use of imported technology in production or service provision. Moreover, outsourcing and hiring of contract services may also be a factor.

Some misleading estimates by politicians, obviously belonging to the ruling party have tried to negate the well-known fact about job drought. A few months back, a Union minister of state had argued in

an article in a national daily the jobs are becoming highly knowledge intensive and this has been impacting employment patterns in the country. Moreover, quoting Nasscom, he showed creation of jobs in four core areas -- automotive, IT-BPM, retail and textiles between 2014 and 2017 of around 1.4 crore new jobs. One cannot deny that there has been some employment in sectors such as IT, tourism, construction etc. but this is far below earlier achievements and also does not match current demands.

In such a scenario, the all-round job drought that is manifest is undoubtedly a disturbing trend. Moreover, the salary for those entering the private sector has not kept pace with costs of living and inflationary trends in most sectors. While white collar jobs are very few with low salaries, even qualified engineers have to start at a relatively low remuneration.

According to reliable sources, an internal document titled 'Jobful Growth - How to Achieve It in 2019-2024', prepared by the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Contemporary Studies, charts a road map for creating 70 million jobs in the next five years and this has reportedly been submitted to the Congress president. This represents a compounded annual growth rate of 3.2 per cent per annum for employment as against an estimated 0.8 to 1.2 per cent in the past eight years. As per the document, there are 29.4 million people looking for jobs at present and that another 40.7 million people will enter the job market between 2019 and 2024. One cannot deny the fact that the paper has obviously been drafted by experts after much deliberation and should go a long way in tackling job drought.

However, this would require not just political will but massive resources mainly geared towards the rural and semi-urban sectors, where infrastructure development could lead to employment generation. Moreover, thrust on labour-intensive industries, especially in the micro and medium sectors, as also entrepreneurship could achieve a part of the desired goal.

The situation has reached alarming proportions and urgent action is called for. It has been pointed out repeatedly that the thrust of planning should not be towards high GDP growth but towards inclusive development that caters to the maximum number of people. Obviously, the decentralised approach, as enunciated long back by Mahatma Gandhi, has to be followed to ensure that development takes place at the grass-root level with participation of the common people.

The thrust has to be on the rural sector where infrastructure development, both physical and social, would generate jobs and rejuvenate the ailing village economy. The right utilisation and allocation of resources is the need of the hour and cannot be wasted on in fructuous work like building statues, bullet trains, building attractive airports as per international standards etc. It has to be understood that if Rs 20 is spent for the affluent, at least Rs 50 has to be spent on the poor and the impoverished and also the economically weaker sections, which constitute at least 65 per cent of the population. Regrettably this has not been done over decades.

At this juncture, there has to be concerted action to tackle the problem through specific programmes. ---INFA

#### TO THE EDITOR

### Victims of departmental botch up.

Editor,

For the past few decades it has been a prevalent practice in some state Offices where the Head of the Department (HOD) has been, at his/her individual capacity, appointing applicants into Grade-IV posts. As HOD, one has every right to exercise such discretion as stipulated under the extant Government Memorandum; however, this prerogative must be exercised with the overall mutual endorsement of a constituted DSC (Departmental Selection Committee) consisting of HOD and other nominated departmental officers of the Office concerned and the decision thereof ought to be conveyed to the respective administrative branches for further vetting. But more often than not, the said DSC is not convened and the HOD takes unilateral decisions in such appointments. In course of time these Grade-IV appointees attain seniority position and the educationally qualified amongst them can

be promoted to the post of Superintendent, Registrar etc at the Head Offices. But at the critical juncture of being on the verge of promotion to such posts, some discerning officers are authorized to cross-check the eligibility criteria for promotion of departmental staff and, in the process, find that some of the latter have been initially appointed at the entry level without the recommendations of the DSC and thereby those defaulters are out-rightly denied promotion and their case is set aside even as they are superseded by their junior colleagues.

Recently I have come to know that one such state Government employee who has served in a particular department for more than thirty three years and has a few years to his credit preceding superannuation was denied promotion to the post of Superintendent on the reason stated above and he is reportedly placed under ad-hoc category. My apprehension is that when he will retire whether the office of Accountant General, pension cell, ever deem him fit for pensionary ben-

efits? And it goes without saying that the aggrieved staff must be in inexorable depression and his passion for office-works adversely compromised. Most likely when he was first appointed as Grade-IV staff, he was blissfully unaware of the binding formality of having to come through the endorsement of the DSC. Further, as his letter of appointment was signed by the ex-Director with copy to the office of AG, the appointee concerned accepted it as Gospel truth and on the premise of this contention the latter cannot arguably be held to be at fault.

Hence, in the ultimate analysis, the losers are the concerned department/s and the deprived victim. I would have thought that such a departmental blunder could have been nipped in the bud had the said department in co-ordination with its administrative office adopted a pre-emptive and discreet mechanism in this context before things take a turn for the worse and matters come to this pass. I can only conclude with a fair measure of certitude that there are appointees like

"A primary function of art and thought is to liberate the individual from the tyranny of his culture in the environmental sense and to permit him to stand beyond it in an autonomy of perception and judgment."

--- Josh Billings

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.182 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

### Tit for tat politics

SAMAJWADI Party leader, Akhilesh Yadav was detained at Lucknow airport after he was stopped by the police from boarding a special flight to Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad). The former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh was scheduled to attend an oath taking function of the Allahabad University Students' Union on Tuesday afternoon. This issue created a ruckus in the Rajya Sabha which was adjourned for the day. How the state police of Uttar Pradesh was used to prevent Akhilesh from boarding the aircraft is another violation of airport regulations since all airports are manned by Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). UP Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath who is known for his vengeful politics is getting back at Akhilesh Yadav. The latter had prevented him from entering the same University in 2015 when he was the UP CM and Adityanath the BJP MP from Gorakhpur. Adityanath stopped in his tracks by the Samajwadi Party's youth wing. This time around it is the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) the students' wing of the BJP which is preventing Akhilesh from entering the University. That such ugly politics has gripped an educational institution can only mean that it is being run according to the whims of the ruling party and is not independent academia.

In the world of twitter this news did not take long to reach all corners of the country even as Akhilesh Yadav posted pictures of the incident at Lucknow airport. The Samajwadi Party leader's media team went on overdrive to show a policeman in plain-clothes stopping Akhilesh from entering the airport. Later Yogi Adityanath while speaking to the media said that the administration feared that the Samajwadi Party's youth wing would create a law and order situation within the campus if Akhilesh attended the function. BSP leader and former Chief Minister of UP, Mayawati and Trinamool leader Mamata Banerjee who are part of the new Opposition Alliance also joined issues and accused the BJP of throttling democracy. Mamata who is still smarting from the recent high-handed handling of the CBI in her territory against her top cop, Rajeev Kumar spares no occasion to hit back at Prime Minister Modi and the BJP. This incident in UP today has only given the anti-BJP forces a handle to mount further attack on the Modi Government. It is expected that all the other anti-BJP forces will now throw their weight behind Akhilesh Yadav.

# Tale of Two Sons In-Law Vadra: Breaking Omerta Code

By Poonam I Kaushik

This is the tale of two sons in law, Feroze Gandhi and Robert Vadra. The first, a *bête noir* of his father-in-law, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The latter, has become the *Achilles Heel* of his brother-in-law and wife, Nehru's great grandson and great granddaughter and Feroz's grandson and granddaughter, Congress President Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Vadra. While Gandhi exposed corruption in independent India's first Congress Government, Vadra has become the focus of alleged sleazy tales.

Recall, Feroze who married Nehru's daughter and ex-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1942 is best remembered for spotlighting dishonesty in his father-in-law's Government. Elected to Parliament in 1952, his exposure of the *affaire* Mundhra in 1957 wherein the LIC invested Rs. 1.24 crores in fraudulent shares of the industrialist company led to the resignation of then Finance Minister T.T. Krishnamachari, causing Nehru major embarrassment. The Justice MC Chagla Commission later sentenced Mundhra to 22 years in prison. Feroze also was the primary force behind industrialist Ram Kishan Dalmia's imprisonment for defrauding his life insurance company in 1956.

Unlike Feroze, Robert Vadra, an ordinary boy from Moradabad was a small-time costume jewellery exporter till he hit headlines by marrying former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia's daughter and Rahul's sister Priyanka in 1997. But controversy began to follow him for all the wrong reasons when India Against Corruption (IAC) founder Arvind Kejriwal exposed his alleged "dirty linen" in 2012. It accused the country's and Congress first 'jawaiiraja' of receiving undue favours and wealth from India's biggest realty firm Delhi-based DLF. And asked Vadra to clarify how his wealth jumped from Rs 50 lakh in 2007 to Rs 300 crore in 2012?

Again Vadra along with ex-Haryana Chief Minister

Hooda was accused in a land deal involving DLF in Gurgaon. An FIR filed against them claims his Sky Light Hospitality purchased 3.5 acres of land in Sector 83 and sold it at a huge profit after obtaining a licence with Hooda's help to develop it commercially. In return for helping Vadra, Hooda is accused of allotting 350 acres to DLF in violation of the law.

Complicating matters, the Enforcement Directorate accused Vadra of money laundering regarding possession of illegal foreign assets including two high-end properties and six flats in London worth 12 million pounds bought between 2005-10 from kickbacks in defence and petroleum deals during UPA1 Government. The BJP has joined the encore and is leaving no stone unturned to paint the 'Congress jawairaja' corrupt.

Vadra is also being investigated for acquiring 275 *bigha* land in Rajasthan's Bikaner through his company, Sky Light Hospitality, allegedly in violation of rules. The Enforcement Directorate registered a case in 2015 after the Rajasthan police filed a charge-sheet alleging forgery in the land allotment.

Now, with Priyanka entering the political arena as Congress General Secretary, Vadra's dubious deals seem to have gathered steam despite him being under investigation for some years post the Dhingra committee report on his links with the DLF. Undeniably, he is the Damocles' sword over her head.

Predictably, Priyanka, like a *pati-vratha* wife underscored, "I stand by my family", as the Enforcement Directorate subjected Vadra to over 15 hours of questioning over two days last week on his links with an arms dealer and money laundering.

Besides, if she and the Congress hoped to milk this politically, it fell flat as Vadra's visit to the Enforcement Directorate

has not stirred a leaf despite the Congress and Priyanka no longer playing defensive, instead they are accusing the BJP of "witch hunt and political vendetta." It's another matter that the Party has changed its earlier stance of "Vadra is a private citizen."

Undoubtedly, the Congress is caught between a rock and hard place. If it tries to portray Vadra as BJP's political revenge it could fall flat as he *per se* does not strike a chord, primarily, as in public perception, he does not belong to the "Gandhi-Congress *parivar*." Unlike Feroze his surname is different.

Alongside, if the BJP succeeds in tom-tomming him as yet another flunkey of Congress corruption it could damage the already slim chances the Party has in UP which accounts for 80 Lok Sabha seats. At such a critical time, the baggage of Vadra can sink the Congress.

Presently, both BJP and Congress are weighing their options. While BJP feels Priyanka's appointment has brought the Vadra corruption scandals onto the "centre-stage", which could benefit the Party. Others, however, state it could backfire if not handled sagaciously. Some aver the Party should observe the code of Omerta and let the law enforcement agencies take action. Not a few are puzzled why the Modi Government failed to act against Vadra earlier.

The Congress is waiting to see how this plays out. Senior Congress leaders worry whether flamboyant Vadra would remain in the background or start making public statements. Given that times out of number in the past he has made plain his political ambitions of fighting elections, it is a matter of time that India's most controversial realtor with a questionable reputation makes his debut. However in the high-stakes power game he will face intense heat.

Consequently, with battle lines drawn in the forthcoming polls it remains

to be seen how the Vadra scandal affects the Congress and Priyanka's electoral chances in the event she decides to contest from family borough Rae Bareilly or against NaMo. Either which way, both will have to deftly deal with their acidic baiters as there is no turning back.

True, the cynics shrug off the hue and cry over Vadra. "It will die down in a few days once a new scandal erupts, remember public memory is short," said a seasoned leader. Some feel the Congress has shot itself in the foot. Instead of leaders competing with each other to defend him, Vadra should have been left to defend his case. That way, whatever the outcome, the Party would have kept itself out of any embarrassment.

The moot point is not only whether Vadra has done any wrong but it has brought three important issues to the fore. One, if Vadra is a "private citizen" why is the Congress defending him? And so clumsily? Two, is it because he could open the Pandora's Box of Gandhi family secrets? Three, it exposes the hypocrisy of "political *maryada*", the unwritten code of honour among our *netagan* not to rake up crimes of omission and commission of their rivals' families.

Mum is the word from the BJP when it comes to corrupt acts of its Partymen and foes-turned-friends. Example, West Bengal's Saradha scam accused who have recently joined the Sangh have been given a clean chit. All adhering to a "live-and-let-live" policy for fear of mutual destruction. Sic.

What next? Will the Vadra case be a political game changer for the Congress? Is it a gamble BJP will regret? Many are confident that the case once again highlights corruption in high place wherein the *aam aadmi* realizes that *ghooskhori* has metamorphosed from behind closed doors to open loot. One hopes Probity does not become the oxymoron for Indian Politicians. --- INFA

## Illicit Deposit Schemes New law to check rot

By Moin Qazi

The Union Cabinet has approved the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018 with the objective of effectively tackling the menace of illicit deposit-taking activities and prevent such schemes from duping poor and gullible people of their hard-earned savings.

Among the provisions is a ban on deposit takers from promoting, operating, issuing advertisements or accepting deposits in any unregulated scheme. Deposit Takers' include all possible entities (including individuals) receiving or soliciting deposits, except specific entities such as those incorporated by legislation. The Bill bans unregulated deposit taking activities altogether, by making them an offence *ex-ante* rather than the existing legislative-cum-regulatory framework which only comes into effect *ex-post* with considerable time lags. It provides for "severe punishment and heavy pecuniary fines" to act as a deterrent. Penalties could involve jail term as well as the sale of the offenders' assets to pay back the defrauded party within set timelines.

The principle is that the Bill would ban unregulated deposit taking activities altogether, by making them an offence *ex-ante* rather than the existing legislative-cum-regulatory framework that only comes into effect *ex-post* with considerable time lags. The Bill creates three different types of offences: (i) running of unregulated deposit schemes, (ii) fraudulent default in regulated deposit schemes, and (iii) wrongful inducement in relation to unregulated deposit schemes.

India has always been a fertile ground for swindles that have milked mostly low-income households of millions of rupees. The financially illiterate are usually easy pickings. The investors have been periodically gulled by nefarious characters into dubious schemes. The poor have now become wary of investing money even in credible organizations. These mercenary agents use enticing traps to net gullible investors like sharks preying on small gold fishes in the big bad financial ocean.

According to a global survey by Standard & Poor's, less than 25 per cent of adults are financially literate in South Asian countries. For an average Indian, financial literacy is yet to become a priority. India is home to 17.5 per cent of the world's population but nearly 76 per cent of its adult population does not understand basic financial concepts.

People with robust financial skills and strong grasp of financial principles are able to better understand and negotiate the financial landscape and avoid financial pitfalls. Conversely, those with a lower degree of financial literacy struggle to understand money matters and the potential impact on their financial well-being. Financial ignorance carries significant costs and results in people spending more on transaction fees, getting over-extended with debts on account of them being ripe prospects for predatory practices.

On account of lack of proper awareness and failure of institutions to properly guide them, people buy insurance policies without planning and give up midway because they do not have money to pay the premium. Aggressive selling prevents the agents from properly assessing the consistency in income streams of the buyers for servicing their policies. The customers end up losing heavily due to harsh penalties. There's a popular term to describe this, called *mis-selling*.

To blunt the potential for risk, it is more important than ever to arm customers,

especially the newly-banked, with skills they need to borrow, save and move money prudently and to keep distance from unscrupulous and dubious investment schemes that are likely to get them into serious trouble.

Whilst financial products can be hard to understand for even highly literate consumers, the lack of this basic understanding leads to extended levels of debt for the illiterate, vulnerable customers, pushing them deeper into indebtedness and poverty.

Financial ignorance carries significant costs and results in people spending more on transaction fees, getting overextended with debts on account of them being ripe prospects for predatory practices. They usually fall prey to aggressive marketing and end up with troublesome financial products. As per RBI data, during July, 2014 to May, 2018, 978 cases of unauthorised schemes were discussed in State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC) meetings in various States and were given to the respective law enforcement agencies in these States.

One area where India needs strong consumer protection measure is insurance services. On account of lack of proper awareness and failure of institutions to properly guide them, people buy insurance policies without planning and give up midway because they don't have money to pay the premium. Aggressive selling prevents the agents from properly assessing the consistency in income streams of the buyers for servicing their policies. The customers end up losing heavily due to harsh penalties.

Persistency measures how long customers persist with their policies. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), in its Handbook on Indian Insurance Statistics 2015-16, has provided persistency figures of the life insurance industry and the numbers are abysmal. For FY2016, the life insurance industry, on an average, had a persistency rate of 61% in the 13th month, which means: 1 year after the sale, only 61 out of every 100 policies were renewed. It shows the huge money customers are losing on account of bad financial planning and the mis-selling practices prevalent in the insurance industry.

The good news is that there are now several channels of information and resources to help the public build their financial stability. To safeguard the hard-earned money of investors and curb the pervasive menace of illegal money pooling by companies, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up a portal -- [sachet.rbi.org.in](http://sachet.rbi.org.in) -- to enable the public to obtain information about registered entities who accept deposits, get information regarding illegal acceptance of deposits, and lodge complaints. The portal also facilitates filing and tracking of complaints.

While we should continue to make a case for strong regulations to protect consumers against unscrupulous firms, we must remember that good financial literacy among citizens is the most effective antidote against these moral abuses. To blunt the potential for risk, it's more important than ever to arm customers with skills they need to responsibly borrow to get a business idea off the ground or to acquire an asset like a house, save to build their assets, insure to stay resilient through life's worst moments without being pushed deeper into debt and to keep distance from unscrupulous and dubious investment schemes that have lacerated the financial lives of multitudes after they got into serious mess with these.---INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

## National Games 2022

Editor,

With reference to the article published earlier by your paper and also apropos to the news report carried today on the National Games - 2022 proposed to be held in Meghalaya (ST Feb 12, 2019), I wish to point out that Meghalaya is ill prepared and far behind schedule in the preparations for the mega sporting event. Until yesterday, nothing much was known about the preparations for the event in the media by the public of Meghalaya. We do not know who will take the full responsibility of organising this sports extravaganza. There is no publicity whatsoever as to the preparations being made and by whom. Yes, people of Meghalaya are kept in the dark about this. Only today some information has filtered down to the media about a meeting held to discuss on how to start doing something for the preparations. This is too little, too late knowing that we are already in mid February, 2019 with hardly three years left. Till today nobody knows, not even

those in the Sports Department know who is really in charge of creating the different infrastructure, because, without them where will the games be held. We also do not know till date who is the over-all in-charge of organising the games. Will it be the Meghalaya State Olympic Association, Central Organising Committee (MSOAO) or some other agency? Is Meghalaya competing in the games and in which disciplines? Have athletes been selected and trained to compete in the different events or not? If not why not and when will the selection begin? If yes, then where are they being coached. This sporting event is brought here for our youth. It will be very shameful if Meghalaya takes part only in few events and bags no medals at all.

Preparation for the athletes taking part in the games is of vital importance; as important as getting the infrastructure in place. Where will the athletes practise when there is no infrastructure/facilities? These are yet to be created. Anyway we

only hope and pray that Meghalaya athletes will bring us laurels despite some crude facilities that we have and I hope that the coaches and the athletes are already preparing for this great event.

Now coming to the infrastructure for the event it is heartening that till date no land is made available for construction of the games village and for construction of other games' infrastructures except for construction of the main stadium for the purpose. A number of infrastructures will be required to hold the different games. So where and when these will be ready? These are billion dollar questions. However, let us hope that with the appointment of Mr PS Dkhar as the CEO of the Traffic Games and working in tandem with the Sports Department and the Meghalaya State Olympic Association the best results will come out with the cooperation of all concerned including the people of Meghalaya. This will be the pride of Meghalaya if organised well. But let us also be

prepared for the worst.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Via email

## Who will manage our traffic?

Editor,

I am sure many will agree that whichever party forms the government in our state, their commitment to solve traffic problem is mere lip service. The main reason that the state government cannot expand the roads inside the city is because of the land-holding system and possibly the huge demand for compensation which will not be viable for any government. Secondly, the primary task of the Traffic Department is to ensure smooth flow of traffic and to regulate that flow but again the shortage of manpower exists because none of those in the State Home Department are ready to provide the funds to create posts that can also give employment to many youths and train them as professional traffic

marshals. I have come to know from confidential sources that there is an annual allocation from the Centre on urban traffic management which also includes creation or filling up of posts. The public have not asked pertinent questions on this issue. Those in authority act like a bunch of hypocrites towards the traffic problem. The public has to tackle this problem head-on for its affects us ordinary citizens who cannot move around with sirens blaring but have to drive at snail's pace.

Yours etc...  
Dominic S. Wankhar,  
Via email

## Whither Swachh Bharat?

Editor,

It is impossible to force people who don't have the sense of cleanliness to follow rules. Nearly all localities today have garbage collection arrangements but if anyone passes through Umpling-Itshyryat to NEIGRIHMS road one will see piles of

garbage thrown on both sides of the road. I once saw people driving slowly and throwing their garbage there. Obviously they are not from the nearby localities. I could not stop because I driving on a slope and was in a hurry to reach NEIGRIHMS. But I thought to myself that we in Meghalaya and Shillong in particular still have a long way to go to understand the meaning of cleanliness. Most of us don't care about this city. We live like temporary dwellers and don't even keep the space outside our compounds clean. In the evenings Police Bazar looks like a community garbage bin. The hawkers who litter don't care to clean up their mess. What are the supervising staff of the Shillong Municipal Board doing? Can we citizens get together and tell these hawkers selling food stuff to not leave behind any food or other leftovers for others to clean? Let's do it. Enough is enough!

Deishisha Nongkhlaw,  
Via email

Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of *The Shillong Times*

“ A Bill of Rights is what the people are entitled to against every government, and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inference. ”

--- Thomas Jefferson

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.183 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2019

### CAG take on Rafale

AT the doorsteps of the Lok Sabha polls, the Congress might as well have egg on its face. Its strategy for the elections was to zero in on the Modi government's Rafale deal with a French aviation firm, in which the grand old party projected a huge scam. Notably, the CAG report on the Rafale deal being tabled in Parliament Wednesday after intense scrutiny has given its stamp of approval for the deal. It has concluded that the deal fixed by the Modi government was about three per cent cheaper than the deal mooted by the previous UPA II government.

In recent times Congress president Rahul Gandhi had been trumping up the Rafale charges, and calling Prime Minister Modi a "chor." He kept shouting "Chowkidar Chor Hai," the allusion being to the PM's claim to being the "chowkidar" of national interests. The Congress and its chief kept arguing that the NDA government's price fixation for the deal was much higher than that of the UPA offer for the fighter jets deal, but that the whole deal smacked of favouritism to industrialist Anil Ambani by officially making his firm the intermediary for the deal. It also alleged that this involved a loss of as high as Rs 3,000 crore to the Indian Air Force, which was meant to go into Anil Ambani's kitty - and by extension, a part thereof to the BJP or those at the helm of government.

The Rafale deal, it was already clear, was an improvement on the previous defence deals in which the main commission agents were foreigners, or more specifically Italians in some cases like Bofors. A special provision this time meant, instead, that one or other Indian agency would be involved. It turned out to be Anil Ambani. Commissions are integral to all defence deals.

Rahul Gandhi kept hurling unparliamentary, objectionable and shameful terms like "chor" on the Prime Minister. Decency and dignity demanded that the Congress leader avoided stooping to such a low level. Sonia Gandhi, despite her limitations as a politician, maintained high dignity in her public speeches. Her undoing, though, was the UPA II scams. Now Rahul Gandhi makes bold to call the CAG the "Chowkidar Accountant General." Till two days ago, the Congress party was pushing for tabling of the CAG report in Parliament!

Be that as it may, Rafale will be the Congress's raison d'être for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

## SC should go for a De Novo hearing on Rafale

# Judgment was based on half-truths presented by Govt

By Indira Jaising

From the eye-popping report published in The Hindu, it is now clear that the PMO was, in fact, in "parallel negotiations" with the French government over the Rafale deal, and that Defence Ministry officials had raised strong objections to this, saying that it had "weakened the position of the MoD and the Indian Negotiating Team seriously". This note from the defence secretary was dated November 24, 2015.

Subsequently, the Government, via a news agency, has put out the fuller version of the note which indicates that the then Defence Minister, Manohar Parrikar, said this was an "overreaction" by MoD, and "it appears that PMO and French president's office are monitoring the progress of the issues, which was an outcome of the summit meeting..." This reaction of the Defence Minister came after more than a month of the November 24, 2015 note, and was written on January 11, 2016, after 43 days. It is pertinent to observe here that the then Defence Minister Parrikar had neither falsified, nor contested the content of the defence ministry official's note, but instead had suggested that the matter should be resolved "in consultation with the Pr Sec to P.M." [sic]

However, the words of the defence ministry officials now seem prophetic in hindsight and perhaps explain why the deal, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself in France on April 10, 2015, was eventually struck at the escalated price of 7.87 billion euro for 36 Rafale jets and that too without a sovereign guarantee, which was being insisted upon by the defence ministry officials as well as the Indian Negotiating Team.

But apart from the obvious implications of off-the-record "parallel negotiations" by the PMO, what does this mean for the Supreme Court judgment delivered on December 14, 2018, rejecting several petitions filed for a mandamus directing the CBI to lodge an FIR in relation to the deal?

We already have an appeal by the Government of India, by the mysterious A K Sharma alone (there is no affidavit by the person who created the note in sealed cover, which the Court is stated to have "mis-

understood") calling for a "correction" of the Supreme Court judgment on the ground that there was no then existing report of the CAG on the Rafale deal and that the report will be sent to the CAG in future. This by itself would vitiate the judgment and render it liable to be set aside.

For reasons unknown, the application is not being taken up for hearing.

ferent bench. The remedy is not a review of the judgment, much less an application for "correction" of the judgment, as is sought to be done by the Union Government.

This is perhaps the first time in Indian legal history that the Government has told the Court how to rewrite its own judgment, and which para to substitute for which one. Now comes the

ing a detailed scrutiny by the Court. We have been informed that joint exercises have taken place, and that there is a financial advantage to our nation. It cannot be lost sight of, that these are contracts of defence procurement which should be subject to a different degree and depth of judicial review. Broadly, the processes have been followed. The need for the aircrafts is not in doubt. The quality of the aircraft is not in question....."

This clearly indicates that if procedures were followed, there would be no case for entertaining the petition any further. The converse is equally true - that if procedures were not followed, the court would entertain the petition and consider directing the CBI to register an FIR. Failure to follow procedure leads to a presumption that the decision-making process was vitiated by extraneous considerations.

Now we have evidence that the procedure was not followed. This information was withheld from the Court. This could only have been a conscious decision, by the authors of the sealed cover, to conceal from the court the fact that the MoD had on record protested about "parallel negotiations" by the PMO.

There is now no doubt that this is a case for recall of the judgment and go for a de novo hearing. While the Supreme Court has issued notice for contempt to advocate Prashant Bhushan for commenting on pending court proceedings in a tweet, today we are all pointing out that the Government concealed facts from the Court in the Rafale case, and that too in pending proceedings. This time, it is the Indian National Congress president Rahul Gandhi who is openly saying that it is the Union Government that lied to the court.

So, are we all guilty of contempt, or is there a public interest in freedom of speech in matters of national importance? We have a right to insist that court proceedings are not manipulated by the Government by presenting half-truths in sealed cover to the court. (IPA Service)

The writer is a Senior Advocate, Supreme Court  
Courtesy: The Leaflet

*It is pertinent to observe here that the then Defence Minister Parrikar had neither falsified, nor contested the content of the defence ministry official's note, but instead had suggested that the matter should be resolved "in consultation with the Pr Sec to P.M."*

We, therefore, do not know whether it was the Union Government that "misled" the Court, or whether the Court "misunderstood" the contents of the sealed cover.

Either way, considering that the judgment is based on a mistake of fact of a gross nature, on the question whether the Court ought to look into the pricing, the judgment is no judgment in the eye of law.

While the Court is enti-

news, with clear evidence in the form of the defence ministry note, that the procedure for negotiating the deal was not followed.

One of the first issues framed by the Court was the question whether procedures prescribed for negotiating the deal were followed. With regard to this, the Supreme Court in its December 14, 2018 order said:

"We have studied the material carefully. We have

*But apart from the obvious implications of off-the-record "parallel negotiations" by the PMO, what does this mean for the Supreme Court judgment delivered on December 14, 2018, rejecting several petitions filed for a mandamus directing the CBI to lodge an FIR in relation to the deal?*

led take a point of view on law which may be debatable, it is not at liberty to play fast and loose with the facts. For a Court of law, facts are sacred and not negotiable.

I have said elsewhere that a judgment based on facts which are false, is no judgment in the eye of law. The remedy is to recall the judgment and go for a fresh hearing, possibly by a dif-

also had the benefit of interacting with senior Air Force Officers who answered Court queries in respect of different aspects, including that of the acquisition process and pricing. We are satisfied that there is no occasion to really doubt the process, and even if minor deviations have occurred, that would not result in either setting aside the contract or requir-

## Kamal Nath favouring soft Hindutva as CM

# Congress high command seems to agree

By Amulya Ganguli

Once an acolyte of the Congress party's enfant terrible, Sanjay Gandhi, the new Madhya Pradesh chief minister, Kamal Nath, has had a chequered, if fairly successful, career.

His latest achievement has been to deftly traverse the minefield of his party's internal feuds in the state to emerge on top as head of the government. In the process, he sidelined a former chief minister and a redoubtable "loose cannon" Digvijay Singh (in his own words) and bundled off a chief ministerial aspirant, Jyotiraditya Scindia, to U.P. where he may well be eclipsed by the rising star of Congress politics, Priyanka Gandhi.

For the moment, therefore, Kamal Nath can breathe easy and regard

How far the Kamal Nath government will go down the Hindutva path is not known, but it appears that the Congress as a party is trying to atone for Rajiv Gandhi's error of judgment as prime minister when he, apparently at the behest of Muslim fundamentalists, negated the Supreme Court's Shah Bano judgment on alimony for Muslim women.

After years of having been seen as being more sensitive to minority sentiments than to the majority ones, the faux pas on Shah Bano was the culmination of the Congress's acquisition of a "Muslim party" image, which was identified by veteran leader A.K. Antony as one of the reasons for the party's electoral setbacks. Since then, the Congress

*"Now, this path is expected to be both a tourist attraction and a sign of the Congress's transformation from a follower of "hard" secularism (which made it look like a Muslim party, as Sonia Gandhi once said) to "soft" Hindutva which is expected to reassure the majority community that the BJP is not their only well-wisher and protector."*

Madhya Pradesh as virtually his exclusive fiefdom. It is probably this perception of being the master of all he surveys which made him decide to emulate his U.P. counterpart, Yogi Adityanath, in embracing the Hindutva weltanschauung.

Kamal Nath (and Scindia) had already decided to pursue their own version of Hindutva when they decided on projecting the construction of a Ram gaman path as a mark of veneration for the route which the Hindu god took during his exile in the region.

Now, this path is expected to be both a tourist attraction and a sign of the Congress's transformation from a follower of "hard" secularism (which made it look like a Muslim party, as Sonia Gandhi once said) to "soft" Hindutva which is expected to reassure the majority community that the BJP is not their only well-wisher and protector.

Towards this end, the Congress manifesto for the state promised a gaushala (shelter for cows) in every village and the commercial sale of gau mutra (cow's urine), the saffron brotherhood's cherished beverage. It is not known if these promises would have outraged Jawaharlal Nehru, but it is obvious that the Congress has come a long way in his great grandson's time, at least in Madhya Pradesh.

Now, the state government has given another indication of its ideological slant by using the National Security Act (NSA) against three people for cow slaughter. Although the decision to use the draconian law has been condemned by senior Congress leader, P. Chidambaram, and Digvijay Singh, the state government has taken only a mild corrective measure by announcing that the home department will monitor the use of the NSA.

The party's central leadership, however, has decided to stand by the chief minister because they believe that he is "competent enough" to know which law to use against which offence.

has been trying to retrace its steps as could be seen from Rahul Gandhi's temple visits. But it is a giant leap backwards from revering the country's Hindu heritage to accepting its antediluvian trends as the Madhya Pradesh Congress is doing. Such revivalism is but one step away from starting to sing the praises of gau mutra and to claiming, as the BJP leaders do, that Hindu India had everything in the ancient times from aeroplanes to plastic surgery to internet.

If Kamal Nath and Co wanted to glorify Hinduism, the emphasis should have been on the really memorable achievements of Aryabhata, the mathematician and astronomer, Baudhayana, who first calculated the value of "pi", Charak, whose book on medicine describes various diseases and the methods of identifying and treating them, Susruta, a pioneer in the field of surgery, Varahamihira, who said that the moon and the planets were not shining because of their own light but by reflecting sunlight, and many other sagas. It is worth noting that the BJP leaders do not mention any of them, but indulge in fantasy which makes India a laughing stock in the world.

In the years before Independence and for a decade or so afterwards, the Congress was seen as the natural party of governance not only because it represented the multicultural idea of India, but also because it stood for a modern, liberal, forward-looking society which had nothing to do with irrational, obscurantist beliefs. Where some of the other parties are obsessed with religious sectarianism or a caste-based polity where patriarchal elders rooted in orthodox rule the roost, the Congress is expected to foster conditions for the present times where robots serve guests at restaurants and Artificial Intelligence opens vistas for a world resembling science fiction. Gau mutra cannot be a part of such a scene. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

## Triple Talaq hurts society

Editor,

Election season in India is like a festival. For political party workers it's an occasion for merry-making. This is also the time when leaders respond to your phone calls! They hardly miss to send you birthday wishes, thanks to automated reminders that help even unkind leaders stage kindness and generosity. Now a flurry of promises are being made. Some are logical, others illogical and outrageous. Some are even unconstitutional. All this goes to show that certain political leaders can go to any extent for votes. Their aspirational leaders speak without thinking, their prime objective being to please the voters. Moreover, making promises does not cost anything.

In the process of pleasing voters, certain leaders have grievously hurt many others. They are also now unashamedly using even the Triple Talaq Act. They are bargaining with certain voters over this as a saleable commodity. Is it not a sore point with Muslim women? Just imagine how hurt the fathers of millions of daughters in this country must be. Again, a sane person would agree that Triple Talaq has been heav-

ily misinterpreted and thus abused for centuries, as all the laid down conditions are ignored and moral values overlooked. Even our immediate neighbour Pakistan, an Islamic country has long abandoned it because of the increasing misuse of this Islamic law.

The present government had fought hard and long with the adversaries of the Bill banning Triple Talaq. The Modi government certainly deserves praise for this bold step. The Bill will save both men and women in many aspects - women from atrocities from their husbands and men from committing sin! But now, with the Lok Sabha elections round the corner, certain parties are stooping so low as to take advantage of this much-abused practice. In the course of their campaign, the leaders are claiming to revoke the Bill if voted to power. What is most disgusting is that even women leaders, without a sense of guilt, are boasting that their party will instantly restore the Triple Talaq. Is this not a dangerous development? When people lust after votes they forget that they are treading on the path of vice! Where are the conscious intellectuals of the country now? Where are those award-wapsi groups and

why is the media holding back from denouncing the perpetuation of this baneful practice? This is indeed a real tragedy! Do we want the cutting edge of modern technology to be used to break off a marriage? A scholarly mother of three daughters says -- "his retrograde practice has literally reduced millions of talented women to living corpses!"

If election and democracy are taking society to an unconscionable point then we are definitely heading towards anarchy. Hence damning, the leaders who commit themselves to ensuring a bright future for the society and for better governance, can result in reducing society to a whirlpool of oppression, repression, and frustration. How on earth can we trust such leaders and bet on their integrity? Have they not brought a bad name to other leaders of integrity? Come on, let's wake up and support principled leader with moral integrity who promise to deal with entrenched societal malpractices. If we don't do so now then Triple Talaq, and such other vices, might burn digital very soon and burn millions of households.

Yours etc.,  
SalilGewali,  
Shillong

## Welcome order from SC

Editor,

The Supreme Court has passed an interim order directing BSP supremo Mayawati to deposit with the UP government huge costs incurred from the public-exchequer on statues of her own and elephants resembling BSP party-symbol during her regime as UP Chief Minister, at Noida and Lucknow. It is noteworthy that further costs were incurred in covering statues of elephants during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. It is likely that the Apex Court may further tighten rules in this regard in its final verdict for which the next hearing is scheduled for April 2, 2019 since the present directions are of an interim nature.

The tendency of political rulers to make statues of themselves and their family-members and mentors are not uncommon. Examples are Tamilnadu and Haryana. Now jailed Om Prakash Chautala in his regime as Chief Minister of Haryana, flooded the state with statues of his father Tau Devilal apart from naming several

institutions etc in his name. Congress party dominated by Nehru-Gandhi family has always been known to name of institutions and schemes after the members of the Nehru-Gandhi family. It is noteworthy that the Party never cared to name institutions and schemes after Prime Ministers from Congress party who were not members of the Nehru-Gandhi family.

A system should be formulated whereby installation of statues and naming of public places or institutions etc., may only be done with compulsory consent of the leader of the opposition.

Yours etc.,  
Subhash Chandra  
Agrawal  
(Guinness Record  
Holder & RTI Consult-  
ant)  
Delhi -6

## NGT ban on coal mining futile

Editor,

Appropos the news report, "Illegal sale of challans thrives without scrutiny" (ST Feb 13, 2019), we have seen how the

coal mine owners are using all kinds of strategies to circumvent the NGT ban on export of coal from Meghalaya, pending the Mining Policy. We have been witnesses to how coal is regularly transported on one or the other pretext after getting orders from the Supreme Court to allow such transportation from time to time on the pleadings of the Advocate General, Govt of Meghalaya. We are told that the Court has appointed an amicus curiae in this case and that a 600 page document has been presented to the Supreme Court. It is the hope of all those who work t environment conservation and a just and humane society that rat hole mining be forever banned in Meghalaya. It has caused the deaths of far too many poor bonded labourers. Such an outdated system of coal mining should not be allowed in the 21st century.

Yours etc.,  
NG Kharpran,  
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.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

--- Margaret Mead

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.184

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2019

### CAB jettisoned

THE contentious Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) 2016 was never tabled in the Rajya Sabha in its final sitting on February 13, for reasons best known to the BJP and its allies. This resulted in celebrations across the region and the emergence of heroes. Meghalaya Chief Minister, Conrad Sangma was hailed by the people of Assam and Mizoram as the new hero that united all those opposed to the Bill and finally made the BJP see reason and shelve the matter, at least for now. Reasons why the CAB is seen in an adversarial light is because it violates the secular nature of the Indian Constitution and seeks to cast this country as a homeland for Hindus persecuted in the three South Asian countries. The other religious communities are an insignificant number. The North East is known as an ethnic homeland of over two hundred ethnic minorities that are all grappling for their space in the sun. Some are looking at Scheduled Tribes status and others demanding separate states.

India's North East is also a region where demand for sovereignty have led to violent insurgencies that claimed several thousand lives. Some of the groups are still engaged in talks with the Government of India about their political status. Insurgency is far from over in the region although the number of killings have come down drastically. To contemplate bringing in a Bill like CAB would have had serious repercussions that the Centre would not have been able to quell quite so easily. Placards in Mizoram which said, "Welcome Independent Republic of Mizoram," carried by no less than the former Chief Minister of the State, Lalthanhawla, convey a strident message to the Centre which it can ignore at its peril. There were other placards saying, "Bye Bye India, Hello China." It's ironic that people in Assam were booked for sedition merely for organising an anti-CAB rally. There is no knowing as to what would have happened if the CAB would have been passed.

But in an interesting turn of events, the Khasi Students Union volunteers here carried out a "peaceful" victory march where non-tribal residents of Rynjah were attacked. The meaning of 'peaceful' seems to have been redefined. It is also a matter of concern that organisations and groups can take out processions without permission from the district administration. This is a clear violation of the rule of law and has to be handled firmly. The KSU leadership has as usual denied that any of their members were responsible for the violence and has attributed it to 'miscreants.' What is the Intelligence Branch of the Police doing?

# CAB: Challenges of Belongingness, Identity and Citizenship

By Patricia Mukhim

The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) 2016 was aborted by the NDA at the very last moment (the last day of parliament sessions in both houses for the present government). The contentious Bill has once again exposed how little the rulers of this vast nation understand this diverse region which is forced into an imagined homogenous space called North East. Yes the rulers of this country barring some honourable exceptions have never understood the people of this region; never appreciated their concerns; their dominant passions; their underlying fears; their inherent strengths and their momentary weaknesses. It is no gainsaying that this region is where South East Asia begins. In this region people are still negotiating their 'Indianness'. To bring a Bill like CAB which will impact this region because of its geo-strategic location and geo-political-historical legacy, is suicidal to say the least.

Although the CAB was not put through a referendum like Brexit was, it turned out into an informal referendum as far as the North East is concerned. There was near unity in opposing the Bill. For once the metro channels turned gaze towards this region to find out what people find offensive about the CAB; why they think the CAB is a detrimental piece of legislation and how it could conflagrate the region if it were to have been passed. There were even writings on the walls that the region might once again sink into the abyss of armed rebellion and that this time such movements would win popular support.

The naked protests by groups from Assam in the national capital; the series of outbursts from Manipur, (both BJP-ruled states), indicate that the BJP may have won votes in the two states but has not won the hearts of people. On the contrary, the BJP has completely alienated the people of this region and cancelled out the gains it had made in its five year tenure when it tried to complete several long-pending projects, particularly the Bogibeel bridge in Dibrugarh which is India's second longest railroad bridge, inaugurated by Prime Minister Modi on Christmas Day last year. The Bogibeel is India's endeavour towards defence preparedness. The abject lack of connectivity within the region in 1962 was India's Achilles Heel. The Chi-

nese came up to Tezpur. The Bogibeel would have been the bulwark against such surprise attacks. It would enable defence forces to move their equipment with greater speed. Army top brass say that the Bogibeel would make travelling to the farthest point of the India-China border shorter by several hundred kilometres and enable logistical support to the Indian Army serving in the borders.

The Bogibeel therefore has a multi-pronged utility and the BJP had hoped that completion of this Bridge which was kept in the backburner for decades would endear the people of Assam to it. But that was a misplaced hope. This time the people of Assam were unsettled by fears of being minorities in their homeland if new migrants are granted citizenship. Assam is already carrying the economic load of millions of illegal settlers from erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh. The illegal migrants are simply unstoppable. Despite the episodic citations by scholars that Bangladesh's Human Development Indices far exceed those of India, the fact remains that India remains an attractive destination because of its liberal and secular nature.

Several studies testify to the fact that the majority of illegal migrants in Assam and other states of North East India are Muslims. In Assam Muslim voters constitute about 35% of the electorate. They are a deciding factor in 6 out of 14 Lok Sabha constituencies. Muslims form the dominant population in Dhubri, Barpeta, Nagaon, Koliabor, Karimganj and Silchar. This was what Himanta Biswa Sarma the BJP's hatchet man in Assam was telling his audience at a meeting. He said there is need to offset this Muslim hegemony by inviting Hindus from that country to settle in India. Of course Afghanistan and Pakistan are also included as countries where Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis are persecuted. As was earlier pointed out by this writer, the Hindus in Bangladesh number 17 million. A huge number by any count! The population of the eight states of the North East is roughly 45.5 million. If we add 17 million people we can imagine the pressure on land and economic resources and the impact on

the culture, literature and ethnographic composition of the region. Tripura is an archetype of what could happen to the other North Eastern states if CAB was passed.

To imagine that the people of the North East are imbued with Indian nationhood which in the collective imagination of the BJP-RSS is equivalent to Hindu, Hindustan and Hindutva and that they would accept the CAB out of empathy for Hindus is a gargantuan error. The ethnic groups living within the eight states are negotiating the idea of nationhood on a daily basis. For a Khasi, her prime identity is that of a Khasi, and then an Indian. So too with Mizos, Nagas, and the 238 ethnic groups. Ethnic identity will never be subsumed by the national identity. That is the major difference between being 'Indian' in Delhi or Bihar or Uttar Pradesh and being Indian in North East India. Ethnic Identity is part of our emotional and political consciousness. Observers from the outside the region may not agree with my observations but the fact remains that these are dominant traits.

This fear of the outsider and about being reduced to a minority can have retrograde effects and prevent our participation in the all-pervasive market economy that knows no geographical or political boundaries. In the book 'The Prosperity Paradox: How Innovation Can Lift Nations Out of Poverty' by Clayton M Christensen of Harvard Business School, the author says there is the push and pull method of addressing poverty and underdevelopment. Christensen says 'push' strategies are driven by priorities of their originators who are typically experts in a particular field of development and generate solutions for poor income countries. But these resources are often pushed into a context that isn't ready to absorb them. Christensen gives the example of the FIFA World Cup in South Africa. The country ended up recovering only 10% of the \$3.12 billion it had invested in transportation, telecommunications and stadiums. Now the country has to shell out \$32 million every year since 2010 to maintain the stadium, an amount that could have gone into creating better public utilities.

The 'pull' strategies on the other hand are responses to a demand. This demand is brought about by an economy that can absorb the knowledge and skills taught to students. Much of this happens in the private sector and the author speaks of his experiences with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) one of the world's largest companies with four lakh employees. TCS caters to market demands and skills people accordingly. The private sector is able to adapt to change quickly; the public sector cannot. Pull strategies create and respond to the needs of the market and that's how jobs are created. Christensen sees a very poor chance of the state creating jobs. The market does. However, in the North East we are still largely reliant on government employment. Entrepreneurship is flagging and not adequately supported by banks and other financial institutions. Once the people of this region enter the market economy their priorities will change and the unaddressed fears might also turn into opportunities for economic growth. However, the North Easterner cannot be pushed into this. He has to evolve and come into his own and realise his inherent strengths and his ability to compete in a level playing field.

Insecurity is a serious problem. It brings out the worst in people. It makes them aggressive bullies. Once this sense of insecurity about one's capability is removed by the strength infused by a new vision and new attitude then perhaps that sense of ethnic pride that must be defended at all costs will be replaced by a new kind of need - the need to collaborate and cooperate with companies and institutions across the nation and the globe. There are already many such collaborations.

Only then will the sense of 'Indianness' emerge where ethnic identity travels alongside the national identity without a tug of war. For this to happen the political eco-system needs to be such that statesmen and not politicians lead the way. The CAB was a quick-fix vote-gathering strategy that backfired. But CAB has given the people of the region much to mull on about negotiating their political and economic rights within the larger Indian nation.

Yours etc.,  
NK Kehar  
Shillong 3

### Why accidental Prime Minister?

Editor,  
False Dilemma or False Dichotomy is a logical fallacy. This fallacy has a few other names ~ black-and-white fallacy, either-or fallacy and bifurcation fallacy. This line of reasoning fails by limiting the options to two when there are indeed more options available. It is not at all a fallacy when there are only two available options. For example, it is not a fallacy to say, "If you voted for a candidate, then you either voted for Donald Trump or for Hillary Clinton" in a two party presidential election in the United States of America. But it is a false dilemma fallacy to say, "You have to

vote for either Narendra Modi or Rahul Gandhi," in our parliamentary democracy.

In a parliamentary democracy, every voter gets the opportunity during the general elections to elect a Member of Parliament to represent her or him among the candidates who are contesting the seat in her or his Lok Sabha constituency. Then the party which gets the majority in the Lok Sabha selects a Prime Minister to "be appointed by the President" (Article 75). Therefore, to tag Manmohan Singh as the "Accidental Prime Minister," is an example of false dilemma or false dichotomy fallacy. The voters of our country need to be aware about the difference between the parliamentary and presidential form of democracy to understand that it is a fallacious argument to project a Prime Minister of India as accidental.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Via email

## Priyanka-Rahul team Will Cong feel the change?

By Oishee Mukherjee

How well will Priyanka Gandhi's official entry into the Congress party help it as well as her brother Rahul as President of the Grand old party is a question doing the rounds. For one, her taking over General Secretary (East) of Uttar Pradesh has at least invoked enthusiasm among the party workers/cadres. Priyanka has been working in some parts of the State for quite some time, particularly her mother and brother's constituency, but now she needs to emerge as a leader and ensure a substantial number of 42 seats in her territory comes into the Congress kitty.

However, there is a view that the Congress would be better served by moving beyond the family and that the induction of Priyanka will only push the Congress deeper into a dynastic mode. There is no question that this may appear a theoretical opposition but given the structure of the party and the way it is held together, the induction may help it. As in the case of Rahul, he was the secret weapon that was not drawn and he skulled around the perimeters of power before being given the responsibility. Similarly, Priyanka may have been drafted much earlier given her ability to command attention and inspire confidence within the rank and file. At a time when Congress and Rahul needed bolstering, having someone who could present herself with confidence and that would potentially make a difference.

It is believed that Priyanka may cut upper caste votes of the BJP and could get a substantial number of Muslim and dalit voters. Added to this, the large unemployment and underemployment in the country and the failure of Modi to provide 2 crore jobs, as promised in the 2014 elections, may motivate young voters to shift to the Congress. It also needs to be pointed out that the SP-BSP alliance would be greatly affected, possibly more than BJP, with Priyanka's entry.

The more significant impact of Priyanka's entry is likely to be within the party at the national level than in eastern U.P. If used as a campaigner nationally, as is generally believed, she would be able to provide substantial support to her brother in the hectic campaign that is normally seen. Rahul has emerged as an effective politician and with effective support from his sister, who has great resemblance with her grandmother Indira Gandhi, there are expectations of a definite change in fortune for the Congress.

The other question that people are also asking is whether the Congress would win enough seats so, along with its allies it could form the government at the Centre? But another thing that causes concern is that the mahagatbandhan of allies, some of whom were once foes, may lead to an unprincipled alliance. This may not bring credibility to the Congress unless it has the power to dictate i.e. the party has to get around 110 to 120 seats, which should not be difficult in the present circumstances.

Political analysts feel that Priyanka can make a difference of around 6 per cent in U.P. along with another 7-8 traditional vote share of the Congress, which should add up to 12-13 per cent, which may be sufficient to win around 14-15 seats in U.P.

The BJP has rightly pointed out that the alliance is 'unprincipled' and has come together with the sole purpose of grabbing power. Moreover, some of the leaders of some of the parties have dubious distinction -

say for example of Mayawati, the one and only leader of BSP or the son of Lalu Prasad Yadav of RJD, both of whom are allegedly seen as corrupt. There is another apprehension of these regional leaders asserting from time to time may make the coalition unstable.

Meanwhile, Mayawati and Mamata Banerjee have shown interest in getting the top post at the Centre assuming the Opposition alliance comes to power. While BSP may not get more than 25 seats, the TMC may at best win around 30-32 seats all from Bengal. In such a scenario, it can easily be derived that bickering would start from who would head the government and then it may extend to various other matters.

In this connection, Modi has already raised the question, at a recent meeting, that the BJP alone would be able to offer a stable government at the Centre and the Opposition parties have come together for an 'unprincipled' alliance. This cannot be totally ignored as stability depends on a stable administration as the chances of a 'chaos' cannot be ruled out if the Congress or any other national party is in a commanding position.

Recently one veteran journalist has raised the point of 'vengeful federalism' taking shape in the country, where the assertion of States' rights has surfaced. This may aggravate after the election with every leader from each region and/or State, asserting the need of the State without thinking the need for balanced regional development.

The onus will obviously be with the Congress and Rahul, who has provided some sort of right leadership, indicating that he has the conviction to lead the government. But unfortunately some parties do not want him to do so as they fear that with him at the Centre, the Congress may again further consolidate its position in the coming years.

The Modi challenge, however, cannot be dismissed as apart from destroying institutions, curtailing the democratic spirit, the Rafale scam and playing the Hindu card, the government has performed quite well as regards development of physical infrastructure. The failure to plan the development process in the right direction keeping in the condition of stakeholders - like farmers, dalits and the rural youth - contributed to discontent among a major section of the electorate and has not augured well for his re-election.

Political analysts attribute his pro-rich attitude and aggressive Hindutva as the two major reasons for his loss of popularity. However, he has made some amends in the last one year but the centralised approach still remains. Overall, it is indeed distressing to note that in the year we are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi there is still lack of decentralisation, both political and economic.

Finally, it can very well be said that the Congress challenge as of now is quite formidable, more so with Rahul-Priyanka team, assisted with a young brigade, geared to look at the welfare of the poor and the neglected sections of society. The Muslims would obviously feel more comfortable with the Congress leading the Opposition alliance at the Centre. It is difficult to predict the post poll scenario but, sources point out, that if the BJP emerges as the largest party it could get support from Telengana Rashtra Samiti, YSR Congress and also possibly from the Biju Janata Dal. However, as the saying goes the political satraps will cross the bridge when they come to it. ---INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

### Violence is condemnable

Editor,

First I would like to congratulate the regional Political Parties and the NGOs across the North East region of India, for uniting and standing tall against the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB). Their united stand has protected us, in the North East, from further demographic, social and economic upheavals that could have come about from further influx from across our borders. The fact that they were able to sink their political differences to make a united stand indicates their maturity of thinking. Kudos to all involved.

Further, the fact that the protests were, by and large, peaceful in nature also shows their concern for the welfare of the common man. Of course the bandhs had disrupted normal life across the region, but I guess the common man was willing to make a few sacrifices for the common good. History has shown us that violence only

begets more violence and more problems. It is the discussions and negotiations across the table that have brought lasting solutions. Bandhs, and other more violent forms of protest, should always be the last resort and, that too only to force discussions and negotiations.

The celebration by different groups across the region on their victory over the CAB was also welcome. However, the violence perpetrated by a group during their victory march is shameful and condemnable. Violence against soft targets during the celebrations shows the immaturity and shortsightedness of those involved. Some NGOs in Meghalaya have glorified violence as a means to achieving solutions and this is deplorable. I call upon the leaders of those groups to show their maturity and change their approach. I reiterate that it was not the violence but the negotiations that have brought lasting solutions.

I condemn the violence during the victory march

and express my solidarity with the innocent victims who were needlessly targeted. I call upon the District Administration not to tolerate any form of violence and to bring the culprits to book as per the law.

Yours etc.,  
RG Lyngdoh  
Via email

### Why target Indian citizens?

Editor,  
Violence perpetrated by members of an organization during so called victory march over CAB on the on February 14, 2019 leading to assault and injury of some innocent persons in Shillong is highly condemnable. Can the leaders of the organization which resorted to such despicable act enlighten us about the role of those innocent persons in the issue? Were those persons illegal Bangladeshis? Such act clearly exposes the fact that the opposition to the CAB is actually directed solely against the non-tribal Indian citizens of the state.

The statement made by the leader of the organization dissociating itself from the violence is nothing but a blatant lie. When they have organised the programme without permission from the district administration, responsibility of stone pelting and violence squarely rests on them. Just by blaming some vested interest they cannot abdicate their responsibility in the entire episode.

Time and again the minority community (non tribal) of the state who are genuine Indian citizens have been targeted in the name of protecting the rights of tribal people. In this age of globalization and rapidly changing geo-political scenario, such violence cannot ensure protection of smaller ethnic groups in India or any part of the world. The State Government which is constitutionally bound to give protection to all its citizens should come down heavily on such organizations and direct the law enforcement agencies to take stern action against the culprits.

*“Human rights are not only violated by terrorism, repression or assassination, but also by unfair economic structures that creates huge inequalities.”*

--- Pope Francis

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.185 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2019

### Bleeding India yet again

PAKISTAN is at it again - and at its heinous worst. The martyrdom of over 40 Jawans in Pulwama is provocation of a very serious nature and the Modi government must respond to this with ingenious dexterity rather than vacillating over such attacks in the past, which cost the nation dearly. The covert ties between the Jaish militant network and the Pakistani military's ISI are well-known. They often act in unison. This must hence be seen as a war-like scenario.

To our mind, the withdrawal of the Most Favoured Nation status is a vain exercise; its impact too little. Or, take the other threat held out by India after the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) met, that India would use all its diplomatic influence to isolate Pakistan at the global fora. This is no more than wishful thinking. With able support from China, and to an extent from the US too, Pakistan gets what it wants from the UN etc. India does not get much backing in such situations from the US, in real terms, as Americans are friends with Pakistan to keep the balance in the sub-continent and offset China's ambitions. India's failure to take strong diplomatic positions is to our disadvantage.

India's weak responses to grave provocations from Pakistan in the past have, prima facie, brought things to such an unfortunate pass. In dealing with Pakistan, the Modi government proved to be no better than that of its predecessor, the UPA II led by Manmohan Singh. India faced major hits, including attacks on its military establishments in Uri and Pathankot in recent years. The Jaish, which took responsibility for the Pulwama attack, is nurtured in Pakistani soil and it enjoys the goodwill of the political establishment there. It's leaders are roaming around freely there.

Closer home, the Governor of J&K has admitted to an intelligence failure. There should have been high alert after a kin of a Jaish leader was killed in Kashmir. Also, Governor Satyapal Malik would need to explain why he reduced security drills at check posts.

The Modi government is at the doorsteps of fresh parliament polls. It either needs to act in a firm manner or invite retribution from voters. Promises of tough responses from the Prime Minister, no longer carry much weight. Such talks were made in the past by the PM and his former defence minister Manohar Parrikar. Nothing much happened on the ground. The nation today is angry and pained.

#### TO THE EDITOR

### Pulwama attack unpardonable

Editor,  
Over forty Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawans were killed and many others injured in an IED blast that targeted their convoy on the Jammu-Srinagar highway. The death toll could rise. It is necessary to make certain whether the involved terrorists led by Adil Mohammad Dar are locals or foreigners by a full-fledged combat operation by the Indian army. It is high time for the Government of India to take immediate stringent and deterrent military action and eliminate terrorists from this land by teaching them a befitting lesson. All political parties should refrain from indulging in mean politics on this grave issue and should not take advantage of this tragic massacre for the forth coming General Election. They should fight together in this hour of grave crisis that threatens the integrity of the country and the nation. It is despicable that Partition of India was done at the behest and initiative of the Congress party at the cost of Bengal & Punjab (partly) and full of Sindh provinces. Kashmir issue was also created by making a cease-fire giving birth to a Line-Of-Control concept which accepts/recognises a

part of Kashmir, being an integral part of India, as "Pak Occupied Kashmir" and making an issue out of a non-issue and then taking it to the United Nations General Assembly platform by the then ruling Congress party. This was a historic blunder. During nearly seven decades of Congress rule including ten years of UPA rule the government in the Centre pursued a soft policy towards Kashmir just to keep its vote bank intact.

All mainstream politicians and former Chief Ministers of J&K who are advocates of talks with Pakistan and often make provocative speeches in support of terrorists sponsored by Pakistan army & ISI combined and stone-pelters under the veil of human rights activists like Mehbooba Mufti, Omar Abdullah & Farukh Abdullah should be put under surveillance. These leaders with pro-Pakistan emotional attachment should clearly understand that talks and terrorism cannot go together.

All the separatist leaders like Lone who consistently encourage the people of Kashmir to resort to terrorist activities need to be kept in detention and charged for treason under ESMA.

It is also necessary to probe into the dubious activities of a general secre-

With the last session of the 16th Lok Sabha ending on February 13, the stage is set for the holding of Lok Sabha elections in April/May 2019. The opposition parties have at last decided on drafting a common minimum programme for fighting the ruling NDA led by the BJP and the responsibility of drafting the CMP has been given to the Congress President Rahul Gandhi at the meeting of the senior leaders of the opposition on Wednesday night at NCP leader Sharad Pawar's residence.

As the leader of the largest opposition party, Rahul will be drafting the CMP and this will be finalized as the manifesto of the opposition at the meeting of the senior leaders soon. There is little time left as the Election Commission is expected to announce the poll dates in the first part of March this year giving only five weeks for the first phase of polling to start.

The opposition parties are showing signs of maturity in dealing with the areas of differences in the states. While both the Congress president Rahul Gandhi and the West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress president Mamata Banerjee have talked of pre poll alliance in the states, wherever possible, the best option is to ensure that maximum efforts are given to prevention of division of anti-BJP votes. There will be some mutual contests among the anti-BJP opposition parties in the states due to local compulsions, but the prime objective is to guarantee post poll alliance of these opposition parties against the BJP after the Lok Sabha elections.

The formulation of the right CMP has assumed special importance this time for the opposition parties because the Prime Minister Narendra Modi is trying to hijack pro-people agenda to project BJP as working for the poor and to opposition CMP has to demarcate itself from the fake PM agenda and aggressively put forward a pro-people agenda which will focus on the real issues of the farmers and the new programmes for the generation of jobs for the unemployed youth.

Rahul Gandhi has a panel of the Congress Party for the preparation of the party manifesto. He has

tary of a major political party stationed in Mumbai who virtually operated a remote control as dictated by Dawood Ibrahim during the proxy-war conducted by Pakistan in 2008. Three top-most police officers were dictated by him to move together in one jeep to face the encounter by infiltrated Pakistani terrorists, sponsored by Pakistan army & ISI combine, only to meet their doom during Congress rule in Maharashtra.

Finally why such a long convoy of 2500 jawans was moving without being led by an opening convoy despite advance alert by IB is not clear. Could the CRPF jawans not be provided with bullet-proof jackets? The ruling dispensation at the Centre should realize that lives of our jawans are more precious than the protection and lives of cows in the country.

Yours etc.,  
Samare Bandyopadhyay  
Advocate, Kolkata High  
Court

### Kashmir the flashpoint of India

Editor,  
It was indeed horrific to learn of the death of 44 CRPF men were killed by a

### Rahul has chance to be change agent

# Common minimum programme must act as catalyst

By Nitya Chakraborty

also before him the 1996 CMP of the opposition parties, supported by the Congress as also the manifesto of the Congress Party for 2004 Lok Sabha elections. Only recently the Congress prepared a pro-people manifesto for the state assembly elections in

new deal comprising assured income, freedom from indebtedness and sustainable farm practices. A document titled Manifesto for Change drafted by some eminent civil society leaders led by lawyer activist Prashant Bhushan, has suggested statutory assur-

*“As the leader of the largest opposition party, Rahul will be drafting the CMP and this will be finalized as the manifesto of the opposition at the meeting of the senior leaders soon.”*

Chhattisgarh. Rahul Gandhi has also articulated in recent days his proposal for a minimum income guarantee scheme for the poor.

All these ideas which will give a big push to the upgradation of the lives of the people below the poverty line as also the lower middle class, have to be given a vigorous push and

ance for remunerative prices, at least 50 per cent on C2 cost of cultivation, one time comprehensive loan waiver along with the setting up of a National Debt Commission and extension of all benefits meant for farmers to tenant farmers, share croppers, women farmers, adivasi farmers, landless cultivators

*There will be some mutual contests among the anti-BJP opposition parties in the states due to local compulsions, but the prime objective is to guarantee post poll alliance of these opposition parties against the BJP after the Lok Sabha elections.*

the basic idea that should be the motivating force is that the economic policies have to benefit the majority and not few. The economic policies and the social programmes have to transform the society so that the inequalities are reduced. The growth process has to be based on equity and generation of more jobs not like the Modi model of jobless growth or even the Manmohan years in the second phase when the crony capitalists had a big sway on the government.

Within this broad framework of equity and social justice, two areas will have to be given maximum attention-distressed farmers and unemployed youth. Farmers have to be given a

and livestock rearers. There is need for universal basic services and social security for the underprivileged, especially ensuring good education for the poor and free healthcare for the poor in real terms. All the latest facilities have to be ensured to bring a transformation in the healthcare system in the rural and semi urban areas. Modi Government's Ayushman Bharat scheme has many gaps and the senior citizens of te lower middle class are still being denied the free medical facilities though the health care costs have become prohibitive. The CMP of the opposition has to bring cheers to the senior citizens both in terms of social security and healthcare. The state

should take the entire responsibility of health care of the senior citizens who cannot afford private health care facilities due to high costs.

Rahul Gandhi has been continuously talking about the job crisis and this should be the core issue in the CMP to draw attention of the job seeking young people who were misled by the BJP and Narendra Modi before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. With the help of experts, Rahul has to prepare an ambitious job generation programme based on the speedy revival of the MSMEs and the informal sector of the rural economy. The Skill India Mission of the Modi regime is a disaster by now. It has to be rejuvenated and the start ups will have to be given new push in te right direction going away with the hype without substance of the Modi regime.

The rejuvenation of the public sector undertakings is another area which has to be focused in the CMP. The opposition CMP has to declare its full confidence in the PSUs role in pepping up the Indian economy and all wrongdoings by the NDA regime including affecting adversely the prospects of the premier defence manufacturing company HAL, have to be corrected. A mega plan for the revival of public sector has to be worked out for giving a new direction in the economy.

Apart there are other areas for restoration of civil liberties, electoral reforms, police reforms for restoring the values of the Indian Republic. The CMP as to be the manifesto for a real change. Just a change of regime does not bring improvement in lives of te masses, it is the change in policies and its implementation that matter. Rahul Gandhi and the non-BJP opposition have to be the agent of change. If only the masses come to realize that the opposition parties really mean what they promise, they will be inspired and actively participate in bringing about the desired change in the elections. Rahul, Mamata and Sharad Pawar have to play that role of game changer in this crucial year of Indian polity. (IPA Service)

### No concern for public interest

# CAG report: Truth or Myth?

By Binoy Viswam

When the CAG report got presented in the 16th Lok Sabha on its last day, Narendra Modi might have breathed a sigh of relief. But Rafale will continue roaring in his ears and thoughts in the coming days. In the name of national security Narendra Modi and company tried their level best to hide the what-abouts related to Rafale deal from the people. But the details of the defence deal have fallen out through various sources reveal that Narendra Modi government mortgaged the nation for the sake of pecuniary interests of his own and his friends. He was trying to render a helping hand to Anil Ambani to become the offset partner in the defence deal. It is to everybody's presumption that a large part of Ambani's fortunes in his defence deal was supposed to reach the coffers of BJP. For this the 'nationalist' prime minister in a subtle manner pushed off Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

there was nothing unusual in the files as such kind of exchanges are nothing but usual. No, it is not usual that the office of the prime minister of a country making telephone calls to the advisor to the defence minister of another country. If such a talk was necessary that should have been at the level of the defence minister's offices of both the countries. This incident shows how eager and enthusiastic Narendra Modi was in reaching the agreement that would benefit Anil Ambani at the cost of India's integrity and security! In the CAG report also it was visible. Narendra Modi was keen to white wash the black deal entered between India and the French Company, Dassault Aviation Limited. Report of the CAG on Capital Acquisition to Indian Air Force mainly deals with the Inter Governmental Agreement (IGA) for acquisition of 36 Rafale aircraft and the provisions of an Indo-French Agreement, signed

*“The defence deal with Rafale has rather a long history. It began during the UPA regime. Then also the idea was to augment the striking capacity of Indian Air Force. And the original negotiations were for 126 aircrafts and HAL was very much there in the whole negotiation process.”*

The defence deal with Rafale has rather a long history. It began during the UPA regime. Then also the idea was to augment the striking capacity of Indian Air Force. And the original negotiations were for 126 aircrafts and HAL was very much there in the whole negotiation process. When Narendra Modi came to power negotiations took a different turn through which national defence was sidelined. Not only HAL, even the defence ministry and its minister were kept under dark. As per the documents revealed by 'The Hindu' a parallel line of negotiation was opened in which the prime minister's office was playing the key role.

According to the defence ministry files itself it was a seven-member negotiating team authorised for the talks with Rafale. It is reported that there were 18 rounds of negotiations between India and France. During the final stage Narendra Modi entered the scene and tried to dictate the terms. When this high level intervention came to the notice of the defence ministry, they noted down in the files that "the PMO may be advised" not to indulge in this matter as it may weaken the position of the Indian negotiating team. That file speaks a lot about Rafale deal. It tells that the intention of the prime minister and his office was not to strengthen India's position in this crucial defence deal. For whom and for what was this intervention is now not a secret at all. Reliance defence, the company mooted by Anil Ambani was born only a couple of weeks before the treaty was signed. Their expertise in the field of fighter aircrafts was near to nothing. Still with the patronage of the nationalist prime minister Reliance company could push out Hindustan Aeronautics Limited with its track record of several decades in service of the nation.

The arm twisting skill of Narendra Modi is such that he could force the then defence secretary to state that

on January 25, 2008. It is intriguing that in such a report commercial details of the deal was not mentioned. The government was always insisting that this being a matter of national security the price information of Rafale deal cannot be revealed. On its letter dated February 6, 2019, the ministry of defence reiterated the same position to the CAG also. Still without the commercial details, CAG acted swiftly and trustworthily to the government.

The present CAG who was the finance secretary during the crucial period of Rafale has somehow managed to present a report that can be used by BJP to cover their ugly face of corruption. Even though the pricing details are not disclosed the CAG found out that NDA - Rafale deal price was 2.86 percent less than the UPA rate. In the same breath, the report says that it was benefitting to Dassault also. Profits for Dassault means loss for India. Certain reports say that during UPA the cost for one Rafale fighter was calculated as 11 million Euros. During NDA it became 36 million Euros per fighter.

The arithmetical principle adopted by CAG in working out the 2.86 percent theory is not known. The watch word of the CAG says that it is "Dedicated to Truth in Public Interest". But in his report Rajiv Mehrishi, the CAG opted to close his eyes to many of the truths, it seems. Of course it is not for the public interest, it is for the interests of the political masters who have successfully caged all the institutions including the CBI for their dirty political ends. Now CAG also is attached to that band wagon otherwise how could the CAG blatantly close its eyes to the dissent note prepared by 3 members in the Indian negotiating team? How could he neglect Modi's decision to do away with the bank guarantee and sovereign guarantee in such a huge commercial deal with great relevance to national security? (IPA Service)

suicide bomber - the 22 year old Adil Mohammad Dar the agent of JeM of Pakistan. I offer my condolences to the bereaved families of the CRPF personnel and may their souls rest in peace. Kashmir has been the bone of contention between India and Pakistan for a very long time. Kashmir has also been the killing field for far too long with no lasting solution forthcoming even to date. Nearly every day there are attacks on Indian security forces and these acts are sponsored by terror outfits nurtured on Pakistani soil such as the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM), Lashkar-e-toiba etc., who do not want peace to rule in J & K. India has been spending over a quarter of its national budget to meet security arrangements and to ensure law and order in J & K. Yes, the daily expenditure on keeping the borders there safe from intrusion and invasion from Pakistan and on keeping security forces in policing and in other security arrangements is huge. But despite all these arrangements, Pakistan continues to bleed India day in and day out. For how long will India keep on bleeding and should the tax payers' money continue to be spent in J & K. Why is India not able to crush the ultra elements coming from

Pakistan? Are there fault-lines in the internal policing and in defence of Kashmir? What is the strength of the terrorists from Pakistan that the Indian forces cannot match and in which aspect? Why can't India win the hearts and minds and the goodwill of the Kashmiri citizens to combat the terrorists from across the borders?

Is India too tolerant towards the hardliners and sympathisers in Kashmir who are known to be hand in gloves with the evil designs of Pakistan and because of which India has to pay a heavy price? Is India running out of strategies and might to contain the law and order in Kashmir? India cannot allow Pakistan to bleed it perpetually. Strong measures are needed at this point but without the political chest-thumping.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Via email

### Countering Terrorism

Editor,  
Yesterday's IED attack on CRPF in Pulwama District by terrorists, where 44 Jawans were martyred is highly condemnable. India just can't watch such at-

tacks anymore and must hunt the masters who perpetually attack our soldiers. India faces threat, uncertainty, violence and fear of terrorism from Islamist terror groups and now must vow revenge. The path of terror delivers no glory, although the barbaric choose it. We need to talk tough language now. Love, justice and sufferings are not just coming together. General Bipin Rawat realises that the Army is facing a dirty war in Kashmir valley which has to be fought in innovative ways. Every other day our brave hearts sacrifice their lives at the border. Soviet secret police, KGB, reportedly gave Arab terrorists a taste of brutality to free Russian diplomats. That is the way the Soviets operate. They do things-- they don't talk. We cry foul at the Army's act, seeing it as a violation of human rights. Should India go for another surgical attack?

Yours etc.,  
Kamal Baruah,  
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.*

*Barring that natural expression of villainy which we all have, the man looked honest enough.*

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.187

SHILLONG, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2019

### Bitter pill for India

AS the USA goes into a state of emergency, President Donald Trump has proven a point that he would go any length to realise his goal of erecting a wall along the US-Mexico border; a key promise in his 2016 presidential election campaign. This would help him assign required funds for the construction, which is yet to start, other than for filling gaps in stretches where such a defensive mechanism against illegal immigrations is already in existence. What the Congress has grudgingly approved for the purpose is \$1.4 billion against a requirement of \$5.7 billion. With the nation put under a state of emergency, Trump is free to bypass rules and divert money meant for other purposes to fulfil the promise of wall construction. The only saving grace is, he would not divert funds from a sensitive head, namely national disaster relief fund. The objection being raised in representative bodies against the Trump plan, though he has obtained nod from the American voters in the last polls, is that a wall is an outdated form of defence against entry of illegal migrants to the US. Trump has, in his usual, somewhat abrasive style, dismissed such talks and would likely divert funds meant for military infrastructure and for fight against the drug menace.

Trump has two more years to be in office for the first term. It's time he acts now to ensure that an election promise is fulfilled before he approaches the citizenry for vote for a second term. His first term has been controversial from the word go, and he's battling his way forward with grit and determination. He has often faltered, too, over key appointments of aides etc resulting in confusion in the administration. With his image taking some beating, keeping the word on the wall is important to salvage lost ground. He aims at erecting over 300km of wall this year to achieve target by the time his first term ends. Trump sees illegal immigrations from the US's neighbourhood as nothing short of an "invasion of our country." He's mindful of the legal challenges that could come in the way of the declaration of emergency, but he is also claiming that the ultimate victory would be his. Democrats are already moving in this direction. Fact is, America is a divided house under Trump. It remains to be seen whether, in the long run, the President would manage to retain his conservative base in strong ways as to have the last laugh.

# CAB: A Feather in Modi's CAP

By H H Mohrmen

After the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) met its fate at the Rajya Sabha, the whole North East erupted in celebration of the death of the Bill that everybody hated and feared the most. The people who fought tooth and nail to stall the passage of the Bill have every right to celebrate its demise which has cast a pall of gloom on the horizon of the entire north eastern region of the country.

It was then followed by claims and counter claims of the reasons why the Bill was stalled in the Upper House. The claims and counter claim was about who had contributed the most to compel the NDA Government to decide not to introduce the Bill in the Rajya Sabha. It is true that despite all the efforts the NDA government put into its passage in the Lok Sabha there must have been some major reason which influenced the Modi Government to all of a sudden abandon the idea. But isn't it too early for folks to claim the honour or even to celebrate the abortion of the CAB?

In the Khasi and Jaintia Hills region of the state, the two organisations which spearheaded the movement against the Bill were the Hyniewtrep Youth Front and the Khasi Students Union who while fighting for the same goal used different strategies and made different moves. And as expected the people of the State gave all out support to both the organisations. People who understand the tensions between the two organisations will understand the reason why the KSU hit the streets first to celebrate the failure of the NDA government to table the Bill.

To take the wind from the other organisation's sail the KSU as usual took to the streets, went on rampage and attacked passers-by and shops which is rather uncalled for. The KSU and their victory march reminds us of similar incidents in the past where innocent people and even tourists were unnecessarily targeted by the marchers who the Organisation will later call

anti social or fringe elements. The defeat of the Bill is not because of the protest by one or other organisation, but it is the combined efforts of all those who were involved in the protest and those who moved from pillar to post to lobby with the law makers and convinced them that this Bill is a threat to the indigenous people of the North East.

For Conrad Sangma February 14, 2019 is unlike the previous Valentine's Day celebration. He was not only presented with bouquets of flowers, but was showered with words of praise from all over the North East. Some have even given him a heroic welcome when he arrived at the airport in Guwahati. Conrad was hailed as the hero or the saviour of the North East but how much is he really responsible for the NDA government's decision to stop the plan

**The point is nobody will actually know who was responsible in convincing the Government to eat humble pie, but part of the truth is that it was the combined effort of all those who were involved in the protest and those who moved from pillar to post to lobby with the law makers and convinced them that this Bill is a threat to the indigenous people of the North East.**

to table the Bill in the floor of the Rajya Sabha? Only time and history will tell us, the answer to this question, but that did not stop the people from hero-worshipping him.

Not to be outdone by the popularity that Conrad garnered from the CAB debacle, the leader of the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Party, Dr Mukul Sangma too claimed that the credit should go to the Congress and its MPs in the august house. They were the ones who had pressured the government to finally decide not to table the Bill in the house. Some are of the opinion that the credit should go to Kiren Rijiju the junior minister of the Home Department, Government of India, a man from North East who prevailed upon the Government and convinced the Prime Minister to abandon the idea of tabling the Bill in the Rajya Sabha.

The point is nobody

sections of the population in the rest of the country that the BJP will get if it was able to pass the CAB.

But Modi also knew very well that come what may, the NDA government will benefit from this move as it will be able to conciliate a large part of the party's constituents. The NDA government will be able to consolidate its support base even if it failed to table the Bill because during the election campaign, they will go to the people and say that they have done their level best to bring the legislation which is of interest to their supporters, but their hands were tied. They will again request the people to support them and give them one more time and most importantly a majority in both the Houses which would then enable them to do the needful.

To the people of the North East the party campaign strategy will be easy. It will first go to the people to clarify the doubts and misconception that the people have of the BJP. They will say that the party is not a communal party as some have alleged and the decision not to table the CAB is one clear example of that. If the Party was only interested in winning the support of the majority as some have alleged, then it would have gone ahead and passed the Bill in the Upper House, but aborted the idea because it respects the minorities in the country too. They will say that the CAB imbroglio proved beyond doubt that the BJP is also listening to the voices of the minority and respect the sentiments of the indigenous people of the North Eastern states of the country. The BJP stand would be that even if they stand to lose a large support base, they are willing to sacrifice that for the sake of the people of North East.

At the end of the day, it is a win for the NDA government any which way one looks at the issue. Even in what looks like a defeat, it could be a win in the final analysis. Ultimately, the outcome of the CAB fiasco is that Modi might still laugh his way to the polling booth.

was not only the CAB that the Government decided not to table in the house, but the NDA Government decided not to table the much talked about Triple Talaq Bill also. The BJP-led Government knew very well that they didn't have the numbers to pass the Bills in the Rajya Sabha.

On the other hand, considering the timing that the Government chose to introduce the Bill which is during the election year, it can be concluded that this is but an election gimmick of the NDA government under the leadership of Narendra Modi. And if we look at the issue using this lens, then we will be able to understand that the move to introduce the Bill is only to appease a certain section of the society which the Party considers to be its major supporters. North Eastern states together have only 26 parliamentary seats in the Lower House. This is insignificant considering the support of the large

## The Ideal Response to the Pulwama Terror Attack

By Lt Gen (Retd) Clarence McKnight, Maj Gen (Retd) Kulwant Singh, & Dr David Leffler

In a speech regarding the Pulwama terror attack, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that "India will give a befitting reply to this incident. The security forces have been given full freedom to decide."

We salute the Prime Minister for granting India's security forces a free hand to decide the best response to this incident. India's military leaders now have the opportunity to deploy a proven, state-of-the-art, non-violent alternative if they have the courage and foresight to do so. This alternative can help their warriors gain a strategic and profound proactive advantage. It would prevent future terrorism instead of responding after attacks have occurred, for far less than the cost of conventional defenses. This unconventional yet highly effective approach with a proven scientific record for diffusing terrorism and violence is called Invincible Defense Technology (IDT), based on the non-religious Transcendental Meditation (TM) program.

As strange as it may sound, when large groups of trained practitioners practice the advanced TM techniques together twice a day, a powerful "field effect" of coherence and peace ripples throughout the consciousness of the surrounding population. The bigger the group the bigger the effect. The outcomes, confirmed repeatedly by extensive scientific research, are consistent and measurable decreases in war deaths, terrorism, and crime.

This surprising effect was demonstrated over a two-month period in the summer of 1993, in Washington D.C., where 4,000 meditators gathered for an experiment to lower crime in America's capital. The result, as documented by an independent board of criminologists, was a 25 percent reduction in criminal violence. (Reference: Social Indicators Research, 1999, 47: 153-201).

In 1983-84, at the peak of fighting in the Lebanon war, as many as 8,000 but as little as a few hundred meditators gathered at different times in Israel, Lebanon, Europe, and the United States. The documented effects of these assemblies included increased cooperation between the warring parties (66 percent) and a decrease of hostilities (70 percent). The odds of these results occurring by chance or any explanation other than the meditation were calculated at one in ten million trillion! (Reference: Journal of Conflict Resolution, 1988, 32: 776-812, and 1990, 34:756-768).

Similarly, large TM groups in Manila, New Delhi, and Puerto Rico have generated significant declines in violent crimes. Alternative explanations could not account for the results. (Reference: Journal of Mind and Behavior, 1987, 8: 67-104).

For a minimal investment of time, manpower, and resources, India's military could train and maintain a group of about 4,000 experts in the IDT strategy. Think of it as a "prevention brigade" whose members meditate twice a day to defuse the deeply-rooted regional stresses and hatred that are the cause of conflict. The research suggests that once such a program becomes operational, societal conditions in India and beyond, would rapidly improve. For as long as the peace-creating group is sustained, the collective coherence throughout

society would rise through the influences of greater harmony and peace. Better solutions will occur to the people and their leaders for improving their own living conditions. Violence will subside.

IDT is not restricted to the military; any large groups practicing the IDT techniques can accomplish the goal, meaning all types of citizens could be enlisted, from schoolchildren to retirees. Its coherence-creating effect has also been documented on a global scale in a study published in the Journal of Offender Rehabilitation. When large assemblies of civilian IDT experts gathered during the years 1983-1985, terrorism-related casualties decreased 72%, international conflict decreased 32%, and overall violence was reduced in nations without intrusion by other governments.

The Global Union of Scientists for Peace (<https://www.gusp.org>), a global group of eminent scientists and leaders dedicated to support alternative, peaceful means of conflict resolution, have endorsed the IDT approach. Among them are Yukio Hatoyama, former prime minister of Japan; former president of Mozambique Joachim Chissano (who applied IDT programs to end that nation's civil war); Lt. General (Ret.) Vasy Krutov, former chief of the Ukraine Anti-Terrorism Center; retired Ecuadorian Lt. General José Villamil (who also applied IDT to end conflict between Ecuador and Peru).

Given the countless efforts previously tried by India that have not worked, now is the time to utilize this scientifically-validated method. IDT is simple and inexpensive, with a documented record of success: a cutting-edge brain-based technology that could potentially maximize the safety and security of India's people and curb the bloodshed. Here is an opportunity for the India to become a global leader in peace-making, so needed by this troubled world.

At one time, meditation was considered "mystical." Now, doctors routinely prescribe it, because research shows Transcendental Meditation reduces stress and improves health. Hundreds of studies confirm real benefits for individuals, including better energy, learning ability, job productivity, and happier relationships. The revelation that group meditation reduces turbulence in society and improves community or global health is simply an extension of the individual practice of meditation.

This is a new proactive paradigm for our times, ready to be implemented for it holds the secret for planetary peace. If wars start in the minds of men, then peace logically ought to start there as well.

**About the Authors: Lt. Gen. Clarence E. McKnight, Jr., (U.S. Army Ret.) is a former Director of Command, Control and Communications Systems for the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, D.C.**

**Major General (Ret.) Kulwant Singh, U.Y.S.M., Ph.D., leads an international group of generals and defense experts that advocates Invincible Defense Technology.**

**Dr. David Leffler is the Executive Director at the Center for Advanced Military Science (CAMS) <http://www.StrongMilitary.org>.**

### TO THE EDITOR

#### CAB- BJP's political ploy

Editor,  
North East India celebrated last week when the Rajya Sabha was adjourned sine die and the Citizenship Amendmend Bill was not tabled in the Upper House. However the Congress party is taking undue credit for all this claiming it was them who blocked this Bill in the upper house. In reality the Bill was not passed because there is stiff opposition from the people and NGOs of North East India and all political parties including BJP allies like the JDU, Shiv Sena, NPP and even BJP party of North East India. Another Bill which was not tabled in the Rajya Sabha is the 'Triple Talaq' Bill, so Muslim men can also celebrate. But let's not get carried away. These two contentious Bills are actually a calculated master ploy of Modi and the BJP for the upcoming general elections. The CAB and the Triple Talaq have been elections promises of Modi in 2014. Modi had precisely brought up these two contentious Bills at the end of his tenure, fully aware that both the Bills would not be passed in the Rajya Sabha since the BJP lacks numbers in the Upper House. Failing to pass both the Bills might actually benefit BJP and might unleash a new lease of life in their cadres for the upcoming elections. Moreover the controversy

surrounding the CAB will help the BJP as all the Hindu voters of the entire country will appreciate the move and even if the Bill was not tabled, the support of the Hindu voters will definitely intensify. Modi is fully backing the Bill to appease core Hindutva voters. Modi failing to pass the Bill will send a political message that a Bill aimed at strengthening Hindu solidarity is being blocked by 'anti-Hindu' opposition parties. So either way it's a win-win situation for BJP. While we all celebrated and the Congress party is claiming all the undue credit, Modi and the BJP have gone one step above everybody else and packed all the ammunition ready for 2019.

Yours etc  
Manuel Carey Lymba  
Shillong - 8.

#### Children's education at stake

Editor,  
It has come to our notice that St. Joseph Higher Secondary School had recently given an ad for a vacant post due to the sudden demise of their teacher. Our daughter who was in the 9th standard at that time came home one day and told us that the "new teacher" who is taking computer classes for them

hardly knows the subject. We told her that maybe its a temporary appointment as they are looking for a replacement, but after further enquiry we were told that the new teacher was the candidate who was chosen for the post. We even found the ad for which the basic criteria for that particular post was B.Sc, B.Ed with computer science (experienced teacher). So we asked around regarding this matter and found out that out of the lot there were only 3 candidates who were chosen to appear for the interview. One was a BSc. Botany (who at that time was officiating in this particular school) another was a BSc Physics ( an experienced teacher from another school) and the last was BSc Computer Science( an experienced teacher from the English section). All this information was obtained after much enquiry and investigation by us parents. As far as we know the standard for selecting a candidate in any deficit school or private school for that matter is through a written test followed by personal interview and demonstration but in this particular case direct interview was conducted. The candidate was not even qualified to begin with as the important criteria was a teacher with Computer Science not Botany nor Physics nor Chemistry or Zoology Honours. The

experienced teacher with "computer science" was rejected but a candidate who does not have any knowledge on how to teach Computers to Classes 9 and 10 students was chosen. This has greatly affected the students and the school took remedial measures by asking a senior teacher to take Computer classes for the above two classes for the time being. When the basic requirement was Computer Science why was the candidate with no knowledge of Computers for Classes 9 and 10 chosen in the first place? Is it because the candidate was already an officiating teacher? Is the favouritism card being played in this case?

As parents when our children complain about any subjects we tackle it some way or the other. So the school/ principal to cover up their "so called appointment" had asked the chosen candidate to take up further computer courses to improve her own knowledge. If the school had to ask the candidate to go for further courses on a subject for which they urgently need a teacher then should they not have chosen the experienced candidate qualified to teach with Computer Science in the first place? . We are not blaming the candidate because perhaps the chosen

candidate did their best in the interview but if they did, then they should also excel in teaching the required "subject". Is this the standard practice in Deficit schools today? As parents we always want the best for our children so we request the Education Department to look into this matter. Many readers will ask why this issue is being raised today and not then. The reason is our daughter and many daughters of other parents are in class 9 and 10 this year and they will be taking Computers as a subject. If the teacher is not qualified to teach that subject then how will our children learn?

Yours etc.,  
Concerned Parents  
(Name withheld on request)

#### Training our Children

Editor,  
Our children today are burdened with heavy study material, and at the same time we trust negative things on them, about their future, career, etc. The media, specially the social media, augments such not so positive thoughts and emotions. Our children also have become physically weak. The situation is quite alarming. Unless the society and parents take notice, and act proactively, our children may have bleak

futures as far as their lifestyles are concerned. True, there would a few brilliant ones who would make their impression, but others would fall apart.

Parents and guardians must take special care for their wards so that right upbringing is taught and children are encouraged to think positively and be active physically. The main focus of education has to be about inculcating habits of good human beings and good citizens. We must teach our children the values of life, our environment, respect for other human lives and the poor, etc. Our country has to bring the best practices of education in Finland, Norway, Singapore, Japan, etc. For school going children, parents are immensely dependent on the schools and teachers for their education and thought process. The reality is that the primary training for being good humans and citizens has to be complemented by schools and homes.

If India is to become a great nation, it has to invest in its children to make them great.

Yours etc.,  
A Bhuyan  
Nagaon

Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of The Shillong Times

*“In a city that is barely getting by with its small budget, something like illegal immigration can be the difference from being able to provide the level of public service that people expect.”*

--- Lou Barletta

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.188 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2019

### Temptations to politicise tragedies

THE Pulwama incident has cast a pall of gloom across the country and reactions have ranged from the mature to the radical. Across India candle-light vigils and solemn tributes were paid to the martyrs whose lives were blown apart due to what is largely seen as a ‘major intelligence failure’ considering that there was enough intelligence output of the possibility of such an attack. A dispassionate analysis of the incident by security experts suggests careful planning, infiltration of an IED doctor (a technical person capable of fabricating IEDs) and a module fully functional at work with a network of over-ground workers. Pakistan is no stranger to the cacophonous nature of India’s democracy where the acquisition of defence equipments becomes subject of intense debate and acrimony and its defence capabilities are laid bare before the world. Democracy has its soft underbelly and that is the politicisation of every issue at the expense of national interests. At the moment there is a strong sense of national pride and the intent to seek retribution for the 40 lives lost. The question is how long will this ‘sense of defeat at the hands of the enemy’ last?

There are knee jerk reactions everywhere but a sustained policy for dealing with Pakistan is what is most needed today. The abrogation of the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status by India in its trade relations with Pakistan is just one small step and will not make much impact considering that the balance of trade is in India’s favour. Trying to isolate Pakistan in the international community is also a futile effort considering China’s presence as the bulwark for Pakistan, due to its own geo-political and strategic interests in the region. These are the pitfalls of international diplomacy and strong nations tend to break all the rules of the game. They are interested in pushing their own dominant agenda of conquest and control even in this day and age of peace-building overtures based on economic cooperation. Every nation seeks to be the most powerful military and economic power and every other attempt to build a violence-free world fails at the altar of self interest.

In India, while the attempt to politicise the issue has been largely muted due to the fear that such stratagem might backfire and alienate even the non-partisan voter, subtle political devices are at work by certain political parties to turn this into electoral dividends. This should not be allowed to happen at any cost, least of all by the Party currently running the Government and looking for a triumphant return.

# CAB: NE BJP & allies have no moral right to be in saffron fold

Albert Thyrniang

The Anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 (CAB) North East based political parties and NGOs celebrated when Rajya Sabha was adjourned sine die on February 13, the last day of the last parliamentary (Budget) session of the NDA government. For all intents and purposes the controversial Bill has lapsed and BJP units who opposed the bill and allies of the saffron party in the region were quick to claim victory. Some protagonists have been unofficially declared ‘heroes’ of North East and were accorded enthusiastic receptions from their respective supporters with garlands and bouquets on their return from the national capital where they camped till the dreaded Bill was forced to exit from the Upper House.

Congratulations must be offered to non-political groups and individuals for their anti-CAB activism. NESO, other students’ bodies, social organisations, civil societies, activists, artists, lakhs of ordinary citizens protested with all their might and creativity to vehemently oppose the dubious Bill. It was nothing short of a mass movement against the Bill that threatens the very identity and existence of the myriad ethnic groups in the North East.

Beginning from January 8, the day when the Bill was hurriedly passed in the Lok Sabha, every day the news from the region were about protests against the Bill that would alter the demography in the seven states by a hundred and eighty degree. The young, the old, the brave women of Manipur who were even injured in their clash with the security forces, the fearless people of Mizoram who manifested their dissent in strong terms, the intellectuals of Assam who had to face sedition charges, the state and national awardees who decided to return their deserved trophies to the governments in protest, all see the Bill as an attempt to dump lakhs of foreigners in the land they have inhabited indigenously for centuries. It is a victory well fought. No wonder the spontaneous celebrations and joys after the Rajya Sabha Deputy adjourned the house sine die. It was literally a sigh of relief after a long, intense stand off.

My uneasiness is with the BJP allies in the North

East. They stand accused of being entities who share the ideology and agenda of the BJP and RSS otherwise how can they still be partners of the communal national party post CAB? It must be recorded that right wing leaders, who obviously include not just the BJP but the entire Sangh Parivar, did their best to table and pass the Bill in the Rajya Sabha. Due to the lack of majority in the Upper House the BJP was forced not to introduce their vote catching project. Without an iota of doubt they would have bulldozed the Bill had they enjoyed clear majority. Till the very last moment no statement was made by the NDA government that they would not persist with the Bill considering the sentiments of the North Eastern states. In other words the creators of the Bill were very keen in passing it as it would favour the majority community at the expense of the microscopic minorities. The BJP has not given up their agenda though CAB was allowed to lapse. By being with the BJP their allies in the North East have a stake in its malevolent agenda. If they don’t share that vision then by now they would have quit the NDA, the BJP and the North East Democratic Alliance.

It is not one’s intention to undermine the efforts of the regional parties in opposing the bill. The point is that they did not succeed in convincing the BJP to either scrap the Bill or not to pass it in the Rajya Sabha. Instead the BJP partners in the North East succeeded in persuading other parties like the JDU, RJD, TDP, BJD, Shiv Sena and others to vote against the Bill (if reaches that stage of passage). The BJP was forced to give up at the last moment after it was clear that the Bill would not go through due to lack of support. The BJP top brass ignored its partners from the North East. The Prime Minister was in no mood to lend an ear to any suggestion from his North East admirers. Instead at the very epicenter of the protests, when Parliament was in session, he reiterated his party’s commitment to ‘correct the wrongs of partition’. The Home Minister cancelled

the will of the Nehru-Gandhi family members prevails. Without this family the party is almost nonexistent. Mr. Rahul Gandhi must be appreciated for his political maturity and courage in bringing Priyanka Vadra Gandhi into the party as its General Secretary in charge of Eastern Uttar Pradesh and that just before the national elections. Indeed this is a masterstroke! However, the rising popularity of Priyanka and her broader acceptance among voters and citizens of the country over Rahul Gandhi may be a matter of concern for both siblings in the forthcoming power struggle. As the saying goes, two tigers cannot roam the same forest; two heavyweight contenders for the top executive job of running India, the coveted seat of the Prime Minister may make the loud expression of happiness on the face of Rahul Gandhi change to anxiety and insecurity. I anticipate

statement of purpose from the saffron party. One year after Modi captured power, on Republic day 2015, in an advertisement that quoted the preamble of the Constitution, the words ‘Secular’ and ‘Socialist’ were conspicuously missing. Political observers read the anointing of Yogi Adityanath, who had earlier stated that ‘word secularism is the biggest lie in India.’ as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh was a step towards officially declaring India a Hindu state by 2019. The Front Against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016 of Assam believed that the determined push for CAB was part of this agenda. Do the allies of the BJP see CAB as a piece of legislation not linked at all to Hindutva and other agenda of right wing groups? If yes how do they dare to collaborate with agents of that agenda? Or is the mentioned agenda harmless to the North East?

To drive my point home, let me venture into some speculative questions. As shown above the North East BJP partners quite easily convinced the JDU, RJD, TDP, BJD, Shiv Sena to vote against CAB. Among them JDU, BJD and Shiv Sena are BJP coalition partners at the centre and the states. If these parties were to be regional parties in the North East in place of the NPP, UDP, HSPDP, PDF, NDPP, would they be still allies of the BJP? The answer is an emphatic no. They would have abandoned the right wing party before January 8 or soon after the date itself. In fine it is recapped that the allies of the BJP in North East were not directly responsible for the failure of the BJP to even table CAB in Rajya Sabha. Even if they take credit for it, after the undisputed intention of the BJP to legislate a detrimental bill, the respected NE regional parties no longer have the moral right to be associates of the Party that is keen to promote its ideology and spread its agenda at the expense of a vulnerable region. Their continuing alliance is an unstated declaration that they share the ideology and agenda of the BJP, the RSS and other Hindutva groups.

As stated by this writer earlier the agenda of the BJP/RSS is now open. They desire to convert India into a ‘Hindu Rashtra’. Earlier the agenda was in secret documents but now it is in the public domain. When BJP led NDA Government first came to power in 1998 it appointed Venkatchaliah Commission to review the Constitution. Though the report was dumped owing to wide spread opposition, the instance was an open

## Fear of Extinction: Human Rights, Immigration, Demographics, and Identity Issues – I

By Deepa Majumdar

A refugee is one who seeks refuge. Although separated by centuries, Christ (and the holy family, whose flight to Egypt was chronicled by Matthew) and HH the fourteenth Dalai Lama (who left occupied Tibet for India in 1959) are among our most famous refugees. India has a long history of granting refuge to those persecuted in other nations, with the Dalai Lama among the most recent of such refugees. Others include ancient Jews and Zoroastrians. If CAB granted refuge to all fleeing persecution in India’s neighboring countries – not just Hindus – it would be more in tune with India’s illustrious history of compassion.

In the twenty-first century, refugees seek refuge in the literal sense of safety from threats to their freedom and lives. Not all immigrants are refugees. The difference between the economic immigrant and the refugee could not be greater than in our times. To be footsore, desperate, homeless, fearful, raped, maimed, and sorrowful – after seeing loved ones killed – is surely an ultimate test of human resilience and the power of faith. Many refugees set out with little more than a GPS and the name of God.

Modern refugees are not only stellar examples of resilience and family values before a narcissistic-materialistic world where families break up over trivial issues – they not only test our capacities for charity and generosity – but in the ultimate, they challenge our powers of self-knowledge. For modern man – who can ford the deepest rivers and climb the highest mountains – does not know himself. Relying on identities, instead of his inmost immortal highest universal Self, he knows himself through group monikers that scaffold his frail ego – thus belying the very purpose of modernity – which is to forge the “I” out of the amorphous “we.” When fleeing en masse to a foreign nation, refugees can unwittingly threaten, through demographics, prevailing identities in the host nation.

Yet, nobody with common sense should depict the flooding of a nation by desperate foreign refugees, whether legal or illegal, as an “invasion” – as Mr. Trump does, almost daily, in reference to Honduras and other refugees from the Latin south of the US. To a survivor of PRC’s invasion of Tibet, such a depiction is an affront to the dignity of those who suffered armed conquest and torture. Where conquerors possess weapons, using violence to subjugate the nations they invade with unparalleled sadism, refugees arrive destitute and in despair – seeking the bare minimum.

Almost all ordinary politics and certainly all identities are byproducts of lack of Self-knowledge. Moreover, they are laden with heavy psychological subtexts. Yet, like opioids, identities, which constitute slivers of the mosaic of the ego, lend us a false but necessary comfort. To stand on the same ground where our ancestors stood for centuries, to till the same land as they did, to practice traditions handed down by generations – all this lulls us before our terror of death. Whether religious or secular, identities offer false comfort in a modern existence that strips us of all nooks of comfort, leaving us staring helplessly at the stark precipice of Death.

To experience this legacy of modern mortality, all one

has to do is visit the contemporary west, where the “I” stands alone – sans family, community, and congregation – yet internalizing these in the form of the ego wrapped in a cohort of identities. This angry unholy solitude of the western “I,” lost in wrappings of undue privacy, is the total converse of the holy meditative solitude of the true hermit. Therefore, the real other of the modern west is neither the Islamic world, nor the former colonies, but the indigenous community, for which it harbors a secret fascination – perhaps because this other opposes modernity by its very nature – so that it is, for the west, the only legitimate escape from modernity.

From the standpoint of rescuing individuality from the “we” of the traditional community – the New World, especially America, should be understood as historically necessary to the purpose of modernity – which is to hone the “I” out of the “we.” As bastions of modernity, these new nations made up of immigrants, strip us of ethnic identities – by immersing us in melting pots from which we emerge as individuals. Notwithstanding racism, they have, in the past been generous to a fault towards immigrants. Since conscience can be practiced only by the individual – not the group (except in the case of a group of conscious individuals capable of dissent) – the “I” created by the New World is essential for our moral development. The fact that Americans actively protested President Trump’s policy of family separation for southern immigrants, is living proof of the moral imperative and efficacy of this “I.” One might therefore say that even immigration, which helps hone further this mundane “I” – a faint echo of the universal Self of all selves – serves the purpose of modernity.

But besides our existential insecurities hidden beneath the rubble of identities, there is the question of human rights. When refugees fleeing terror en masse threaten the demographics of the host country, we must ask ourselves which is more urgent – the human rights imperative to assuage the pain of the refugee, or the right to preserve the identity at stake in host nations? We must also note that the refugee never intends any malicious and deliberate demographic conquest of the host nation.

To anybody with conscience the answer is straightforward. Obviously human rights should take precedence over threatened identities. After all the individual does not become extinct when an identity withers away through the annals of history. But the refugee can die from unintended wounds (mental or physical), starvation, etc. We can live without ephemeral identities or even external culture. But we cannot live without medical care, food, shelter, and safety. Besides, those with abundance ought to share with those without. For, the glowing words of St. Francis Assisi – that it is in giving that we receive – apply not only to individuals but to communities and nations. If, from a human rights perspective, the refugee should be prioritized over the ordinary immigrant – so also, the needs of the refugee should be prioritized over needs of identity.

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Pulwama martyrs

Editor,

Our heads bow down in honour of the martyred troopers of the CRPF in Pulwama. The dastardly act perpetrated by terrorist groups based in Pakistan and in the Kashmir valley is highly condemnable. At a time when politicians seem to have started playing the blame game and lampooning the intelligence community for failure to warn of the IED blast it is time to uplift the morale of our soldiers and give them the respect they deserve. There are also a number of Khasi and Jaintia youths in the Army. Some are also in commanding ranks with various units of the Army, Navy and Air Force about whom many of us do not know. The need of the hour is to ensure peace, communal harmony in society and boost the morale of our forces even while a policy to effectively

deal with cross-border terrorism is put in place.

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

#### Unfair selection

Editor,

Apropos the letter, “Children’s education at stake” (ST Feb 18, 2019) by some concerned parents, I would like to shed some light into this matter. I was one of the candidates who had applied for the same post but was rejected on grounds that I am not qualified for the desired post. The first question that I was asked by the Principal of the school was if I am a Computer Science Honours student to which I replied in the negative but I stated that I had completed a few courses from Ram Krishna Mission, Umsohun. Then the Principal told me that they were looking specifically for a candidate who is a Computer Science (Hon-

ours) graduate and not any candidate with “Computer Knowledge” as they want a teacher who is capable of teaching Computers for classes 9 and 10. On the day that I went to submit my application there were other candidates as well for which the same explanation was given by the Principal. We were not saddened by the rejection because we are B.Sc degree holders with Honours in other subjects and so we knew then and there that we were not qualified. To therefore learn that the School had chosen a candidate who is not qualified and rejected an experienced Computer teacher reeks of favouritism. If the school had given all the candidates a fair chance to participate in the interview or perhaps the “computer courses” that they had sent the chosen candidate to complete then maybe a more qualified candidate would have emerged. I also wish to point out the B.Sc. Computer Science is one

of the courses that is offered only in few colleges in Shillong and to combine B.Sc. Computer Science with B.Ed. is a rarity. That is why applicants have lesser chances of being selected while someone who is already officiating becomes the candidate of choice.

Yours etc.,  
Name withheld on request  
Shillong-8

#### Congress Party dilemma

Editor,

The former political entry of Priyanka Vadra Gandhi has been inspiring. She has tremendous fan following and commendable support of party workers from the lowest level and won the respect of leaders of various ranks within the Congress party. The Indian National Congress is a purely dynastic party within which only

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

“A banker is a fellow who lends you his umbrella when the sun is shining, but wants it back the minute it begins to rain.”

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.189 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2019

### CAB a dominant agenda of BJP

MOST political observers knew that the BJP was not going to drop the contentious Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) simply because political groups and civil society activists of the North East had protested against it. The BJP has not said a word as to why the Bill was not pushed through in the Rajya Sabha this time. It was obvious that not taking up the Bill was a tactical move to consolidate the Hindu vote bank in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections. The BJP is not bothered about the impact of the CAB in the North Eastern states. The Party is hungry to come to power in West Bengal. During Partition there was no large scale exodus of Hindus from East Pakistan to India but violence escalated in the 1950s and 1960s leading to large numbers of upper caste Hindus migrating to West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. Even when border restrictions and other immigration control mechanisms such as barbed wire fencing came up in West Bengal, immigration from Bangladesh continued unabated. Many of these Bangladeshi nationals have entered the country without valid travel documents and these are the people that the BJP is keen to bring under its wings.

This mass migration estimated at around 11 million Hindu Bangladeshis from 1964 to 2013 played a significant role in West Bengal's politics. Today, the BJP estimates that Bangladeshi Hindu immigrants have significant presence in 75 Assembly constituencies which make up approximately one fourth of the state assembly seats. For the BJP, Hindu Bangladeshi refugees are an easy demographic to woo and one that could boost its chances of becoming a major player in West Bengal. However, that demography alone is not enough if the BJP wants to win Bengal where the Trinamool still rules the roost. In 2017, the Minister of State for Home, Kiren Rijiju informed Parliament that there were around 20 million Bangladeshi immigrants staying illegally in India and residing in 17 states and Union territories. Assam alone accounted for 5 million Bangladeshi squatters, while their number in West Bengal was estimated to be the highest at 5.7 million. It is presumed that this immigrant population is largely Hindu, hence the anxiety of the BJP to enrol them into its party rank and file. No wonder Amit Shah reiterated at a public function in Guwahati recently that if the BJP returns to power it would bring back the CAB. Hence the political parties aligned with the BJP are either naive or are misleading their constituents.

14 February was Valentine's Day, the day of love. But in edgy Kashmir, the day ended bloody-red.

If I die in a war zone, box me up and send me home.

Put my medals on my chest, tell my mother I did my best.

Tell my nation not to cry, because I am a soldier born to die.

When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today.

Poignant lines which encapsulate the Pulwama horror of 40 bloodied human flesh and dismembered parts amidst a mangled heap of the ill-fated bus, part of a 78 vehicle convoy of 2500 CRPF jawans travelling from Jammu to Srinagar to resume duty. The deadliest attack on security forces till date when a Jaish-e-Mohammad Kashmiri fideyean rammed his 300kg explosives-laden SUV into the convoy and triggered an explosion which shocked the nation. The worst terror strike in Kashmir over two decades.

An angry India hit back asserting, 'we will not forget, we will not forgive.' With Prime Minister Modi talking tough and giving a free hand to security forces to take action they deem fit. "Logon ka khoon khaal raha hai, yeh main samajh raha hun. A strong reply will be given to this attack."

Though Kashmir has witnessed suicide attacks earlier, this new-age militancy of homegrown Kashmiris cannot be seen through the prism of the past anymore, whereby local youth played only supporting roles to militants sent by terror outfits based in Pakistan to cause mayhem. Pertinently, the Army's "Operation All Out" launched in summer 2017 to eliminate terrorists only gave rise to more militancy.

Today, Pulwama is a wake-up call and underscores the growing radicalization of Kashmiri youth whereby instead of sending recruits to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) for training, JeM brought in trainers from Pakistan. According to the Army there are over 191 local youths who joined various militant outfits last year, 65 more than 2017. Despite 257 militants being killed in 2018 there is a constant rise in the number of youths joining militancy whereby 250 are again active, 50 from Pulwama alone. Further, there were over 15 Pakistani JeM terrorists in Pulwama of which three were IED experts.

For this new generation

### Pak Terror Tango

# India: We have josh, will hit

By Poonam I Kaushish

of local militancy slain Hizbul Mujahideen's Burhan Wani is the 'poster boy'. A youth bred on constant years of strife and violence who have not only seen death and destruction but also overcome the fear factor. They are alert to the fundamentalists demand for self-determination and glorify those carrying out fideyean attacks. Worse, they have no respect left for any national or regional leaders, perhaps including Hurriyat's Geelani and Mirwaiz Farooq.

Undeniably, Pulwama once again raises several questions about how

and their State sponsors from carrying on their irrational jihad. In fact, they could raise a lethal phase of violence, notwithstanding Islamabad's diplomatic isolation.

At another level, the Government has a lot of explaining to do for intelligence failure. How was such a large-scale relocation happening in a terrorist-prone area? Is assembling a 300 kg-plus car bomb that easy in South Kashmir? How did a rogue SUV find its way on a sensitised route and its planning go undetected? Were standard operating procedures flouted? Who was complacent? Is local

necessary to meet those dangers. It includes also a basic, crystalline faith that India is on the right path and that Kashmir is worth defending.

Consequently, the success of counter-terrorism lies in degrading the JeM and LeT's capabilities, forcing them to change their intentions and denying them opportunities to strike. New Delhi needs to think of ways to neutralise their fast-growing domestic base, availability of hardware and human resource, collaborative linkages with organized crime, gun runners, drug syndicates, hawala operators, subversive radical groups etc.

For any anti-terrorist operation to succeed one must be focused on the vitals, keeping a watch on the essentials, deliberate and debate the options and leave the desirables till the vitals have been achieved and essentials addressed.

Certainly, in this zero sum game the muscle-flexing, war rhetoric and one-upmanship will continue till the core issue of Kashmir is resolved. In the ultimate, India cannot wish away Pakistan and nor can Islamabad bully New Delhi to being a passive bystander. It must make clear that protection to terrorists by Islamabad is unacceptable. They need to be smoked out and bombed, a la US seals of Osama bin Laden at Abbottabad and India's hitting NSCN(K) terror modules in Myanmar.

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

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

**In this age of real politik, India will remain at the mercy of terrorist organizations which will always have the upper hand in choosing the time and place of the next attack. Our leaders should not be under any illusion that the death of the fideyees will deter jihadis operating from Pakistan and their State sponsors from carrying on their irrational jihad. In fact, they could raise a lethal phase of violence, notwithstanding Islamabad's diplomatic isolation.**

serious Pakistan is about reining in anti-India terrorism. Of course, New Delhi will demand stringent action against JeM Chief Maulana Masood Azhar who like Lakshar-e Toiba's Hafez Sayeed continues to roam scot free.

Anyway one looks at it, the terror attack exposes the tenuous links in the troika that rules Pakistan --- Establishment, Army and ISI. New Delhi, times out of number forgets that its neighbour has been nurtured on a military psyche whereby it views India as an ideological, not solely military problem fed on a staple anti-India tirade since 1947. For the ruling troika seeped in armed tradition along-with its jihadist proxies, the 'core' issue of Kashmir is an article of faith. Succinctly, described by late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as "bleeding India with a thousand cuts."

In this age of real politik, India will remain at the mercy of terrorist organizations which will always have the upper hand in choosing the time and place of the next attack. Our leaders should not be under any illusion that the death of the fideyees will deter jihadis operating from Pakistan

support for militancy growing in the Valley?

Clearly, our supposedly vigilant intelligence agencies are not working in tandem given the glaring security lapse in actionable intelligence and coordination, crucial for safeguarding India's national security fabric. Obviously, New Delhi has not learnt any lesson from previous Pakistan operations against us.

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

For the success of any strategy be it combative or "limited" war one needs national will, great swiftness and sagacity more than readiness to use military power. War is an option every nation prepares. This entails a clear view of where the dangers lie, and of what kinds of responses are

## Fear of Extinction: Human Rights, Immigration, Demographics, and Identity Issues – II

By Deepa Majumdar

Given this background, our historical moment demands a certain balance in our moral-political views of refugees. Although vilified on social media (the modern lynch mob) for these words (from Sep 16, 2018, Rotterdam, Netherlands), which have been taken out of context, HH the Dalai Lama, himself a refugee, has perhaps the most balanced of all views on the issue of refugee versus identity:

"When refugees from other countries have come to Europe, it's wonderful that Germany and other European countries have given them help. However, I think that most of those refugees think of their own lands as home, but just now there is lots of killing, bullying and suffering there. That's why they escaped. So, in the short term, European countries should provide them with shelter, and should particularly provide children with facilities for education and training, including mechanical training, for the young people. The aim is that they should eventually be able to return to rebuild their own countries. That has been my view right from the beginning.

"For example, we Tibetans took shelter in India, but most Tibetans want to return to Tibet when the situation there has changed. Each country has its own culture, language, way of life, and it is better for people to live in their own country. That is my view."

Not only balanced, but the Dalai Lama's words reflect our current historical context of recoiling

preferable to a pyre that burns a refugee for the sake of salvaging identities. One could understand (but not justify) violence over a piece of bread when starving people fight for food – but not violence over fear of extinction of identities. The New World stands as living proof that the individual does not die when his identity becomes extinct. For its immigration oath ceremonies sound the death knell of all prior identities. The new immigrant emerges from these ceremonies, a grand individual, washed clean of all prior identities.

To hate the Hindu Bengali, who fled neighboring Bangladesh into the Northeast because of circumstances beyond his control – for the sake of salvaging the indigenous identity – is morally untenable. Yet, the reality remains what it is. The Hindu Bengali refugee is unlikely in the near future to return to his original home, as the Dalai Lama suggests above. Therefore, the indigenous communities of the Northeast might be demographically overwhelmed by these "outsiders."

But an indigenous community that salvages its identity by violating and killing the innocent other, commits suicide thereby. For the identity thus salvaged is never the same as it was before. After shedding blood, it becomes a source of internal extinction – withering away under the burden of its own moral toxins. Present day America is living proof of the fact that

**The Hindu Bengali refugee is unlikely in the near future to return to his original home, as the Dalai Lama suggests above. Therefore, the indigenous communities of the Northeast might be demographically overwhelmed by these "outsiders."**

nationalism. For, the greatest, most towering of human personalities (like the Dalai Lama) – that stand out as movers and shakers of History – obey the logic of History consciously – where others obey this logic unconsciously. Anything but unsympathetic to the plight of the refugee, yet, His Holiness is realistic – because he is driven by compassion – the source of objectivity – not by pity, which blinds, because it derives from the ego.

Cocooned by centuries of external sameness, the nativist, who attacks the other, whom he perceives as a threat to his existential nook in the form of the indigenous community, may not understand that his man-made cultural home is ephemeral, narcissistic, and temporally sedentary in the extreme. Paranoid before the other, he may not understand that the surest proof that his cocoon is ephemeral lies in the fact that his rage and racism against this other, who he fears as a source of demographic doom, is unjust in the extreme. That no refugee willfully plots the demographic extinction of his hosts is something he cannot fathom. Nor does he understand that the unrelenting purpose of modernity is to yank him out of his cocoon, to hone the "I" out of the "we" – sometimes through this very other he abhors. Yet by recoiling further into nativism, the nativist fulfills the principle banner of our current historical moment – namely, recoiling nationalism.

But from a higher moral standpoint nothing – absolutely nothing – justifies violence towards the other, for the sake of salvaging identities. A funeral pyre that immolates all identities is

a community that murders innocent others, commits suicide thereby. For, unrepentant America has been spiraling downward morally, ever since it killed more than 100,000 innocent Iraqis in the 2003 pre-emptive attack on Iraq. Moreover, the Law of Karma applies equally to groups as it does to individuals. A nation that attacks innocent others is likely to be attacked in turn.

To say "Bye bye India, hello China," as some might in the Northeast, in response to the 2019 Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), is not so much seditious, as it is short-sighted. First, unlike China, India is a democracy – despite threats from Hindu fundamentalists who are clueless about the highest ideals of Hindu mysticism. Moreover, freedom in India is not only civic, but existential – given its unique spiritual history of mysticism and meditation, drawn not only from Vedantic Hinduism, but also from Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Sikhism, and other valuable religions. Second, China may not offer the Northeast the advantages India has offered thus far. Third, China has a record of unparalleled human rights abuses in Tibet, which the whole world ignored, for fear of China.

As part of a futuristic dystopia, the Northeast might want to remember PRC's record of torture in Tibet. It might want to anticipate the brutal brown-on-brown racism it might face as a colony of imperialistic China. What matters in the end, is not whether it belongs to India or China, but rather, which of the two ascending nations is more likely to offer the Northeast greater sovereignty and human rights.

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Governor tours Garo Hills

Editor,  
Recently Meghalaya Governor, Tathagata Roy, has undertaken a tour of Garo Hills beginning from North Garo Hills, to gather first-hand knowledge about the development or lack of development of the western sector of Meghalaya. During his visit to the districts of Garo Hills, he held meetings with the Deputy Commissioners and the district heads of different departments to know about the progress of various developmental schemes sanctioned by the central government. Many officers were on their toes and in fact many were wary about such review meetings with the Governor as they were not used to such meetings before. The meetings presumably went off well and the Governor got valuable information about the real state of affairs of the Garo Hills.

Kudos to the present Governor for visiting the

districts and we hope that his tour must have benefited him and will help to pull up the lackadaisical officers serving in that part of the state. We appeal to the Governor to tour other districts of the state as well and to follow up the different schemes and help speed up developmental activities in the remaining districts of the state. This will not only help him to gain wider knowledge about the state and the large number of pending projects but will also help the development of the state as a whole because touring and reviewing by the head of state will make a lot of difference.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Via-Email

#### Kashmiri's are Indians too!

Editor,  
All those who tried to divide India by killing our soldiers at Pulwama in Kashmir must be punished

in accordance with the law of the land. Also, all those who are trying to divide our country by giving hate speeches ~ painting all the Kashmiri Muslims as terrorists and by assaulting innocent Kashmiri students in various parts of our country, must be punished accordingly. In this hour of darkness, we need to be united and show the world that we are united. We need to show solidarity with the law abiding Kashmiri students, shopkeepers who have been residing in various places of India to tell the world that Kashmir is an integral part of India and Kashmiris are our brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, some anti-national elements have been creating a wrong impression by attacking Kashmiri students and shopkeepers in some parts of our country. They have been trying, as it were, to justify the cause of the rabid organisation who is behind the dastardly killing of our jawans.

The forty CRPF personnel who were killed

in the Pulwama attack represent the unity in diversity of our great country. We have Kashmiri Muslim (N Ahmed), Bengali Hindu (S Biswas and B Santra), Punjabi Sikh (S Singh, MS Attri, J Singh and K Singh) and tribal Jharkhandi (V Soreng). Also we have our brothers from MP (AK Kaochi) to Rajasthan (J Ram, R Lamba, NL Gurjar, H Meena and B Singh) to Assam (M Basumatari) to Tamil Nadu (Subramanian G. and Sivachandran C.) to Himachal (T Raj) to Kerala (V Kumar V. V.) to Uttarakhand (M Lal and V Singh) to Karnataka (Guru H.) to Odisha (MK Behra and PK Sahoo) to Maharashtra (S Rajput and R Shivaji) to Bihar (S Sinha and RK Thakur) to UP (AK Yadav, PK Tripathi, A Kumar, VK Mourya, R Vakeel, P Kumar, R Yadav, KK Rawat, P Singh, S. Babu, AK Azad and M Kumar) among them. Indeed, Pulwama martyrs teach us what India is all about.

Moreover, we cannot

tag all German Christians as terrorists for the Holocaust against Jews. Similarly we cannot tag all Indian Hindus as terrorists for the 1984 riots against Sikhs and 2002 riots against Muslims. In the same manner we cannot tag all the Kashmiri Muslims as terrorists for the terror strike in Kashmir.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Via email

#### Don't punish all Kashmiris

Editor,  
After the Pulwama tragedy there has been a tendency to demonise all Kashmiris and to label them as terrorists and anti-nationals. But it seems that is the intent of a few people in this country who claim to be fired by a nationalist fervour. Such people believe only they have a claim to patriotism. This is not true at all. Large sections of Kashmiri's do not subscribe to the jihadist agenda and just want to move on with

their lives. It is also true that militarisation of the valley has radicalised large sections of youth who are indoctrinated with the idiom of hatred and fear fed by terror mongers from across our western borders. Vigilance along the border needs to be enhanced and the country's anti-terror module must be reimagined in the light of present realities. Rather than alienate all Kashmiris it is important to isolate the enemy and not give them any quarter. That's how other countries have tackled terrorism within their soil. Knee-jerk reactions show our own immaturity. Patriotism is a noble virtue that is inculcated in the home at a tender age. Are we even doing it?

RN Singh,  
Via email

**Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of The Shillong Times**

“...21st century leaders use their brain cells more than their muscle tissues!”

--- Israelmore Ayivor

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.190 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2019

### Governor's post above politics

MEGHALAYA Governor, Dr Tathagatha Roy an eminent person in his own right could have been an exemplary appointee to the Shillong Raj Bhavan by rising above party politics and refraining from making public statements that are provocative and overtly partisan. His tweet asking people of India to boycott 'everything Kashmiri' which includes Kashmiri products is unbecoming at a time when there is need to maintain calm as averse to being jingoistic. Every Indian feels the pain of losing 40 CRPF jawans on Feb 14, due to the IED attack but war-mongering or verbal attacks aimed at an entire population are uncalled for. This is not the first time that Governor Roy has sent out controversial tweets or made provocative statements.

Meghalaya's past governors like BK Nehru, MM Jacob and Dr KK Paul lent dignity to the post they held. The Shillong Raj Bhavan fell from grace after a Governor appointed by the NDA Government was sent packing on allegations of sexually inappropriate behaviour. It goes to show that not every appointee can carry with dignity the post of a constitutional head.

A key debate in the Constituent Assembly was on the appointment of governors. There were vociferous demands then that a governor should be elected, not appointed because in a democracy the head of the state should be directly elected by the people. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru however differed. His contention was that an elected governor would become a parallel authority to the elected chief minister. This would hamper the normal functioning of the state. But Nehru wanted the governor to be an eminent person, respected in his field, whether in academics, science or the arts. He did not favour a political appointee, a person whom the ruling party sought to elevate to this august office. But Nehru never imagined that even the constitutional head could be used by his own Party to serve its ends. It was the Congress Party under Indira Gandhi that first used Article 356 which empowers the Centre to dismiss an elected government if there was a "breakdown" in the law and order in a state after getting a report from the Governor of that state.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is under Governor's rule today and questions should rightly be put to the Governor there about the security lapse that resulted in the death of the 40 brave-hearts. It is high time to review the procedure of selection of governors and stop making the Constitutional post a retirement job for politicians, retired bureaucrats, police chiefs and army generals. In fact it is time the country debates whether Governors are at all needed.

# When leaders fail the nation

By Prem Chandran

time. There is intelligence failure as a top former RAW chief Vikram Sood has stated in Hyderabad, stressing that this was not an act of just one suicide bomber. Yet, with the huge money spent on intelligence gathering in the Valley, no hint came as to what was happening. There was lethargy on the part of the officials engaged in the surveillance operations. And, there was failure on the part of the political leadership which oversaw matters from Delhi.

Massod Azhar, the notorious character heading the Jaish-e-Mohammed is roaming around freely in Pakistan, under the patronage of the ISI. His institutions also collect huge funds in that name from the Gulf and other regions and he's standing for elections, and playing more mischief against India in multiple ways. All these directly under the watch of the political establishment in Pakistan with direct support from the military intelligence wing, the ISI. Yet, India has no guts to confront it for its acts of omissions and commissions. This is a strange situation. The Mumbai attacks occurred; India under Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi scurried for cover. Later, the attacks on Pathankot airbase took place, followed by a similar attack on the Uri military establishment. Both happened under Modi's watch. India simply blinked. Pakistan asked for proof, and in a shameful manner, India scurried around to collect proof. Everybody knew how Pakistan would respond to it. It said this was no proof. In the first place, why did India take the trouble of collecting and giving proof to Pakistan? Did it expect of the enemy nation to take action against the perpetrators — its own military brass and the rogue agencies like Jaish? In doing so, the Modi government was simply buying time, and its actions in this respect were just an eye-wash to fool the Indian citizenry. Meanwhile what is the impression gaining ground in Pakistan. With India not taking strong action against Pakistan, Jaish kingpin Masoor Azhar's stature grew from a hero to a demi-god. By its failure to act, India has accorded Azhar a superhuman status in Pakistan. He's gaining in stature and keeps having the last laugh. Instead, had Pakistan been made to pay a heavy price for what its operatives did against In-

dia from Pakistani soil, Azhar would have been finished off by the Pakistani establishment itself long ago. India's failure to act is the prime reason why Pakistan gives Azhar a free hand. The more Manmohan Singh vacillated and the more Modi does more of the same the more India will suffer.

Under Manmohan Singh and Modi, India took several hits from Pakistan and failed to retaliate act. Even Modi's 56-inch chest meant nothing for India in the past five years. His big talks from public platforms helped little. Even at the last minute, when Modi came up with budget provisions to woo the unorganised labour and small-scale farmers with pension schemes, he did so because he found there was no other way he could win the next parliamentary elections. The assembly poll results in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh jolted him out of his slumber. Now, he's out to create new vote banks. Had he done these within at least the first two years of his rule, his sincerity would not have been questioned. Instead, he carried on with the jaded governance systems left behind by the UPA-Congress. Other than implementing a market taxation restructuring system via the GST, he failed to change India for the better. This is not to argue that he was a failure; not so, overall. He gave leadership, refused to buckle under pressures from schemers like Chandrababu Naidu or the Thackeray clan, both corrupt to the core. He put them in their places. The strong positions Modi took on several fronts were highly appreciable. But, his failures, like in not facing situations squarely vis-a-vis Pakistan, will remain as a major black mark on his leadership.

No one is asking Modi to declare a war on Pakistan under the present circumstances. But what other plan does Modi have to discipline a wayward, rogue neighbour? In the past five years, has he put a Plan B in place, or slept over such matters? An Afghan route is often talked about; but this is not for open discussion. One does not know how viable it was, is, or will be. The way to hit Pakistan back, Modi once hinted, was to take the Balochistan route. India apparently could not make much headway there too. For now, Pakistan has all the aces up its sleeves. It has China on

its side, it has the Islamic nations -- other than, say, Iran - to be counted on for overt or covert support. Saudi Arabia and the entire Gulf patronises Pakistan. And it has the Americans who would talk but not act against it.

With Pakistan establishing closer links with China in recent years, it would be more difficult for India to take on Pakistan. India is neither with the US nor against the US. When China is exposing its designs against India, the natural course open to India is to edge closer to the US, and frame a meaningful alliance with the Americans. India failed to do that, and it expects "favours" from the US in the form of solid support to discipline Pakistan. There is abject failure of diplomacy on the Indian side even under Modi. Manmohan Singh took the first steps to reach out to the Americans. But India does not know how to go about winning friends. Truth be told - the leadership is seen to be very incompetent.

Indira Gandhi's time was different. In the age of the Cold War, it was easy for India to ally with the Soviet Union and position itself against the US Non-Alignment which in reality was an alignment in favour of Russia against the US. It helped India little, though it accorded it some protection and care at world fora, thanks to the clout of the Soviet Union. With the end of the Cold War and disintegration of the Soviet Union, India felt orphaned. Russia was no more into alliance games, and rather minded its business. Americans forgot the past to some extent, and said they were ready to build bridges with India in the age of US-inspired liberalization and Soviet-initiated Openness (Glasnost). But, three decades later, India is still confused and taking only baby steps towards allying with the US. You are either with someone, or not with them. The lack of courage on the part of Indian leadership to act firmly is most evident in such situations too.

Modi will not escape retribution if he fails to act this time. This is not a call for war, per se. It is time to salvage India's image and reputation. If Modi sits back and sweats it out, it will have an impact on the way people judge him in the 2019. That's for sure. —

(The writer is a media consultant, former Editor and a campaigner with India Against Corruption and can be contacted at preemcee@gmail.com)

Time for New Delhi to seriously focus on Kashmir

## Valley's youth have to be brought to mainstream

By Sagarneel Sinha

The recent deadly attack by a suicide bomber from the Pakistan based terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammad in Pulwama of South Kashmir which killed 49 Indian paramilitary forces, the worst terrorist attack in decades since the start of insurgency in the valley, has once again brought the issue of Kashmir before New Delhi. The suicide bomber identified as Adil Ahmed Dar, who was reportedly in his early 20s, recorded a video message earlier which clearly indicates how the valley has slipped into the hands of a violent Islamic ideology — similar to ISIS, probably the most violent terrorist group in the history of world terrorism.

Many always say that Kashmir is a political problem but if one checks the pages of history one would find that it is not exactly a political problem. The problem dates to the partition period when British administered India was split into India and Pakistan based on the two nation theory of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan. According to Jinnah India was for Hindus and Pakistan for Muslims. So for Jinnah and his supporters, Muslim majority Kashmir belongs to Pakistan. Although despite Jinnah's attempt, Kashmiris were divided in backing Pakistan, but as the things turned up, larger part of Kashmir stayed with India and the other part remained with Pakistan. Since then, Kashmir has been the bone of contention between the two countries and the issue was mostly viewed through political lens.

However, things took a more negative turn in the 1990s with the rise of insurgency in the valley aided by Pakistan. The insurgents attacked the minorities — Hindu Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs. It has been over three decades of unending bleeding in the valley with many moderate Muslims too facing the wrath of the Pakistan supported terrorists. It is this insurgency which actually shifted the issue of Kashmir from political to an extreme religious issue. A chunk of Kashmiris has been demanding freedom from India though divided whether to join Pakistan or stay independent. For them Kashmir is still a political mess and they have always echoed this.

However, the present situation of Kashmir says — it is no more a political issue with roots of Islamic terrorism deeply penetrating into the ground. Obviously, this was first witnessed when minority Hindus and Sikhs were targeted and were forced to leave the valley by turning Kashmir, which once used to be the centre of Hinduism (Shaivism and Advaita Vedanta) and Mahayana Buddhism and later Sufism, into an intolerant religious state. However, many refused to note the change in the valley including New Delhi. Nevertheless, the attack on the convoy of the Indian forces in Pulwama by a local suicide bomber clearly shows the ground of Kashmir has changed radically abandoning the moderate Sufi ideology and New Delhi's disconnection from the ground realities of the valley.

India is blaming Pakistan for the Pulwama attack but the question is will that solve the mess of Kashmir? No. Because blaming Pakistan will not help us as our neighbour is globally known for sheltering and nurturing terrorists — world's most wanted terrorist Osama Bin Laden was found hidden in Pakistan before being killed by United States. And Pakistan's support to Kashmiri insurgency against India is actually a tactic of waging a proxy war against its neighbour. It is better for New Delhi to shift the focus on Kashmir. Unfortunately, New Delhi also has its own share, apart from Pakistan, of blame for the mess of Kashmir mainly due to ill political decisions made by two former prime ministers — Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi. Even previous prime minister Manmohan Singh's approach about Kashmir didn't change the reality of the ground and so is the present prime minister Narendra Modi's viewpoint. It was only during the regime of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, most probably the only Indian prime minister who knew the illness of the valley and was genuine to solve it, the solution of Kashmir seemed achievable.

New Delhi never tried to connect directly to the voices of Kashmir. It has always relied on the two dominant family run regional parties — National Conference of the Abdullahs and People's Democratic Party of the Mufitis. Truth is both the leaders of these parties speak in double voices — when in power they speak in India's tone and while in opposition they speak in a voice which is softly opposite to India — especially PDP is known to be more soft on separatists. It is due to this reason that leaders of these two parties are not even well accepted by all the Kashmiris. It is this political vacuum in the valley which helped Pakistan to fill with the help of its sleeper cells in the valley — the separatists — largely due to New Delhi's negligence.

But withdrawing security cover of the separatists whose thoughts are well rooted in the valley, will not change the ground actuality. New Delhi has to fill the political vacuum. People's Conference leader and former separatist Sajjad Lone, son of former separatist Abdul Ghani Lone who was killed by terrorists for leaving separatism to join Vajpayee's peace efforts, is currently the major option New Delhi has. But New Delhi has to prevent itself from committing the same mistakes — instead of imposing its own ideals on Sajjad Lone, it should rather cooperate with him.

The situation of the valley — especially South Kashmir — has worsened heavily due to influence of the extremist religious ideas of ISIS, which emerged as a global threat in 2014. The radical youths with guns and grenades in their hands and brains filled with hate have to be eliminated. For that strong military response is needed mainly in the areas of South Kashmir — Shopian, Pulwama, Anantnag and Kulgam. It is also true that more army action may result in more radicalisation. To nullify that, Indian forces have to recruit more Kashmiris in the battle against the terrorists and should also reduce the communication gap between the Jammu & Kashmir police forces and the Indian army and the paramilitary forces. Apart from that, a strong intelligence system is needed in the valley which can come into force only after having the local Kashmiris on board. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

## Understanding true meditation

Editor

I read with interest the special article, "The Ideal Response to the Phulwama Terror Attack" (ST Feb 19, 2019) and its references to "Transcendental Meditation" (TM). The sentence that caught my eye was the following:

"At one time, meditation was considered "mystical." Now, doctors routinely prescribe it, because research shows Transcendental Meditation reduces stress and improves health."

It saddens me to see the same commercialization of Yoga, reduced by a corporeal western society to a set of stretching exercises, now applied to meditation. It saddens me that the authors use research (instead of wisdom) to arrogate science above the superior truth of mysticism — that they use the term "mystical" with such screeching cynicism. Like Yoga, meditation too has been reified to that which the shallow modern soul can digest — some-

thing easy, light, not requiring the arduous labor of true belief and devotion to God, bypassing ethical discipline, perfect chastity, etc.

This begs the question, what really is meditation and should it ever be divorced from God consciousness? Is it simply quietening the breath and stilling the mind? If this is all it is, why pay homage to the image of Swami Vivekananda absorbed in meditation, with little to no consciousness of the external world or his body? Why pay homage to images of the Buddha with his eyes turned inward in deep introspection? Why pay homage to the transcendental experiences of Sri Ramakrishna after years of the deepest meditation through which He communed with the form of the Great Goddess he worshipped? Why flock from all over the world to pay homage to Ramana Maharshi?

TM, it seems to me, dilutes and cheapens the very meaning of the word "transcendental" as experienced

by savants east and west. Plato, the great mystic, would have turned in his grave to hear "transcendental" being used in TM.

Real meditation is impossible for most human beings — until they have practiced strict chastity for many years alongside other ethical perfections. Real meditation is dangerous without a proper Guru, because it heightens the lingering impurities of the meditating mind — iniquities that the Guru removes. Real meditation comes after ardent love for God and earnest importunities to the Divine to reveal Itself in the meditating mind. Unlike TM, real meditation demands perfect chastity (many years of unbroken continence). Unlike TM, real meditation comes with profound expiatory powers, transforming forever our minds and bodies.

It saddens me to see India, the hearth and origin of sophisticated forms of meditation, receive TM through postcolonialism and blind westernization — instead of turning to that which keeps India alive, despite moder-

nity — namely the transcendental experiences of our humble silent monks and nuns who receive a vision of God everyday when they meditate.

I asked one such senior monk if meditation is that easy. His reply confirmed my own hunches: "No! Meditation is very difficult."

Please, let us not cheapen true meditation or direct life-giving mystical communion with the Divine, or the real meaning of "transcendental" as used by Plotinus and the European Platonists — with TM!

Yours, etc.,  
Deepa Majumdar  
Via email

## Laitumkrah's fall from grace

Editor,

This is to bring to your kind attention that the footpaths on both sides of the Don Bosco road Laitumkrah especially from Don Bosco Square to Police Point and also from

Don Bosco Square to Dhankheti Point are badly constructed and are now in dilapidated condition. These are footpaths used mainly by school and college going students and also by the general public at large. I have often noticed many school going children and elderly persons fall off the footpaths as they find difficulty in negotiating the potholes in the dilapidated portions along the paths. Moreover, all along this stretch the footpaths are not covered with tiles as was done in the other footpaths of Shillong. In this connection I wish to draw the attention of the PWD, Central Division, Shillong, to attend to these footpaths immediately so that the pedestrians in general and the school going children and the elderly persons in particular will find it easy to walk along the footpaths.

I also wish to draw the attention of the Laitumkrah Durbar Shnong to the invasion of the hawkers all along the footpaths and streets of

Laitumkrah locality. The pedestrians and vehicles alike find it very difficult to negotiate the footpaths because of these hawkers. The Durbar Shnong in its wisdom can lessen this menace by putting in place proper arrangements and regulations. Laitumkrah today looks most disorderly and suffocating with all the street hawkers around. Is it too much for the Durbar Shnong of Laitumkrah to take up the responsibility of ensuring that the Laitumkrah streets and footpaths are freed of hawkers and properly lighted at night as many portions of this locality are without street lights. The dark night a place dangerous as it encourages anti-social elements to thrive.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
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.

“Always acknowledge a fault. This will throw those in authority off their guard and give you an opportunity to commit more.”

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.191 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2019

### NDA gets going

The BJP leading the NDA must have considerable satisfaction at having brought the Shiv Sena around this time again as an ally for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, which would be followed by state assembly elections in Maharashtra. The “honourable” seat-sharing arrangement agreed upon by the two sides comes after a period of suspense when the Sena leadership was seen giving several pin-pricks to the BJP and specially to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, even going to the extent of screaming, “Chowkidar Chor Hai,” vis-a-vis the Rafale deal. Clearly, as the new seat-sharing pact was signed this week, Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray looks like a tamed tiger. In a way, the Shiv Sena had no other go. The NCP of Sharad Pawar edged closer to the Congress and Pawar was increasingly being seen in the company of anti-BJP opposition figures. Together, the NCP and the Congress are capable of putting up a good show in the Lok Sabha polls in the state as also in the assembly polls that too are just a few months away.

Notably, the new pact between the Sena and the BJP comes close on the heels of a similar re-affirmation of NDA ties in Tamil Nadu, where the ruling AIADMK is currently calling the shots. The rival DMK and the Congress are allies, and a close fight between the UPA and the NDA is expected in the southern state. While actor Rajinikant is not entering politics right now and postponed his plans up until the next assembly polls in 2022, chances are also that his fans might side with the BJP for the reason that the matinee idol has a personal liking for PM Modi. Another actor, Kamal Haasan, too is testing the political waters, and might make a difference to the polls this time. The DMK being in a strong position may have an edge, overall, in the state. The BJP has reason to feel comfortable also for the reason that it has finalised a fresh pact with the JDU of Nitish Kumar in Bihar. The scenario may not be all that rosy for the BJP in Bihar. NDA partner SAD in Punjab too is bound to stand by the BJP. With Shiv Sena and other NDA allies standing firmly with the BJP, except for the TDP of Chandrababu Naidu, PM Modi and the BJP can breathe a little easy now.

# Pulwama Attack

# Responding to Pak PM

By Dr D.K.Giri

The terrorist suicide attack at Lethpora, Awantipora in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir killing 46 CRPF personnel has deeply shocked and fiercely outraged the Indians up and down the country. The mood of anger, exasperation and revenge is sweeping across the nation as has never been seen before. The Government is almost pressed into taking decisive action as no room is left for dithering any more.

Before we talk about the nature and magnitude of India's retaliation, we should decode Pakistan's reaction through the vacuous statements of their Prime Minister in the channel. As Indians from all walks of life are urging the Government to act, the Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has reacted to the dastardly attack on our security forces with diplomatic verities.

Khan has been propped up by its military and some terrorists. He claims to speak for a New Pakistan, which is seeking stability. He asks what Pakistan gets out of such an attack. Khan should know that the whole world knows -- Pakistani military feeds on terrorism and the funds it generates to harbour and sponsor terrorists.

It is now an open secret that, in the name of fighting militants in Afghanistan, Pakistan was given billions of dollars, bulk of which it used in sponsoring terrorism in India. The present American President has testified to this in no uncertain terms. Khan should check Pakistani military budget, their receiving and spending on the terrorism. That is the benefit to Pakistan, where military rules the roost.

The second point Khan laboriously makes is Pakistan is a victim of terrorism, which has taken 70,000 Pakistani lives and cost them billions of dollars. This is a sympathy seeking posture ubiquitously used by Pakistani governments in their international presentations. Khan should know the idea of karma or poetic justice that “those who live by the sword will die by the sword” and there is a proverb that similarly says, “If someone digs a hole for others they will fall

into it.” So, beware, unless you stop breeding terrorists, you will be consumed by it.

Third, Khan says we are ready for a dialogue with India, including on terrorism which according to him, is India's precondition. But India has seen through Pakistan's duplicity, which will offer or respond to invitation to talk, at the same time, sponsor terrorism. Terrorist attacks in Pathankot, Uri, Kargil have accompanied or followed the dialogue process. Pakistan is now known for its deceptive international behavior. It no longer has any credibility for peace initiative as it has become a hub of terrorism. Note that India is not the only target; even Iran accuses Pakistan of sponsoring terrorism in its soil.

Imran Khan cites Afghanistan, where 17 years of military action did not work and the warring parties had to come to the table for talks. Again in Afghanistan, peace has been bedeviled by Pakistani duplicity of supporting the Taliban on the one hand, and sucking up to Americans on the other for funds to contain Taliban. If Taliban is neutralised, Pakistan will have no more business from America. Now America realises this and Pakistan is left in the lurch vis-a-vis American support. And the jury is still out on Afghanistan.

Anyway, for any dialogue to take place or proceed, let alone succeed, first, people have to lay down arms. Dialogue and deaths cannot go together. Let Khan study the peace process in Northern Ireland, where peace was restored through dialogue that followed a complete and transparent surrender of arms, unlike Pakistan holding a white flag in one hand and a bomb on the other.

Fourth, Imran Khan asks which law in the world allows a particular country to be a judge, jury and an executioner. Show us the proof of Pakistan's complicity in the recent attack, he protests. Obviously, Khan is

forgetting the series of terrorist attacks in India carried out in active connivance with the Pakistani Army and ISI. Trees of evidence have been provided to Pakistan, and the Pulwama attack has been claimed to have been done by JeM. Then asking for proof is ridiculous. Does Imran Khan not know how may terrorist groups operate from Pakistan? Dawood Ibrahim moves scot free! Osama Bin Laden was camping near an army base. So is there no limit to Pakistani leadership prevaricating on terrorism.

In the same breath, Pakistan will retaliate any action by Indian military, claims Khan He sermonises: it is easy to start a war but difficult to end it. Finishing a war is in the hands of God. The Indian Army is not naive to know that Pakistan military will retaliate. It is more than prepared. But Mr. Khan, it is India that is retaliating. Pakistan has already waged a war surreptitiously through terrorists. The war is in the hands of humans, both beginning and ending it. Please do not invoke God, even Saddam Hussein used to wage ‘holy wars’ against his opponents in the name of God. Surely, God does not advise his children to use violence in any form.

Let us tell you Mr. Khan, India is not a war-mongering country, unlike Pakistan it is a peace-loving, multi-faith democratic country. It prevents its security forces from retaliating unarmed civilians who heckle or even manhandle them. Watch some videos from Kashmir to learn how our well armed security forces conduct themselves in the face of provocations in Kashmir valley.

But, Pakistan has changed it all by attacking our innocent forces through suicide bombers. Cross-border terrorists and at-home desperados not amenable to reason will be put down by force. Having exhausted all the options, India will have to take on the terrorist Pakistani-State in the interest of sanity and humanity.

You talk of election year in India. The Indian Army is apolitical enjoying support

from everyone in the country across party, political, religious or any other affiliation. Army action is never an issue in the election unlike in Pakistan where the Army installs and dismisses governments, provides safe haven for terrorists.

Finally, you say, we must introspect on Kashmir. Yes we agree. We will introspect on letting you get away with a part of Kashmir. We demand that you vacate POK to let the accession of India be complete. We will retrieve it sooner than later as it is an unfinished task. We will introspect if you deserve any concession from us; we had given you the MFN status without any reciprocal gesture. We will introspect on how to treat the separatists. We will introspect on whether to touch your country with a barge pole or your supporters. We will introspect on Baloch who are crying for freedom from domination and exploitation by the Pakistani State. We will also introspect on your country playing the Islamic card when we have more Muslims in our country.

So Mr. Prime Minister of Pakistan, we were trying to wheedle you into peace and friendship, but you declare war on us. You are like a dog's tail that will never be straight until it is cut off. We will respond to your unquenchable desire for a war. It has already begun in all fronts-- diplomatic, economic, social and military.

Let us tell you that there are people in our country who wanted to give you a chance as the new Prime Minister since you sounded conciliatory. I was one among those, although we knew that you too are just a front of Pakistan Army like ISI or other agencies they manage.

You promise action, but make a laughable point of proof. You know the terrorists in your country. Will you arrest them and hand over those who are guilty of deaths of innocents in India? Then we will dialogue and resolve all the bilateral issues. Are you up to it? Will you stand up to your Army? If not, please stop sermonising us! ---INFA

(The writer is Prof. International Politics, Jamia Milia Islamia)

Yours etc.,  
Wankitbok Pohshna,  
Shillong-3

### Kashmiri remark

Editor,  
Indeed the Kashmiri remark of the Governor of Meghalaya has gone viral and it is very difficult now to do anything to stop it. The only thing left for him is to apologise and mend his words hereinafter. Being the head of state he should have measured his words carefully before tweeting. The best thing for him is not to tweet unnecessarily and to live by example. It is not the post that exalts him but he should exult the post he holds. Governors are supposed to be men and women of stature with a proven track record of credibility. They should be the real chosen ones who exude confidence and trust and should be role models in every way. Hence, the government of India should give a lot of thought before choosing governors and they should not be failed and retired politicians, retired army men or bureaucrats or the chosen men and women from some other cadres.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Via-Email.

### Inappropriate timing for load shedding

Editor  
Thousands of our children are preparing for their X and XII Board exams that are to take place in the next few days. However it is so unfortunate that the timing for load-shedding chosen by MePDCL is from 11 p.m to 12 a.m everyday. One feels that the timing is inappropriate as many students would still be studying at that time. First of all one fails to understand as to why the load-shedding at this time when our children cannot afford to be disturbed in their studies. Secondly, if at all it is required why not choose a timing that will not inconvenience the students. Perhaps a timing between 3-4 am when even the students are most likely to be sleeping to gain strength and energy would be more humane.

Yours etc.,  
Jennifer Dkhar,  
Via email

## 16th Lok Sabha

## A critical assessment

By Dr S. Saraswathi

The last session of the 16th Lok Sabha came to an end on February 13 with a memorable speech of Prime Minister Modi effectively making amends for the overall failure of the party in power. However he also chose to highlight the NDA's people-oriented policies and programmes and correct the lies of opponents freely circulating and euphemistically called “fake news”. It is time to broadly assess the functioning of this Lok Sabha in terms of its legislative record as well as the manner of conducting business.

The Lok Sabha, which is the legislative wing of government, is not to be confused with the executive. It comprises ruling and Opposition parties though conducting Parliament is the job of the government. An assessment of its work is practically an evaluation of the contributions of members of all parties and independents represented in the House.

The 16th Lok Sabha started with a large contingent of new members numbering 315, i.e. more than half the House. It is the second highest number after 1977 election that returned 376 new members. This, itself should have proved a great advantage by bringing new talents and enthusiasm that it would have created normally. However, expectations of lively debates and wider participation by new members, turned out to be farce. For, it is also true that incumbent party members are closer to their parties and have long-term aspirations and take Parliament work seriously.

There is a view that our legislatures are at the root of the problems faced in governance today and that the present electoral system is the promoter of political corruption rampant in the country. Still, there is no support for the idea to seek an alternative to the parliamentary system of democracy. At present, we have to refresh the system wherever it shows signs of decay. For every deficiency found in the functioning of parliament, remedies also can be found.

Legislative and representative roles of Parliament and State legislatures are similar, but not identical. Parliament members must have a national perspective and interest while safeguarding their home State interests. Unfortunately, the Indian Parliament has often become the battle ground for pressing demands and aspirations of States, which is mistaken as issues in federalism.

The 16th Lok Sabha, especially in the final two years, despite giving an impression of an unruly gathering shouting in the well of the House or outside Parliament when it is in session enacted 151 Acts and repealed 1,428 as part of easing doing business. A total of 189 bills were introduced and 299 bills were passed. Railway Budget has been merged with the General Budget and the distinction as Plan and Non-Plan expenditure has been given up. Seven Constitutional amendments have been carried out during 2014 and 2019. These include 100th amendment in pursuance of the agreement entered into between Government of India and Government of Bangladesh regarding border issues, 101st amendment introducing Goods and Services Act (GST) 2016 which introduced “one nation, one tax” regime, and 103rd amendment providing for Direct Benefit Transfer to citizens by means of Aadhaar, and 124th amendment to provide for 10 per cent reservation for economically weaker sections in jobs and educational institutions. Laws to curb black money like the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill have been passed. Important among social legislations are the Juvenile Justice Act allowing prosecution of juveniles apprehended for heinous crimes like adults and Acts relating to treatment of mental health patients, and those affected by HIV/Aids, and rights of persons with disabilities.

However, 16th Lok Sabha

was as bad as the previous one in the number of hours it worked. Its record of 1,615 hours of work is second lowest after the 15th Lok Sabha, which wasted one-third of its scheduled time. It sat for 331 days which is 137 days less than the average number of days of Parliament sitting by previous full-term Lok Sabhas. Contrary to general criticism, the 16th Lok Sabha spent 32 per cent of its time on legislative business, which was higher than the average of other Lok Sabhas by 7 per cent. Legislative business has received due importance, but the time given for discussion is eaten by disruptions. Question Hour took 13 per cent of its time while 10 per cent went to Short Duration Discussion, and 0.7 per cent to Calling Attention Motions.

Noteworthy is that the Triple Talaq Bill and the Citizenship Bill actively promoted by the NDA government are set to lapse with the end of the last session. It will bring both gain and loss of votes to the BJP depending on its use as election propaganda material.

With more and more TV channels telecasting Parliament proceedings live and conducting political debates, citizens get opportunities to watch the performance of their Parliamentarians. Interruptions in both Houses are so common that the voters who have sent these members to the august body have started murmuring whether elections are held to choose the best obstructers. Time lost due to interruptions was 217 hours excluding the last session, according to Lok Sabha data. The tendency to stall Bills at the stage of introduction seems to have grown.

Absenteeism is another problem that voters have to fight. BJP MPs had the highest attendance whereas Shiv Sena MPs recorded highest participation in discussions and questions.

Election speeches, manifestos, and promises become meaningless if Parliament is converted from a place for deliberations on legislations, functioning of the executive, and other important public matters into a place for protests and demands. Salaries of members are hiked so fast and other allowances and perks are enormous and conducting elections are so expensive that voters have a right to expect full return for the money spent. Unfortunately, even voters are ready to tolerate and watch unruly scenes inside Parliament as an interesting scene in a TV serial.

Disciplinary action against unruly members is not likely to work, as in most cases all members of a party or even groups of parties join together under one leader. Increasing constituency pressure and preoccupation of Lok Sabha members especially from regional parties with regional/local problems are caused by closer interaction of voters with their MPs in coalition governments formed with a number of regional parties. The social base of MPs has been widened with the entry of more and more regional parties, but there is a danger of our democracy getting stuck with sectarian and territorial ties. This may cause regionalisation of the national Parliament compelling the government to take to the Ordinance route for vital legislations.

A suggestion to suspend members entering the well of the House for one week and inflict loss of sitting allowance for the period was mooted by the Lok Sabha Speaker Balayogi and leaders of some parties in 2001. This Speaker even evicted some members at times for rushing to the well and creating disruptions. But, as all parties were in the habit of disturbing the proceedings, disciplinary rules do not work.

Despite a good record of legislative work, what lingers in our mind is the unruly scenes in Parliament. This may lead to voter apathy -- the worst enemy of representative system of democracy. ---INFA

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

### TO THE EDITOR

### Boundary dispute

Editor,  
The boundary dispute between Meghalaya and Assam has once again reared its ugly head barely a month after Meghalaya celebrated its 47th statehood day. For countless number of times, government after government have tried to solve this elusive muddle. It was perhaps only during the tenure of Late E K Mawlong as Chief Minister that an earnest effort was put in by him and PK Mahanta, former Chief Minister of Assam to reach a settlement. In the year 2000, the duo almost reached a viable solution to amicably solve the issue but the political winds swayed against the stalwarts too viciously to see them through to the end. Thereafter, like-minded and unlike-minded parties who've formed governments in the states have come and gone, yet the problem still persists due to lack of political will. While browsing the website of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, I found this relevant heart-rending speech in the proceedings section:

“Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to bring to the information of the House that there had been one incident in the border area of Khasi Hills District and those areas happen also to be at present in my Constituency. The Assam Police from the

Karbi-Anglong District came to two villages of Jatalong and Sabuda and arrested three of our people. After the arrest, our people were harassed and beaten up and were taken to Jail for about a week or more. We were busy trying to look for them and ultimately we found out that they were detained in the Nowgong Jail. With the help of the District Council authorities and other sources, we were able to bring them back. The people living in those villages, about 5 or 6 villages, which are in the border areas, are facing lots of hardship and difficulties and they are constantly living in their homes with fear of being harassed or arrested by the people from Assam and only in the last few days I have also received one resolution from the Village Durbar of those villages whereby it says that the people of Assam have threatened our people staying in those villages. They say that the lands that used to be cultivated many years together might also be taken and given to those people who are recognising the Assam authorities. Now during this election, the villages of Ummat Umlaper, Sabuda and Jatalong in my constituency have been considered or taken to be part and parcel of the Khasi Hills District. But the Assam Government particularly the

villages of Karbi-Anglong District are trying to claim those villages and they are also harassing our people at present. So, if we are not going to do anything from our end it seems that our people will not be able to stay in those villages and a time might come when these border people might be asked to vacate those lands...I do hope that this boundary dispute would immediately be taken up and finally solved, so that there will be peace in the border areas and that our people also will be able to live and work in peace without any interference from the other side of the boundary.”

The above speech was given by Late E K Mawlong, Former Chief Minister of Meghalaya, in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly on 23rd March, 1978, when he was elected to the house for the first time. After 41 years, the same speech can be delivered by any of the present legislators and it'll still be relevant.

F B Lyngdoh  
Central Agricultural University  
Tura

### Putting things in perspective

Editor,  
Apropos the letter

‘Laitumkrah’s fall from grace’ by Phillip Marwein dated 21 Feb 2019; I would like thank the writer for his concern which has prompted me to write further. Firstly, an eminent writer of his stature should realise that the matter pertaining to hawkers in the streets & footpath of Laitumkrah or any other area in Shillong is sub-judice at this juncture. I'm sure the Laitumkrah Dorbar Shnong Pyllun is aware of its status and definitely the Dorbar officials must have taken steps to address the issue in their rightful capacity. And secondly, may I enlighten the writer that Laitumkrah area is also administered by the Shillong Municipal Board to take care of sanitation, drinking water, street lightings etc. for which we as residents pay tax and not to the Dorbar Shnong as such. Therefore on this point I would disagree with the writer that the Dorbar is to be held responsible for the failure of the administration in keeping the public safe during the night for no street lights. Since there is an elected public representative in the area who surely stands aware of all the problems faced by the people including the writer, I hope that the issue is addressed at the earliest.

“Terrorism has once again shown it is prepared deliberately to stop at nothing in creating human victims. An end must be put to this. As never before, it is vital to unite forces of the entire world community against terror.”

--- Vladimir Putin

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.192 SHILLONG, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2019

### Election expenditure

IT'S common knowledge that money plays a prominent role in Indian elections. The graph in this is steadily rising, despite the Election Commission effecting substantial controls over poll-spends. But, like in every other rule and regulation, this too is observed more in the breach than in its adherence.

A widely publicized observation made by an Indian-born expert in the US this week that the poll expenses in India pegged at \$5 billion (approximately Rs 3500 crore) in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections is bound to phenomenally increase in the coming polls this year. Both the ruling party and the Opposition are running neck and neck as of now, and this is bound to raise the heat more, pushing rival sides to spend more. Notable is also the fact that the US presidential and congressional polls in 2016 cost the wealthy nation about \$6.5 billion. The Indian spend this time could well exceed this.

A safe guess would be that the recorded expenditure here - or even in the US - might be far less than what was spent for the polls. In a way, spending as much money may not, prima facie, be a scary factor for the reason that this would correspondingly boost market mechanisms. Locking money in bank vaults is not the right prescription for economic growth.

However, the huge spend by candidates and parties needs to be minimised. The BJP being in the driving seat has access to huge funds, fair or foul and is the largest spender in recent polls. Even candidates are selected by regional parties in several states based on their money power. Those who can afford to pay, say, Rs 30 - 50 crore, get named as candidates for some political parties. In the process, democracy might degrade itself into a kind of oligarchy - the system that democracy originally aimed to replace. This is also time for several politicians to indulge in heavy fund collection and pocket large parts of the money.

Perfecting a system is easier said than done. This is possible only if those who are at the helm of governments - senior politicians - put their hearts and minds into such causes. This has not been the case in India. The process of election reforms in India is progressing at snail's pace. Election commission organising raids in the weeks before the voting day to unearth hoarded money from candidates or parties is of little consequence. This is more for effect than in helping serve a purpose.

# Cacophonous drama of a common candidate & Lok Sabha elections

By Banshanlang Marwein

In a very recent development, the People's Democratic Front (PDF) also has just informed the media that they are going to put up an MP candidate. As much as the idea of 'common candidate' for the Lok Sabha election would sound fascinating in defeating the Congress party in Meghalaya, it is not so in the practical sense from what we see in the political scenario of the Meghalaya Democratic Alliance(MDA) which is also the ruling alliance in Meghalaya. The recent announcement by the CM himself is loud and clear. The NPP will be contesting the election in all the 24 Lok Sabha seats in the region (Northeast India). Not so long ago it appeared that the MDA had agreed on a common Lok Sabha candidate for the forthcoming elections. But now almost all the political parties in the MDA have come up with their own candidates even while the Independent (MLA) observed that a common candidate should not be from any party.

The United Democratic Party (UDP) was the first party to have proposed that the common candidate from Shillong seat should be from the UDP and from the Tura seat it should be from National People's Party(NPP); as if there is no other party in the MDA government. Interestingly the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA and Minister in the present cabinet did not agree with the proposal of a common candidate for the Lok Sabha; instead he argued that the Party would contest both the seats as they don't want to make people feel that they are incapable of fielding a candidate for the Lok Sabha MP elections. But for a final say they have to await the decision from Delhi (so Delhi knows better about local politics?). Interestingly few months ago the UDP had nominated a leader from the party to be the MP candidate. Not to mention that the Hills Peoples Democratic Party (HSPDP) confirmed their common candidate. This has added another side-splitting situation to the idea of common candidate right from that time.

It goes without saying that NPP stronghold Tura seat will or should definitely be agreed upon that candidate from NPP should be the common candidate considering their influence and chances of winning. But recent news from the Congress party that Mukul

Sangma might be the MP candidate might be a challenge to the NPP. However, the NPP is the best option if the MDA partners all agree upon a common candidate at least in Tura. Nevertheless in politics, power matters a lot. A National party like BJP will not leave it to the wisdom of NPP to decide their own course. However the ball game which is going to add flavour to the banquet is the Shillong Parliamentary seat because it consists of many regional parties. If the re-

lost both proves that he is not the choice of the UDP for their MP candidate because they are fielding Dr Jemino Mawthoh this time. If we go with the figures in the previous MP and MLA elections it would have been a better idea if the regional parties (RDA) come up with a common candidate but gluttony, popularity and power struggles are part and parcel of politics. However, we never know because in politics things change very rapidly within days or hours.

*“The United Democratic Party (UDP) was the first party to have proposed that the common candidate from Shillong seat should be from the UDP and from the Tura seat it should be from National People's Party(NPP); as if there is no other party in the MDA government.”*

gional parties could at least agree among themselves this dilemma that is facing the Shillong parliamentary seat will somehow see the light of day to ensure the defeat of the Congress candidate, considering that in the present MDA government they have the largest influence in the region. Let us just hope at least this time something substantive will occur, so that we may see a new dawn in the Shillong seat.

The MDA has so much to catch up with its alliance partners as well as the new developments that are directly and indirectly hampering the alliance. The recent developments vis-à-vis the Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016 and the NPP threatening to quit from the NDA partnership if the Bill was passed is an interesting development. But the question remains whether the NPP quitting the NDA alliance will make any difference. The other issue in the state such as the Them Metor issue, the illegal coal mining and the tragedy following the 15 miners being trapped in the coal mine, border issue, the influx issue (ILP issue) among others are tough nuts for the Chief Minister and his cabinet to crack.

Meanwhile Paul Lyngdoh the UDP veteran leader who fought the last MP and MLA elections and

tough fight for the BJP, although it is still early days to comment. The same situation could have panned out in West Bengal and Bihar on the idea of pre-poll alliances but it has not materialised.

As far as the Lok Sabha elections are concerned, Meghalaya has very little to gain since the state has only two Lok Sabha MPs who can make very little difference unless the Party they belong to is in power at the centre. It is stimulating to note that the maximum number of Lok Sabha MPs have been from the Congress party for the past 45 years particularly in Shillong parliamentary seat. Hence an anxious attempt to defeat the Congress has emerged but will it become a reality? This also reflects that the Congress has been in power for the longest time in Meghalaya and at the centre. Whatever be the case it is high time that the MPs (whichever party they belong to) should be more vocal in the Parliament to address the issues that beset the state and the region, particularly issues such as the recognition of Khasi and Garo as official languages to be listed among the languages in the Eight Schedule, discrimination of minorities and other pressing issues such as the Citizen Amendment Bill 2016 etc. They should be daring to raise pertinent questions on issues that directly and indirectly affect the people of the state and region.

To conclude, the stark reality is that political parties, especially national parties would always want to project their own candidate to ensure their relevance in the political spectrum. In that light the recent developments on the issue of a common Lok Sabha candidate is a difficult proposition particularly there are only two seats to decide the same. If a common candidate is set up there will be a lot of differences among the supporters if the party leadership fail to convey the right message to their supporters as well as to the party functionaries. The idea of a common candidate from the MDA seems to have reached a dead end for the time being. This will pave the way for other parties such as Congress party or other potential independent candidates to win the Lok Sabha seat especially in Shillong. Meanwhile we will keep a keen watch on this space.

## Are we a civilised society?

By Insaif

### Pulwama aftermath

A big question mark hangs over India's civilised society. The ongoing shocking persecution of Kashmiris, be it students, workers, tenants, professionals etc in the aftermath of the Pulwama attack is simply not acceptable. Further, it is a sad reflection on the government of the day that the Supreme Court has had to intervene to remind it of its duty to protect the nation's citizens. On Thursday last, it directed 10 State governments/UTs and their Chief Secretaries, DGPs to ensure "prompt and necessary action to prevent any incidents of threat, assault, social boycott etc. against Kashmiris and other minorities." This notwithstanding the Centre claiming it had already taken steps and issued requisite advisories and the HRD Ministry denying 'incidents of Kashmiri students being attacked.' Obviously, the petition had merit. While it alleged 'mobs and vigilante groups were engaged in vitriolic hate speech and were attacking and threatening Muslims and Kashmiris throughout the country,' media reports with photographs covering incidents in some States these past few days is additional evidence.

The States put on alert are Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, UP, Haryana, Bihar, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra. Instances of Kashmiri students being forced to flee back to their homes and administrators of their colleges being made to pledge they won't admit Kashmiris first hit headlines from Dehra Dun. What followed was a barrage: 10 Kashmiri students booked and 24 others suspended/rusticated from colleges across the country over "anti-national" social media posts; students in Haryana asked leave after cases of some being assaulted; a senior faculty member of Kashmir origin dismissed from his post; six Kashmiri students of Kushabhau Thakre Nursing College in Bihar expelled under pressure from Bajrang Dal activists; in Ambala's Maharishi Markandeshwar University Mullanua campus, around 110 students forced out of their rented accommodation by locals et al. While the apex court has asked the Home Ministry to give wide publicity of nodal officers' contact details so that those who need help can approach them easily, there is reason to doubt whether the exercise will succeed. The fear that has gripped the Kashmiris needs to be addressed first. The hate and revenge attacks on ordinary citizens are certainly no traits of nationalism.

\*\*\*\*

**Controversial Governor** Meghalaya and Rashtrapati Bhavan must be cringing.

Governor Tathagata Roy's tweet "I am inclined to agree" with a retired colonel's boycott call of Kashmir and Kashmiris following Pulwama tragedy, is simply unacceptable. He forgets he is holding a Constitutional office, is expected to act as the custodian of the Constitution and is a representative of the President of India and no longer of the BJP. Though the saffron party has finally distanced itself from the tweet of Roy, its former head of West Bengal unit, there appears to be no word of censure from President Kovind. Far from being reigned in, Roy as Governor openly identifies himself as a 'Right-wing Hindu socio-political thinker, writer, ideologue,' in his Twitter profile and his outrageous and insensitive remarks continue to go unchecked. A question that needs an answer is how is his right to free speech different from those university students, who are booked for sedition for their social media posts? His bigotry is said to have helped him get to the Constitutional office, starting with Tripura, where his remarks too raised contro-

versy. The Left, PDP, NC has demanded his sacking when will enough be enough?

### Southern Gathbandhan

Southern Gathbandhan takes off. Both the BJP and Congress have managed to stitch a pre-poll alliance with the big two regional parties in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. On Tuesday last, the AIADMK agreed to give five seats to the BJP and seven to PMK and keep 27 of the 39 Lok Sabha seats in TN. PMK will also get a Rajya Sabha seat. A day later, DMK formalised its partnership with Congress, finally giving it 10 seats (9 in TN and one in Puducherry). This after it failed to clinch the deal with PMK. However, it hopes to make up by partnering with VCK, MDMK and Left parties given that talks are underway. On its part, the BJP has committed itself to back the AIADMK in the by-polls to 21 Assembly seats. The people, however, have a third option. Actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) is in the arena, but opted to go it alone. Celebrating the party's first anniversary, Haasan sees himself as an important 'tool' and that people must make 'good use of him for the State's betterment'. Though time is short and lot's to be done, Haasan promises "tomorrow is ours." Is it?

### Maha Words, Different Action

Words come cheap for the Shiv Sena. And who other than its partner, the BJP, would know best. Perennial threats of breaking the alliance and going alone were hogwash. Sena did the opposite. Looking for greener pastures in Maharashtra, the BJP-Sena team pledged togetherness and agree to contest an equal number of seats in Assembly polls and for Lok Sabha, Sena will contest 23 seats and the BJP 25. But, within 48 hours of the signed deal, both are heard bickering again. The Sena claims a condition for the alliance was "sharing the Chief Minister's post for half-terms each," whereas the BJP remains firm that whoever wins more seats shall wear the crown. Will there be a walkout? No, as both know that sheer maths forced them to stick with the alliance to beat rivals Congress and NCP and the anti-incumbency factor. Neither should miscalculate and heed what Uddhav Thackeray said after sealing the alliance: "I have already won in the treaty, now we should win the real battle of election." For only then can he claim his CM crown!

### Home Misuse

Stop misusing public money and live in your private bungalows, is a directive former Chief Ministers of Bihar can no longer ignore. On Tuesday last, the Patna High Court not only sought to ensure the Supreme Court's order issued last year is followed but that the 'have been' take a cue from their counterparts in Uttar Pradesh such as Mmulyam Singh Yadav and Mayawati and save the State exchequer unnecessary burden. The Bill allotting these bungalows for their lifetime, the court said was 'unconstitutional' and wondered why they did not live in their private homes when they were provided security there. Records show former Bihar Chief Ministers Satish Prasad Singh (CM for three days in 1968), Dr. Jagannath Mishra (1975-77, 1980-83 and 1989-90), Jitan Ram Manjhi (CM for nine months in 2014-15), Rabri Devi and her husband Lalu Prasad Yadav (1990-2005) enjoying this privilege. How soon they will vacate and oblige is anybody's guess given Elections round the corner and their luck just might change. --- INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

## Ordinance Vrs parliamentary process

Editor, It is unfortunate that the BJP led NDA Government at the Centre has re-promulgated the triple talaq ordinance, making it a criminal offence just to gain political mileage. Without going into the merits and demerits of the Ordinance, what is disturbing is that Government has by-passed the parliamentary norms to achieve its objectives. The Government had earlier promulgated the Ordinance, but failed to table it in the Rajya Sabha for reasons best known to it. Further, there is no urgent need of this Ordinance that it cannot wait for a few months, when it could have been re-introduced in the Parliament, and debates and discussions could have taken place, in both Houses. This diversionary tactic of the Government has made a mockery of

the parliamentary process. The Government may even go to the extent of issuing an Ordinance in favour of the Citizenship Amendment Bill, in spite of severe protests in Assam and other parts of North East India, and opposition to it from many political parties. The acts of the NDA Government are condemnable to say the least.

Yours etc.,  
A Bhuyan,  
Via email

## Pedestrians have rights

Editor, Even the most optimistic person has to feel just a little less so when surveying the scenario in this city. It's amazing that there is no authority that is able to remove vendors and hawkers from our pavements. The civic authorities do not seem to have an answer; only excuses. There is absolutely no re-

gard for safety of school children, persons with disability and the elderly. Point being what is the purpose of pavements if not for walking?

Hawkers seem to multiply daily. In Laitumkrah they sit from Police Point to Police Beat House. Hawk and vendors are on both sides of the pavement and if there is any vacant spot beggars fill in, so where is the space for walking? Apart from infringing on our rights to freedom of movement they have completely taken away from persons with disabilities a barrier free environment which those working and advocating for persons with special needs are trying to create.

Only people who walk fully understand what a menace this lot is. The hawkers sit on the pavement watching videos on their mobile phones, while persons with disabilities, school children and the public have to like it or lump it. What a stage we

have come to! Is this why we have a government?

Yours etc.,  
Christine Nonghuloo  
Via email

## Give us back our footpaths!

Editor,

I read with great interest the exchange between Wankitbok Pohshna and Philip Marwein vis-à-vis the problem of footpaths in Laitumkrah. The footpaths beginning from Police Point where a shop has literally been set up selling Naga shawls and shoes etc., to fish and vegetable vendors, have all taken over our footpaths. In simple terms, the footpath has literally been stolen from us and the MLA and MDC are silent onlookers because they no longer walk. They are busy people going around in cars and doing their politics. If they cared enough they would have

Laitumkrah market in the way that the Polo market is being built today and these hawkers could have been given shops inside the building. Those who refuse to set up shops inside should be penalized.

However, I have one idea that I hope the shoppers who frequent Laitumkrah market would agree. Let us not buy from the pavement hawkers and walk a few steps inside the market. That's the only way that citizens can deal with this menace. If the residents of Laitumkrah don't lead the way, then those from outside the locality will find it difficult to step in. The problem of hawkers in Shillong has come to a point where in Police Bazar the main thoroughfare that was meant to be a pedestrians' walk space has now become a full-fledged flea market. It is interesting that one of the hawkers even shouted pro-Pakistan slogans on Thursday leading to a melee.

Thankfully no one was hurt. This could have escalated into a full fledged conflict in these sensitive times post the Pulwama terror attack. It also shows that many of these hawkers who spread themselves in Police Bazar are of doubtful identity but we seem to have lost the battle already. I wonder what will happen to Police Bazar and Laitumkrah ten years from now. Perhaps we won't be able to walk on the footpaths and will have to walk on the road and imperil our own lives. The price we pay for bad, corrupt governance and the mafiadom of the hawkers!

Yours etc.,  
KL Diengdoh,  
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.

# FACING EXTINCTION

## Where history resides



The grizzled giant squirrel struggles to survive in the face of habitat loss in India. Manupriya reports

The Indian giant squirrel (*Ratufa indica*) is another species

For about a year now, P. O. Nameer and Kiran Thomas have been walking the slopes of Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala looking for a special kind of squirrel. Called the grizzled giant squirrel, this squirrel has a body length of 25-45 cms, with an equally long or slightly longer tail. It can weigh anything between 1.5-3 kgs.

To put that in context the common squirrel we see around our homes, called the Indian palm squirrel, weighs about 150 gms and is 23 to 35 cm in length, inclusive of the tail.

The grizzled giant squirrel has made its home in riverside plants growing in the sanctuary for centuries. Two rivers – the Chinnar and Pamban – weaving through the sanctuary create the perfect riverine habitat preferred by them. And yet, the year-long survey by Nameer and Thomas revealed that a mere 15-24 grizzled giant squirrels now inhabit the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary.

The researcher duo from the College of Forestry, Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur, has published the results of their survey recently in a paper, where they say that the population has declined by 78-85 percent from previous estimates in 1993 and 2007.

The grizzled giant squirrel (GGS) is one of the four giant squirrels found in the world. India has the unique distinction of being home to three of them. Apart from

GGS, the other two are the Malayan giant squirrel from northeastern India and Indian giant squirrel, found across the Western Ghats.

Though the Indian giant squirrel and the GGS are both found in southern India, their habitat requirements are quite different. The Indian giant squirrel is a generalist and "is seen in a wide variety of habitats from the deciduous forests to evergreen forests to shola forests," said Nameer. The GGS, on the other hand, is entirely dependent on riverine vegetation, the kind that grows along the rivers, to thrive.

The result of this specificity in habitat requirement is that GGS is now limited to "nine severely fragmented locations" in India: the Grizzled Giant Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary, Srivilliputhur, The Nil Forest Division, Palani Hills, Anamalai Tiger Reserve, Sirumalai, Thiruvannamalai Forest Division, Hosur Forest Division and Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary (all in Tamil Nadu), the Cauvery basin in Karnataka and Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala.

Like other rodents, the GGS plays an important ecological role in seed dispersal. They live on the canopy of forest trees and have a preference for tamarind and mango. They also feed on the leaves and bark of the trees. A decrease in canopy cover not only decreases the amount of real estate available to them but also exposes them more to their predators.

The GGS faces a variety of threats. For example, in the Cau-

very wildlife sanctuary which sustains a small population of GGS, "the riverine forests are used for picnics. People even gather firewood and cook under the canopy of the riverine forest. In addition, there are natural predators like the black eagle (*Ictinaetus malaiensis*), changeable hawk eagle (*Nisaeetus cirrhatus*), python (*Python molurus*) and leopards (*Panthera pardus*)," said A.J.T. Johnsingh, eminent wildlife biologist at the Nature Conservation Foundation. In Chinnar, particularly, the problem is "the extremely restricted habitat," he added.

Another significant threat to GGS at Chinnar comes from the "pilgrimage at Kodanthur temple which is situated within Anamalai Tiger Reserve along the Chinnar river," said A. Veeramani of Department of Zoology, Government Arts College, Kumbakonam. Veeramani too has been studying the status and distribution of Grizzled Giant Squirrel in Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary.

### Potential hybrids

During their forays into the Chinnar Sanctuary, Nameer and Thomas made an interesting observation. They spotted some giant squirrels that looked like inter-species hybrids between the grizzled giant squirrel and the Indian giant squirrel. These hybrids could be identified because they showed a mix of skin colour from both types of giant squirrels. Other sources, such as here, have

also noticed these inter-specific matings. Though the exact reason for the existence of these hybrids is not known, Nameer said, "it is not a healthy sign for either of the species."

Inter-specific hybrids are relatively uncommon in nature. The biological definition of a species is a group of individuals that can mate to produce fertile off-springs. When animals cross the species barrier to mate the hybrids are mostly infertile (for instance the mule, a hybrid of horse and donkey). However, instances of fertile hybrids that evolved into new species have also been reported in the past.

Matings between the GGS and the Indian giant squirrel were "first seen by Justus Joshua in the Ayyanarkoil valley in the Rajapalayam hills which is part of the Srivilliputhur Grizzled Giant Squirrel Sanctuary," said Johnsingh. Chances of such "hybridizations increase when two closely related species occur together in one location," he added.

As of now, we know very little about these hybrid giant squirrels. "Detailed investigation on the fertility status, exact reasons for hybridisation, and a study on the genetics of the GGS need to be undertaken at the Chinnar WLS to find out the genetic purity of GGS there," said Nameer.

"The mix-up and hybridization between the GGS and Indian giant squirrel should also be monitored, to find out its effect on the long-term survival of the GGS, which

has a restricted distribution. Being a near-threatened species, the interbreeding could be a challenge to the long-term conservation of the grizzled giant squirrels at Chinnar wildlife sanctuary," he added.

While on the one hand, a decline in the population of GGS has been recorded, on the other hand, reports of new sightings from areas where GGS was never seen before are also coming up. Earlier this year in January, a group of researchers from Pondicherry saw a pair of GGS in Pakkamalai reserve forest in Villupuram district in Tamil Nadu. The researchers also observed seven dreys (squirrel nests). The Pakkamalai forest is an offshoot of the Eastern Ghats, and this is the first time GGSs have been seen in this area.

The exact reason behind these "random and scattered sightings" is "unknown and needs to be investigated," said Nameer. Johnsingh said the reason behind new sightings could simply be that "people may not have looked for it." Whatever the reason, it is clear that several gaps exist in our understanding of GGS's habitat range.

Without more studies and improved understanding, effective conservation strategies for GGS cannot be devised, and the species will continue facing threats. "If the GGS is wiped out from Chinnar, then the Sanctuary will be poorer by losing one of its mammalian species," said Johnsingh.

(Mongabay-India/IBNS-TWF)

Jitbhum in Rilbong is more than a century old and has memories of poet laureate Rabindranath Tagore who visited Shillong thrice in the last century. Tagore stayed in the Assam-type house during his second sojourn in April 1923 and spent almost two months here, and vastly enriched his literary works.

Jitbhum was built by the British during the last part of 19th century when the Kench's Trace area was a hilly grove. It looked ghostly even at day time. At night, the shrill cries of jackals from the thickets would give the place an eerie look. During that initial period of Shillong, a few big houses were built by British officers deforesting the hillocks of Shillong and Jitbhum was one of them.

But in 1905-1910, when the partition of Bengal was declared by Lord Curzon, including East Bengal with Assam to form a new province named Assam Bengal, and the capital was shifted from Shillong to Dacca, all the top officials were transferred to Dacca. During that period, the houses were disposed of at a cheap rate and 'Jitbhum' was purchased by Dr Devendranath Chatterjee, a government physician in Shillong.

Devendranath married Abhigna Devi, daughter of Hemendranath, the third elder brother of Tagore.

There is an interesting story regarding the name of the house. Senior citizens say that the house while purchased by Devendranath, was under litigation, and Devendranath had to move the case that he ultimately won. Tagore named the house 'Jitbhum', or conquered land, and that name is being carried till today.

As Abhigna Devi died a premature death, Devendranath married Manisha Devi, the younger sister of Abhigna, who was a very good singer. Manisha instituted an art and music school in the Jitbhum complex in 1915. Among her tiny tots was the eminent writer Leela Mazumdar and her elder sister.

Devendranath was a tuberculosis patient and after prolonged suffering, expired on July 24, 1916, in Jitbhum. After his death, Manisha Devi stayed in the house with her children and continued with her music school. She disposed of the house by 1927 (approx).

It was April 1923. The weather was excessively hot in Bengal and Tagore, exhausted of summer, decided to come to Shillong to get some respite from the scorching heat. Shillong was tempting him and he expressed his ardent feelings in the following poem —

When the burning heat of scorching summer/ Couldn't be ebbed by cold-drinks and fan/ Exhausted, I rushed to the Shillong hill/ To be soothed with pleasant chill/ The hillocks, covered with cluster of clouds/ Green dense forests and shadowy mounds/ Warmly call the tiresome passers./ 'Come to my cosy lap, to relax'.

(Translated by the author from the original poem 'Shillong-er-Chithi')

At the entrance of the house, there still stands a plaque carrying the memory of the great poet Tagore's stay here. It is engraved as,

'Here lived RABINDRANATH TAGORE

In April-May-June 1923.

His famous drama 'RAKTAKARABI' and poems 'Shillong-er-Chithi' etc were written here.'

On the other side of the plaque, a few lines of a poem in Bengali, composed by Tagore are engraved.

For the last few decades, the owner of 'Jitbhum' was Bimal Chakravorty who preserved the house with full care and devotion, keeping intact the valuable memoirs of Tagore. Recently, it was heard that 'Jitbhum' was disposed of and the new owner is also a sincere Rabindra lover who has committed to preserving the serene memorial in a greater way so that the Rabindra lovers can easily trace the house to pay tribute to the great bard.

(Contributed by Uma Purkayastha)



## Event planning can be a great opportunity

By Ranjan K Baruah

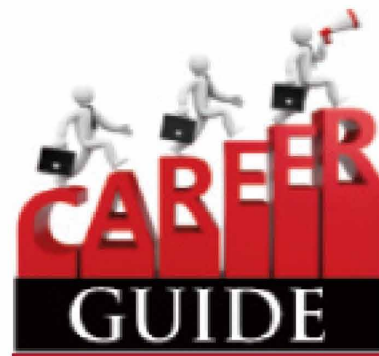
Occasions and festivity can also be linked with career and the easy word for us in this regard is event management. It is the application of project management to the creation and development of large-scale events such as festivals, conferences, ceremonies, formal parties, concerts or conventions. It involves studying the brand, identifying the target audience, devising the event concept and coordinating the technical aspects before actually launching the event.

The process of planning and coordinating the event is usually referred to as event planning and which can include budgeting, scheduling, site selection, acquiring necessary permits, coordinating transportation and parking, arranging for speakers or entertainers, arranging decor, event security, catering, coordinating with third party vendors, and emergency plans.

Many industries and charitable organisations hold events to market themselves, build business relationships, raise money or celebrate achievement. Increase in trade and

commerce and other activities also create many other things. It is always helpful for the entrepreneurs and people who are creative and serious about work.

One of the career options which have been booming in all parts of the country is event management. It is one of the careers where one does not need much investment and yet can



earn more. Event management, the most profound form of advertising and marketing, is a glamorous and thrilling profession. It provides an opportunity for unleashing one's cre-



ative potential to a very high degree.

One does not need much formal qualification to be part of these professions. Some of the qualities which are important are skills like good communication skill, confidence and ability to work in team and manage people. Having good command over language and writing skills are added advantage.

Leadership skills, work under pressure are also needed. Students of Mass

Communication or Public Relations can also take up this profession. It demands high perfection, hard work and a lot of patience. With the event management industry poised to grow by leaps and bounds, trained candidates have excellent job opportunities. The success of an event manager or event management team depends on its capacity to procreate themes that have never been thought of before.

Some of the courses related to event

management are: Certificate Course in Event Management, Diploma in Event Management (DEM), Post Graduate Diploma in Event Management (PGEM), Post Graduate Diploma in Event Management and Public Relations, etc. There are some institutes that offer this kind of courses. People can start event management even without doing any of these courses. Event Management is yet to take momentum in the state but in

last few years it has increased. In near future there will be more demand for people who are associated with event management and youths from the state can take up event management as their career options. It depends upon our youths how they understand various aspects of this and take it up as their profession.

International Scholarships:

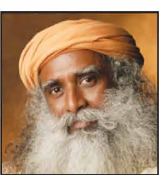
The Government of Brunei Darussalam has announced the scholarships to foreign students for the academic session 2019-20 which is tenable in Brunei Darussalam. The details of the scholarships are available on the websites of the government of Brunei at [www.mfa.gov.bn](http://www.mfa.gov.bn). The last date for application under this scholarship is February 28.

Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India invites applications from the Indian nationals for the New Zealand Commonwealth Scholarship 2019 in the Masters and Ph D level. Last date for sending application is March 28.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at [bkranjan@gmail.com](mailto:bkranjan@gmail.com) or 8473943734 for any career related queries)

# What is the source of Sadhguru's knowing?

**Sadhguru, Isha Foundation**



Those who have listened to Sadhguru answer innumerable questions on every conceivable topic have probably wondered at some point, how it is possible for one being to contain so much knowledge. Below, Sadhguru answers.

**Your knowing seems to be inexhaustible. Is all this recorded in you or are you just getting it from somewhere?**

Karma is recorded in many ways: memory-wise, sensation-wise, physiology-wise and energy-wise. Similarly with knowledge, some things are transmitted to you on the level of your mind, others on the level of your body. Do you see how once you know how to swim, your body knows it? If you fall into the water, you will swim. You do not have to remember how to ride a bicycle. Once you know how, if you sit on the bicycle, it just goes. Even if you do not ride a bicycle for twenty years and then get on to one, you might be a bit off-balance at first but then you just go, because the memory is in the body. It is no longer in the mind. Transmission is also on many different levels.

I am not carrying the burden of this knowledge when I walk on the street. I do not know anything, but at the same time, I know everything. If you ask me anything concerned with the inner dimensions of a human being, I will come out with the answer, without any hesitation, with absolute clarity. Even if somebody says the Gita is saying something else, I will simply say that maybe Krishna does not know. What can I do about it? It is so crystal-clear within me that it cannot be any other way. It is not that Krishna does not know. It is just that maybe you are not able to see what he is saying.

**Information Stored in Energy**

This is not coming from remembrance. This was transmitted in a different way. My association with my Guru was just for a few moments. Somehow, he did not even want to touch me with his foot. He touched

me with his walking stick. What cannot be learned in ten lifetimes was transmitted in one moment. It was all there. It was not just about knowing myself. It was also about various technologies, about how and what to do in every aspect, with absolute clarity. When it is transmitted like this, in the form of energy, not in the form of memory or logical understanding, the burden of knowledge is not on you. This is the difference.

People who have studied knowledge become heavy with it. They become serious. Studied people cannot even laugh usually, but someone who comes from his realization – he knows, but the burden of knowledge does not sit on his head all the time. He carries it very lightly, because this is a different technology altogether.

From the days of the stone tablet to today's microchips, it's come a long way. The moment we started producing a book, a million stone tablets could go into a single book. Now a million books can go into a CD and a million CDs can go into a chip. And what is stored in a billion chips can be stored in a certain arrangement of energy. I do not know if modern science is working

in this direction, but someday, science will come up with ways to store information in an arrangement of energy. I know this clearly as that is the reality within us. Your energy system or pranamayakosha carries stupendous volumes of information, which is so easy to carry and is not burdensome. It is so simple.

**Even if somebody says the Gita is saying something else, I will simply say that maybe Krishna does not know**

**Whatever you are speaking now, is it recorded somewhere in your energy system?**

What is already recorded is what is being spoken and what is being spoken is not something which I am thinking of and speaking. What is being spoken is what life is. It is recorded all the time, everywhere. We do not have to re-record it again. It has always been there. Whether I exist or I do not exist, Truth is; it is always there. We can talk about it if you want to, or we can just see it as it is. Do not worry, it will never be lost.

*(Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary and bestselling author. He was conferred the Padma Vibhushan in 2017 for exceptional and distinguished service)*

# The jewellery story

**By Pooja Mahesh**

Think of the Indian bride. Can you bypass the role of the jewellery? After all, it complements the attire in such a way that everything falls into place to bring out the radiance and elegance of the bridal look.

No wonder that smart brides today look for the perfect jewellery set for the big day. While some go for the contemporary look, others choose the traditional look- with a bit of difference, though.

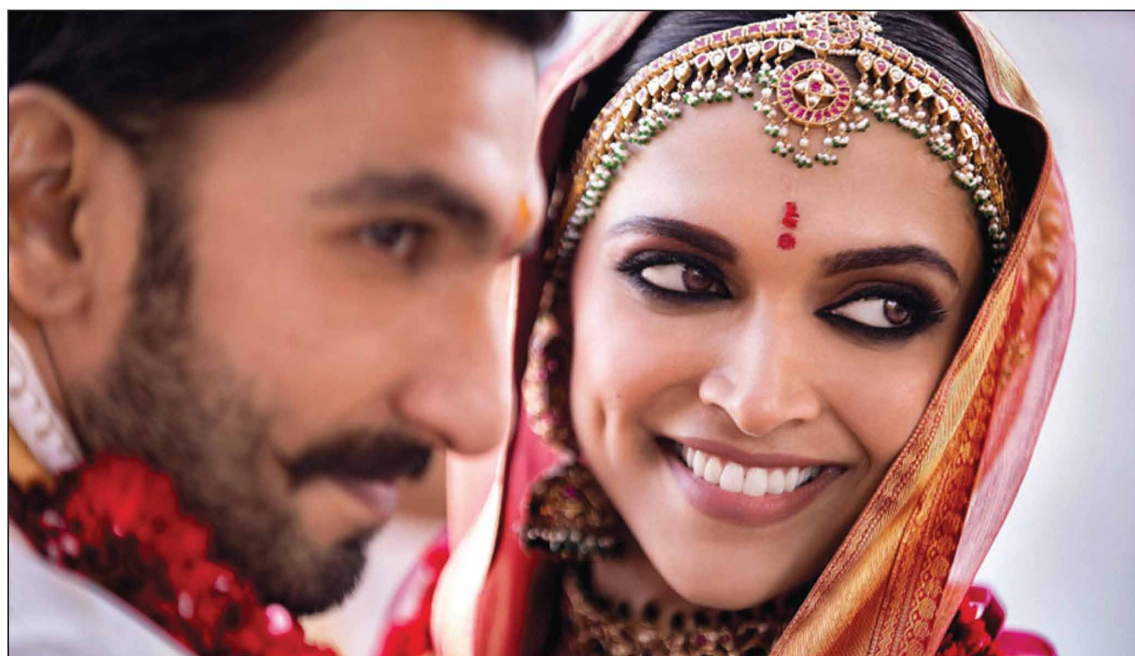
If you wonder how, think back on what film stars Deepika Padukone, Sonam Kapoor Ahuja, Priyanka Chopra and Anushka Sharma wore for their wedding celebrations: traditional heirloom jewellery that complemented their bridal trousseau.

"Film stars and period movies, in fact, have helped many traditional designs like the polki and jadau come back into the mainstream. Subsequently, it has boosted the popularity and demand for traditional heirloom jewellery during the wedding season," says Ishu Datwani, founder, Anmol Jewellers, Mumbai.

Little wonder that many trendy brides are now turning to traditional heirloom jewellery that are either recreated, or are passed down from generations.

While popular film stars may have helped popularise heirloom jewellery, it is perhaps because of its understated appeal that has caught the attention of many a bride-to-be. "The trend of brides wearing heritage jewellery started around three or four years ago. As there has been a lot of talk on revival during the past few years, there has been a surge of interest in old jewellery designs and patterns, particularly among the youngsters," says Ashwini Oza, co-founder and chief designer at Arnay & Co, Bengaluru.

What makes traditional jewellery unique and sought- after by many brides? "This is perhaps due to an excessive presence of fashion and bridal jewellery in the market that fades as trends change. Heirloom jewellery pieces are stunning and add an ethereal touch and feel to the wearer and completes the look with elegance and grace," says Raji Anand, founder and designer, Raji Anand Design, Chennai. Some of the jewellery pieces that brides



to select her jewellery and take into consideration the quality and versatility of each piece. Hence, many choose to select a few that will stand the test of time and a few others that are 'of-the-moment'. In short, the wedding jewellery needs to be designed in a way that can complement the needs of the modern- day bride not just on her wedding day, but beyond as well.

"The designer's job is to understand and respect the old, understand what the client needs, and understand that we are all global citizens. I would still love to wear an old, traditional piece with a gown or a simple white T-shirt. While the main piece is going to be heritage, how you are going to use and wear it needs to be in the modern context," elaborates Oza.

What then are some of the aspects that a bride needs to keep in mind while selecting her jewellery? "While teaming up with heirloom jewellery, it's important to keep in mind the bridal outfit's colours, its silhouette, garment used. Knowing what these elements are can help in selecting the style and cut of the jewellery," shares Anand. It is also important to ensure that the jewellery and outfits do not overpower each other. Oza advises brides to select their jewellery first before their outfits as it is "something that can be used repeatedly over time and can be changed over time". (TWF)

interpretations of traditional designs. "While going back to the roots and heritage for inspiration, jewellery designers are not far behind. Many are digging into what we already have and contemporising it. In essence, they are keeping the flavour of the past but are adapting it to the modern day context," says Shah.

While these are newly minted 'heirlooms', there are also instances where family heirlooms are modified carefully, if possible, to infuse a new lease of life into it. One of the most common ways that heirloom jewellery pieces are modified are by tweaking existing pieces in a small way to make more wearable. For example, a multi-layered ranihaara can be split into two or more smaller necklaces.

However, given the wide variety of choices available today, it is also imperative that one chooses wisely. Today's bride, more often than not, may take a well-informed approach

usually go for include traditional diamond and ruby chocker, temple jhumkas, pashas, huge matha ka tikas and kajara bangles.

Moreover, for many brides, wearing heirloom jewellery pieces mean embracing their roots. "Wedding is when the bride can showcase her culture and can take it forward by wearing something that is either old, borrowed or new," reiterates Puja Shah, founder and jewellery designer, Aurus Jewels, Ahmedabad.

Traditional jewellery has an intrinsic old-world charm, authenticity and heritage value to it. "Heirloom jewellery is something that is classic and timeless. They can be passed down and do not look dated even after decades," believes Datwani.

While gradually shifting towards heirloom jewellery and designs, some are also looking at modern day

## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, FEBRUARY 24, 2019

Moon trine Sun on your solar return chart suggests a good year ahead. Increase your spiritual practices and embrace white as your power color this year to activate your intuitive powers. A special project at work will give you the opportunity to express a unique talent, which in turn will increase your finances with a pay increase or promotion. A nagging health issue will subside once you discover and implement new information about personal habits you can change to heal the problem. Expect family and friends to make higher demands on your time as they'll need you now more than ever. Investments you make now should pay off handsomely, restoring your financial security by the end of the year.

**Aries: (March 21 - April 20)**

Your efforts and confidence and courage bring success in the form of monetary gains and your energy increases for work projects and your job environment is lively. Domestic relationships and the home environment tend to be harmonious and peaceful through devotion and considerable efforts on your part. You have more energy at your disposal to express yourself creatively, through activities with children, romantic hobbies, or sports. Short trips, and other forms of communication and making connections, appeal strongly now.

**Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)**

This phase brings love and harmony in professional and personal relations. You have the chance to shine, largely because you project yourself with self-respect and modesty. You are especially appealing and charming in personal and family relations. Your children may need more discipline than they previously did. Talking, writing, and studying can be good ways to handle stress. You might invest time in traveling and visiting friends and relatives. There will be a fluctuation in energy levels before a balance is achieved. Health will take a turn for the better.

**Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)**

This period offers a natural curiosity, facility with words, and the ability to multi-task successfully. You are especially good at mediating conflicts. Smoothing over differences and using your diplomacy skills figures now. Your mind is always active with new ideas for an increase of income. This is a very self-expressive time when you have lots of energy, but not necessarily self-discipline to match. You want others to take notice, and you are more sensitive to the appreciation of people. Personal projects are on the rise. You will be considerably more productive, healthy, and focused.

**Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)**

This is favorable period for hobbies, sports and competitive exams. Beware of a covetous and suspicious person around you who could cause misunderstanding in your personal relationships. You are bold in your love, yet not aggressive either. Artistic self-expression is important, possibly through music, fashion and writing. Your communication style tends to be sharper, more direct and to the point. You may work hard at making yourself feel more secure, and you may be called upon to take charge on the home and family front. You may have more energy to invest in homemaking, house repairs, re-decorating, or family activities. In fact, if you are feeling very restless, moody, or defensive, it would be a good idea to do any of these things. Energy need to be conserved through a busy time at work.

**Leo: (July 23 - August 23)**

The present planetary configuration increases confidence in personal relations; courage and efforts at work place. It is a great time to do something entirely new and pioneering. Discussions and ideas about finances and material security figure strongly. You may find yourself in a position in which there is a blending of the financial with social or public affairs. Although you like the good things in life and may spend quite a bit on clothes, furniture, and entertainment, your innate sense of security will not permit you to go overboard to the point of extravagance. You will have the ability to build up financial reserves and resources, for this placement can bring a good deal of success in all monetary pursuits.

**Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)**

This is a period that brings love and understanding in personal and professional relations. Friends and loved ones take priority. People at work might be surprised by your ability to assert yourself and your needs. You do not find

yourself lacking in opportunities to socialize. You are likely to enjoy a strong feeling of happiness and solidarity in friendship, or with groups of like-minded individuals. You are more peace loving than usual and slightly detached on a personal level and feelings towards religion are enhanced this week. Examining the past in order to improve the future is certainly worthwhile, as long as you don't waste your energy.

**Libra: (September 23 - October 23)**

Success, responsibility and maturity are the keywords. You have a great deal of energy for new money making projects, or for stepping up existing ones. Matters of the heart touch you deeply. You may willingly play a supportive role to the family and offer compassion and selfless love. This is a rather happy, goal-oriented time on the professional front. This is a time to follow your dreams and ideas, and to plant a seed in the form of a wish for the future. You possess extra charm in your professional life. Strong opportunities for love and fun occur. More opportunities to socialize and network could present themselves now.

**Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)**

This phase is good for money, family, status and happiness. Money matters come into focus for you. You would adopt a serious approach to business because you are in the spotlight. Career and vocational issues may benefit from the increased clarity you possess. Much of your energy will be applied to vocational achievement, professional success, and leadership. Being part of a community or circle of friends and building your social network is important to you at this time. Your love life is more attractive and charming. Public relations work, promotion, and other such endeavors are favored now. You give attention on fitness and health related programs.

**Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)**

Diplomacy, correctness in manner, finesse, and charm will be a big plus in aiding financial gains, especially in areas requiring public interaction. You feel attracted to intelligent people with whom you can communicate well and exchange ideas. You know how to relate to others and you do so in a natural and warm manner. More contact with authority figures is likely. Recognition is likely to come your way whether you ask for it or not, and the responsibility that comes right along with it. Do what you feel is right, keeping in mind that you are at your most visible during this time. It's a great time to make improvements to your regular routines.

**Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)**

This is an excellent time to create a budget or financial plan, or to rid yourself of old habits that undermine your sense of personal power and self-mastery. You are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy for higher studies, travel, or brand new subjects. Smoothing out your close personal relationships is what makes you happy. If single, you are more willing than normal to enter into a committed relationship. It's a good time to work out money problems or other issues of sharing with a partner. You receive pleasure from anything that expands your horizons, both physically and mentally.

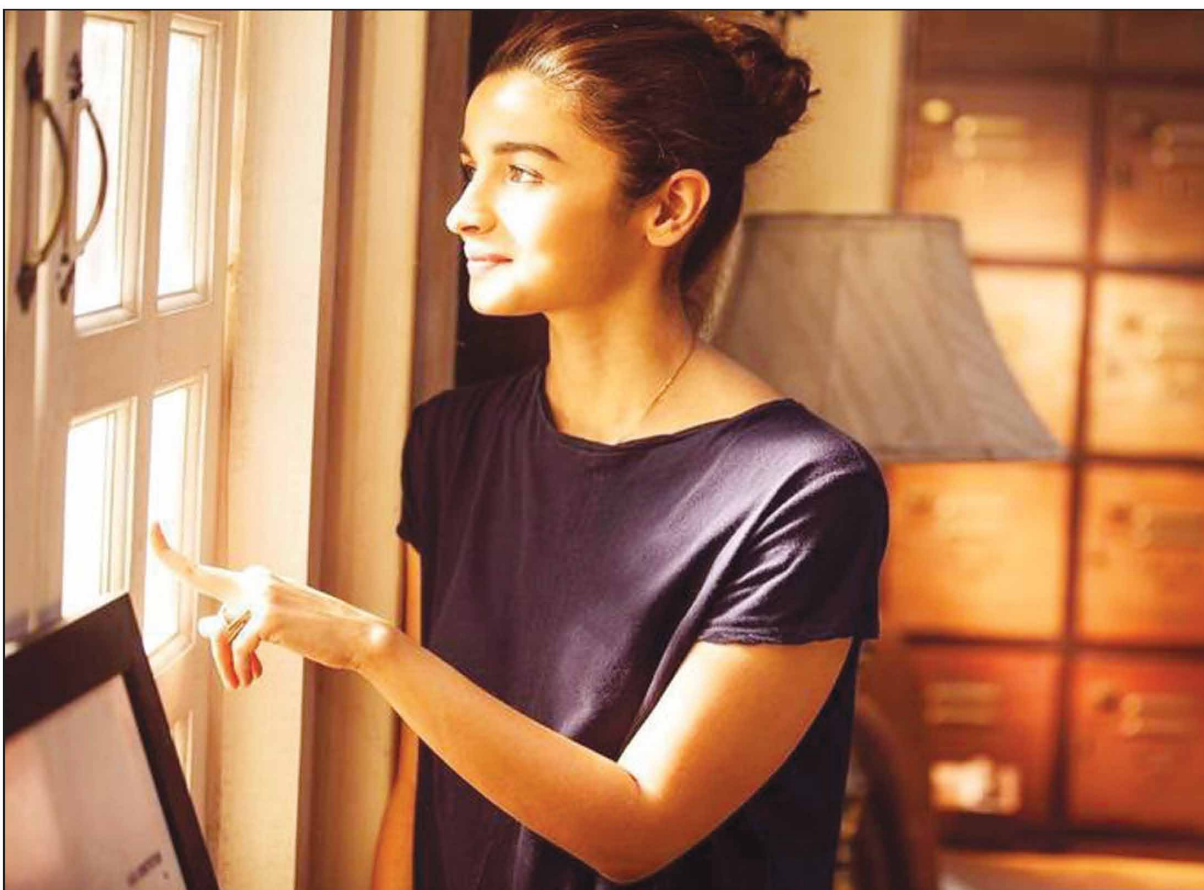
**Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)**

All that is deeply personal comes into focus now. Conflicts with a partner over values or personal possessions are more likely to occur. Circumstances are such that your diplomacy skills are required. Your self-mastery skills matter more than usual. This is the time when you are most desirous of change on a deep level. You are more willing than usual to explore life's secrets. On a more practical level, you may be dealing with joint finances and shared resources now more than usual. Social life takes priority in your life. Social interactions of a personal, one-on-one kind are emphasized.

**Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)**

You would be generous, emotional, and sympathetic with people around you. You will also thoroughly enjoy artistic, musical, or cultural events and activities, with a loved one. You have good team spirit right now, and you are more tactful and obliging with your co-workers. You need the energies, companionship, and support of other people, and they may also seek out your support and companionship. It's important to include others rather than to go solo for the time being. However, bending too much to the will of another is not advised either. You take more pride in the work you do and in your health routines.

# 'I always follow the processes of directors'



After *Dear Zindagi* and *Raazi*, actress **Alia Bhatt** has once again worked with a female director and this time *Zoya Akhtar* for *Gully Boy*. The 25-year-old Bollywood star is rushing for promotions. **IBNS-TWF** brings some excerpts:

**How was it to enter into the sets of Zoya Akhtar's film?**

My experience was brilliant. I haven't worked with a better team so far. They are fantastic and on point with everything. It was a crazy ride.

**Tell us about your character in the film.**

Actually, I cried less and made others weep more in the film. The kind of dialogues I gave in this film is something which I didn't do before in my career. The character in the film is a (medical) student who can do liver

transplantation.

**Do you take extra responsibility while taking part in a film which is based on someone's character as it is in the case in *Gully Boy*?**

In these cases, we have to leave the job of representing the real-life world to the makers of the film. How the world will be represented in the film is not something we should get into or there is any need. I think the better way to deal with these films is to concentrate on one's own character and try to become authentic as much as possible without thinking about the reactions to it from audience. I believe thinking about the reaction to one's performance may sometimes hold one back or push further unnecessarily.

**How do your roles affect you personally?**

When I finish my roles, I forget what happened (in the film). The only experience which I remember is the physical one as to how difficult was it for me to enact in any sequence. In the preparation part, I always do what I am asked for. I like to follow the processes of individual directors.

**After seven years of your career and so many brilliant films, how do you deal with the kind of expectations your fans are having from you?**

I don't know. These thoughts don't come to my mind. I realise them only a few days before the release of any film. I think expectations will be there whether one is doing well or not. I hope I don't disappoint my audience. At the same time, I hope these expectations don't come in my way of decisions then it will become a little clinical.

*“An Englishman is a person who does things because they have been done before. An American is a person who does things because they haven't been done before.”*

--- Mark Twain

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.194 SHILLONG, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2019

### Some Relief for Farmers

WHAT was unthinkable till a month ago has happened. Farmers have begun getting a substantial amount as pension from the government – and this, without any middlemen, and the money is going directly into their bank accounts. Its impact would be huge, and the goodwill the Modi government earned out of this is phenomenal. Strong chances are that this will have an impact on the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, at a time when serious doubts had arisen whether the BJP-led government can return to power for a second term. On Sunday, at an event in Gorakhpur, UP, Prime Minister Narendra Modi implemented the surprise provision in the 2019-20 Union Budget. The budget also has a provision for pension to unorganised labour. That too is set to be implemented soon, as both the provisions have won parliament's approval. Notably, the first scheme styled as the PM-Kisan Yojana, involves a disbursement of Rs 75,000 crore to 12 crore small and marginal farmers across the nation, involving payment of Rs 6,000 a year to a farmer in three instalments. The first instalment of Rs 2,000 has been credited into the accounts of over one crore farmers, while the rest of the beneficiaries would soon get the same in their bank accounts.

Prima facie, PM Modi has stolen a march over the principal Opposition, the Congress party, as also the alliance of regional parties set against him and the BJP. It could be argued, perhaps rightly, that the PM took the decision to accord pension to farmers after the Congress governments in Madhya Pradesh etc., announced a loan waiver for farmers in the aftermath of the five-state assembly polls which led to the defeat of the BJP there. Suggestions were also that the PM and the BJP were planning to come up with some huge lure for farmers in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls. Whichever way one looks at it, farmers are now the beneficiaries and in a most surprising and unexpected way. However, pension alone will not be adequate to deal with the farm crisis. Their basic requirements need be addressed with the same seriousness. For instance, there is need to have better marketing systems for their products without middlemen playing a role; there is need for cold storages to preserve their products until sale; and there should be easy credit facilities so that they will not have to fall into debt traps and eventual suicides.

# At the threshold of ADC elections: Points to ponder

By H H Mohrmen

Now that the noise has died down and the campaigns and the rallies are over, it is time to take-stock and to try and understand if elections in the state really help to improve democracy and ensure good representatives are elected or have they merely become a tamasha? We are not only going to learn an awesome lot from this election, but the elections to the two Autonomous District Councils, 2019 are also crucial because they are going to be the last election to the Councils as we know them. Hence they obviously have much to teach us.

The first lesson is that contesting elections is now an expensive proposition. Even an election to the membership to the Autonomous District Council is becoming expensive, at least in the Jaiñtia hills because there is a spending spree everywhere. Apart from the usual expenditure which includes such things as candidates having to pay for hiring sound systems and decoration of meeting venues, now candidates even to provide tea during the meetings organised throughout the campaign period.

The above expenditures are at least accountable, however, the larger expenditure is on the conveyance when candidates have to hire vehicles to ferry people to and from meetings and rallies. The expenditure is quite enormous because nothing comes free these days especially during the elections. Ninety percent of the vehicles which attend the rallies and campaigns are paid for and surprisingly the candidates have to pay even for private vehicles joining the cavalcade. The enforcing agencies will find it difficult to detect this activity of the candidates because of the restriction of numbers of vehicles which can bear flags. Although there are vehicles carrying people to and from during the election campaign period but because they do not carry flags, the government cannot possibly arrest them.

One may ask why the need to ferry people to attend the different meetings of their respective candidates. Well, the sole objective of this activity is to influence undecided voters. In Jaiñtia Hills one

would hear people predict about the prospect of the candidate winning from the number of vehicles he can bring to the different meetings and rallies. The more people and more vehicles one can bring the brighter the chance the candidate has to win the election.

Candidates not only have to pay for conveyance of the people to attend meetings and rallies, but everyday voters are even paid for attending the meetings or rallies of the candidate they support wherever they are held. The voters are paid on a daily basis and the rate varies from place to place, but the sad fact is that the candidates or his supporters provide not

fact, it is only natural that even for the office of Member to the District Council, the contestants have to have a big bank balance. The way the election spending is happening one cannot help but ask why are contenders willing to spend so much money only to get elected as members of the ADC? Is it the status? Or is it something else because from experience it is found that the function of the JHADC leaves much to be desired. One may ask what exactly the function of the ADC is. What have they done to protect the rivers and forests in the scheduled areas?

If the function of the ADC is merely to protect the culture and traditions of the

therefore that if there are no issues to debate then are the ADCs still relevant? Some have rightly pointed out that it looks like the dorbar shongs have more agenda to discuss than the JHADC because their meeting will definitely last more than three hours.

The other major issue which is affecting the ADCs is defection because of the absence of the anti-defection mechanism in the Council. Hence members switch allegiance at their own whims and fancies. This has led to the frequent change of Chief Executive Members and the Executive Committee. Another pertinent question that one may ask is how many CEMs did we have in the last five-year term? The frequent change of CEM and ECs has also affected the functioning of the Council as a whole.

In the Khasi Pnar context when candidates visit their respective constituencies to campaign, they request the voters to elect them as their 'Nongialam' which literally means leader, but how can we get true leaders when in the process, he or she is literally buying his or her way to the House? The Khasi Pnar people also have another term which they use for the political leaders and that is u/ka 'nong-mihkhmat,' but what does 'mihkhmat' exactly mean? In true sense of the term, it just means to show one's face. For instance when a person visits a bereaved family, he/she goes to show his/her face or 'mihkhmat,' on his/her own behalf or on behalf of the family. Or when one joins the family in times of joy, one attends the same to also represent or 'mihkhmat' one's family in the meeting or the occasion. Is this the kind of leadership we want?

There is now a blame game as to who should be held accountable for the sad state of affairs that we are in now. Should we blame the politicians for bribing the voters or are we the voters to be blamed for expecting largesse from the candidates. We are really in the, 'which came first, the egg or the chicken situation,' because the voters also take advantage of the situation and milk their candidates as much as they can because after the campaign period they would have disappeared altogether all pursuing their own businesses even while voters are left high and dry.

**The readers will find it interesting to know that the Jaiñtia Hills Autonomous District Council in particular has spent very little time debating issues in the different sessions of the Council in the last five years.**

only food but even free drinks for the people who join the meetings.

This year unlike the last elections to the Legislative Assembly, from videos doing the rounds on social media, there are cases not only of women being in an inebriated condition, but also of them exchanging blows and the crowd instead of trying to disengage them were seen cheering and egging them on to fight each other. This is the sad state of affairs that we are in where men and women especially farmers and daily wage earners, throughout the campaign period, stopped attending to their chores altogether.

Compared to the Legislative Assembly elections and the constituencies under KHADC, the MDC constituencies in Jaiñtia hills are smaller. In spite of that, the expenditure that the candidates have to incur is considerably much higher than their counterparts in the Khasi hills. It is now also obvious that every serious contender to any public office will have to shell out huge amounts of money only to contest the election. Based on this

indigenous people, then why is there this spending spree during elections? Another question that needs to be asked is what have the MDCs particularly those of the JHADC done in the last 2014-2019 council? What have they done to protect and promote the languages of the area? What have they done to protect the indigenous people for which the Council is mandated to protect? Obviously the Council has done precious little in the last tenure.

The people also have the right to know how many Bills were passed in the entire five year term and how much time the members spent debating these Bills in the august house. The readers will find it interesting to know that the Jaiñtia Hills Autonomous District Council in particular has spent very little time debating issues in the different sessions of the Council in the last five years. The readers will also be surprised to know that in the last term of the JHADC, the different sessions and in fact even the budget session, did not last not even for two hours. Yes the entire budget session did not last for even a few hours. The question arises

## Pulwama Massacre: How to Deal With Pakistan Now

By Brig. Arun Bajpai

The Pulwama massacre of Feb 14 last on the Jammu-Srinagar highway when a suicide bomber of Pakistani based jihadi organisation Jaish-e-Mohammad rammed his explosive laden SUV into the fifth bus of the CRPF convoy, martyring 40 CRPF constables, still rankles. Indian blood is on the boil. The aam aadmi are on the streets demanding revenge from the Modi Government for this dastardly act. PM Modi has publicly promised revenge; he also said that time for talks are over. Pakistan is in a panic. It has already shot down one of its own fighter planes mistaking it to be Indian. Its puppet PM Imran Khan and its generals are threatening India of a full-scale retaliation if India attacks Pakistan. To scare India, Pakistan is reportedly fitting its tactical nuclear warheads into its short-range missiles. So where do we go from here in this surcharged atmosphere?

A week ago PM Modi had said that the Indian Army has been told to teach Pakistan a lesson at a time and place of its own choosing. I am very sure that Indian Armed Forces are mulling all options, because it is not an easy task, besides the time that elapsed has alerted Pakistan and kept it in preparedness. The surprise factor is no longer available to India. We should also not forget that both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers and India will not like to convert this limited action to full scale war leading to use of nuclear warheads in which Pakistan will definitely get wiped out from the face of earth, but India will also suffer collateral damage. So what are the options?

First and foremost, it is time Indian political masters of all hues understand that Pakistan is the only country in the world where instead of the country having an Army the Pakistani Army has a country by the name of Pakistan. Pakistani author Ayesha Siddiqqa in her book on the Pakistani Army named 'The Military Incorporation', the Pakistani Army runs a 20 billion dollar business in Pakistan. It survives and does all these activities by creating a fear psychosis that but for them India would have gobbled up Pakistan. In a recent survey carried out by PEW International Agency, more than 73% Pakistanis believe this. In other words, Pakistani Army and its intelligence agency ISI will never allow Pakistan to be a friend of India.

Indian political masters advised by their Police or National Security Advisors (so far no Army General in India has been made NSA) have till date no coherent Pakistan policy despite the fact that Pakistan has projected a proxy war on India in the shadow of its nuclear arsenal since 1988. Pakistani Army created and nurtured Jihadi organisations, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Toiba, Hizbul Mujahidin, all housed in Pakistan. From there they sally into India across the border; cause damage in India and again run back to Pakistan. The Pakistani Army is doing this openly today. It is pathetic that in the last 30 years our Indian political masters and their 'babu' advisors have not found a solution to this problem and we continue to suffer and lose the lives and limbs of our trained soldiers.

The truth is that basically India projects the image of a soft target, where anyone can hit us and go back and we do not show the guts to retaliate. Since the last 30 years we are killing these Jihadis coming from Pakistan, who are basically cannon fodder for the Pakistani Army. We tom-tom our achievements in the number of jihadis killed per year but we forget that our trained soldiers are also getting killed and to whom we have to give monetary

grants and family pensions too while Jihadis get nothing. Meanwhile the perpetrators of this crime, the Pakistani Army continue to laugh at us. Various governments in power in the last 30 years have evolved their own policies in dealing with Pakistan. There is no sustained thread which ensures a robust and sustained Pakistan policy. Compare this with Pakistan a country 1/8th the size of India, now on the verge of bankruptcy but carrying on with its India policy of the 60's – 'break India by imparting a thousand cuts.' It is high time we in India specially our netas wake up and join hands to craft out a Pakistan policy which is stable and consistent.

Since the time Pakistan started this proxy war 30 years ago we have lost more than 5000 soldiers to these jihadis. Yes, we have also killed more than 20,000 jihadis but how many Pakistani army soldiers? Very few in comparison. Unless we kill Pakistani army soldiers in bulk, every time they send jihadis across the borders, this proxy war causing damage to us will carry on. Yes, we must start killing their regular army soldiers by attacking them, every time they launch jihadis. It will have a telling effect on them. We must remember that Pakistani Army is a political Army. They shun fighting while Indian Army is battle-hardened fighting these jihadis one to one for the last 30 years. Also, when fighting insurgency Pakistani Army uses F-16 fighter jets, tanks, heavy artillery, on their own people. See what they have done in Swat Valley and Tribal Areas of Pakistan. So, what stops us from doing the same on these jihadis coming from across the borders? Surely, they are not our people.

When Pakistan is steadfast in its policy of breaking India by a thousand cuts, why are we shy of plucking low hanging fruits like Sind and Baluchistan provinces of Pakistan? As it is Pakistan is blaming us for everything which goes wrong there? We must go all out to funnel money, weapons and what have you in these two provinces of Pakistan as Pakistan is doing in Kashmir Valley. We must not forget that it takes two to tango. When we keep on announcing to the world that J&K is part of India then why do we agree to talk to Pakistan on its status? Why cannot we tell Pakistan that J&K is part of India and there is nothing more to talk? We can only talk when Pakistan hands over POK to India.

We hope PM Modi has now realised that in foreign relations Koot Neeti and Rajneeti only works when you have backing of strong Armed Forces. A country cannot neglect its armed forces for 15 long years and then expect the world to listen to India. Ajit Doval the NSA must explain to our political masters why despite China keeping 20 lakh Muslims from its Xinxiang province in detention camps; not allowing Muslims to read their holy book, Quran; not allowing Muslim women to wear the burkha; not allowing Muslim males to keep beard etc., no Muslim country of the world numbering 50 including Pakistan are complaining?

We must divide J&K into three states of Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir Valley and abrogate Article 370 and Article 35A, the root cause of alienation of J&K. Let the three states, be fully subsumed in India. Also, it is time India learns that there is no lasting friendship between nations; what is lasting of lasting value is national interest and for that a country has to depend on itself and not on friends.

*(The author is a retired Brigadier and can be reached at brigarunbajpai@yahoo.co.in)*

### TO THE EDITOR

#### KHADC: A second division league

Editor,  
The great Indian tamasha (elections) in our state had started where politicians and political parties are training their guns at each other and trading charges as they prepare for the District Councils elections. It is amusing to see supporters of different politicians dancing and singing at the time of filing of nominations and taking out rallies as if their political masters are demigods who will solve all their problems once elected. Unlike the young generation elsewhere, our youth seems to have all the time riding cars, bikes and shouting political slogans for their political masters. I simply assume they are unemployed youths (khynnah khlem kam khlem jam) with all the free time in the world. My assumption was right when I asked a young biker what this fuss is all about. His reply is that since he has nothing to do he should enjoy the free drinks,

free foods and free petrol rather than sitting idle at home.

Every politician claims that the District Council is a very vital institution in Meghalaya and hence they are contesting for the sake of the jaidbynriew. Really? As far as we are concerned the District Council is actually a lower division league where every politician tries to get promoted to the main league (Assembly). It is also a rehabilitation centre for someone who has been relegated from the main league or for politicians who cannot win the Assembly seat or a place where sitting MLAs earn extra income and monetary schemes and hence MLAs, their spouses, offsprings et al are contesting elections as dummy candidates. An MLA's relative who becomes MDC will automatically keep the vote bank of the MLA intact for the next election.

Recently H S Shylla felt insulted to be an MDC and confessed that there is no point being an MDC since

all Bills passed by the KHADC are not passed by the District Council Affairs of the State Government. He also rued the fact that 70 % of the businesses in Iewduh are run or owned by non tribals. So the big question here is, "Who is issuing them trading licence in the first place? Is it Narendra Modi? No, it's the KHADC themselves. When Mukul Sangma passed the Prevention of Disqualification Amendment Bill 2015, all legislators who held dual posts vacated their MDC seats and held on to the Assembly one, with the exception of PN Syiem. Not a single MLA resigned to cling on to the MDC seat. So when a candidate proudly claims that the District Council is the 'Stieh of the Jaidbynriew', (protective shield for the people) we should simply tell them it is bunkum. It is just a 2nd division league for politicians. In fact it only leads to conflict of power. There are frequent conflicts of interest between the district councils and the

state legislature. The Sixth Schedule clearly states that- whenever there is a conflict of interest between District Councils and the state legislature, the views of the latter would prevail. Thus, state legislature enjoys superiority over the ADCs. Therefore autonomous councils are mere platforms for aspiring politicians who nurture ambitions to contest the assembly polls in the future.

Yours etc  
Manuel Carey Lymba  
Shillong -8

#### Much ado about District Council elections

Editor,  
Every night there are lectures up to 11 pm by various candidates contesting the ADC elections. Then there are songs playing before the lectures and after too. What for? What have the District Councils done for

us? How have they improved our lives or reduced the poverty levels in our villages. Have they prevented land alienation? Will they be able to bring in land reforms so that all the indigenous people of Meghalaya who are landless are given some land for a home? This redistribution of land as happened in West Bengal must happen here in Meghalaya too otherwise we are staring at a bleak future. And I can say with certainty that these people who are contesting the MDC elections are not bothered about the key issues affecting the tribal people here whom they are elected to serve.

Why should the MDC also make footpaths? Isn't that part of the MLA Scheme? The KHADC should make laws that are enlightened and which empower the tribes to start their own businesses. Instead we are seeing most shops in Iewduh which were previously held by Khasi-Pnar traders are now in the hands of non-tribal traders.

Is the Iewduh not a sacred market of the Khasis where some worship is carried out by the Syiem of Myllem once a year? Is the Syiem of Myllem also blind to this fact or is the Iewduh his main source of income? For how long can people be fooled by politicians who are all out to enrich themselves and their immediate families? I think people are fed up of elections. I have a stall in Iewduh and I heard people discussing the Council elections. They said when Ardent Basaiawmoit was the CEM he had planned to modernise Iewduh. But he was soon unseated and Iewduh is now worse off than before. People are no longer enthusiastic to vote for the MDC elections. Soon they will also be tired of the Assembly elections.

Yours etc,  
T Sohkhlet,  
Via email

Articles and letters appearing on this page are the views of the writers/authors and not that of The Shillong Times

“Not voting is not a protest.  
It is a surrender.”

--- Keith Ellison

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.195 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2019

### Arunachal Pradesh burns

BARELY has the uproar on the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) 2016 died down in the seven states when a proposal to grant permanent residential status to six non-Arunachalee tribes has now singed the state of Arunachal Pradesh. It all started when several organisations in the state called for a 48-hour bandh on Thursday and Friday last seeking changes in the proposals made by the government-appointed panel for granting Permanent Residential Certificates (PRC) to six non-indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The Joint High Power Committee (JHPC), after holding several rounds of discussions with stakeholders, had recommended granting PRC to six communities, who through not natives of Arunachal Pradesh but have been living in Namsai and Changlang districts for decades.

The proposals evoked strong resentment among several community-based groups and students' organisations. Their contention was that the rights and interests of indigenous people would be compromised if the state government accepts them.

The recommendations of the JHPC were to be tabled in the Assembly on Saturday but the matter was shelved as the House was adjourned sine die.

The tragedy about the violence was that it disrupted the first ever film festival - the Itanagar International Film Festival (IIFF) scheduled to be held over the weekend. The venue of the film fest at IG Park Itanagar was vandalized and the artists bundled off into their hotels while a Mumbai based actor-director Satish Kaushik and his team took refuge in the auditorium until they were evacuated. Over 50 artists, filmmakers, musicians from Mumbai, Goa and other North-eastern states were later evacuated safely but at great cost to their equipments. Vehicles of some of them were also set ablaze. Nagaland-based musician Alogo Naga whose vehicle and musical instruments were torched by the agitators has now asked the Government to compensate the loss. It will be a long time before people gather confidence to venture into Arunachal Pradesh again for another event.

Interestingly, Chief Minister Pema Khandu said that the issue of granting citizenship to some communities not indigenous to Arunachal Pradesh was no longer a live issue and the matter stands closed. Somewhere there was a communication gap but the damage done to the image of the state is phenomenal. The loss of three young lives to police firing is regrettable. That the residence of the Deputy Chief Minister was burnt down and police lathi-charged women protestors also shows breakdown of law and order. Meanwhile the Union Government has dispatched 1,000 paramilitary personnel to the state to help the administration maintain law and order and for the state to limp back to normalcy.

### Quota in perpetuity

# NETA: Don't cast vote, vote caste

By Poonam I Kaushish

Questionably, can reservations be in perpetuity? Is it fair that a meritorious person is denied admission or job because his quota is full? Where does he head? When does backwardness supersede equality guaranteed by our Constitution and equal opportunities in public employment? Has anyone assessed whether those provided reservation have gained or continue to lose?

Does it make sense if someone with 90% in engineering sells medicines

while a Dalit with 40% becomes a doctor, thanks to reservation? What purpose does quota serve when a student or officer is unable to cope with the decision-making process? Are caste-based reservations the answer for maintaining India's social fabric and harmony? How does it better the lot of the SC/ST if a few get jobs?

Certainly, social justice is a desirable and laudable goal and it is the Government's fundamental mis-

derstanding that it is the Government's fundamental mis-

*“For Telangana's TRS Government which wants to give 12% reservations to Muslims, the Centre's decision to provide 10% quota in education and employment to EWS has come as a blessing in disguise.”*

derstanding that it is the Government's fundamental mis-

derstanding that it is the Government's fundamental mis-

*“Indeed, one would forgive our netas their one-upmanship, populist bravado and reckless ad-hocism if it bettered the lot of the downtrodden and poor.”*

derstanding that it is the Government's fundamental mis-

derstanding that it is the Government's fundamental mis-

derstanding that it is the Government's fundamental mis-

derstanding that it is the Government's fundamental mis-

### Minimum daily wage

# Double rate in offing?

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

A committee, appointed by the Centre, has recently recommended an improved formula on minimum daily wage, based on workers' families spending on balanced diet meal and non-food expenditure. The rate, it suggested should not be less than Rs 375 for the work done in government, private establishments and individuals, which is more than the notified Rs 176. If accepted, almost all States will have to increase minimum wage rates. The report titled "Determining the Methodology for Fixation of the National Minimum Wage," has been prepared by the committee, headed by Anoop Satpathy, a Fellow at the VV Giri National Labour Institute, with six members including officials from the International Labour Organisation and the labour Ministry. It has recommended five slabs of wages based on region with amounts varying between Rs 342 and Rs 447, based on July 2018 prices.

Last year, The India Wage Report published by ILO found that the wage rates of many States were below the minimum floor-level rate. Taking into account various factors, the Satpathy committee has departed from the usual formula of fixing minimum wage rate based on food and other items expenditure and prescribed another based on balanced diet which factors in a 'minimum threshold of calories, proteins and fat for the wage-earner--the requirements of which should include 50 grams of protein and 30 grams of fat a day'. It has also included non-food expenditure such as the money spent on house rent, clothing, fuel, electricity, education, medical care, footwear, entertainment and conveyance.

Presently, the wage rates under the programme differ from State to State and in no State is the amount close to the proposed national minimum wage. In most States, the wage varies between Rs 165 to Rs 190. Importantly, if the committee's recommendations are accepted, then the wages paid under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) will not only have to be raised but revisions will need to be done every six months instead of a year and the changes will have to be calculated on a formula that factors not only food items but also non-food ones.

It is a well known fact that wage disparities in the country has for long been an area of concern. In a report released sometime back, the ILO found that State governments often set their minimum wages lower than the recommended national minimum wage. Apart from inter-State variations, the wage is unrelated to the cost of living for the same kind of job. This is because the Minimum Wages Act of 1948 does not say on what basis the minimum wages should be fixed or revised.

At that time a committee defined three levels of wages - the living wage, the fair wage and the minimum wage. The minimum wage was defined as subsistence wage plus 'standard' wage, the latter being left undefined. The Minimum Wages Act empowered the States to set a variety of wages and revise them at periodic intervals, not exceeding five years. Such revision is obviously aimed at ensuring that wages are in tune with the socio-economic realities and take into account inflation. However, it is known that the minimum wages have often been revised "somewhat arbitrarily, without full consultation with social partners".

Morever, it is found that nearly a third of the country's workers were paid less than the minimum wage in

2009-10 and women were in general paid less than men.

Recall a Code on Wages Bill was introduced in Parliament in August 2017, which provides for introduction of a binding national minimum wage (NMW). This includes stipulating a single NMW or different minimum wages for different States or geographical areas.

The variance in wages among States is definitely a matter of concern. The wage for agricultural labour was as low as Rs 80 in Arunachal Pradesh and Rs 92 in Odisha though it was higher in Mizoram at Rs 170 and Haryana at Rs 178 in 2013. As regards Maharashtra, which occupies the highest share of such workers, the minimum wage was 73 per cent lower than the national minimum wage in 2013, according to an old report.

While the disparities are quite manifest, what needs to be stated is that most workers are paid around 20 per cent lower than the minimum wage but forced to sign on the dotted line. The aspect of corruption being pervasive as regards wages is prevalent both in the government and private sectors. Some analysts have found that the panchayats pay much less compared to the private sector. However, in the latter, the duty hours are often extended beyond the permissible eight hours with a short break.

All this clearly reveals that the bottom segment of the population can be categorised as exploited, the obvious reason being wage inequality leading to consumption inequality. In India, the structure of employment and the sources of labour income have changed over course of time. In particular, labour is increasingly engaged informally, either through a rise in the number of informal workers in the informal enterprises or an increase in the hiring of workers informally in the formal enterprises, the latter being referred to as 'casualisation' of the workforce.

It has been seen that firms create a dual structure within their enterprises, preferring to hire unskilled workers as contract/temporary staff rather than as regular workers. However, formal firms, having access to financial capital and hence, more advanced technological processes, have preference for skilled workers and hence pay higher wages, generating larger income disparities. It is no secret that in the informal sector, exploitation of labour in terms of low wages is a case for serious concern. The government is not completely oblivious to this development but has taken no action taken to ensure that the minimum wages are paid to the employees. Some units do not show their workers as employees and give them much lower wages than stipulated and lower than minimum wages.

It goes without saying there is need to adhere to a minimum wage policy that ensures decent livelihood to workers - both in the field and factory. Moreover, the wage should be more or less uniform in the States so that the informal sector workers are not deprived. There is need also that there be strict monitoring regarding the actual wages paid to workers in government projects as also what the private sector pays to its employees.

Obviously, questions may arise about government resources that need to be mobilised for the hike in wages. This must be considered a priority area and cuts in unnecessary expenses be given a serious thought. For there needs to be genuine concern for field workers and his welfare must take precedence.--- INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

### ADC elections

Editor,  
Now that the election campaigns are over the visible signs in the fields in Jaintia Hills are that the NPP and the UDP are doing far better than the INC, PDF and others. As things stand the NPP and the UDP are moving neck to neck and who knows they may come to a post poll alliance and that too depending on how many seats each gets on the counting day. On the other hand, in the Khasi Hills the INC seems to be doing quite well so far gauging from the public mood. However, on its own it may not be able to form the much wanted EC. However, we cannot discount the performance of the UDP and the NPP in Khasi Hills. These regional parties are doing commendably well in a number of pockets and in fact, UDP and NPP together may outnumber the seats obtained

by the INC. The PDF might also spring a surprise in some MDC constituency segments. As for HSPDP it is struggling very hard to get Mawthadraishan, Nongstoin, Rambrai-Jyngam and Mawkyrwat because unlike in the past the mood of the voters this time seems to go against it even in these traditional HSPDP pockets. The likely scene post elections in the Khasi Hills seems to be that UDP, NPP, PDF and perhaps HSPDP may have post poll alliance in the KHADC.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Via-Email.

### Goraline road completed

Editor,  
Apropos my letter dated June 22, 2018 wherein I had mentioned that the re-in-

change our minds. They had worked for a better tomorrow for all of us including for those who killed them. They had been tagged as the enemy of the people by those whose representatives were their killers. But why had a section of us been so much agitated while confronting their ideas?

Psychologists have found that our partisan identities get entangled with our personal identities. As a result, we have a tendency to take a comment on our strongly held beliefs as though it is an attack on our self and as an attempt to assassinate our character. Jonas Kaplan, a psychologist at the University of Southern California said, "The brain's primary responsibility is to take care of the body, to protect the body. The psychological self is the brain's extension of that. When our self feels attacked, our brain is go-

ing to bring to bear the same defences that it has for protecting the body."

Kaplan and other neuroscientists set up an experiment to know what happens in the brain when we resist changing our minds. The results show that our brains process information about religious beliefs, political beliefs and strongly held beliefs differently than in the case of other facts. When an idea challenges our religious and political beliefs, the region of the brain where we have kept an image of our identity, gets agitated. As a result, we feel threatened. Kaplan says a good way to make people aware about the importance of accepting fresh progressive ideas is to remind them who they are and what they believe are two separate things.

The journal of Science published an interesting article in 2016 on how to reduce prejudices. The

mantra is simple - Listen. People can learn lessons more durably when they come to the conclusion themselves. Dave Fleisher calls it deep canvassing. The key is to listen to the people after asking open-ended questions.

In talking about their own lives, the people can be engaged in what psychologists call "active processing". In this way, it is important to help people understand that they must evolve from their possessing a set of beliefs into having a more progressive set of ideas in tune with the ascending evolution.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
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.

*"Propaganda does not deceive people; it merely helps them to deceive themselves."*

--- Eric Hoffer

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.196 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2019

### Well done, IAF

THE Pakistani military has, if anything, proven its incompetence and that most glaringly. Twelve fighter jets from India crossed the border, went deep into enemy territory, rained laser-guided bombs of 1,000kg, and returned to their bases without any hindrance. Pakistani fighter jets scrambled, but failed to act. Now, if India can reach up to 50 miles inside undetected or unchallenged, the message is, it might go further inside and rain down bombs with more courage in future. The first time the Indian troops staged an incursion under directions from Prime Minister Modi, styled as surgical strikes, was into a five km distance in September, 2016. Now, four years later, the scope has been extended by 10 times. Both times, the Pakistani military has been caught napping. Its bluff has been called.

The extent of damage caused by this IAF action, styled as a pre-emptive strike based on intelligence inputs about terrorist plans to stage more attacks on India, stopped short of a serious military response. As foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale put it, no civilian was targeted and only the well-erected terror modules inside forests. Civilian areas were kept outside the purview of the IAF action. This is bound to put Pakistan in a serious predicament. For, Pakistan itself used to shout from roof-tops that it was a victim of terrorism in its soil. Now, it can be proposed to it that India helped eliminate at least a part of this network, run by Jaish e Mohammed and its notorious head Masood Azhar. This must be seen as a friendly gesture to the Pakistani establishment and its people.

Yet, Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi was the first to come out with a threat Tuesday, saying his country would give a fitting reply to India. Fact is, Pakistan was using the terror modules to give more than a reply to India for long years, and without facing serious repercussions. What happened in the pre-dawn strike Tuesday might also not amount to much in terms of harm caused to Pakistan.

The Indian Air Force and Prime Minister Narendra Modi deserve praise for this retaliatory action done in a highly professional manner. Pakistan has now been put on notice. India has shown that it has the courage to act - something that was missing in the past. For the first time after 1971, fighter jets flew into Pakistan - and they acted as per script, and returned to their bases safely. Well done, IAF.

# Post-Pulwama, need to check hyper-nationalism Attacking Kashmiris part of high-pitched saffron agenda

By Amulya Ganguli

The Prime Minister's call for ending the targeting of Kashmiris living in other parts of the country in the wake of the Pulwama outrage has come not a moment too soon. The young Shiv Sena leader, Aditya Thackeray, has also done well to sack those party workers who assaulted Kashmiris in Maharashtra. Few will deny that the attacks were yet another manifestation of the atmosphere of intolerance which has been evident in the diatribes directed against the minorities on social media and the assaults on them and even murders by the self-appointed cow vigilantes.

It wasn't surprising, therefore, that the hyper-nationalism whipped up by the saffron activists on the ground and in the media would seize the Pulwama massacre to vilify, terrorise and attack innocent Kashmiris. How deep-rooted such vitriol is in the Hindutva camp can be gauged from the fact that a BJP-appointed governor, Tathagata Roy of Meghalaya, endorsed the statement of a retired army officer to ostracise Kashmiris and refuse to buy their goods.

Roy's vitiated mentality is not dissimilar to that of the Union minister, Jayant Sinha, who garlanded the convicts of an act of lynching. That both of them remain ensconced in their positions tells its own tale.

Like these two, there is also a section of the media which has been unabashedly jingoistic ever since the Pulwama tragedy. Their current obsession is a campaign calling for cutting off all sporting ties with Pakistan. Such a ban may be generally supported in the case of bilateral fixtures between the two countries.

But extending it to international encounters such as the June 16 cricket World Cup match is problematic as it is unlikely that India will be able to persuade the Interna-

*"It wasn't surprising, therefore, that the hyper-nationalism whipped up by the saffron activists on the ground and in the media would seize the Pulwama massacre to vilify, terrorise and attack innocent Kashmiris."*

A boycott of the game in the event of the world body rejecting India's plea for outlawing Pakistan will result in India

typical of the illiberal outlook of the Hindu Right, for the Kashmiris, who have to contend daily with the sight of patrolling paramilitary personnel, such labelling is a reminder of their less than secure status as citizens.

It goes without saying that the prohibition of their admissions in colleges or ouster from rented premises elsewhere in India can only further widen the gulf between Kashmir and the rest of the country, making the already existing alienation virtually irreparable.

There isn't enough, therefore, only to condemn the attacks on them, but also to foster an atmosphere of goodwill which can only be achieved if the government severely admonishes those who doubt the patriotic credentials of its critics.

Europe learnt about the pitfalls of nationalism from the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy. In contrast, Indian nationalism was singularly devoid of the poison of sectarianism through the long years of the freedom struggle because of the presence at the helm of the independence movement of luminaries like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Unfortunately, the last decade of the movement saw the rise of Muslim separatism, leading to the creation of Pakistan. In India, such divisive sentiments were kept at bay after 1947 by a successful democratic system.

In Kashmir, however, they reappeared because of the flawed election of 1987 and has since been aided and abetted by Pakistan and the generally insensitive attitude of the governments in New Delhi towards Kashmiri grievances and aspirations.

Should not be further jeopardized by the hyped-up nationalism of the Hindu Right. (IPA Service)

not only forfeiting two points, but there will also be a cloud over its participation in future games and even its right to stage international events, as the row over reports of the denial of visas to Pakistani players for a rifle shooting competition in New Delhi showed.

It is obvious that the country will see no lessening of the display of muscular nationalism as the general election draws near. Yet, it will be a pity if people in responsible positions, such as a governor, or the gov-

ernment itself tend to be swayed from the path of sanity as the country becomes more of a "cacophonous cauldron", as a British high commissioner said at a time when

the Twitterati did not exist and the mainstream media was a model of restraint.

There is little doubt

*"Roy's vitiated mentality is not dissimilar to that of the Union minister, Jayant Sinha, who garlanded the convicts of an act of lynching. That both of them remain ensconced in their positions tells its own tale."*

in aviation. In case of civil aviation, the human loss is enormous. Should India cancel air shows following such fatal accidents even while it enhances aerospace safety measures.

Yours etc,  
Kamal Baruah  
Guwahati

## Mehbooba Warns Centre

Editor,  
PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti on Monday (Feb 24) warned the Centre over Article 35A that gives the state legislative powers to define the residents of Jammu and Kashmir and their privileges, asking it not to play with fire else people might witness something that they haven't since 1947. Speaking to the media, Mufti reportedly even said, "Don't play with fire; don't fiddle with Article-35A, else you will see what you haven't seen since 1947. If it's attacked then I don't know which flag people of J&K will be forced to pick up instead of the tri-colour. Such statements from Mehbooba merely exposes her jaundiced favour of Pakistan-sponsored terrorists.

She is completely mistaken. In fact the state has

not been attacked and the Government's intention is to make the state of J & K terrorist free. Her pronouncement that she does not know which flag people of J&K will be forced to pick up instead of the tricolour is a direct provocation for communal inflammation. Mufti Mehbooba should refrain from such titillation and of issuing dire threats to the country with re-enactment of the "Great Calcutta Killings" of August 1946.

Mehbooba's statement comes amid intense speculation that the central government might favour abrogation of Article 35A when the petition challenging its constitutional validity comes up for hearing in the Supreme Court later this week. Mufti Mehbooba is incompetent to dictate to the Judiciary when the subject is sub-judice. Her irresponsible statement on the subject constitutes contempt of court

According to the DGP of J&K, Pak-sponsored terrorism shows no signs of decline and as such Mehbooba has no business at all to condemn the arrest of leaders of the Hurriyat Conference, a fanatic separatist party funded by Pakistan. A citizen of India has to have integrity and loyalty to the

country and nation and cannot be a separatist.

It may be recalled that when Syed Mufti Mohammad was a Minister in the Union Cabinet of Morarji Deesai a fake story of abduction of his elder daughter, a medical doctor was sinisterly designed and fan-fired. More than half a dozen dreaded terrorists had to be released from Indian prisons/jails in the blackmailing/bargaining process to Pakistan. Who engineered such a heinous anti-national plot needs to be investigated. Which Chief Minister of J&K took the initiative to enact a law in the state assembly to deprive women from their right to property after their marriage outside the state of J & K? Which political party of the state took the lead to drive out the Hindus from Jammu and make them refugees twice over after the Partition of India in 1947, needs to be probed and placed in the public domain.

Yours etc.,  
Samares Bandyopadhyay  
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.*

## Modi's yorker rattles Pakistan

# Now, it is upto Imran to give a bouncer

By Sushil Kutty

India's promised response to Pulwama was at whatever speeds Mirage and Sukhoi fighter jets achieved early Tuesday morning and like a twin, Pakistan has sworn to return the compliment ASAP at a "time and place of its choosing", a choice of words borrowed from the Indian armed forces. For now, Pakistan has decided to keep its nuclear threat in the silos and Prime Minister Imran Khan has chosen surprise and suspense to simmer.

Of course, Pakistan started the day with saying that its fighter jets scrambled and chased the Indian jets out, which in their hurry

first place much less escape? Social Media has turned into battleground for Pakistanis and Indians. Right now, the Indians are laughing with the Pakistanis promising they will have the last laugh. Be sure pressure would mount on Imran Khan and Gen. Qamar Bajwa in the days to come.

Imran Khan in his response to Pulwama had promised to retaliate to any Indian "misadventure" and he will be duty-bound to keep his word. His Indian counterpart Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Cloud 9, already telling an election rally that the country was in "safe hands." The electoral

*This time, unlike the first surgical strikes, Pakistan could not deny and defuse. India's foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale cleared the air and said that India took out "pre-emptive" strikes against terrorist camps in Balakot in Pakistan; and that it was a "non-military strike."*

to escape the wrath of the Pakistani pilots junked "payloads" and went scooting into the safety of Indian skies. This time, unlike the first surgical strikes, Pakistan could not deny and defuse. India's foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale cleared the air and said that India took out "pre-emptive" strikes against terrorist camps in Balakot in Pakistan; and that it was a "non-military strike."

Unfortunately, for Pakistan there are no terrorist training camps in India it can target. So, it has a handicap. While "time" will be easy for Pakistan to choose, as far as "place" goes it will be diffi-

advantage to Modi and the BJP from these pre-emptive strikes can only be dented by what Imran Khan and Pakistan unloads on India in the days to come.

But there's a time limit: Before Voting Day in India. For now, India stands united behind its armed forces. Congress president Rahul Gandhi tweeted his "salute to the Indian Air Force" and so did several other opposition leaders. Unfortunately, for the opposition parties, Narendra Modi and the BJP will keep drumming up nationalistic fervour and Pakistan by whatever action it takes will willy-nilly help raise it.

The Pakistani media, on

*While "time" will be easy for Pakistan to choose, as far as "place" goes it will be difficult. It can either go for a military target or a civilian one. In both cases, it will be a "military strike" and that will be "an act of war." That said, India had termed even Pulwama an act of war.*

cult. It can either go for a military target or a civilian one. In both cases, it will be a "military strike" and that will be "an act of war." That said, India had termed even Pulwama an act of war. Pakistan will most likely try to capture one or more Indian Army soldiers and flaunt them to India and the world, a likelihood India should try to avoid at any cost.

Right now, Pakistan, particularly its all-powerful Army, is a wounded tiger with a bloody nose. Gokhale claimed that a large number of terrorists and their trainers were killed in the pre-emptive strikes including a brother-in-law of Jaish-e-Muhammad chief Azhar Masood. A joint session of the Pakistan Parliament would be held Wednesday and a call has already gone to the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) to cancel its invitation to India's external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj to the OIC meet to be held in UAE March 1-2.

That said, the people of Pakistan are not a happy lot. Their confidence in Imran Khan and the Pakistan Army remains intact, but many are asking how is it that Indian fighter-jets could even get into Pakistan airspace in the

orders from its handlers, are chapping at the bits but may not be able to hold itself back for long; it will have to go with public mood in the days to come. As it is, unlike other media worldwide, Pakistan media have not sent reporters to Balakot to "take stock." The Indian media, the majority of them, are behaving exactly the way the Modi government and BJP wants them to: Gung Ho and pro-government.

Imran Khan has called "India's claims, reckless and fictitious" and the two, "reckless" and "fictitious", do not go together. Going by his character, which is not lost on Indians, Imran Khan is not going to sit back; he'll be thinking of in-swingers and out-swingers; bouncers and yorkers to get back at India. Khan on the cricket pitch always wanted to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat and he will try to do just that in his new role, too. Pakistan will be keeping a close eye on Jammu & Kashmir and so should India. But the most likely Pakistani retaliation could be a 26/11 like terrorist strike, which could be anywhere, and anytime! (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

## Smoke out terrorist hideouts

Editor,

It is gratifying that India has hit some terrorists camps across the Line of Control (LoC) but this is not enough to teach Pakistan a lesson. What is more important is that India should strike the main hideouts of the JeM and LeT especially where Masood Azhar and his cohorts are taking shelter in Pakistan. The main purpose should be to cause total destruction to the main hideouts of the dreaded terrorists that have inflicted heavy damage on India which include those who masterminded the 26/11 attack on India. As long as the enemies of India are roaming free in Pakistan, the job is not accomplished and India should not rest. If the US can finish Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan why not India do likewise to Masood and other dreaded terrorists?

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Via email

## Can we remain calm?

Editor,  
The Indian Air Force has done a commendable job of

offloading 1000 kg of payload on strategic targets. The manner in which the operation was executed was extraordinary because of the surprise element. After the attack, India's Foreign Secretary, Vijay Gokhale gave a very diplomatic statement that did not reveal much but stated exactly what was achieved by the operation. This maturity is much appreciated. It is the television channels that are falling over themselves to give the audience a blow by blow account of the operation, which to my mind, reveals the complete operational strategy that India adopted in the early hours of Tuesday. Is this revelation necessary? Can't the defence forces be allowed to do their work without micro-scanning their activities? And those who are hectoring in TV studios about what India should and should not do vis-à-vis Pakistan are doing a great disservice to the nation. It is important to remain calm and not indulge in hyper-nationalism at this juncture.

Yours etc.,  
AK Singh,  
Via email

“The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.”

--- Sun Tzu

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LXI No.197 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2019

### Pakistan calls for restraint

PAKISTAN Prime Minister Imran Khan has belatedly called for a dialogue with India even as Pakistani fighter aircrafts breached the Indian airspace on Wednesday morning and were sent packing, albeit with some casualty as an IAF fighter pilot is in Pakistan's custody. The last time the Indian and Pakistani Air Force engaged in a war was way back in 1971. The present face-off is a result of the Pulwana attack by a suicide bomber that cost India the lives of over 40 CRPF jawans with as many injured. India on Tuesday flew its Mirage 2000 into Balakot where the Jaish-e Mohammed terrorist camps are located and dropped payload of 1000 kilogram. After India's attack on the Jaish camps the Mirages returned unscathed. However, India was on high alert and as predicted Pakistan F16 aircrafts entered inside the Line of Control (LoC) but were driven back by IAF fighters. Imran Khan and the Pakistani army have consistently denied that they are giving fire power to the Jaish-e-Mohammed and other terror outfits on their soil. They were similarly in denial about Osama Bin Laden being holed up in Abbottabad, southwest of the Pakistan Military Academy in Bilal Town where retired military officers reside. It is not possible that they did not know of Osama's presence in the vicinity. Since November 2008 when the horrific Mumbai attack happened India has been asking Pakistan to dismantle the terror camps of radical Islamist groups but all that Pakistan has done is to ask for evidence. Even after the Pulwama attack Imran Khan repeated the rhetoric about evidence. This is what irks the Indian establishment.

As far as India is concerned what has been lacking is a strategic Pakistan policy that should have been a commonly accepted doctrine across the political divide and which should be adopted by every Government in power at the Centre and which is subject to change depending on the changing contours of politics in Pakistan. Military doctrines cannot be subjected to the fluctuations and vagaries of politics. Diplomacy too cannot be dictated by the politics of the day unless found faulty and lacks outcomes. Our diplomatic engagement with Pakistan has always been a case of one step forward and two steps backwards. India now needs to get a grip on things and also find a way to handle the Kashmir imbroglio. That's India's Achilles heel and perhaps some new strategies need to be tried out there too. However that requires a humane approach and not just military action and keeping in mind that not every Kashmiri is a terrorist.

# Will Indo-Pak tensions affect bilateral trade?

By TN Ashok

In the 21st century, no country wants a full scale war, leave alone even a limited engagement militarily to exert ones armed superiority over the other in a game of sabre rattling or muscle flexing. India withdrew the Most Favoured Nation treatment (MFN) status accorded to Pakistan in trade soon after its alleged involvement in the Pulwama massacre of 41 CRPF soldiers in a truck in Kashmir.

Indian's retaliatory attack on terrorist camp of Balakote in the hill tops of Pak occupied Kashmir (POK), well inside the Line of Actual Control (LOC) in the disputed areas with IAF Mirage scramble jets dropping 1,000kg laser guided bombs claiming loss of JeM terrorists numbering 300 to 400 and Pakistan denying the same as fake encounter, the question is, will this escalate into even a limited military engagement between the two countries to seriously affect Indo- Pak bilateral trade.

That's the million dollar question. Even the US after its superior military might and two sordid engagements in Vietnam and Iraq faced stiff domestic opposition even as its foreign policy on anti-Communism and WMD guided the assault. US is one country, which can run normally even with a one trillion dollar deficit. Even on the North Korean nuclear threat, US President Donald Trump has used all his diplomatic skills to bring both South Korea and North Korea to the table for peace talks.

But neither India nor Pakistan can afford any armed conflict at this stage especially when India's economy has come out of the throes of the demonetisation and GST effects and is poised to grow at 7% and rein in fiscal deficit at 3.4% of GDP, after the massive dole out to farmers in the FY 2019-20 budgets. Successive governments in India and Pakistan have failed to take the Shimla Peace accord forward that both Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto formalised in a historic moment, as Pakistan subsequently failed to honour the spirit of the agreement for the talks and India insisting that should be the base to move forward.

Given this scenario of constant bickering between India and Pakistan on disputed territories in Kashmir and using Pakistan territory for terror camps, where is Indo Pak trade stuck? Does withdrawal of MFN complicate matters for Pakistan further. Here's a look at the stats.

The India -Pakistan

trade volume posted a growth of nearly 5% in the first seven months of the current fiscal year from a year ago despite border tensions. Trade sources claim as late as February 24. But India withdrew the MFN Following the alleged Pak inspired JeM Pulwama terror attack, which was granted in 1995.

MFN status is defined as one, in which a country will treat all WTO member states equally in matters of tariffs on imports. A day later, India slapped 200% import duty on Pakistani goods. However, the Indian government's decision to impose 200pc additional duty will bring them no tangible results as Pakistan's annual exports to the country are worth only a few million dollars, Pakistan's leading newspaper Dawn claimed.

However, Trade statistics show a different picture that on the contrary New Delhi may feel the pinch of the current stand-off. The total aggregate volume of bilateral trade between July-January 2018-19 has reached to \$1.122 billion, up by 4.96% up from \$1.069 billion over the corresponding period of last year. The first seven-month data of this fiscal year shows that Indian exports to Pakistan constitute 79.33% of the total bilateral trade volume.

Pakistan imports from India between July-January 2018-19 have reached to \$890.05 million from \$871.71 million over the corresponding period of last year, showing an increase of 2.1%. Pakistan's imports have already entered negative growth with almost all countries except India, an official report claims.

In the year 2017-18, Indian exports to Pakistan touched \$1.84 billion as against \$1.64 billion over the previous year, showing an increase of 12.2%. On India's move to revoke Pakistan's MFN status, Secretary Commerce Younus Dagha told Dawn that Commerce Division has already worked out different options. However, he did not disclose the details.

"No plan yet to announce it anytime soon," he said, adding "But we will give a measured response whenever the government also decides." Strangely, amid escalation of tensions between India and Pakistan, trade across the Line of Control continued on Tuesday, as 70 trucks crossed LOC from both sides of northern Kashmir with high level security ar-

rangements. The cross LoC trade is scheduled for four days a week from Tuesday to Friday, while as travel is scheduled once every week, trade sources said adding : "Today 35 trucks carrying tomatoes, embroidery and grapes crossed the Kaman Post from Uri to the other side and 35 trucks came even after Jaish-e-Muhammad attack on CRPF convoy in Pulwama on February 14. Even as suspense prevails in the Valley on what will happen next, the trade across the LoC continues.

On February 26, when India attacked the terror camps across the border leading to tensions escalating, the trucks crossed the LoC from Uri, which is extremely sensitive area and prone to shelling by Pakistan. Last week, 140 trucks crossed the LoC from the Indian side while 70 trucks came in from Pakistan, carrying various items both from Uri and Poonch trade facilitation centers. Trade was temporarily halted in Poonch for two days last week due to curfew in Jammu district because of which transport was not plying, media reports claim.

Cross-LOC barter trade has had a rickety journey since its inception in 2008, but it is still considered to be the biggest confidence-building measure (CBM) between India and Pakistan. However, it is often suspended in the wake of political strain between the two countries. Also, these traders have been frequently targeted by the investigating agencies like NIA for their alleged involvement in narcotics and illegal money exchange, which has not allowed the trade to flourish.

In January 2018, J&K government informed that goods worth Rs 3,432 crores have been traded via cross-Line of Control (LoC) trade during last three years. Much before the tensions between India and Pakistan escalated, the Indian envoy in Pakistan had called for removing non-tariff barriers between India and Pakistan, as both the countries needed to shun violence and normalise relations in order to take the two-way trade to \$30 billion from the present \$5 billion. This was sometime in March last year. But a lot of things have changed since then.

Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan Ajay Bisaria, while addressing the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), had said that there is no better way of improv-

ing bilateral relations than mutually beneficial economic ties. India has been pushing Pakistan for normalisation of trade on the basis of the September 2012 roadmap that mentioned removal of all restrictions on trade through the Wagah border and grant of the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India by December 2012. Pakistan, however, did not adhere to the timeline. India had already given Pakistan the MFN status - which is nothing but a promise not to discriminate against imports from the country that has got the status.

Bisaria said mutual relations between the two countries should be built on the basis of trade and economy, and violence and war should not be an option. Bisaria's statement came at a time when relations between the two nuclear-power neighbours were at a low amid heightened tensions following claims and counter-claims by both the countries about harassment of each other's diplomats.

The Indian High Commissioner also said that India and Pakistan should have the future different from the past and must not carry the burden of history. "Both Pakistan and India need to take more steps to remove non-tariff barriers that are a major impediment to bilateral trade relations.

"We should not talk about negative and positive lists rather we should work on the windows of opportunities. At present, over \$5 billion trade is being done through third country but after removal of non-tariff barriers, liberalisation of visa and normalisation of mutual relations, the two-way trade could touch a high \$30 billion," he had said.

LCCI President Malik Tahir Javaid had said then that at present an unfavourable scenario has developed both at political and diplomatic fronts. "We have been witnessing time and again that first there is a trust deficit, then some joint efforts are made for trust building, then some incident happens and we end up yet again at trust deficit. One such (terror) incident must not halt the process of relation building. Both countries should give the peace another chance to prevail in the region for our youth and coming generations," he had said adding "Pakistan and India need to show a lot of maturity and act very sensibly".

### Ghost of Rafale deal still haunting Modi

## Supreme Court opens new window amidst euphoria

By Nitya Chakraborty

Amidst the countrywide euphoria over the successful air strikes on terror camps in Pakistan, the Supreme Court has opened a Pandora's Box by agreeing to hold an open hearing on the review petitions calling for the recall of the verdict given by the apex court on December 14 last year. The decision of the SC bench headed by the Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi has extraordinary significance as it allows consideration by the bench of the points made by the petitioners that the December 14 judgment was based on the wrong and untruthful facts submitted by the Government in the sealed envelope to the Court.

Further, the bench took an uncommon decision to hold the hearings in an open court instead of its chamber, which is generally done in such review cases. This gives credence to the fact that the highest Court of the country has taken up this Rafale deal controversy very seriously now as the Court's image and especially the image of the Chief Justice has got a beating as a result of the dismissal of the petitions earlier and giving clean chit to the NDA government of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Now, the petitioners, especially the Trio - Two former ministers Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie and the lawyer Prashant Bhushan will be getting full opportunity in the open court to mention of the erroneous facts given by the Government in their note submitted through the sealed envelope as also the reports quoting the official documents which came out in media after December 14 judgment pointing out the active involvement of the Prime Minister's Office in the decision making process on the Rafale deal overlooking the views of the defence secretary. The date of the hearing has not yet been fixed but indications are that it will be held soon and that will start a process when the PM's actions also in respect of precipitating the Rafale deal, will come to limelight.

The most important aspect of the petition submitted by the trio in revised form, mentions that the December 14 judgment relied on non-existent CAG report to give clean chit to the deal. The petitioners want the recall of the judgment since the judgment based on a hypothetical CAG report is not merely a clerical or arithmetical slip but a substantial error. Since the apex Court has agreed to hear the petition, it will be a tough task for the Government people including the attorney general to

defend the official position. The Court will decide on the basis of open session hearings whether the December 14 judgment will be re-viewed.

At this present juncture when no one is questioning the Prime Minister and his policies in the wake of the sweep of national sentiments, it will be interesting how the Supreme Court deals with the petitioners arguments in the open hearing. The petitioners will certainly request the presence of some retired officials for inter-rogation. Will the Supreme Court allow that? In any case, the hearings will be very embarrassing for the Modi government and also the Prime Minister himself in the present period of the Government and the BJP led frenzy. As senior advocate Indira Jaising has pointed out a judgment based on facts which are false, is no judgment in the eye of law. The remedy is to recall the judgment and go for a fresh hearing, possibly by a different bench. The remedy is not a review of the judgment, much less an application for "correction" of the judgment, as is sought to be done by the Union Government. This is perhaps the first time in Indian legal history that the Government has told the Court how to re-write its own judgment, and which para to substitute for which one. Now comes the news, with clear evidence in the form of the defence ministry note, that the procedure for negotiating the deal was not followed.

One of the fist issues framed by the Court was the question whether procedures prescribed for negotiating the deal were followed. With regard to this, the Supreme Court in its December 14, 2018 order said: "We have studied the material carefully. We have also had the benefit of interacting with senior Air Force Officers who answered Court queries in respect of different aspects, including that of the acquisition process and pricing. We are satisfied that there is no occasion to really doubt the process, and even if minor deviations have occurred, that would not result in either setting aside the contract or requiring a detailed scrutiny by the Court. We have been informed that joint exercises have taken place, and that there is a financial advantage to our nation. It cannot be lost sight of, that these are contracts of defence procurement which should be subject to a different degree and depth of judicial review. Broadly, the processes have been followed. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

## After Pulwama India strikes back

Editor,  
After the terrible Pulwama attack by Pakistan sponsored terrorists, India is apparently standing up. Yes, it is practically gearing towards investment in better strategies to hit the right targets. True, the realization that the enemies are getting more brutal and more inhumane than ever before should make India more realistic and pragmatic. Of course, our battles are many, because the adversaries are of various kinds. While India should send its army deep into the terrorists' hideouts into Pakistan, it should also spare its thought on how to deal with those forces who eat and drink here but their hearts are with India's enemies. Has India logically failed to be humane to it's own people? Is it a fact that discrimination against certain tribes, certain religions and

communities really exist or is it just a lame issue for endless debates? One wonders how the idea of "intolerance" was coined suddenly in the country and that it vanished into thin air when the same term was applied otherwise!

Three successful strikes by India on February 26 should be a cause for joy but not at all are celebrating because today's joy could bring a load of sorrows tomorrow! Thank God, no civilians were hurt, and let that never happen because they are innocent. Let's always consider the innocent civilians as our own brothers-and-sisters! However, the silent preparedness for the bigger battles is what is most important. It can ensure easy victory. The noises only contribute towards shaking the firmness and determination of military forces. Is it not childish that we get prior information as to the plans and modus operandi of our fighters on WhatsApp

these days? I think it is disgusting. The TV channels round the clock give a detailed coverage about almost every inch of the army's movement. A lot of sensitive action plans are discussed threadbare in the newsrooms. Alas, this is not the real way to fight a battle. The road to victory must be undisclosed. A successful businessman never shares his trade secrets!

Yours etc.,  
Salil Gewali,  
Shillong-2

## India must be on alert

Editor,

I hail the pre-dawn, pre-emptive strikes on Jaish-e-Mohammed terror camps by the IAF on February 26. Naturally, Indians are very jubilant upon hearing this magnificent news. They started celebrating, which they should have. But India, as I feel, must not be

too complacent after this strike. There must be all round alertness vis-a-vis possible retaliation(s) by Pakistan any day, any time. Moreover, we must not forget that Pakistan always has an advantage over us as far as inflicting grievous injury to our country is concerned as we have, seemingly, large number of pro-Pakistan/anti-national elements inside our own territory who subsist on Indian tax-payers' money but always sing to the tune of Pakistan/China.

There is a need to gaze deep into the 'China' factor too, as we must not overlook the new Chinese interests in POK/NE India. After taking into account all these aspects, India should go all out in the future to destroy other existing sinister terror modules around it. People are with the Government as they cannot tolerate the misadventures of Pakistan/China any more. Here, in this context, I would like to pass an im-

portant message to all the anti-India elements living in India: you are fortunate that you were born in this country. This country takes all possible care to provide all your needs for you and your family's respectable subsistence. Other countries, like Pakistan, or China in particular, will never entertain you without a vested interest of their own! There, one has to sweat to earn a bread and, believe me, nothing will be provided free of cost. Pakistan, albeit very wrongly, is already famous for looking upon a particular religious community of India as somewhat an inferior one, although they have been using them since long in order to satisfy their own goal! China, on the other hand, means business and, unlike India, is well known for it's all round strictness on the ground, be it work-culture or family-size or freedom of expression, and what not! So, think hundred times before you leap!

Yours etc.,  
PS Gupta,  
Via email

## Let the assessment be fair

Editor,

There is a popular joke about a doctor who advised his patient to take complete rest along with medicines prescribed. When the doctor came to know that his patient was a Govt. employee, he advised him to attend his office regularly without fail since it was the best place for complete rest.

Work culture in Govt offices is a common topic of discussion across the country. Generally people's opinions are based on the experiences they gather during their visit to such offices for any kind of service. In most cases the same is far from satisfactory. Naturally there are different types of

employees, each with a different outlook. Some are serious and dutiful with their allotted job while others are shirkers. During my tenure in Govt. for over 38 years, I have many fond memories about my colleagues. Some of them were very regular in attendance and serious about their allotted job. They always helped people within their capacity. There are examples where an employee came to office on a particular day just to fulfil his commitment at the expense of his/her important household job. There are of course employees in Govt offices who are opportunists and spend duty hours in shopping, gossiping and other personal errands. As seniority is the main criteria for promotion and other service benefits in a Govt. office, such people get promoted despite their non-performance. This is not possible in any private sector office.

However, all employees should not be painted with the same brush. Those who

are allergic to work should be condemned. But we must also acknowledge the selfless services rendered by the sincere lot who often go out of the way to lend their co-operative hands. Bad apples exist in every sector of the society. But it is generally the police and the middle/lower tier Government employees who get maligned for inefficiency and for not performing their tasks. This is certainly not fair.

At the end of the day, the public must appreciate the fact that Govt. policies are implemented through their employees only and accordingly the society is benefited.

Yours etc.,  
Asish Chattopadhyay,  
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.