

By Atul Cowshish

A parliamentary committee, headed by a TDP Member, J.C. Divakar Reddy, is reported to have proposed a hefty fine (up to Rs 50 lakhs) and a long jail term (up to five years) for celebrities who 'mislead' consumers/buyers with their endorsements. The proposal has not been given a legal shape yet. It has to be accepted by the government and passed by parliament to become a law of the land. Nonetheless, the recommendation needs to be considered in all seriousness and merits wide support because there have been instances when public has felt 'cheated' by endorsement by their favourite film star or sporting personality.

Recently, the Indian cricket team captain, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, had to defend his position as 'brand ambassador' of real estate developer who had failed to deliver the flats even two years after the promised date. The reaction on the social media stumped him. And he has since given up the endorsement of a builder, who, consumers allege, has cheated them.

It can be said in Dhoni's defence that he was not selling the flats; he was merely promoting a Noida housing project. But Dhoni knows it as much as anyone else that when a celebrity like him promotes something it influences the decision of a large number of consumers and buyers. If it were not true why should Dhoni or any other celebrity be roped in?



Celebrity Endorsement

other celebrity, this time from the world of glamour, had withdrawn from the endorsement of a 'fast-food' item after it was said to contain some harmful ingredients. It is a different matter that the food item was later found to be quite 'safe'.

Some of the most popular celebrities include 'cola' drinks and 'junk food', both of which are described as harmful, especially for children who form the largest segment of consumers of these products.

It may appear as somewhat strange that the 'brand ambassadors' of various

big names in films, television and the sporting world, especially cricket. They seem to be happy promoting just about everything and anything—from soaps, hair oil and toothpaste to 'dream houses', cars and diamond jewellery.

Some think that certain celebrities are being 'over exposed' through advertisements. Hardly a day passes without their faces staring down from the pages of newspapers or TV screens. It can produce a fatigue among newspaper readers and viewers.

While celebrities—popular persons with large following—appearing in advertisements has been a long practice it has now become almost the rule. Earlier, the celebrity appearance was certainly not as common as it is now. The old tradition of unknown models appearing in ads seems to be nearing the end. It appears, almost all products directed at chil-

dren and women and even celebrities charge anything



many items of mass consumption have to be 'endorsed' by celebrities these days.

The ad budgets of manufacturers and service providers who hire the celebrities must obviously be several times larger today than ever before.

The famous from two or three crore rupees a day to Rs 10 crore for a day's 'shoot'. Time is certainly money for them! The huge ad costs would certainly be calculated in fixing the price of the product.

The hiring of celebrities for (Contd on P-VII)



Some months ago, another items that are endorsed consumer products are the

'I identify as a potato'

It's 2055. Phones are painted on our palms. Being transgender is compulsory, except for Popes, who have to be female. All countries have combined into one big nation, North Zuckerberg.

No, wait. May be life won't be that weird in 2055. It will be that strange much sooner, like may be in the next week or so.

The day I realized exactly how bizarre life was becoming started normally enough, when a reader sent me a heartwarming news report about a dog that accidentally won a race.

Ludvine, a two-year-old pet, stepped out of her home and saw humans starting to run. She joined them and ran the entire 21 kilometre trail, coming first in her age group and seventh overall. Officials chose to formally "identify her as a human" so she could receive a medal. Her surprised owner said that the dog had been let out to poop in the woods and must have decided to run the Alabama half-marathon on a whim.

This impressed me, as I need a lengthy period of psyching myself up just to move from sofa to fridge. I once watched a 40-minute documentary on Latvian railways because the remote was on the next armchair.

That email was immediately followed by one with a link to a news report about Hobo, a UK goat who thinks he is a dog and likes to go "walkies" twice a day. Pet goats are illegal where Hobo lives, but the authorities agreed to issue a special permit since "he identifies as a dog".

I mentioned these news items at lunch with a group of journalists and found that they were rather angrily struggling with the whole "identifies as" issue. One worked for a major news corporation which had issued an edict that if a person born male

identified as a woman, reporters had to use the pronoun "she", and vice versa for people born as women. This seemed fine to her until she had to sub-edit reports about a natural blond who identified as a

black American and an oversized adult male who identified as a little girl.

A feature writer who defies the laws of physics by being lazier and more sluggish than I am said that under the new "it's the individual's choice" policy, he identified as Brad Pitt and all women should henceforth be legally forced to respond accordingly. The women present enthusiastically acclaimed his proclamation with synchronized vomit gestures.

The next day I heard from friends in Bangkok that Thai Airways has said it now recognizes luk thep (fashionable life-sized child dolls) as humans and sells them air tickets. Some restaurants already accept seat-bookings for luk thep, although I foresee disputes regarding buffet charges. Diner: "The doll didn't eat anything." Waiter: "That's what they all say."

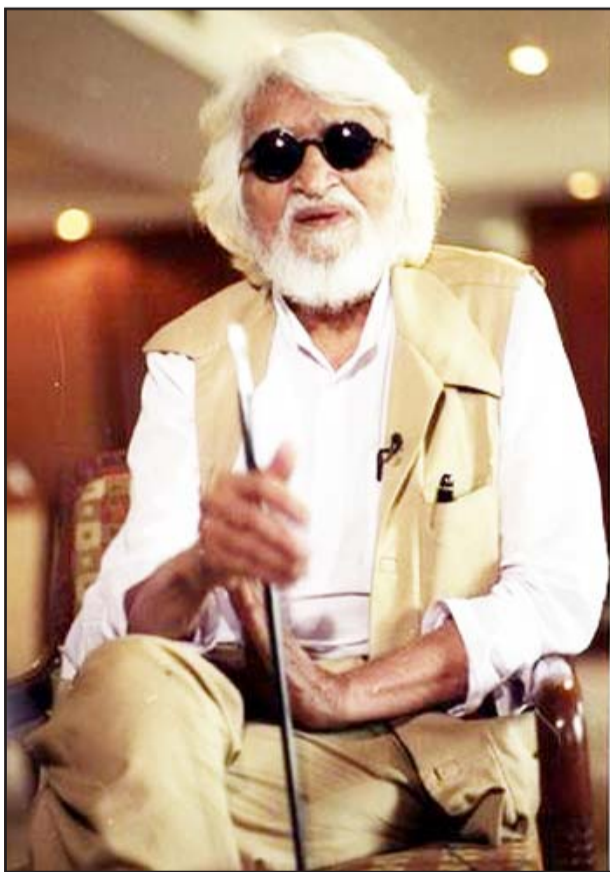
As a Modern Scientific Person, I think only thinking creatures should be allowed to identify as sentient beings, so that takes dolls, bacteria and nationalist politicians out of the loop. As for us coach potatoes sitting on sofas staring at screens, we're kind of in the grey area. Anyway, most of us already spend most of our time in the vast empire of Zucker

The Funny side

And if I identify as a potato, from now on you should address me as "vegeto-human".

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

MF Husain's favourite city Kolkata recently paid tribute on his birth centenary year with a multi-layered event 'Husain 100'. Uttara Gangopadhyay reports



an exhibition of 88 of his paintings. But miffed by a comment purportedly made by Husain that most Ben-

Economy of lines Husain's forte

gal painters lack stamina and energy, West Bengal's artist community boycotted the exhibition. Even the then chief minister of West Bengal, Buddhadev Bhattacharya, known for his cultural inclinations, failed to turn up for the scheduled inauguration of the exhibition.

The maverick artist, who eschewed footwear, began his career painting billboards for cinemas and rose to become an iconic artist with a formidable portfolio. His 1956 painting Between the Spider and the Lamp was used for a commemorative stamp by Indian Post; he was called the 'Picasso of India' by Forbes magazine; he was awarded Padma Bhushan (1973) and Padma Vibhushan (1991) but was often targeted for his paintings of Indian goddesses.

But one particular painting, put up for auction by a Chennai-based non-profit, drew the ire of a section of Indians. Though Husain clarified that he had not named the painting as Bharat Mata, they refused to accept his explanation. Troubled by constant threats and court cases,



Husain finally went into a self-imposed exile and died in Qatar in 2011.

Art historian Geeti Sen reiterated that Husain never named the controversial painting as Bharat Mata; he had executed it as a private work for a buyer. But people refused to listen to Husain when he said that it was somebody else and not he who had named the painting. Sen recalled how Husain occasionally loved

to indulge in a little drama but he never belittled any one. Once he had painted a picture of Ma Durga as she is worshipped in Bengal and then covered it with white paint to symbolise the immersion of the idol that takes place on the last day of the festival.

'Husain 100' was all about refreshing people's knowledge about the great artist and an acknowledgment of his contribution to

modern Indian art was how Partha Pratim Roy of RAD, who mainly scripted the show, introduced the five-day festival, which included, apart from the exhibition of paintings, a display of books by and on Husain, his posters from the film Gajagamini and others, seminars and lectures on his work and life, and film screening (Vision 20th Century - Paintings by M F Husain).

The exhibition, spread across the three galleries of the Academy of Fine Arts, comprised a wide-range of Husain's paintings, including those inspired by Kolkata's icon Mother Teresa and of course, his famous horses. "I have heard so much about Husain and now standing in front of his paintings, I am thrilled," gushed Ahana Mukherjee of Barasat, an aspiring artist. Her friend, Bhaskar Das, was studying the use of colour to convey various moods. "When he makes a woman wear a red sari, it gives her such a subtle look. But when he uses the same red colour as background to the horses, the picture turns grim," observed Das.

Interpreting Husain is not an easy task, acknowledged renowned scientist P M Bhargava, whose friendship with the artist is well-known. "It's difficult to talk about Husain. I don't know where to start," said Bhargava reminiscing about the artist at the centenary celebration. "Everything about him was unique. He would be involved in a variety of activities but managed to do them differently."

According to Bhargava, Husain was sparing with his words; he was a keen observer of everything around him but not a slave to them. Like many of Husain's ardent fans, he was pained by the artist's decision to go on self-imposed exile but the artist had little choice as Hindu fundamentalists hounded him.

Husain had vast knowledge about the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata. "He had more knowledge about the epics than (Contd on P-VII)

Artist Maqbool Fida Husain was abroad while some of his paintings were being denounced and vandalised at home in India. As Husain was preparing to return home, his friend Arun Relia wanted to know which would be his arrival city. "Husain chose Calcutta," said Relia. The artist felt Calcutta (as Kolkata was then known) would be the safest place to wait for the storm to abate, said Relia while speaking at a special five-day event titled 'Husain 100' organised in Kolkata recently.

The centenary celebration was organised by Virasat Art, an online contemporary art gallery spearheaded by Ganesh Pratap Singh along with a host of others, including the Government College of Art and Craft, Society of Contemporary Artists, Reflections of Another Day (RAD), Third Eye, Spectrum Artists' Circle, Young Artists Painter Circle and Calcutta Painters.

The Kolkata celebration also finally put to rest the ghost of a controversy that erupted in the city in 2003. Kolkata-based Galerie 88 had decided to observe Husain's 88th birthday with

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By Ranjan K Baruah

Career in actuarial science

We are aware of insurance or investing money for the future. We are also aware of different corporations or companies offering different insurance for individuals. A word associated with investment is actuary and there is a term called actuarial science. Actuarial Science is the discipline that applies mathematical and statistical methods to assess risks in insurance and finance industries. Dictionary meaning of actuary is a person who compiles and analyses statistics and uses them to calculate insurance risks and premiums.

It means a person skilled in determining the present effects of future contingent events or in finance modelling and risk analysis in different areas of insurance, or calculating the value of life interests and insurance risks, or designing and pricing of policies, working out the benefits recommending rates relating to insurance business, annuities, insurance and pension rates on the basis of empirically based tables and includes a statistician engaged in such technology, taxation, employees' benefits and such other risk management and investments.

Actuaries are experts in assessing the financial impact of tomorrow's uncertain events. A student after passing senior secondary, graduate, post graduate, Engineer, MBA, CA, ICWA, etc with sound knowledge in Mathematics & Statistics may appear for the exam conducted by Institute of Actuaries of India.

Institute of Actuaries of India is a statutory body established under The Actuaries Act 2006 (35 of 2006) for regulation of profession of Actuaries in India. The provisions of

the said Act have come into force from 10th day of November 2006, in terms of the notification dated 8th November 2006, issued by the Government of India in the Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs. As a consequence of this, the erstwhile Actuarial Society of India was dissolved and all the Assets and Liabilities of the Actuarial Society of India were transferred to, and vested in, the Institute of Actuaries of India constituted under Section 3 of the Actuaries Act, 2006.

There is a test named Actuarial Common Entrance Test (ACET). Institute of Actuaries of India had started conducting its Entrance Exam which is ACET from January 2012. There is a change in the structure of ACET examination from May 2016 exam diet. Actuaries in India can work in the following areas: Life Insurance, General Insurance, Health Insurance, Reinsurance Companies, Pension Funds, Consultants, Investments, Government, Academics, Risk Management, etc. As the insurance and investment sector is booming, so there would be more opportunities for actuaries in the country.

Fellowships:

SBI Youth for India: State Bank of India's Youth for India is a 13 month long programme that enables India's brightest young minds to work on rural development projects with experienced NGOs. SBI YFI offers a wide range of projects that cover

the entire gamut of rural development. Fellows can either choose to work on an existing project or can implement a new project in a focus area of the partner NGO. The fellowship offers the platform to follow your heart and help solve rural India's most pressing challenges. Last date of applying is 10th June and aspirant may apply online.

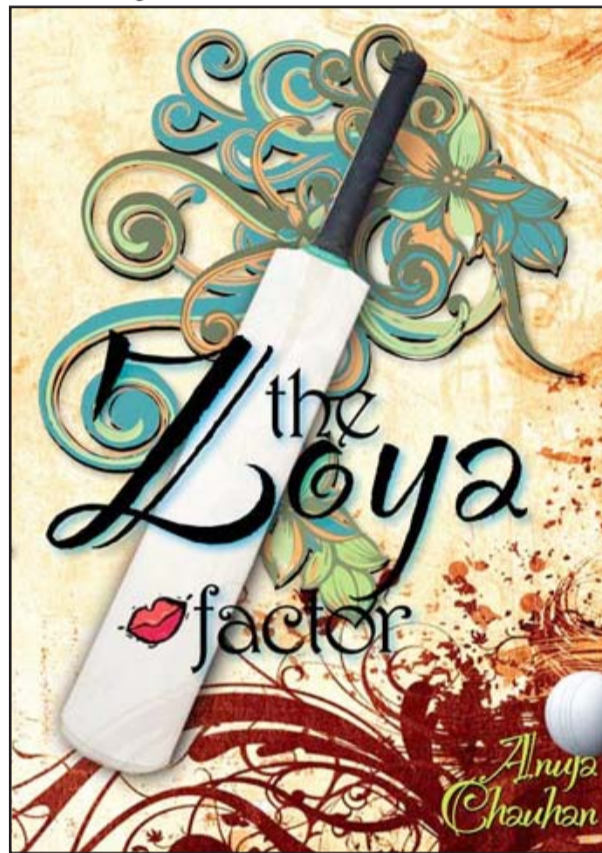
Hurford Youth Fellowship Program for Overseas Applicants in USA, 2016-2017: Applications are invited for Hurford Youth Fellowship Program for a period of four months. The aim of the scholarship is to enable and encourage academically able students from any nationality. The World Youth Movement for Democracy (WYMD) is a network that aims to support the development of sustainable democracy movements by empowering the next generation of democracy activists. This is four months fellowship programme. Applicants interested in the Hurford Youth Fellows Program must be no older than 30 years of age. They must demonstrate strong interest in democratic activism and in the advancement of democracy in their respective communities, as well as worldwide. Youth affiliated with civil society organizations are especially encouraged to apply. The mode of application is online and all application materials must be submitted by 18 May 2016.

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

With successful campaigns like 'Yeh Dil Maange More', 'Darr ke Aage Jeet hai', 'Kit Kat Break Banta Hai' among others, Anuja Chauhan had a thriving advertising career many would vouch for, yet she decided to switch careers and write novels in what she calls a "quest for control".

"It was not that there would be no more advertising, but more like I needed to do something more. And that happened very specifically. I remember the day, we were shooting a Pepsi campaign with Shahrukh Khan, Saif Ali Khan, Madhavan and Surya. It was a crazy budget and a crazy shoot! It was so hectic, nerve-racking and frantic that it became depressing.

"I went back to the hotel room that night and decided



that I have to do something different. It was a quest for control that got me started on writing books," says Chauhan. The 1970-born Chauhan, who has penned bestsellers like 'The Zoya Factor', 'Battle for Bittora', 'Those Pricey Thakur Girls' and the more recent 'The House that BJ Built' lends a

'Bad choice to sell book to TV'

unique style of perkiness, wit, humour and cheek to stories in a language which is not run-of-the-mill.

Given the entertaining and meaty plots in her books, film companies acquired rights to turn the books for the 70mm screens soon enough, though none of them is out yet.

"Film producers who came, be it the Anil Kapoor Film company or Pooja

projects live. They have recently just extended the contract.

"The reasons they gave me for the delay quite often are that the book is so thick and fat that it was difficult to make into a screenplay. The other thing is they have trouble casting heroes, because apparently they are woman oriented films," Chauhan says adding that male actors rarely want to play second fiddle.

She sold the rights of her third book, 'Those Pricey Thakur Girls' to a TV channel for a daily Hindi soap, which bombed. She agrees that "it was a bad choice" but maintains she had intended to reach a larger audience through it.

"All the TV channels wanted it because it was 5 sisters. I got lots of money and it is always a very good reason, specially when you're hoping to live by your writing.

"The other thing is that the book was also being translated into seven different languages and at that time it seemed like a really good idea to have a TV serial in Hindi at the time the translation was coming out. But then it did not turn out to be a good choice at all," she told PTI in an interview.

Although the women in Chauhan's books are feisty and strong, much of their trouble arises when they fall in love. However, the author feels that it is no dichotomy as smart girls can also go



Anuja Chauhan

"weak in the knees" if they like someone. "Just because you are an intelligent and smart girl doesn't mean that you aren't capable of going weak in the knees and not have a very, very goofy reaction to someone she really likes. I see absolutely no dichotomy in that.

"It works for both sexes, whether you are a man or a woman. That is romance and chemistry. Who said you cannot be flimsy yet strong," she says.

Chauhan's first book 'The Zoya Factor' is a funny, romantic tale set in the heart of Delhi between the Indian cricket team captain and an advertising professional, which seemed to carry traits from the real world of cricket.

The writer, however, brushes away such notions saying that the man she created in the book was her image of an ideal captain.

Economy of lines Husain's forte



(Contd from P-VI) I had," said Bhargava, adding, "Husain had internalised the content." Between 1971 and 1990, Husain came out with several series of his Mahabharata paintings. He also painted another series based on the Ramayana.

Many speakers at 'Husain 100' described how fast Husain could visualise and paint. Bhargava attributes this to his 'economy of lines'. "He could express everything in few lines," he explains.

Once Husain visited the Alimuddin Street office of the Communist Party of India - Marxist, in Kolkata, recalled art critic, writer and poet Suneet Chopra. He wanted to know what the various newspapers were saying about the Gujarat riots. Then he suddenly got up, pinned a copy of the Ganashakti newspaper, the CPM party's mouthpiece, on the wall and began to paint. That was his way of relieving himself from the stress, said Chopra.

Probably it was Chopra who, through his poem A Conversation with Husain, best expressed what Husain wanted to say -

"...he tells me when we speak of how a drawing finished in minutes fetches such a high price, how "each moment of my seventy five years of life is in it, so the price they pay is for that..."

Probably, the best compliment to the 'Husain 100' came from the artist's son Mustafa, who said, "My father would have been very happy if he was present here today. After all Kolkata was his favourite city." (TWF)

Celebrity endorsements

(Contd from P-VI) endorsements is actually a win-win situation for both parties—the celebrity and the company that hires them. The celebrities from the glamour world want to be constantly seen and heard by their fans and followers to keep their market value pegged high. The ads make that sure.

Such is the nature of the glamour world that a 'star' who is out of sight will soon be out of mind-on way out from the industry. That can have a devastating effect, mentally, psychologically and even physically. Some stars had reportedly failed to cope with the stress of living in virtual oblivion and had fallen into depression; some hit the bottle hard. Some suicides could also be traced to the sudden break in a blooming career.

In the sporting world the impact of going out of sight and mind can be equally painful for the person concerned. But often it is well anticipated. In fact, many of the sporting stars announce their retirement even though they are at the prime of their youth; some are, however, 'forced' into retirement.

The issue of concern for the public, however, is not how going out of limelight affects a celebrity. The fans and followers can get emotional when sympathizing with their idols but there is little or no impact on their lives with the waning of the fortunes of their idols.

On the other hand, the fans of the celebrities can suffer

a great deal of hardship from the harmful consequences of a product that they had-foolishly, it might be said- bought because it was endorsed by their favourite public figure.

The celebrities, it is said, can't be held responsible if a product they endorse turns out to be bad in any way.

Perhaps legally it is right. But the celebrities certainly have to bear some moral responsibility by taking up an assignment that brought a measure of misery to the people who adore them rather blindly. Can it be said that fame built on people's trust and love is free of any responsibility? In politics, the term 'moral responsibility' is frequently thrown around to bring down rivals and opponents.

The parliamentary committee's recommendations are a step ahead of what the ministry of consumer affairs had reportedly suggested-both fine and jail term. If accepted, the new measures will be incorporated in the Consumer Protection Law. That will certainly make the rich and famous 'brand ambassadors' careful when they sign lucrative endorsement deals.

To the old fashioned it doesn't make sense that consumer products can't sell unless endorsed by a celebrity. Surely, a toothpaste, or any other product, will still find buyers if it is 'endorsed' by an unknown figure in the ads. It depends entirely upon what you are looking for, not the person who is 'hawking' it in newspaper ads or the TV screen. (Syndicate Features)

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambani

Sunday, May 1, 2016

Emotive issues could leave you feeling unsettled at times during the year as Moon square Mercury on your solar return chart. Rival activity will be more visible and you need to be on your toes to stay ahead. Support from new quarters can emerge and you are likely to be actively involved with teamwork and collaborative efforts. Some property deals may also be finalized. Open communications will strengthen family ties. Travel will bring in desired results be it professional or personal.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

People and friends look to you with more respect, tolerance, and acceptance. You don't feel the need to prove yourself. You have the chance to shine because you project yourself with self efforts and modesty. Some of your most natural talents and hobbies would meet with reward and acceptance. Work done behind the scenes may be revealed or incorporated into your career or public life. Past efforts pay off now. Some of you may find that your career is moving towards a more service-oriented direction. You need a certain amount of self-confidence during this period.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

You would move towards a more positive and objective approach to your professional and personal life. You would have a great desire to expand your work and knowledge. Your ideas are higher as teaching may be part of the picture, and your cultural and spiritual awareness increases. You might further your education and it's a fabulous time to do so, or you could broaden your knowledge in a more informal manner. This is the best time for realizing the positive potential that you have. You could have a feeling of unrest or dissatisfaction with your environment.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

Your idealistic nature is stimulated, and you are likely to be more spiritual. You are sober and serious in professional and personal relationships. You are getting serious about loved ones, family relationships and children. You are likely to take your hobbies more seriously. In fact, this is an excellent time for monetizing any personal hobby and turning it into a profession. You would be more practical in romantic relations with a loved one. For many, a romantic relationship stabilizes and becomes more serious. Opportunities-both personal and professional-are likely to present themselves. You would combine your inner and outer strengths to achieve success and happiness in professional aspects. It is easier than usual to be sensible about your diet, health, hygiene, and fitness needs.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

You may travel or make contact with people of different cultural backgrounds than your own. You are more determined to achieve your personal goals, and are more strategic in the manner that you go about doing so. Pouring your heart and soul into your efforts comes naturally now. Happiness and fulfillment through the expansion of your mind, widening your social circle, travel, and connections to people of a different cultural background than you is indicated. You connect with well known personalities, fun loving people, artists and entertainers. Emotional attachments and relationships are rewarded with reciprocation. Some interesting people are drawn to you and invite you to work with them.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

You would be involved in lectures, debates, and discussions. You can convey your ideas powerfully to others, and you may be invited to speak in front of many people and this would enhance your image. You are quick to take the initiative and to put your thoughts into action. You would have a tendency to work on many projects. A new project or goal begun at this time has a good chance of being successful and long-lasting. It's an excellent time in which you make a lifestyle change, as your ability to concentrate on what really matters to you is enhanced. A short vacation allows you to enjoy natural surroundings with a loved one.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

There is perfection and beauty in emotional and personal relationships. You are frank, outspoken and can be outrageous or undiplomatic on occasions. This is altogether a happy and relaxed period for you. Remember to be thankful. Mental pursuits, new learning, and all forms of intellectual

activity are favored. Your ability to concentrate and focus helps you to achieve what you set out to do. You are more inclined to put your ideas into action than usual. Your position of power and authority is maintained despite many changes all around. You should maintain a positive attitude and face life in a positive way otherwise you will become frustrated and dull.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

A business partnership is lucrative and supportive. Good planning and management leads to be more progressive and productive professional ventures. Good luck in financial opportunities is encouraging. You are restless and move into varied activities and pay visits to friends. You are in touch with your more sensitive and spiritual qualities. You may be divided about business and professional matters and finally come to terms with compromise which might be the best thing to do at this time.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

You are able to express a greater level of sensitivity and sensibility. Your personal charm and attractiveness has a positive effect on your personal and professional relationships. People see you as a loving and lovable person and they would help and cooperate with your goals and ambitions. It's a very favorable time for developing your relationships with parents and other relatives. Responsibilities and commitments may take up more time than usual, so set a target and make a proper schedule so meet the desired goal. Personal relations are precious and need to be treated with tender, love and care.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

Family is supportive, children are loving and friends share hospitality and love at this time. It would be in your favor to make new beginnings and forget all old wounds and past patterns. It is best to let go negative feelings about relationships and situations gone by. You may disagree mentally with your partner but the love between you allows peace and acceptance. Your social life is expansive and a variety of people connect with you. You are stronger and wiser after having gone through trouble and difficulty. It is time to come back to your inner center to regain physical strength, mental balance, emotional harmony and spiritual awareness.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

Issues of sharing of power and authority with others in personal and professional relationships come to the fore. You are likely to experience events that highlight the necessity to share and trust. Events and circumstances are such that you learn about your own personal strength. You may have to deal with willfulness and issues of power and competition. You would have a tendency to control your life through some form of manipulation. Watch for jealousies and manipulative behavior of people around. Things will not go in your favor if you resort to tactics to get what you want. You could have problems staying calm, cool, and collected at times.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

You are in touch with dynamic, forceful and assertive energy to make new beginnings. Professional power and authority is vested in you to organize and achieve important targets and goals. You bring stability and order in business and professional projects with a dynamic and assertive approach. You most successfully perform tasks that involve cooperation and team harmony. Your warrior like qualities of energy, action, swiftness, strength and pride come to the fore. You need to value and respect established relationships and business partnerships as they stand by you in times of stress and trouble.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

It is time to break through restrictions, additions and emotional patterns as you are ripe and ready for major professional changes. Do not forget about long term commitments while you are dealing with short term contracts. Visitors, friends and family make this a happy time as an event is celebrated. You are appreciative and caring as you give total support to loved ones through a difficult time. It is time to concentrate on your career prospects and professional skills as a promotion or lucrative business opportunity is likely to present itself.

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing you can do is keep your mind young."

--- Mark Twain

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Clear Misunderstanding

HISTORY should be a guide, not a cause of unseemly controversy. The late Bipan Chandra was an eminent historian and what he wrote should be treated with respect and not result in such intemperate remarks as "academic murder". There is no doubt that what is taught at academic institutions can be debated in Parliament but not with political vendetta. Bipan Chandra was an eminent historian and famous for his work on Bhagat Singh. Bhagat Singh started his political pronouncements with the question, "Why am I an atheist?" Revolutionary terrorism in British days was not a hated term as terrorism is today. The Gandhian mainstream represented by the Congress was committed to non-violence. But Bhagat Singh's Naujawan Bharat Sabha and Chandrashekar Azad's Hindustan Socialist Republican Association along with the Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar in Bengal advocated extremist politics- some the politics of the bomb. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose also believed in an armed movement and even got involved in World War II to liberate India from the clutches of the British.

Over the last few years, terrorism, especially Islamic terrorism, has become associated with blood-thirsty murderous gangs. When Sabyasachi, hero of Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's famous revolutionary novel, "Pather Dabi", asked if he could be called a terrorist he did not have a pejorative sense in mind. The government of India looks upon Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka as a brand of terrorism which cannot be linked with Khudiram Bose or Bagha Jatin. Bipan Chandra also made it clear that he has not used the term "revolutionary terrorism" in a bad sense when writing on Bhagat Singh. It is good that the Union HRD Minister is expected to take necessary steps to keep an eye on what is taught at universities. But she should not be bogged down in politics and semantic confusion.

LOOKING BACK

February 8, 1989

A serious lapse

Congress(I) victory at the recent Mizoram and Nagaland Assembly elections is being argued as having been brought about at the cost of virtual liquidation of 'regional parties', all of which have been beaten hollow in those States. While factually it may be so, poll analysts may still be hard put to it to establish that the electoral verdict does represent a rejection of regional sentiments and urges too. A significant fact noticed widely in the Press even during the pendency of the election campaign was the wanton prodding at these very sentiments by the victor Congress(I) itself, supposed to be holding aloft the national banner of secularism at all costs and under all circumstances. Headlines in the Press screamed not without reason "Congress (I) goes Christian in Mizoram" or "Congress(I) becomes party for Christians in Mizoram". And, now, after the election, the new Congress(I) Chief Minister himself declares that "It is a victory for the Church."

The Church itself, however, may feel different about falling in line with such a non-chalant assertion. The Church in Mizoram at any rate is not a single entity, organizationally diffused as it is into about a dozen different denominational outfits in the State. Even so, they did meet for a common concerted course on the eve of the election but stopped short of issuing any 'firman' in favor of one or the other of the contesting parties, regional or national. This is enough to absolve them of any direct or deliberate involvement in a partisan political wrangle. The next best for them to do was to allow freedom to followers to act according to their own choice, going by

the merits of individual candidates even if cutting across party affiliations.

This obviously renders the Congress(I) Election Manifesto, rather than the Church, guilty of having exploited religious sentiments during the election by incorporating in it such statements as that this party is committed to "establish a government with Christian principles" or that "as Christians it is our bounded responsibility to proclaim the gospel." A secular election is not the occasion for such a mission, however noble otherwise. The Church did accept the bounds within which it had to work, but ironically it is the Congress(I) manifesto which chose to release the party and its supporters from this obligation.

It has been said that the manifesto had been prepared locally, the authorship being attributed by some to the State Congress President who is now the Chief Minister. His henchmen have argued what can be wrong in talking in terms of Christianity when overwhelming number of voters in Mizoram are Christians. The answer to the riddle should be found in secular India not allowing even the larger Hindu or Muslim population to trade in religious sentiments in a public exercise which is supposed to be essentially political and as such should be divorced from religion. It has therefore, been a serious lapse on the part of the Congress(I) High Command to have overlooked the liberty taken in the local draft of the manifesto in respect of one of the very basic pillars of Indian polity.

First high school and status of higher education in Jaintia Hills

By H H Mohrmen

The inauguration of the year-long platinum jubilee celebration of the Jowai Government boys Higher Secondary School recently is also an occasion to look back and assess how Jaintia hills has fared in higher education. It is pertinent to ask that after seventy five years had lapsed since the first school in the region was established in 1941, how much progress has the government been able to make in the field of higher education in the erstwhile Jaintia hills district.

No doubt SSA has been able to bring Lower Primary and Upper Primary School education to the door steps of the villagers in different parts of the district. Poor students have easy access to LP and UP schools nearby but the question is with regards to secondary and higher secondary schools.

But before we proceed further and examine the progress of higher education in the area, perhaps it is only fit and proper that we acquaint ourselves with a little bit of story about the beginning of the first high school in the entire Jaintia hills. In 1941 when the then British Government decided to start the one of its kind school in Jowai, Rev Annie Margaret Barr a minister of the Unitarian church and an educationist par-excellence was given the responsibility to do the honours. Rev Annie Margaret Bar has a degree in theology from Oxford and also in Teaching from Cambridge and most importantly she was a Gandhian to the core.

The story of how Kong Barr (as she was affectionately called by people who were dear to her) began her journey to the hills is also a fascinating one. The position of working with the Unitarian church in the Khasi-Jaintia and Mikir Hills was announced in the General Assembly of the British Unitarian. Kong Barr applied for the job only to be told that 'it is no job for a woman.' In October 1933 she travelled to India anyway and worked as a teacher in a school at Calcutta known as Gokhale Memorial Girls' School and during the

vacation she visited Khasi and Jaintia hills and later returned to England to tell those in the position in the GA that she had been to the Khasi and Jaintia hills. They then had no other option but to give her the job, but before that, Margaret Barr (through her sister Mary who was one of Gandhiji's village workers) went to meet him in Wardha.

Gandhiji advised Kong Barr to stay away from jail and work in the rural areas where her service is much needed. Towards the end of the meeting the conversation went like this - Margaret Barr: "What do you really want your English friends to do, Bapuji? Gandhi: "Keep out of gaol now, don't get mixed up in politics. Find some constructive work to do." Margaret Barr: "And constructive work I suppose means village work?" Gandhi: "Of course, what else is worth doing in comparison with serving those who need you most!"

Annie Margaret Barr was not new to the Indian freedom movement. While serving as a minister of the Unitarian church of Our Father at Rotterdam from 1927-1933 she maintained a close relationship with the friends of India People and had also used the pulpit to educate the congregation about Indian freedom movement.

In 1941 the government decided to start a high school in Jowai and hoping that she would be able to achieve her twin objectives of starting a high school as well as a training centre for high school graduates to teach in the lower primary school she took the job. Kong Barr strongly felt the need to train teachers because she believed that until and unless a strong foundation at the primary level is built up it would be difficult for the students to proceed to the high school level. She resigned only few months after she was appointed the principal of the Jowai government school and the reason was because the government did not keep its promise. Before she took office, she made the government agree to her proposal to help start a school and at the same time train some of the students to become teachers but the

government went back on its promise thereby forcing her to resign. Her meeting with the Director of Education then and subsequently even with the Governor did not bear fruit. She then started a teacher's training school in Malki which was built in 1942. It was later renamed as Lady Reid non-sectarian school which was taken over by the government in 1949.

Kong Barr spent the remaining part of her life teaching and training young people at a centre she helped build in Kharang. After her demise people who live in the twelve villages which fall under Mawkyntse block decided to start a school in her memory and the school is still known as Kong Barr Secondary School.

In 1989-90, I met an elderly lady in England who fondly remembers Kong Barr and told me that during one of her visits to the country, people asked her if she was not afraid of walking alone in the hills? Kong Barr said, 'I am more afraid of walking alone in the streets of London.'

Coming back to the status of higher education in Jaintia hills, one of the yardsticks to assess the Government's success is to measure what it has been able to achieve in the field of education. No doubt since the first high school was started in the region many more schools have come up in different parts of Jaintia hills, but if one does a careful study of the higher education scenario one would find that most of the schools were either started by faith based organizations (FBOs), the Dorbar Shnong or Private individuals. There are now only few government schools in Jaintia hills and had it not been for the FBOs, the Dorbar Shnong and the private individuals we would not have been able to provide the much needed higher education to the people of the area.

And it is well and good for FBOs, Dorbar Shnongs and Individuals or families to start schools to provide higher education in the region, but at what cost? The government had not been able to start schools; neither was it able to provide proper financial support to these private schools which cater to the

needs of the students. There are very few secondary and higher secondary schools in the district which have been brought into the deficit system (where teachers are paid by government), but most of the secondary and higher secondary schools in the district are only supported by the government vide a grant-in-aid pattern only. And in this pattern the government is only supporting some part of the salary of the teachers in the schools.

What this means is that the schools are not being wholly supported by the government, hence the school managements need to generate funds to run the school. On this pretext the schools charge fees at their own whims and fancies and the monthly fees vary from one hundred to a few thousands rupees. It is also a matter of surprise that even schools run by FBOs or mission schools which are supposed to serve the poor and the needy section of the population charge an exorbitant amount as school fees.

The point therefore is that higher education is not free in Meghalaya because there are very few government schools which provide free education. In such a situation it is the poorer section of the society which is being hit the hardest because they cannot afford to send their kids to school. There is no equality because those who can pay send their kids to good schools but poor parents sometimes have to stop sending their schooling their children because they cannot afford to pay the fees in private schools and because there is no government school nearby. Higher education in the state is still reserved only for those who can afford it. The government can make tall claims about its achievements in providing education to the children, but as long as there are still some children who are denied education just because their parents cannot afford it, then the state still has a long way to go to fulfill its mandate of providing education to every citizen.

(Information about Margaret Barr are from "A dream come true: the story of Kharang," by Margaret Barr)

Non reply doesn't make Agusta non issue

By M J Akbar

There is a term in government parlance called non-paper, basically designed to cover grey space, to suggest a position without offering any commitment. Indian politics should now acknowledge the emergence of a new term that extends this concept to the edge: a "non-reply". The purpose of a non-reply is to camouflage any response with so much assertion that volume and attitude disguise equivocation. Or, if you want to shift the metaphor into cricket terminology, when you have to snick, snick hard and pray that the ball, instead of being caught in the slips, races to the boundary.

When Mrs Sonia Gandhi was asked about the reference to her name in the Italian court judgement convicting an arms company's executives for giving bribes, she replied defiantly that she was not afraid of anyone. It may be perfectly true that Mrs Gandhi is not afraid, but that was not the question.

Indeed it might even be true that Mrs Gandhi is not afraid of the law. After all, whenever Congress has been in power during the last three decades, either directly or indirectly, it is others who have been afraid of Mrs Sonia Gandhi. Even when her party is out of power and in a bit of shambles, it remains completely in thrall to her, according her the privileges of quasi-divinity. She can do no wrong. She is never accountable. Such unquestioning obedience can become addictive.

This deference, however, is between party and leader. What is not so cosy is the relationship between Congress leaders involved in the Agusta-Westland helicopter scandal and the country, which wants to know what happened to its money.

There is no shortage of questions. Here's one for starters: how did James Christian Michel, the middleman at the heart of the Agusta-Westland scandal and a familiar face on Delhi's power-party circuit, suddenly leave the capital on 13 February 2013, one day after CBI registered a preliminary enquiry after details were revealed abroad? Why did Michel receive 18 million euros [Rs 135 crore] from Agusta-Westland for the "purchase" of discarded Pawan Hans helicopters when their worth, as scrap, was only 5% of that value? [Agusta-Westland has not been renamed Father Christmas Private Limited.] Who was this money meant for? The Italian court judgement refers to a powerful Indian "FAM": which political FAM was the most powerful family during the UPA regime? It also mentions "AP" as a beneficiary. Now who could

this AP be?

Congress leaders have been vocal about the fact that they cancelled the helicopter contract when news of bribery broke out. Very interesting. What happened to the massive advance that was given to Agusta-Westland for the contract? Why has that advance never been returned? Is the end result then that Agusta-Westland kept the advance and did not deliver enough helicopters to cover the advance, winning twice in the money game?

We also learn that Agusta-Westland budgeted Rs 50 crore to persuade Indian media to wear blindfolds, or perhaps become its defence counsel in possible media trials. That is another can of worms waiting to be opened.

One could go on, but it would be merely repetitive. Unsurprisingly, the Congress defence has been muddled by either inaccuracy or bluster in order to cloud facts with verbiage. Witness only the claim made in Parliament that Congress government had blacklisted Agusta-Westland. It did not. Or the spurious allegation, abetted by a false newspaper report, that some sort of a deal was made between the present Prime Ministers of India and Italy. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley categorically exposed this lie on the floor of the Rajya Sabha, and Congress has gone quiet on this fabrication since then.

Bravado is not a substitute for facts. It really is as simple as that. Something dramatic has begun to unravel thanks to a court case in Italy, and much more will become public knowledge as the investigation process gathers momentum in our country. You can spin a web to hide the truth if you control the instruments of power, but that game only lasts as long as you are in office.

There was a time when the CPI[M] and CPI would have been on the front lines of this offensive against corruption. Today, the Marxists are compromised. In Bengal their attack on Mamata Banerjee for corruption rings hollow, given their silence over Agusta-Westland. If the Marxists cannot castigate the Western "corrupt capitalist-industrial-military complex", then there is not much else to say, is there?

A non-reply may, or may not, purchase temporary relief, but it never makes corruption a non-issue.

Most of us do not seem to understand this problem which modern society faces today. Yet when we ourselves are in similar 'trouble' would we prefer the others to stand there and take pictures or would we prefer them to lend us a hand? Think about it!

Yours etc.,
Banmankhraw
Lyngdoh
Shillong-5

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

TO THE EDITOR

She longs for spirituality

Editor,

Kudos to your editorial titled, "Shillong comes of age, but how" (ST, April 29, 2016) in which you reminded us about Shillong turning 150 years on April 28. Recently, Shillong was voted as India's favourite hill station and these votes should be treated as the candles for her sesquicentennial birthday. But for birthday cake, she must have shared it with two of her contemporaries, Tagore and Swami Vivekananda both of whom she had close association with.

After Tagore's sesquicentennial birthday in 2011 and Swami Vivekananda's in 2013, now it is the turn of their 'mita' (friend) Shillong's. In his famous 'Shillonger Chithi' ('Letter from Shillong') which was

actually a poem, Tagore portrayed her innate natural beauty and how deeply he was in love with her. Tagore's Amit and Labanya met here in 'Sheshher kabita'. In fact the total background of this immortal creation of Tagore was Shillong and through Amit and Labanya, Tagore narrates the blossoming of a romance between him and the nature of Shillong.

Swami Vivekananda delivered the last public lecture of his life in this hill-station on 27 April 1901. It happened to be on the eve of the 37th birthday of Shillong. In his speech, Swami Vivekananda laid stress on the fact that religious ceremonies without deeds were worth nothing. He urged all to enlighten our fellow beings and to help them.

He said that those who could afford to go to school should be provided with facilities to learn extensively but

those who could not, should at least learn the alphabets. This speech is as relevant today as it was 115 years ago. Shillong is not just a place. She has with her the glorious vibrations of Tagore and Swami Vivekananda. This is Shillong.

She longs for spirituality.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Mind that camera

Editor,

With the advent of smart-phones we see that it is both a blessing and a burden as well. Although these smart-phones have simplified the means of communication and made connectivity faster with just a touch of the screen, yet in some circumstances they just add to the problems. This is mostly with the phone's camera.

Everyone loves clicking pictures but, this has got way out of hand in recent times.

It seems that in today's world we are quick to take a picture first rather than to lend a helping hand. Be it in an accident, a natural disaster or any other circumstances, even if people are present at the scene of the disaster they would first click a picture rather than lend a hand to the injured. This is because for many the objective is to be the 'first' one to post the pictures of such accidents or disaster on social media. This is a very disturbing trend and the bane of modern society. The best example is when the Vivekananda Road flyover came crashing down in Kolkata injuring and killing several persons. Even during such a horrific accident people scrambled to take selfies with the injured instead of lending them a helping hand. Such persons even competed amongst themselves to get

"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

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SHILLONG, TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2016

Agusta-Westland helicopter scam

THE Congress Party has learnt the subtle art of deflecting all blame related to scams during its tenure by a series of filibusters. When the infamous 3-G Telecom scam relating to sale of spectrum which led to a loss of a whopping Rs 1.76 lakh crore, first broke out, the Congress party ducked for cover and called it a 'notional' loss that was in the realm of speculation. This was followed by the Coalgate scam where coal blocs were auctioned off for negligible amounts. The 3-G scam was prised open following a leak from the CAGs office then led by Vinod Rai. The Congress party remains unfazed by these scams. The latest to be unearthed is the Agusta-Westland helicopter deal involving a middleman who regularly bribed key people in the Indian Defence establishment including the then Chief of the Air Force, SP Tyagi, media persons and other key political leaders.

In a fit of bravado, Congress Party leaders have risen to defend the Nehru-Gandhi family despite their being mentioned by Christian Michel, the middleman as 'The Family' in his list of people who needed to be paid. To counter the Congress's claim of innocence, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar has said that he would place the detailed chronology about the VVIP Chopper scam before Parliament. The Congress had been trying to corner the Union Government for allowing the tainted AgustaWestland to take part in the 'Make in India' initiative and the Defence Expo. At this point it is more important for the country to know who in the UPA dispensation had received the alleged kickbacks in the AgustaWestland chopper deal. There are far too many scams in this country which have never been successfully unearthed and have been used as a tool to punish political rivals instead. Although a case has been registered by CBI against former IAF chief S P Tyagi and 12 others, including his cousins, for alleged cheating, corruption and criminal conspiracy in the Rs 3,600 crore VVIP helicopter deal, in which Rs 360 crore is alleged to have been paid as kickbacks, the country is entitled to know who has compromised the security of this country for a fistful of dollars. The Rs 64 crore Bofors scam that singed the Rajiv Gandhi government, finally saw Ottavio Quattrochi the middleman exit the country unfazed. We hope the Agusta-Westland deal does not reach a similar dead-end.

LOOKING BACK

February 8, 1989

Civil Aviation officials leave for Nagaland copter crash site

Director General of Civil Aviation Mr P C Sen and the Director Air Safety of the DGCA Mr H S Khosla have left for Kohima today to conduct an on the spot investigation of the Pawan Hans helicopter which crashed at Merema yesterday. A spokesman of the Pawan Hans told UNI today that senior officials of the Corporation had also been sent to assist the authorities in the rescue operations. Meanwhile the two pilots killed in the crash have been identified as Wing Commander C S Kataria and Col Agnihotiri. Pawan Hans sources said both the pilots were very experienced and were rated very high in the organization. Wing Commander Kataria had already done 5500 hours flying including 800 hours of the Westland Helicopter.

International meet on Global Cooperation

An International Conference on Global Co-operation for a Better World will be held from Feb 11 to 13 at the Mount Abu (Rajasthan) headquarters of the organizer the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University. The Conference, to be attended by about 2500 eminent persons from

about 60 countries will have workshops for various professions and segments of society.

The Conference is being proceeded by an International Summit where about 80 eminent personalities from all over the world have assembled. The summit, an offshoot of the Un-sponsored project "Global Co-operation for a Better World", will review and assess the accomplishments of the formulation of a 'Global Vision' reflecting ideas and action plans of various people. The project envisages motivating people all over the world to formulate a plan for self-change and to lend their cooperation for building a better world by contributing their ideas, visions and action plans towards that end to a 'Global Cooperation Bank.'

Court charges youth after 10 years

In an unusual case, a committal court has framed charges after ten years against a youth accused of keeping a knife. Accused Ved Prakash was arrested by Delhi Police on December 29, 1978 on the charge that he was publicly threatening people with a knife. Metropolitan Magistrate Mr V B Gupta has fixed March two for prosecution evidence in the case.

Suppose, just Suppose

(Mutdur, shu mutdur)

By Toki Blah

For those of us who grew up in the Beatles era, the song "Imagine" perhaps is one of those legendary John Lennon lyrics that never fail to stir. It moves because it happens to reflect the inner most desire of our hearts - to be something else than what we really are. It stimulates the "What if" or the "Suppose, just suppose" game of introspection that everyone indulges throughout life. We ask ourselves such questions because man is never satisfied with what he has. It's human nature. The less romantic call it wishful fantasy. For dreamers it's the gateway to the "Could have been". It exists and it persists. 'Suppose' we had been born in a different country; a different era, a different generation? 'What if' we had married someone else? 'Imagine' what we would have done if only we had a different job with different responsibilities? It goes on. It adds to the spice of life and those who say they don't know what I am talking about are either walking vegetables or lying through their teeth.

Having said that, let's reflect on the "Shillong turns 150, in silence" report of the Shillong Times edition of April 29 2016. The British shifted their HQ from Sohra to Shillong in 1866. This apparently did not blink on the 2016 official radar of the state but nonetheless, the paper went on to speak of the many changes that have affected Shillong since then and later since 1972 when we attained statehood. Be that as it may, let's suppose, for suppositions sake, that we never got the Hill state we demanded in the 1960s. Had we still remained in erstwhile Assam, by now, the Assamese would have converted Shillong into their summer capital with Dispur as the winter HQ. I doubt if they would have allowed the city to deteriorate to the extent it has today. They would have had a stake in retaining its reputation as Queen of the Hill Stations, a tribute the people of Meghalaya hardly seem to care about. Most of us are just not bothered! Shillong or its adjacent areas most probably would have developed and added one or more 19-hole golf courses. The present Golf Links would have remained green, pristine and well looked after and not the decrepit location for a Police Academy, nor quarters for the MPRO. What a waste of resources!

Let's suppose that Meghalaya was not blessed with such rich mineral resources and we did not have so much coal and limestone. What would have happened to this state of ours? Most probably the poisoned and dead rivers of Meghalaya would still be as unspoiled and pure as the day God made them. Rat holes would still remain the natural habitation of rodents and snakes and not the toxic underground assets of greedy, arrogant human cretins. The ground below Ladrymbai, Khliehriat and Wapung would not have become a warren of death traps for every quake that comes our way. The Meghalayan electorate would most probably still be voting for persons with the ability to think, visualise and lead the state and its people. Most probably we would be sneering with contempt at those who dream of winning elections through sheer money power. Meghalaya would probably still be practicing time honoured systems of governance and not ruled by ignorant short-sighted individuals more interested in cornering Government contracts and supply jobs for themselves or their family members. Most important, perhaps our egalitarian value system would still have been our most valued asset instead of the coal mines and limestone quarries that now pockmark the country side to showcase the uncaring greed that dominate Meghalaya governance.

Suppose the "No Hill State, No Rest" agitation and the resultant state of Meghalaya had never happened. Suppose we never got our own Legislative Assembly. Then what? Most probably legislators would have taken better care of that heritage Assembly building we inherited from the British that once dominated the Khyndai Lad skyline. It would probably still be standing. Most probably as tribals we would have been politically represented by intellectuals and social reformers, people with genuine concern for the growth of society rather than coal merchants more worried about the NGT ban than anything else. We would probably have produced philanthropists who would have invested in schools, colleges, hospitals and playgrounds rather than grubby rich individuals who love nothing better than to showcase their wealth through properties in Shillong and swanky SUVs. "The winnability factor", the most stupid political catchphrase ever uttered would never have found expression. Most important if we never did have our own Legislative Assembly

we would have had 60 less people to be ashamed of. Have we ever thought of that? Now suppose some idiot (whoever he was, may the Devil make his miserable soul the permanent caretaker of Hell's garbage dump) never did cause the Shillong Municipality to be superseded. What if elections to the Shillong Municipality were a regular feature of the city? Then what? We would most probably have had an urban population with better civic sense than what people are showing today. The Shillong Municipal Board would by now have introduced a viable solid waste disposal system for the whole of urban Shillong. Marten would have reverted to the forest it once was and Shillong would have had a better, technologically advanced land fill area somewhere else. Dumping of waste on the road itself would have existed only in our worst nightmares. We would have had better regulation over hawkers; people would still be using footpaths for walking instead of turning them into impromptu flea markets. Most probably none of us would be treating the Wah Umkrah as God's special sewage created specifically for the people of Shillong. We most probably would have had better civic infrastructure, a better water supply system, better roads, better traffic control and a cleaner Shillong to be proud of. Honestly speaking, the "Imagine" game is so invigorating that as far as civic administration of Shillong is concerned, one simply wishes it was true.

Suppose and just imagine we were still under Assam. We would most probably be having, at the most, 3 MLAs in the Assam Assembly and most of the development funds would still be under the control of technical experts serving in the different departments involved with overall development of the state. Most probably 120 crores of scarce resources would go direct into development schemes for the people instead of being diverted as the private pocket money of 60 MLAs. We would have had sustainable development! Under Assam most of the contentious socio-political problems of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo people would not have been there in the first place. The question of a Garo, a Khasi or a Jaintia CM would have been infructuous. Political stability thus ensured, there would be no Langpih; no Block I Block II border disputes simply because there would be no Meghalaya-Assam border.

Simple! Everyone would be happy and contented. Actually we would be in serious competition with the Bhutanese in implementing Gross National Happiness. Oh glorious existence!

Then suppose the ASEB had never constructed the Umiang Hydro project! We never would have had electric power. No electric bulbs; no TVs; no computers; no accessibility to modern gadgets. Every house would still be lit with candles and hurricane lamps. Suppose we never had cars so there would be no point of having paved roads. Glory be, we would be living in the true meaning of our glorious past (ka sotti juk; ka juk ksar u barim jah) Culture and tradition would have reigned supreme as they existed thousands of years ago. Suppose the British had never come to these hills; there would have been no script, no education. IT, a superfluous technology as we all would still be communicating via the kyrwoh. All of us would have been so happy tilling our small little fields on some wretched hill slope.

Champions of tradition who never forget to remind us of our imagined glorious past; those who are so reluctant to let go of yesterday, would be in their seventh heaven. The Khasis and the Achiks would still be preserved in all their half naked glory. This whole controversy over culture vs development would never have arisen. Sometimes one tends to actually believe in the fable of Ka Sotti Juk.

To cap it all, suppose just suppose the British never discovered Shillong as the most alluring hill station and a health resort for their soldiers, then we would never have been tagged with that infamous and impractical identity of being the 'Scotland of the East'. Let's face it, we just don't have the mental calibre of accepting the title. Suppose just suppose that when the Brits left, the Instrument of Accession, the Standstill Agreement had never been signed. Suppose the Khasi and Jaintia Hills had never seceded to India. Then what? By now most probably all Khasi males would be Mias and our females Begums. A sack called a burkha would have replaced the other sack called a jainkup and all of us would have cheered that as progress. The taste of crunchy juicy pork would have been foreign to our palate. What a nightmarish possibility but compensated perhaps by the alluring thought of 70 virgins waiting for us in the afterlife. What lovely suppositions!

The decision of an Indian High court to shift the premises of the IPL because of drought conditions, and also because of water scarcity has been debated by many including former cricketers and icons. Some of the arguments run on these lines: why only cricket as a sport has been chosen, what guarantee is there that the new venue is also not drought affected? So much for that, but the court's verdict had of course been peremptorily acceded to, as it has to be.

Cricket has been dominating the Indian psyche ever since India met international standards and started winning abroad and of course after Indian cricketers got more compensation from the Board for their talents. But soon after BCCI came to dominate all the other Boards by virtue of their wealth and subsequently power. Of course J.M. Dalmiya's entry into the scene and his rise and support for the cricketing boards of Asia is well known, if not infamous. Very soon the BCCI had enough clout even to 'overrule' ICC decisions and the IPL more of a merchandise, rather than a sport came into existence with India as the focus, and with the irony that cricketers came to India to look out for more money, the argument notwithstanding that local talent would also be given a fillip.

The cynics of course say that cricketing countries like England which taught us the game, were now eating their hats, in an ironic reversal of historical and colonial fortunes. Needless to say the IPL became one of the world's most flourishing and popular extravaganzas, with cricketers hitting real hard the coveted jackpot, and sometimes even preferring to play in this tournament while skipping duties for their country. Of course out of it, in India emerged players who could represent the country. The T-20 (which invariably reminds me of a tee shirt) became instant cricket, instant results, and shorter viewing for people, even for aficionados of the limited 50 overs matches. So it became very populist, and many people who do not know much of the game are now experts on it in India from tea shop owners to people who sell wares on the footpath. Cricket now has a glamour akin to our illustrious film industry dominated of course by our famed Bollywood actors. In fact it has become quite fashionable for film actors to be seen on the galleries of these adrenalin pumping matches! This actually began with the limited overs matches in places like Sharjah, when the BCCI were slowly beginning to dominate the scene. Foreign commentators also started entering the arena, which added to the glamour. Cricket was truly becoming an international sport a far cry from the past, but again notwithstanding the fact that only about eight or nine nations were actually playing it, or were good at it.

And then it was very prudent to start a World Cup and have qualifiers initially for the

Watery Cricket

By Ananya S. Guha

50 overs brand, and now for the nail biting jaw turning T-20. So much for that and cricket has now, in India especially become a glorious bed of roses, with cricketers exercising latent skills in advertising, reality shows, and what have you. The relationship between cricketers and actors/guerrillas has bonded heavily to the point of talking about marriage. A healthy sign indeed, when sportsmanship and showmanship are happily wedded, in both literal and metaphorical senses. Three cheers for cricket. We are just waiting for the fourth and fifth ones, also with bated breath for the inevitable T-5 or even T-1. Then we can expect spectators not only gnashing their teeth, but collapsing after a game due to the sheer excitement and adventurousness of it all! Cricket will surely become the king of games, and all other sportsmen or women mere princes or princesses.

Hats off to this game from a mere 'gentleman's game' it has now become the patriarch and monarch of sports, though, many ogling at it don't know it's history, or who the father of cricket was. Mention W.G. Grace or even Garfield Sobers, not to speak of a Hanif Mohammed or a B.D. Nimbalkar, and you might see blinking, blank looks. The alliteration here, strictly unintended! Of course in between I remember patchy details of the fight between Sharad Pawar and J.M Dalmiya. But that is best forgotten. What should not however be is that much of the coffers to BCCI to make cricket a prosperous sport came from the Eden Gardens Calcutta, where 90,000 would watch from inside the space and many more from roof tops and house tops! Even for a Ranji Trophy match there could be at times 50,000 spectators.

And all this while the other sports suffered, not only in terms of money but attention as well. One heard horror stories of a hockey team being lodged in a train in a domestic tournament and so on, a weightlifter or a wrestler heaving stones or selling off his medals. No, these do not make it to the Prime News, they are not reality shows, they are 'real truths' and no one likes to swallow such shallow truths, reeking of obsolescence. We must be contemporary, 'modern'. And that will inevitably smell of a corporate world.

The decision of the Bombay High Court is absolutely correct, bang on the nail. Be sensitive to your surroundings, man. People do not have a drop of water, and here you are bludgeoning a white, or yellow (whatever maybe the case) - ball to make those bucks. It must be respected, as it calls for more sensitiveness to the plight of the people especially the poor in the country.

disaster or when terrorists strike which, God forbid, should not happen. Their contribution goes unnoticed but they have done a lot of commendable things in the rural areas which the student leader or his members have not seen or have no knowledge of. If they too could contribute in noble ways for the well-being of the state it would be worth mentioning rather than engaging in piecemeal political games and emotional blackmail.

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

People need relief assistance!

Editor,
Nature has shown its face of fury in Meghalaya and many families have been affected. Cyclones, hailstorms, fires, lightning, etc have joined hands and left destruction all over. But, I wonder, what the Meghalaya Government has done in or-

der to provide timely assistance and relief to the affected people. As far as my knowledge goes no help has been given to these families. Hence the following questions for the people in Government especially the CM. (1) Is there no emergency relief funds that can be provided to the affected families? (2) Is the CM so busy campaigning that he has forgotten to help needy families? (3) Is the CM only funding unproductive events? (4) What has the CM done to get Central Govt assistance for disaster relief? (5) Why do the common people have to undergo numerous procedures to avail help when it could be done in the least possible time? These are questions that need to be answered by the Head of the State.

Yours etc.,
Joannes JTL Lamare,
Via email

TO THE EDITOR

Evils of benami transaction

Editor,
The news report, 'Benami transactions in MUDA complex' (ST April 29, 2016) is a shocker. That 77 out of nearly 120 stalls (64%) are involved in benami business while unemployment amongst local tribals is rising by the day is appalling. Hypothetically if 77 stalls are doing benami business of even Rs 5000 a day it works out to Rs 12 crore of business per annum which is inclusive of a profit margin of at times more than 100%. That works out to Rs 1.56 crore worth of income tax evaded annually. And this is a very conservative estimate. A percentage of taxes collected by the Centre is ploughed back to the State for developmental and other welfare schemes. It is a shame that we local tribals selling the names we have inherited from our ancestors. This allows non-tribals to do business with impunity as they hide

behind the garb of managers or employees. It is heartening that the Urban Affairs Minister has assured that steps would be taken to free the complex from benami business. The Minister informs that a Committee was formed 18 months ago and a full report was submitted and subsequent action taken. But the Minister would agree that the situation in MUDA complex has not changed and benami business is carrying on unabated. If the Minister is serious she should, herself do a surprise check to find out exactly how her officers are duping her. Eliminating benami business is no easy task and if the Minister means business then she must evolve ways to involve authorities like the Income Tax, Sales Tax, Labour Departments etc.,. The absence of books of accounts, business and bank account statements of stall owners who sub-let their allotted spaces to benami businessmen will reveal and prove the massive extent of benami transactions. Needless to say the quantum of benami business in MUDA complex merits CBI

investigation as the entire complex has been funded and constructed by Ministry of Urban Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Govt of India. The Meghalaya High Court might like to take suo-moto cognisance of this malfeasance that goes on right under the nose of MUDA officials.

Yours etc.,
Bekstar Tariang,
Shillong-14

Police deserve appreciation

Editor,
The swift action taken by Umroi Police Station under Ms Sangma recently led to the arrest of three persons within two hours. The three had trespassed into a farm land, at Umsohpieng Ri Bhoi, killing ducks etc. If not for the timely action of Umroi Police Station the goons would have continued their vandalism in the area. We hope that the Umroi Police would also contain other unlawful activities so as to make the area free from unwanted elements.

Yours etc.,
PM Sylem,
Via email

Politics not militarisation

Editor,
The sudden move by the ITBP to shift out of Shillong to the state of Arunachal Pradesh is a tactical and strategic approach considering that it is a specialized force trained for high altitude warfare and specially created for the Indo-China border. Recently the statements of a student leader (or perhaps a political leader) that the Eastern Air Command and other defence centres should also move out is immature and reeks of ethnocentrism. It is because of such defence establishments that entire country, nay the world knows and takes notice of our State and is the reason for the strategic importance of Shillong. If not for defence establishments Shillong would have lost most of its green cover. The presence of defence establishments also assures us of their readiness to assist in times of calamity and

"You see things; and you say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?'"

—George Bernard Shaw

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 261 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2016

Health service in Meghalaya

A hue and cry by the NGOs of Garo Hills calling attention to the pathetic condition of the Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and health sub-centres further into the villages is a timely reminder that health services in the State are at an all time low. Despite the investments in human resource and infrastructure over the decades, health services particularly in the periphery of Meghalaya continues to be in a shambles. There are complaints galore about the absence of a doctor in the PHCs and sub-centres to attend to emergencies. This is not surprising considering that most government doctors attend to their patients only on market days and spend the rest of the week in the district headquarters. The fact of the matter is that doctors no longer respect the Hippocratic oath. Medicine is no longer a noble profession where doctors exhibit a sense of caring and concern. They treat their practice as a mechanical duty and their patients as an intrusion into their schedule. The number of government doctors with private clinics is quite high in Meghalaya. Most of them spend more time there where they can charge their patients and earn a quick buck.

Supervision and surprise checks in the government health sector are unheard of. The people of Garobadha have approached the Health Minister himself and asked that certain action be taken against the doctor who was absent from duty and the driver of an ambulance who was also not available on call during an emergency. Many more such vigilant citizens' groups ought to approach the Health Minister to demand better services from the Health Department. There is also the flip side about PHCs and Sub-Centres being poorly equipped. This results in doctors recommending patients to the Community Health Centres (CHCs), the Shillong Civil Hospital or Ganesh Das Hospital in case of delivery. Many women from interior villages have delivered inside vehicles while on the way to Shillong. Quite a few have died because of complicated deliveries. Meghalaya still has very poor indices in terms of maternal and child health. The maternal and infant mortality rates are higher than the national average. Will the Health Minister take a series of actions to beef up the Health scenario of the State? Let's not also forget that the Chief Minister of this state is himself a medical doctor! He should not be presiding over such a pathetic health care delivery system!

LOOKING BACK

February 8, 1989

96 cars enter Himalayan Car Rally

Ninety-six cars left the ramps of the Jawaharlal Nehru stadium this morning to begin a five day battle for supremacy over some of the most difficult terrains in the world in a rally known to be one of the toughest.

The 3,000 Km eighth Himalayan Car Rally, to be completed in four legs, was flagged off by the Lt Governor of Delhi H.L. Kapoor the Australian rally champ Davib Officer, driving the Mitsubishi team's Mitsubishi Starion was the first to zoom off and was followed by one of the legends of this rally, Jayant Shah of Kenya.

Shah, the winner four times from 1982 to 1985 drove off in a Nissan 200 that was actually meant for another of the Nissan team's entry, Ashok Patel. There had been a delay in the arrival of Shah's car and since Patel's was nicely tuned he would be using it to try notch his fifth victory.

Ross Dunkerton and Steve McKimmie were the third to leave in another

Mitsubishi Starion. Dunctbn the winner of the luck strike rally in Malaysia had come in third last year in the Himalayan rally. Ashok Patel whose participation had been doubtful however was able to drive off as Shah's car arrived yesterday. (UNI)

Bounties for Indian Cricketers

India's captain Kapil Dev has so far earned Rs. 33,000 by way of incentive from Bush on the schemes announced by them till the end of the India-Zimbabwe match at Ahmedabad yesterday. He is followed by Manoj Prabhakar with Rs. 20,500, Azharuddin Rs. 20,000, Sidhu Rs.19,500, Gavaskar and Maninder have been awarded Rs. 17,000 each.

So far four batsmen have scored 35 runs in 30 balls to earn Rs. 3,500 each and both Kapil Dev and Azharuddin have scored 50 in 50 balls to earn Rs. 10,000 each.

The culture of Minimalism

By Barnes Mawrie

If you ask me what is the cause for Meghalaya's lack of development, I would say that among many other causes, it is the culture of minimalism that is corroding the system of our State (I am not discussing minimalism here as a philosophy but I take it at its popular parlance). Something becomes culture when it is habitually done and has become a way of living. Minimalism instead would indicate the attitude of doing the least or at a nominal degree. Minimalism is just the opposite of perfectionism and so a minimalist is a person who does not aspire for perfection but has the habit of doing the least possible. Thus a culture of minimalism would imply "a way of life wherein performance is minimal and that is taken as a code of life." It is a culture typical of our country but perhaps more rampant in our State.

Turning to our State Meghalaya, we see a strong culture of minimalism pervading in every department of the Government. It is enough to observe the way most government employees go about their duties. They reach their offices late, work very little but spend their time chatting and drinking tea or chewing kwait. With such habits how can one perform with efficiency? When we turn our attention to public work/construction, we see the same attitude. Our roads are shabbily made and there is no finishing touch in them. It is not uncommon to see roads which are half done and left so for years to come. In fact our roads are made to last for a season unlike roads in other places which are made to last decades. Look again at the so called beautification of Khyndailad (now commonly referred to as PB)! What a miserable picture it gives. The manner the project has been carried out speaks volume

of the culture of minimalism. When we compare PB to the MG Market in Gangtok, there is a huge contrast. One reveals a decrepit mindset (PB); the other (MG Road, Sikkim) shows that a lot of thought has gone into planning and execution of the work, perhaps supervised by the CM, Pawan Chamling himself. He does not hesitate to pick up the broom and sweep this place whenever there is a cleaning drive and that happens quite often! The PB project definitely has been done haphazardly, tiles are badly laid, drainage system has not been meticulously done, lighting system is nil and

festation of a minimalist attitude. The other day I witnessed a municipal truck carrying garbage on the way to Marten through Polo Bazaar. The garbage was so carelessly loaded that all along the way packets were falling off. What an ugly sight it was to see patches of garbage along the way. Probably the New Shillong Project is the most revealing aspect of a minimalist attitude affecting our State. Minimalism is a virus that has affected the entire state right from the top to the bottom. There is hardly any effort seen to get out of this mentality.

The culture of minimalism is a "losing cul-

The need to overcome this culture of minimalism is as important and urgent as rooting out corruption. This virus is contagious and it has a debilitating effect on the lives of individuals and of the community. There is need to excel in everything we do starting with those at the helms of State affairs. There are indeed some examples of public servants who demonstrate a lot of professionalism in the execution of their duties, but for the majority there is much room for improvement. Perfectionism in itself can be a mania but to aspire for a certain degree of perfection in whatever we do, is a virtue we must all cultivate.

there is no provision for tourists or shoppers to sit out and enjoy the evening.

Again look at the foot-path railing project all over the city, what we see is again "poor planning and poor execution". Many of those steel railings are already broken or have peeled off the cement path and there is hardly any aesthetic sense about them. If we observe the manner our phone cables or electric wires are laid we will realize a poor workmanship. The way the Municipality is going about its garbage disposal work is another mani-

ture" because it abrogates all desires for excellence and progress. Minimalism is a close kin of corruption because it lends itself easily to manipulation by those engrossed in the practice. Take for example, our city roads could have been excellently done once and for all if given to a company and they would have lasted for decades. But as of now, PWD is doing a shoddy job and roads are bumpy and above all they last but for a season. Perhaps if we dig deep into the matter we will not fail to find traces of corruption in the process. It is

not a secret at all that in most cases of government projects, the expenses projected in the bills are always higher than what is actually spent in the work. A lot of public money remains unaccounted for and goes into the black money loop. The consequence of this is poor infrastructure and backwardness in the State. As long as this culture afflicts those assigned to carry out public utility works there can be no progress in our State. Unfortunately, the young are unconsciously assimilating such negative values and so we see a minimalist mentality among our youth in the manner they perform in schools and colleges or in other activities. The quest for perfection has seldom crossed the minds of our young people except for a few.

The need to overcome this culture of minimalism is as important and urgent as rooting out corruption. This virus is contagious and it has a debilitating effect on the lives of individuals and of the community. There is need to excel in everything we do starting with those at the helms of State affairs. There are indeed some examples of public servants who demonstrate a lot of professionalism in the execution of their duties, but for the majority there is much room for improvement. Perfectionism in itself can be a mania but to aspire for a certain degree of perfection in whatever we do, is a virtue we must all cultivate. Developed countries become so, because the citizens in the entire hierarchy have a certain sense of professionalism and perfectionism in their approach to life and duties. I wish our schools and colleges, families and churches inculcate in the young this sense of perfectionism so that we could nurture leaders in the near future, who would strive for nothing less than excellence. Then only can our State move forward and become the pride of India.

TO THE EDITOR

Dorbar Shnong and accountability!

Editor,

The article on 'Dorbar Shnong vis-a-vis Supreme Court Order' which appeared in your esteemed daily on April 22, 2016 is a timely intervention and reminder to all inhabitants of Meghalaya on the need for a robust local governance though Dorbars. What is heartening to see is the increasing acceptance of the demand to make women too as members of the Dorbars. It is however shocking and it hurts and shames me personally that the Dorbar Shnong of Madan Laban-Riat Laban has not been summoned for over 5 years. How are the yearly expenditure and budget - if any - being approved? If this is the situation in a Dorbar in the city, one can only pray that the trend is not rampant everywhere. Writings and opinions to strengthen Dorbars should be encouraged and I urge your daily to continue publishing inputs on Dorbar Shnongs so that a healthy debate ensues on what are the best means to provide local governance to the populace.

Your etc.,
A Wanshai Shynret
Shillong 4

Stop giving 'tips' in restaurants!

Editor,

The Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC) has through a

newspaper-advertisement on May 3, 2016 pictorially revealed that effective service-tax inclusive of cess on food served in air-conditioned restaurants is just 5.8 percent while restaurants are levying ten percent additional as service-charge. Rather than issuing clarifications through newspaper-advertisements, CBEC and other concerned authorities in central and Delhi governments should instead give stern warning to restaurants against looting of consumers through such unnoticed levy of service-charge.

On being queried in a restaurant on such unhealthy practice of levying service-charge, it was revealed that it is to be distributed amongst the serving-staff as a sort of 'compulsory' tip. It is quite another thing that serving-staff even then expect and stand before the customers in expectation of some more 'tips'. Giving 'tips' depends on the personal wish of the customer. The Union and Delhi Government should take stern action against the practice of forcing compulsory 'tip' in the name of service-charge since consumers normally take 'service-charge' also as a sort of government-levied tax. Even banks should be directed not to provide space for 'tips' in their credit-card slips.

It is also time that members of public now do away with British-era practice of paying 'tips' to serving-staff anywhere at hotels, restaurants or at any other place mainly for status-symbol. 'Tips' are a sort of bribe for getting better service. In countries with highest honesty-rankings, the practice of paying 'tips' does

not exist at all. Department of Consumer affairs should launch a publicity-campaign under its programme 'Jago Grahak Jago' to educate people to discontinue practice of paying 'tips'.

Yours etc.,
Subhash Chandra Agrawal
(Guinness Record Holder & RTI Activist)
Delhi - 6

Special leave

Editor,

The Election Commission of India has declared May 16, 2016 as polling date to the 2- Tura Parliamentary Constituency bye election. The Government is familiar with the fact that the electorates of Garo Hills who are Government employees are serving in Khasi, Jaintia and Ri-Bhoi Districts of Meghalaya. Therefore, on behalf of all the electorate I request the Chief Secretary of Meghalaya/ Chief Electoral Officer to kindly grant the State Govt employees and also those of Public Sector Undertakings two days special leave on May 16-17 subject to the production of EPIC as proof to their respective departments to enable us to exercise our franchise as citizens of India.

Yours etc.,
Louvre Venus R. Marak
(Govt. Employee),
Shillong.

The selfie craze

Editor,

Kudos to Banmankhraw Lyngdoh for the letter titled "Mind the camera"(ST May 2, 2016).The highly appropriate and relevant letter reminds me of my recent trips to Nepal and Bhutan. Far from appreciating the majestic beauty of the two Himalayan nations, our fel-

low tourists were acting like lunatics and zealously clicking selfies with their smart phones in front of Buddha statues, monasteries, lakes, rivers or near watch towers in jungles as if there is no tomorrow! And immediately after posting those pictures on social media sites, they started to engage themselves in mere gossip or discuss politics to Bollywood! It seemed their trip was not meant to cultivate new lands and its culture, but merely to advertise to the world that 'I am also travelling'!

This zealous obsession with self has engulfed the world in such a pathetic way that even Barack Obama, otherwise a highly sensible personality, immersed himself in selfie-culture with two other European leaders at the solemn occasion of the funeral ceremony of none other but the great Nelson Mandela! Since the world in general prefers to augment the external beauty instead of improving the inner self, thereby providing a huge boost to the cosmetic industry; the self-centred selfie-culture of advertising oneself has succeeded in capturing the imagination of civilization with disastrous consequences including fatal accidents while taking "brave" pictures at mountains or sea coasts. If individuals are so eager to highlight themselves in front of the society, why don't they try to make a mark through excellence in sports, education, literature or social service?

Lastly, if people do not hesitate to risk their very own lives so as to act "smart", isn't it too much to expect from them that they would lend their hands of support to save the lives of others? Thanks to these set of perverts, "disaster tour-

Modi still an amateur in foreign affairs

India squeezed between China, Pakistan

By Amulya Ganguli

Narendra Modi's dealings with Pakistan and China have underlined the veracity of the Peter principle which refers to the fallacy of choosing a person for a post on the basis of his/her performance in the current job. In Modi's case, it has become obvious that a successful chief minister need not be an effective prime minister. Having had no experience in foreign affairs, especially with two of India's most bitter enemies - Pakistan and China - Modi's blunders are there for all to see.

His gaffes would have made India a laughing stock of the world if the international community was unaware of Pakistan's and China's duplicitous record. In contrast with these two patently untrustworthy and crassly cynical countries, Modi has stood out as someone who is ready to go the extra mile for the sake of peace. As such has been evident from his impromptu visit to Islamabad on his way home from Kabul and his decision to invite a Pakistani team to investigate the terror attack on the Pathankot air base.

With regard to China, Modi went out of his way to be rude to the Dalai Lama when the Tibetan pontiff was hustled out of his residence late at night and ushered in to the prime minister's presence in 7, Race Course Road, New Delhi, to be given a one-sided lecture on the relations between India, China and Tibet's government-in-exile at Dharamshala. The Tibetan spiritual leader was reportedly "shaken" by the encounter because Indian leaders have never treated him so discourteously in the past.

But Modi's harsh treatment of the "splittist" and a "wolf in sheep's clothing", to use two of the Chinese invectives against its bete noire, doesn't seem to have mollified Beijing in any way. It continues to rub India the wrong way where Pakistan is concerned.

Like China, Pakistan, too, has responded with crude cynicism to Modi's goodwill gestures such going to Islamabad at a moment's notice while travelling from Kabul to New Delhi by deputing Pakistan's high commissioner in the Indian capital to suspend the India-Pakistan dialogue for a time. The talks have again got under way, but Pakistan - rather its viscerally anti-India army chief, Raheel Sharif - has ensured that the signs of hope seen at Ufa and again when Modi visited Islamabad have been extinguished.

If Modi has been naïve with regard to Pakistan, his government has been guilty of acting without forethought with China. Moreover, it has chosen to play a tit-for-tat game without looking at the big picture. Irritated by Beijing's blocking of India's move to have the Pakistani jihadi, Azhar Masood, declared as a terrorist by the UN, New Delhi decided to hold a conference of Chinese dissidents in Dharamshala.

But in a classic case of

taking one bold step forward and two pusillanimous steps back, India cancelled the visas of Uyghur separatist Dolkin Isa and two others after China frowned. The ostensible reason for the retreat included the Interpol's red corner notice to Isa, which has been ignored by most European countries including Germany where the "freedom fighter" stays, and alleged discrepancies in the visa applications of the others. Even if these difficulties are true, India should have taken them into account before issuing the invitations. Now it is obvious that the putative strong man with his 56-inch chest is not as strong as his admirers claim.

If the egregious rudeness towards the Dalai Lama is set aside for the moment, there was nothing fundamentally wrong with Modi's initiatives towards Pakistan except that he chose to turn a blind eye to the ground realities in Pakistan where the army chief is the primus inter pares and not prime minister Nawaz Sharif. Both in Ufa and during Modi's Islamabad stopover, the latter went out on a limb and was rebuffed by the Pakistan army chief who is riding high with China's backing.

Modi's over-enthusiasm also put Nawaz Sharif in a false position by revealing that his wishes for better India-Pakistan relations do not have the army's support. As a result, it's back to the old face-off between the two countries with China relishing India's discomfiture. Evidently, the world is different from the way it looked to Ajiit Doval, the national security adviser who has been called Modi's 007, when he headed the pro-BJP think tank, Vivekananda International Foundation.

China, on its part, must be pleased that Modi is pragmatic enough to dump his religious baggage of Hindutva to be the first Indian leader to show disrespect to the Dalai Lama when all his "secular" predecessors had treated the Nobel laureate with unflinching courtesy. However, the genuflection is unlikely to make the Middle Kingdom any more receptive than before towards India's sensitivities, as on the Masood Azhar issue.

Jawaharlal Nehru, too, had misread China, believing that the two neighbours will be a beacon for world peace. But he was honest enough to admit his mistake, saying that "we were getting out of touch with reality in the modern world and we were living in an artificial atmosphere of our own creation". Modi, however, with all his hubris is unlikely to admit his gullibility with regard to Pakistan and lack of foresight with regard to China, not to mention his insulting behaviour towards the Dalai Lama. (IPA Service)

thereby augmenting heartlessness and selfishness in the society.

Yours etc.,
Kajal Chatterjee,
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.

"By trying we can easily learn to endure adversity -- another man's I mean."

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 262 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2016

Tax Evasion

THE tax evasion affair is a murky business the world over. India's Income Tax department has released data for the period 2000-2001 to 2014-2015. The intention is to increase transparency and help data analysis. But some of the findings are discouraging. India is one of the fastest growing countries of the world which attracts the biggest wealth management firms but only 18,359 individuals had declared incomes over Rs 1 crore in 2011-2012 and paid tax on it. Of the over 5 crore individuals who filed their tax returns, only the top 11% paid 80% of all personal income tax. 16 crore tax filers paid no tax, being in the lowest tax bracket. 85% pay less than Rs 1.15 lakh tax annually. Such data underscore the need for widening the tax net and streamlining collections. The top creamy layer includes a very small number of taxpayers. It emphasizes growing income inequality. One reason for the small number of billionaires in the creamy layer is that a huge amount of capital gains is exempt from tax. The amount was Rs 70, 121 crore in FY 2012-2013. Besides, there is the setting off of loss in business income (at Rs 67, 63 crore) and farm income which is outside the tax net, though considerable. India's gross tax to GDP ratio has therefore remained more or less the same in the last few years.

All this is at odds with the need for expenditure on health, education, social security plus social and physical infrastructure. It is necessary to widen the tax net (how long will farm income be a holy cow) and deepening the tax base (without aggravating poverty). Such exemptions as are not necessary for the low tax-payers should be curtailed. Finally, the data released recently leaves out the basis of compliance. How many among the rich evade tax payment? And they do not merely include film and sports icons whose arrears are common knowledge but done nothing about.

LOOKING BACK

February 8, 1989

Decision on Bihar, Gujarat soon: PM

Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi today indicated that some decision would be taken soon on various issues including the leadership in Bihar and Gujarat a reshuffle in the union ministry and reorganization of the AICC. During an informal chat, after he had inaugurated the two day Chief Minister's conference here newsmen asked Mr Gandhi what he was going to do about various pending issues as there was not much time left with the budget session of Parliament scheduled to begin from February 21.

Gujarat dissidents claim support of 73

The Congress(I) dissident legislators today claimed to have collected the signatures of 73 party legislators demanding the ouster of Chief Minister Mr Amarsingh Choudhury. Briefing reporters in the presence of a minister in his Assembly House chamber, dissidents leaders said that they would submit the list of signatures of the party legislators to Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi on Tuesday. They said that a few more legislators who were

busy in panchayat by elections, would sign the memorandum on Monday.

Cong-I man, cop among 7 ultra victims

A Congress(I) leader and two policemen were among seven people killed, while security forces nabbed ten terrorist and their harbourers in Punjab during the past 24 hours. Two cycle-borne terrorists forcibly entered the house of Hoshiarpur Congress(I) Vice President Shankar Das at Taprian village in the district. The terrorists escaped after committing the crime.

Four terrorists shot dead folk singers, Nirmal Singh and Tarsem Singh at Najjar Nangal village in Jalandhar district this morning. Two terrorists attacked the house of Mr Shankar Das Principal of DAV Higher Secondary School at Parian village, and killed him. The terrorists kidnapped two policemen and in separate operations, the security forces nabbed five ultra last night. The constables, of a six-member police party, were kidnapped in a raid on a farm house at Jasrul village in Amritsar district.

Influx, smuggling worries Tripura Govt.

The Tripura government is worried about the fresh influx of Bangladesh nationals and the recent spurt of smuggling of different essential commodities through the international border, official sources said. The sources said the increase in smuggling activities had a telling effect on the prices of essential commodities, especially rice, in the local markets. Though production of food grains increased this season, the "border trade", ruined the situation, they regretted.

Water Management Don't blame God, plan

By Dr S Saraswathi

Over 54 crore farmers in 13 States are in the grip of drought facing relentless multi-dimensional water crisis. In fact, drought has not spared any State resulting in crop failure, distress migrations, closure of small industries, extended vacation for educational institutions, shifting of venues or schedules of popular events and celebrations etc.

Tragically, farmers' suicides have become common occurrences wherein the acute water scarcity is competing for space with political news in newspapers and television.

Notably, drought is no longer a problem exclusively of the poor notwithstanding they spend about 15 per cent of their income on water in some areas but the rich too are affected in many ways and use their money power to grab available water. Consequently, famine is putting obstacles in the way of reaching the Millennium Development Goals (2010-15).

Water shortage does not distinguish between rural and urban areas. Incredibly, areas that suffered the wrath of floods a few months back are face to face with water scarcity today, counting the number of days water is sufficient in the reservoirs even as they pray for rains!

Where has the water gone? Indeed, a legitimate question in flood-hit areas. Why can't we manage available water resources better? An important query raised to our deaf and mute authorities everywhere.

Last month, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh were declared drought-affected with over 300 million people and half of the country's districts affected by it. Worse, the World Bank's prediction of a "turbulent future" vis-à-vis the inevitable water crisis seems to be coming true earlier than expected.

Questionably, to put the entire blame on failure of rains as the cause for water shortage is incorrect against the backdrop that human failure is equally re-

sponsible. Thanks to lack of foresight and water planning, deficiency in water management, criminal neglect of duties and responsibilities on the part of all concerned which have combined to aggravate the situation resulting in this unprecedented crisis in terms of extent and severity.

Significantly, water management is today an independent area of study under Environment administration as it is crucial for development of water bodies, their protection from pollution and over-exploitation as also for fair distribution and prevention of disputes.

It requires integration of several disciplines: water and civil engineering to augment supply and storage, chemical, bio-physical and hydrological knowledge to take care of quality along-with politics, economics, social work and law to address sharing and distribution.

Undoubtedly, administrative ability is indispensable for every task in building infrastructure, institutional and service management alongside policy-making as bureaucratic failure might nullify benefits acquired from knowledge and experience. Specialization includes management of resources, quality, services, and conflicts.

Besides, water management has two important parts --- supervision of supply and demand. Pertinently, availability, quality and management are the three key water issues. Especially as it is universally acknowledged that water is a basic need and therefore a basic right for all.

According to a water expert the crisis is not one of short supply but of mismanagement in India and globally a crisis of rapacity which requires a sound water management system combined with national planning and local action.

True, the National Water Mission is one of the eight missions in the National Action Plan on Climate Change launched by Prime Ministers to tackle global warming in December 2013. The Mission's objective is

to conserve water, minimize wastage and ensure more equitable distribution across and within States through integrated water resources development and management.

Towards that end, the Mission identified five goals comprising collection of a comprehensive water data base in the public domain and assessment of the impact of climate change; promotion of citizen-State action for conservation, augmentation and preservation of water; focused attention on vulnerable areas including over-exploited areas; increase of water use efficiency by 20 per cent; and promotion of basin level integrated water resources management. Last, the very substance of water management.

However, missions, goals and targets remain disconnected with reality. What we perceive is a literal scramble for water along with increasing disparities vis-à-vis access to water. Think. Water management requires full public cooperation devoid of any in-fighting. Even we are conditioned to think of water disputes as inter-States and international problem, conveniently forgetting that disputes start near community wells and taps among neighbours.

Interestingly, we need to take a leaf from the US where a non-profit professional association, American Water Resources Association (AWRA) was founded in 1964 to tackle the problem and is dedicated to improvements in water resources management, research and education. Its members include professionals from diverse fields. Similar associations to work with proper recognition and support are the need of the hour.

Additionally, the idea of trading in water and treating it as a commodity appeals to some people. The World Bank also is in favour of leaving water to market forces wherein water business has already become popular in many parts of the world. Namely, US, Chile, South Africa and Australia et al. In fact, the Australian system is consid-

ered to be most efficient.

This has spread to India too, but is alas, accompanied with omnipresent trade malpractices --- supply of polluted water and diversion of free water for commercial purposes in many places. This has led to closure of several water plants and sales outlets.

In some places farmers have discontinued their agricultural occupation and engage in water trade as a more profitable venture to meet the needs of water-starved cities, thereby making a mockery of agriculture and its accompanying subsidies.

Clearly, with water management being a problem in every country, we need to learn from abroad. Singapore is very efficient in water management despite having few resources of its own. It imports water to meet most of its requirements and is able to achieve round-the-clock availability of quality water by scrupulously following three principles: It captures every drop of rain; traps every drop of used water and recycle every drop more than once. In some South-East Asian countries, their Constitutions provide for public participation in water management.

Sadly, such integrated water management is missing in India. Since water is nature's endowment, we are unable to realize its value despite its limited supply. Under Indian law, ownership of land gives ownership of groundwater in that land.

In sum, planning and executing infrastructure needs to be in the hands of the Government. However, public participation too has a crucial role to play. There are already several thousands of users' associations which could be involved in more constructive and planned work.

Traditional practices of water management which are prevalent, effective and costless in many States should be revived. Above all, we must shed our habit of attributing human failure to divine will, instead seriously take up water management. ---- INFA

(The writer is Former Director, ICSSR, New Delhi)

TO THE EDITOR

Clean up the Myllem Syiemship!

Editor, The observation made by the Hon'ble High Court in the case of the nomination to the post of the Acting Syiem of Myllem (ST May, /2016) is the same observation made by one and all living helplessly every day and bearing the brunt of the increased expense of each individual for the protection of their own interests in the hands of unorganized and corrupt office of the Syiem of Myllem.

The news of the suspension of the Syiem of Myllem gave so much hope to the people awaiting restorative justice after failing to receive neither distributive/economic justice - their fair share of equality which is their fundamental right nor procedural justice - the application of the principle of fairness from the office of the Syiem of Myllem. Everyone was looking forward to the appointment of Armstrong Syiem as the Acting Syiem who has a record of re-booting the whole administrative system of Hima Myllem when he held office. Armstrong Syiem, whose name is associated with justice and kindness, is known for his fair and clean administration. Iewduh would turn overnight into a disciplined, safe public shop-

ping place. Every person especially the local non-tribal citizens of Shillong for whom it is mandatory to obtain various bonafide documents from the Office of the Syiem of Myllem would find it easier to go through the process without all the exorbitant amount of their time, money and a sense of discrimination.

If the Hon'ble High Court can intervene by keeping in mind that the office of the Syiem of Myllem is not apolitical but a traditional office to oversee the well being of the people living under the Syiemship, the post of the Acting Syiem should be given to the person who is duly qualified and has the experience to restore back the office administration of Hima Myllem especially at this point of time when it is rotting in corruption, mismanagement of Iewduh and the whole administrative office inside the Durbur of Hima Myllem.

Yours etc.,
Prasanta K. Gain,
Shillong-1

Emotional CJJ

Editor, It is very unfortunate but expected that indifference of both the Executive and Judiciary came to the fore once again with the recent outburst of Chief Justice of India (CJI).

The CJI as the Judiciary's fountain head is solely and wholly respon-

sible and liable for this awkward and pathetic plight of the judiciary. I have personal experience of the fall of the judicial system across the country as I am exposed to the working and mal-functioning of the munsif-magistrates to the Supreme Court for last four decades or so. The Judges with their privileged jobs, invincible pride, ordinarily unchallengeable legal uniqueness and draconian judicial arrogance very conveniently, comfortably and consciously rather ceremoniously play fraud systematically on the silent and voiceless.

As long as those living in traditional ivory towers and glass-house encased CJI and his judicial fraternity do not have sincere "Judicial Will" and honest "legal longings" to walk the extramile for the marginalized poor and voiceless citizenries to bring them at par with the super rich and highly influential persons, the case pendency in the country's courts (about 3 crore & 60,000 plus in Supreme Court) will continue to swell.

If the CJI is honest to his tears, let him physically see the plight of poor litigants and practical functioning of the courts from lowest to the highest level where the nexus between the judges and counsels is the order of the day and money exchange within the court staff is "operational" mantra and magic. To ensure spot justice to the corporates, and the rich, the court works

overtime, while the same court works with snail speed for poor litigants who have to wait years together for justice, if at all given after a long wait.

This long wait, delays, judicial inefficiency and incapacity among others further contribute towards the silent systematic accumulation of cases, and the judges as a class and creed need to voluntarily come forward in the national interest as the CJI now mooted and sacrifice the long summer vacation of courts. There is also suggestion for reduction of holidays (except religious days) along with formation of globally best practiced reorganization of court management and litigant oriented work style, and adoption of modern technological advancements from its current culture of extraction of penny and pounds from the legal-aid sponsored poor-to-rich litigants.

There should be "Judicial Emergency" in redolence of the political emergency on setting prudent judicial standards and firm norms albeit limited time in case disposals and accountability of work can bring magical reduction of pendency of cases to minimum if not "zero" in the coming five years. Till this is achieved, the tears of CJI will only be exhibitionist crocodile tears, to many of the judiciary insiders and on-lookers like this writer.

Yours etc.,
Dr G John
Dehra Dun,
Uttarakhand

MSME policies have to be streamlined

Panel must plug loopholes to impart dynamism

By G Srinivasan

It is a year over since on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on reservation, the NDA government that believed in Joseph Schumpeter's "creative destruction"-a process of industrial mutation that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within by destroying the old one and creating a new one, had cleaned up the lingering vestiges of the earlier reservation policy by de-reserving the last twenty odd items purported for exclusive manufacture in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

It is now in the midst of preparing a national policy for MSME to swim against competition in the absence of ballast of patent support like reservation. A one-man Committee under the chairmanship of the former Cabinet Secretary and former Governor, Jharkhand, Mr. Prabhat Kumar has been constituted to make appropriate recommendation for such a pan-India MSME policy. Secretary, MSME, Government of India, Mr. K.K. Jalan told this correspondent that the Committee is most likely to submit its report by June 30 2016 as it has already held detailed deliberations to come out with a concrete plan of action to give an impetus to this indispensable segment of the national economy.

With registered 3.6 crore units spread across the country employing more than 80 million people, MSMEs today make a contribution of 37.5 per cent to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). As per latest estimates available upto 2013-14, the employment opportunities fostered by MSMEs was of the order of 111.4 million. On the basis of data on GDP published by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and final results of the latest MSME Census (Fourth Census) conducted (with base reference year 2006-07), wherein the data was gleaned till 2009 and results published in 2011-12, the estimated contribution of MSME manufacturing sector to GDP during 2013-14 was 7.04 per cent. What lends gravitas to the MSME's contribution to GDP is the contribution of MSME services sector, which is estimated at 30.50 per cent during 2012-13, the aggregate share of MSME sector in GDP during 2012-13, the final year of the decade-long erstwhile UPA government, is 37.54. Shorn of the contribution of services MSME, the manufacturing MSME contribution remains low and slow of barely less than 10 per cent in overall GDP.

Considering the importance with which the Modi Government began its innings after May 2014 unfolding a host of schemes such as Make in India, Start up India, Stand up India, Zero effect and Zero defect to give an impetus to manufacturing in the overall scheme of things for pushing the country's growth a tad higher, expectations naturally run high for MSMEs to benefit by these schemes announced with much panache. But the reality on the ground punctured all plain expectations with manufacturing growth remaining on a morose mode, nowhere near the bruited 8 per cent industrial growth rate the country had chalked out decades ago and which it had compassed in the 1990s!

It would be interesting to know that the Ministry of MSME has its plates overflowing in running a raft of schemes for the benefit of the MSMEs, convinced as it is, of the sector's immeasurable potential to help address structural problems like unemployment, regional imbalances, unequal distribution of national income and wealth across the nation. The spate of schemes include, among others, the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), Credit Guarantee Trust Fund for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE), Credit Linked

Capital Subsidy Scheme (CLCSS) for technology upgradation, Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI) and Micro and Small Enterprises- Cluster Development Programme (MSE-CDP) for the establishment of new enterprises and development of extant ones.

Other equally weighty schemes include, Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum (UAM), Public Procurement Policy, Framework for Revival and Rehabilitation of MSMEs, Tool Rooms & Technology Centres for MSMEs and a Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE). UAM was notified in September 2015 under section 8 of the MSME Development Act, 2006. A pioneering scheme to promote ease-of-doing business for MSMEs in the country, UAM ushers a modern era trade facilitation, replacing the irksome filing of Entrepreneurs' Memorandum (EM part I & II) with the respective States/Union Territories. All that an MSME entrepreneur is required to do is just to file online, a simple single page UAM on the relevant website to get an instant unique Udyog Aadhaar Number (UAN). In less than a short span of six months, more than 3.12 lakh UAMs have been filed as the information sought is on self-certification basis sans supporting documents at the time of online filing.

Similarly under a framework for revival and rehabilitation of MSMEs, notified in May 2015 under section 9 of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006, identification of incipient stress/sickness is now on a fast track with all the banks being directed to set up a Committee for Distressed MSME enterprises at zonal or district level with the Committee putting up a Corrective Action Plan for the MSME unit that approaches it for salvage. Under Tool Rooms & Technology Centres for MSMEs, these Centres have assisted 32,349 MSMEs for catering to MSMEs' need for skilled manpower, precision and highly sophisticated components, tools and dies.

According to the Union Minister, MSME, Mr. Kalraj Mishra, the Ministry is currently working for setting up of 15 new Technology Centres at Rs 2200 crore with the assistance of the World Bank, even as the extant tool rooms would make around two lakh youth employed every year with due training and skilling. Again, under SFURTI, the objective of organizing the traditional industries and artisans into clusters to make them competitive and lend support for their long-term sustainability by way of enhancing the marketability of products, improving the skills of artisans and making provision for common facilities is unexceptionable. Besides these development-focused schemes for MSMEs, the biggest relief to units working under the sector came from the Union Budget 2016-17 when an increase in turnover limit under pre-sumptive taxation scheme (Sec 44AD of the Income Tax) from existing one crore of rupees to Rs 2 crore was announced. All these no doubt testify to the seriousness with which the NDA government is determined to accord the requisite thrust for this crucial sector that holds the golden key to offer countless employment opportunities to skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled population. (IPA Service)

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

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

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Pakistan's Predicament

THE Pakistan air force will not receive eight new-generation F-16 combat jets for a song, 699 million dollars. It shows that global capitals are miffed at the country's behaviour. The US administration had approved the sale in February. The jets had to be largely paid for with US military aid. The US Congress was however concerned that the jets may be used against India rather than terrorists. Pakistan's failure to deliver Taliban terrorists operating from its territory against Afghanistan was another factor. A terrible terrorist attack in Kabul confirmed fears. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has declared that his government does not wish to seek Pakistan's help to have a dialogue with the Taliban. India is unhappy about Islamabad's attitude on various grounds.

There has been more reflective diplomacy against Pakistan of late as proved by the backing off on the F16 deal. Pakistan was trying to use its alliance with the US to secure nuclear weapons and go for proxy war through jihadists. 9/11 ensured impunity from sanctions. The thing is that such machinations have thrown doubt on Pakistan's policy prerogatives. There is widespread belief that Pakistan encourages state sponsorship of anti-Indian militancy. At the same time, both Rawalpindi and Islamabad claim that their own people are in danger, especially with the ISIS threats. Pakistan's illusion that China will be a military and economic patron is wiped out by recent developments. With China moving out of Islamabad's fond calculations, Islamabad had better rethink its neighbourhood policy, especially directed towards New Delhi.

LOOKING BACK

February 8, 1989

Tail Rotor failure cause of Kohima crash

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation today ordered immediate inspection of the tail rotor drive system of all Westland helicopters following the crash of a Pawan Hans helicopter near Kohima on Tuesday in which three people were killed and three injured. According to Civil Aviation Ministry sources, the DGCA has ordered that the inspection be completed within three days.

It was also ordered that as a matter of abated precaution, pilots operating in hilly terrain will now require special clearance for operating the helicopters from both Pawan Hans and the DGCA. The crash, the second involving a Westland helicopter, had caused serious concern in the government which has decided to take strict maintenance measures for the safety of the helicopters and passengers. A Westland helicopter had crashed near Vishnudev in the Jammu area last year, killing all the occupants.

The DGCA has also ordered that a study be carried out of the maintenance facilities of the Pawan Hans. According to a message received from Kohima, where DGCA Director General Mr P C Sen and Deputy Director General Mr H S Khola flew yesterday to inspect the crash site it appeared that the pilots of the helicopter had attempted an emergency landing on a small open patch on a hilly slope seven km from Kohima.

It appears that tail rotor was not rotating when the helicopter impacted. The tail rotor drive shaft was found broken and there was no fire, the message said. Mr A K Chopra Regional Controller of Air Safety of the DGCA, who had also gone on the site has been appointed inspector of the accident.

Man held for faking as IAS officer for Dowri

A man posing as an IAS officer tried to raise money for marriage, scheduled for yesterday, and gave Lakshimpriya Rs. 65000 for his "expenses" a house in the city and Rs. One lakh was also promised. But Director for Adult Education Madan Gopal saw the wedding invitation card and corn in the gutter and alerted the police who arrested the impostor.

India-Pakistan Talks Another case of missed opportunity?

By Amrita Banerjee

The recent meeting between India and Pakistan's Foreign Secretaries in Delhi served as a reality check on the stalemate in the bilateral dialogue between both countries. Meeting on the sidelines of the Heart of Asia Conference, the two officials failed to find common ground to kick start the Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue process or even agree on a timetable.

Both underscored the talks bore no results. Add to this, the separate statements by the two foreign offices listing point-wise the issues discussed were an equal indicator of the discord. Predictably, New Delhi raised its concerns about Pathankot, the 26/11 ground attack and consular access to alleged spy Kulbhushan Jadhav. Islamabad brought up the supposed Indian interference in Baluchistan, concerns about the Samjhauta Express blast investigations and again reiterated Kashmir as the 'core issue', echoing its traditional posture.

Neither mentioned the other's concerns, with both statements aimed at their respective domestic audiences rather than a bilateral outreach. Undeniably, despite many setbacks, there have been numerous occasions over the past year to encourage hope that dialogue will acquire some sort of permanence. To begin with, the meeting in Ufa between the two Prime Ministers that drew up an ambitious road map for talks, subsequent meeting in Paris and Prime Minister Modi's surprise Christmas visit to Lahore gave new hopes and pulled ties out of a deep freeze.

Moreover, things take an uglier turn when another neighbour China provokes cover to Pakistan-based terrorists like Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar by blocking action against including their names in the UN terror roll.

Clearly, China's double standards vis-a-vis terrorism and separatism are revealed when it relates to its own national sovereignty. Highlighted by Beijing's annoyance over India issuing a visa and later revoking it to Chinese dissident Uygur leader Dolkun Isa to visit Dharamasala with parsons, Tibet and Uygur regions. True, every country has the right to preserve their national interests and territorial integrity but at the same time they should also be sensitive to neighbour good countries concerns. Good relations can be sustained and maintained only on mutual recognition and respect for each other.

Notably, the lack of unanimity especially the position taken by the Hurriyat leaders during Indo-Pak bilateral talks further complicated the situation. Their insistence on supporting Pakistan on Kashmir being the core issue is not only distasteful but also has definite political connotations so far as Kashmir's domestic politics is concerned.

Besides, Islamabad reserves the right to talk about Kashmir only when it has set its house in order. The Pakistani Army Chief's recent removal of 13 officers, implicitly suggests that Prime Minister Sharif need to quit. More so, after his resignation, the Pakistan Army Chief's recent removal of 13 officers, implicitly suggests that Prime Minister Sharif need to quit.

Plains, it seems the military is getting ready to take over the reins of Government for the fifth time in its 69 years of existence. Obviously, to perform its self-acquired additional role of defending national security.

Grapevine in Pakistan suggests four future possibilities: One, Shari's Government is forced to resign under the restraints of the anti-Centre rhetoric, which is working on an image makeover with the result that India and Pakistan can at least discuss key issues within a structured framework and continue making attempts till they achieve a modicum of mutual satisfaction. -- INFA

(The author is from School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi)

J J M. Nichols Roy adopted Patriliny

All we are aware that Mr. J.J.M Nichols Roy or James Joy Mohon Nichols Roy or as he is lovingly called Bah Joy by many, was one of the architects of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution which resulted in the establishment of the Autonomous District Councils with the objective of safeguarding the land, its resources, the culture and tradition of the small populated indigenous people living in this region. Apropos the headline above I would like to share the following information, especially with the younger generation of our society.

J.J. Mohon Roy (Bah Joy) was born on the 12th June, 1884. His father was Khajendra Mohon Roy (spelt Roi in those days) and his mother was Rimai Sjiemlieh who was also the sister of a Tiroi Sing Sjiem. Bah Joy's wife, Nora Evelyn Nichols was born on 27th April, 1879 at Idaho, USA. They were married on the 17th August, 1907 and after marriage they were known as James Joy Mohon Nichols Roy and Nora Evelyn Nichols Roy who was also the ex. MLA and Minister of Meghalaya

Acting Syiem will deliver his promises and be the just chief that he is supposed to be. Yours etc., Name withheld on request

A beautiful moment from the beautiful game

A momentous occasion has just taken place in the footballing world. Leicester City an unfancied team from the East Midlands of England has just won the top prize in English football, a feat they have never achieved in their entire footballing history. A hard-core Tottenham Hotspur supporter I was hugely disappointed that they did not win the league this year but the consoling factor for me is that I was named after a football legend who started his footballing career with Leicester city and who ended his career in English football with Tottenham Hotspur. That player was part of a consortium that rescued Leicester City from financial mire in 2002. Leaving aside personal affiliations, the fact that I was part of the team who were battling for survival last season managed to become champions the next season with almost the same set of players and circumstances is nothing

Parties still betting on old horses Stalin, Sukhbir, Rahul in waiting room

By Kalyani Shankar

What is common between British Prince Charles, Gandhian scion Rahul Gandhi, the DMK leader MK Stalin and Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Karunamithi is still in the saddle. Parkash Singh Badal is going strong at the age of 87. Stalin is important in the context of Tamil Nadu politics. His fate will be known in the ensuing Assembly polls. Having made the DMK party his family fiefdom, Karunamithi is not averse to anointing his son but he also does not want to upset the apple cart before the Assembly polls. Stalin supporters wanted him to be projected as the chief ministerial face but the old guard including Durai Murugan wanted the 94-year-old Karunamithi as the chief ministerial candidate. Also Stalin is no match to the chief minister Jayalalitha.

Before the entry of older brother Azhagiri and half-sister Kanimozhi a decade ago, Stalin was the undisputed leader when Karunamithi made him deputy chief minister in 2009. But rising ambitions and family politics have blocked him. Azhagiri and Kanimozhi are staking their claim for their father's political legacy. Azhagiri is now out of favour while Kanimozhi has patched up with Stalin. So, Stalin has practically taken over the organisation despite the family feuds.

The bitter truth is that it is a difficult task for the weak DMK-Congress combine to come back to power. Jaya has surpassed the DMK in extending welfare programmes and freebies. Let us hope that of its traditional political planks from the Tamil caste to the anti-Centre rhetoric, which is working on an image makeover with the result that India and Pakistan can at least discuss key issues within a structured framework and continue making attempts till they achieve a modicum of mutual satisfaction. -- INFA

(The author is from School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi)

Repeated power cuts in Jowai

The repeated power cuts in Jowai town is very annoying. This power cut is a common feature but for the last one month it has happened several times in a day. Hence people are uncomfortable not only at night but it also affects the normal life

Yours etc., Gary Marbaniang, Via email

Electricity bill paid per every month tallies with the power supplies. It may be mentioned that whenever there is delay in payment of electricity bills one has to pay a penalty amount. Should the amounts not be deducted for irregular supply of power?

Yours etc., Omargo Laloo, Mynthong, Jowai

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

Cosmetics may not be safe during pregnancy

High-fructose diet during pregnancy may restrict foetal growth: Study

Would-be-mothers please take note! Using personal care products such as soaps and lotions during pregnancy may lead to adverse reproductive effects in your newborns, warns a new study. The findings revealed a link between women who use cosmetics with higher levels of butyl paraben -- commonly used preservative in cosmetics -- to shorter gestational age at birth, decreased birth weight and increased odds of preterm birth. "The antimicrobial compound -- triclocarban -- mainly added to soaps, is associated with shorter gestational age at birth. Another common chemical -- propyl paraben -- is associated with decreased body length at birth," said Laura Geer from SUNY Downstate Medical Center in New York, US. "Our latest study adds to the growing body of evidence showing that endocrine-disrupting compounds can lead to developmental and reproductive problems in animals and in humans," Geer added in a paper published in the Journal of Hazardous Materials. "Based on this new evidence, the safety of use of these chemicals in our consumer products should be reassessed," Geer pointed out. "While small-scale changes in birth size may not be of clinical relevance or cause for concern in individual cases, subtle shifts in birth size or timing at the population-level would have major impacts on the risk for adverse birth outcomes," Geer noted. (ANS)



For mothers-to-be, consuming high-fructose diet during pregnancy may cause defects in the placenta and restrict foetal growth, warns a study, adding that this may increase the baby's risk of developing metabolic health problems in adulthood. The findings suggest that it may be possible to devise a prenatal screening test and treatment plan for pregnant women with high-fructose levels. "It is becoming increasingly critical to understand how fructose consumption is impacting human health. This study shows potentially negative effects of a high-fructose diet during pregnancy," said senior study author Kelle H. Moley from Washington University in St. Louis. "The negative effect of excess fructose in humans is likely to lead to an exacerbation of the problems seen in mice," Moley stated in the paper published in the online journal Scientific Reports. Elevated levels of uric acid and triglycerides in healthy mice that were fed a high-fructose diet during pregnancy resulted in smaller fetuses and larger placentas than those fed standard rodent chow. To assess the relevance of the mouse data in pregnant women, the team examined the association between fructose and placental uric acid levels in a small controlled group of 18 women who underwent scheduled cesarean sections. The women had no disorders that would have caused elevated uric acid levels, it is considered safe to take late in the second or third trimester during pregnancy, Moley said. (ANS)

Common cold may increase diabetes risk in kids

Viral respiratory tract infections -- like the common cold, flu, tonsillitis, bronchitis and pneumonia -- during the first six months of life are likely to increase the risk for Type-1 diabetes in children, says a new study. The findings suggest that the first half-year of life is crucial for the development of the immune system and of autoimmune diseases such as Type-1 diabetes (T1D). According to researchers, T1D risk increased in children who had a respiratory tract infection between birth and 2.9 months or between three and 5.9 months of age compared with children who had no respiratory tract infections in those age intervals. "Our findings show that months of life significantly increase the risk of children developing Type-1 diabetes," said one of the researchers, Andrea Brezler, from Helmholtz Zentrum Munchen in Germany. Infants are particularly susceptible to respiratory tract infections like the common cold, flu, tonsillitis, bronchitis and pneumonia, because, unlike adults, their immune systems have not acquired the immunity to



Scientists develop new heart bypass surgery device

Team of international scientists has developed a device that will help doctors to perform heart bypass surgery without stopping the heart. Scientists from MISIS National University of Science and Technology, Moscow and their colleagues from Australia's Endogene-Globetek medical company have developed a unique device to enhance cardiovascular surgery. The stapler like device for mending blood vessels using strong staples surgery lasts four to five hours, with doctors having to stop the heart, and entails lengthy post-operative rehabilitation. This new stitching instrument allows doctors to operate on the heart while the beats. Instead of saving the breastbone apart, surgeons can now simply bore two holes through it and put the bypass in place. The entire operation lasts about 60 minutes, and the patient can be discharged on the following day. This innovative stapler uses special resilient nickel titanium (nitinol) reversible shape memory staples. These staples are inserted inside a cartridge which is then placed inside the polymer-body stapler's distal end. Pre-clinical tests have already been completed and this technology has also been patented in Russia and Australia. This Russian-Australian invention received an award at the 44th International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva held last month. (ANS)

What causes appetite loss during illness? Researchers have discovered that an immune system molecule hijacks a brain circuit and reduces appetite when you are afflicted with an illness. While loss of appetite during illness is common, it contributes to reducing a patient's strength and in cancer patients, it can even shorten lifespan. The new research points to potential targets for treating loss of appetite and restoring a patient's strength. "Treating loss of appetite would cure an underlying disease, but it could help a patient cope," said senior author of the study Bruno Conti, professor at The Scripps Research Institute (TSRI) in California, US. "Many times, loss of appetite can compromise clinical outcome. A weak individual is less likely to be able to cope with chemotherapy, for instance," Conti said. (ANS)

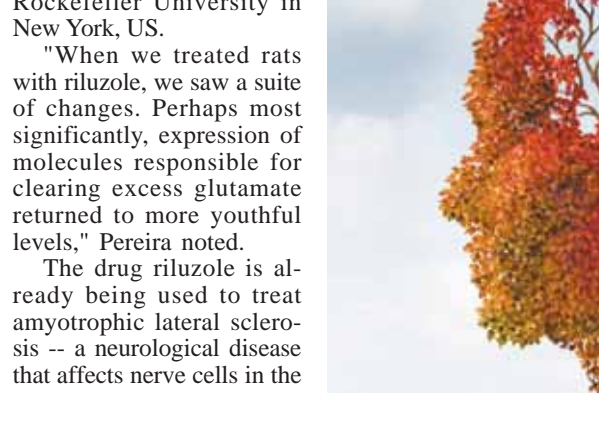
Sleep remains elusive for children with ADHD

Children suffering from attention deficit disorder have greater difficulty in falling asleep, proves a new research. The findings showed that children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are unable to experience deep sleep, as they usually remain more distracted. The duration of their sleep was also found to be less than other children. "Our study confirms what many parents have experienced, which is that children with ADHD take longer to fall asleep at night," said lead researcher Anne Virring Sorensen, PhD student at the Aarhus University in Denmark. Further, two out of three children with ADHD have one or more additional psychiatric diagnoses in addition to their attention disorder, which probably increases the risk of sleep disturbance. In addition, unlike in the evening the children with ADHD also showed a tendency to fall asleep faster during the day than the children in the control group. (ANS)

Consuming grapes combined with a diet rich in saturated fats can lower obesity risk as well as improve gut bacteria, a new study has found. According to researchers, it may also help counter the negative effects of a high fat diet, including heart disease, hypertension and obesity. The findings showed that the unique and diverse composition of microbial diversity and decreased abundance of several deleterious bacteria in the intestinal tract. The research, published in the Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry, is based on two laboratory studies. In the first study, intake of a diet high in fat content (33 percent of energy from fat) and enriched with 5 percent grapes for 11 weeks, showed a lower percentage of overall body fat and reduced subcutaneous fat deposits. In the second study, which ran for 16 weeks, the polyphenol fraction of grapes or the non-polyphenol portion of grapes, as well as the high fat diet plus five percent whole grapes. All the high fat experimental diets were matched for sugar type and amount. (ANS)

Drug that reverses genetic changes behind Alzheimer's

A drug which is already being used to treat a neurological disorder is capable of reversing key genetic changes associated with Alzheimer's disease, says a study. Ageing takes its toll on the brain, and the cells of the hippocampus -- a brain region with circuitry crucial to learning and memory -- are particularly vulnerable to changes that can lead to Alzheimer's disease or cognitive decline. With the hope of counteracting the changes that can lead to these two conditions, the researchers excited about the effects of a drug called riluzole which is known to affect this circuitry. "In ageing and Alzheimer's, the chemical signal glutamate can accumulate between neurons, damaging the circuitry," said lead researcher Ana Pereira from Rockefeller University in New York, US. "When we treated rats with riluzole, we saw a suite of changes. Perhaps most significantly, expression of molecules responsible for clearing excess glutamate returned to more youthful levels," Pereira noted. The drug riluzole is already being used to treat amyotrophic lateral sclerosis -- a neurological disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord and is therefore considered safe. The drug, it turns out, modifies the activity of certain genes in an aged animal to resemble that of a younger rat. For example, the researchers found that the expression of a gene called EAAT2, which has been linked to Alzheimer's and is known to play a role in removing excess glutamate from nerve fibres, declines as the animals age. However, in rats treated with riluzole this gene's activity was brought back to its youthful levels. The research was described in the journal Molecular Psychiatry. Previous work by Pereira had shown that the drug prompted structural changes in rats' neurons that prevent the memory loss often seen in old animals. Pereira is currently testing riluzole for the first time in Alzheimer's patients in a clinical trial at the Rockefeller University Hospital, an official statement said. "We hope to use a medication to break the cycle of toxicity by which glutamate can damage the neurons that use it as a neurotransmitter, and our studies so far changes in rats' neurons and possibly support weight loss for those with metabolic disorders. "IL-18 regulates feeding by locking directly into the neuronal circuitry," Conti said. (ANS)



Researchers have discovered that an immune system molecule hijacks a brain circuit and reduces appetite when you are afflicted with an illness. While loss of appetite during illness is common, it contributes to reducing a patient's strength and in cancer patients, it can even shorten lifespan. The new research points to potential targets for treating loss of appetite and restoring a patient's strength. "Treating loss of appetite would cure an underlying disease, but it could help a patient cope," said senior author of the study Bruno Conti, professor at The Scripps Research Institute (TSRI) in California, US. "Many times, loss of appetite can compromise clinical outcome. A weak individual is less likely to be able to cope with chemotherapy, for instance," Conti said. (ANS)

"A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval."

--- Mark Twain

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, SATURDAY, MAY 7, 2016

Whither Congress Party?

IN Tripura the Congress Party has suffered a serious attrition with senior Congressmen and sitting MLAs including the leader of the opposition in the Tripura Assembly resigning his post. Leaders of frontal organizations in Tripura have followed suit. This was after the Congress decided to tie up with the CPI(M) in Bengal to counter the Trinamool Congress in the State Assembly elections. The Congress has had a similar tie up with the Communists in Kerala. With just 44 MPs in a House of 552 members, the Congress is reduced to third or fourth player which is forced to ally with regional political parties as it did in Bihar (Maha-Gatbandhan) with Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United). In Bengal the Congress has lost any foothold it had because it had earlier aligned with Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress during the UPA-2 regime, until 2012 when Banerjee withdrew support on some contentious issues. The CPI(M) had earlier supported the UPA-1 regime but withdrew support on the nuclear deal. That had created quite an embarrassment for the Congress Party and pushed it to look for other allies to continue to remain in power.

The UPA-2 was ridden with scams galore from the 2-G to Coalgate. These are still under investigation. And now comes the Agusta-Westland helicopter deal where an Italian Court has pronounced the bribe givers in this deal guilty of cheating the nation. The Italian Court has with it a list of documents which indicate who the bribe takers in India are. It is now for the Indian investigating agencies to get their act together and not be caught napping or colluding to protect those in power. India's plight has been that it investigating agencies have been used as pawns by the government in power. They have lost credibility and spine to do anything better. Now that unsavoury aspects of the Agusta Westland deal are spilling out every day and links to the Gandhi family are clearly emerging despite the bravado put up by Congress party honchos, it remains to be seen whether the Modi Government is actually serious about eradicating the scams that afflict this country or if this is yet another witch-hunt against the Nehru-Gandhi family as is being alleged. Coming to the health of the Congress Party in Meghalaya, here too things don't look too bright. The performance of the Government leaves much to be desired and party workers don't seem upbeat by what is happening at the national level. They have all gone on the defensive. But how far they can defend the first family remains to be seen. The bluster has to give and the truth must emerge because on that hinges national security.

LOOKING BACK

February 8, 1989

Sanjay Khan critical, Nina Gupta unhurt 40 died in Mysore studio fire

At least 40 people were killed and several others injured in night's devastating fire in the Premier studios here. Twenty seven people were killed on the spot while 13 succumbed to injuries in hospital, according to Additional Superintendent of Police Mr M R Poojar. Actor Producer Sanjay Khan suffered serious burns on his back and was stated to be in a critical condition in Bangalore. Five of the victims were young women who were dancing when the fire broke out. Of the injured 15 were undergoing treatment at a hospital here where the condition of ten was said to be serious.

The fire was caused when crackers and other fireworks were set off while filming a wedding scene for the television serial "Tippu Sultan". The studio soon turned into an inferno when the fire, which first caught on the fabric and cardboard used for the set, spread to the gunny bags covering the ceiling. Studio sources said several wires had been found burnt in the studio indicating that there has also

been a short circuit. About 200 people and been on the set when the fire broke out. Noted art designer Kalelkar of "Pakeezah" fame was among those killed in the fire, while actor-producer Sanjay Khan was admitted to a private hospital in Bangalore with burns on his back. Actress Nina Gupta escaped unhurt as she was in the make-up room. The set consisted of a house in a village. Palm trees and hay had been used to create the village atmosphere.

The studio had only two doors, one of which was partially blocked by the set while the other was closed as shooting was in progress. A survivor said men and women screamed as they struggled to open the closed door. Many of the bodies, kept this morning in the adjacent studio, have taken on grotesque shapes with hands stiffly held out as if they had cried for help while dying. Karnataka Education Minister Mr M Chandraskhar visited the spot and criticised the studio for not having basic firefighting equipment.

Adivasi rights victim of residents' policy Jharkhand land grab targeting tribals

By Arun Srivastava

Adivasis are aliens in their own land. The local residents' policy passed by the BJP government of Jharkhand, has failed to keep its promises made to the tribals of the state. An insight into the policy would reveal that the Jharkhand chief minister, Raghubar Das has failed to do justice to the adivasis and true enough has given too much credence to the non-adviasis who constitute the primary support base for the BJP.

Just after assuming office, Das had assured the tribals to come out with the resident policy for protecting their interest. But the final decree found to be wanting on many counts. Even the party's Lok Sabha members do not support the policy document and in a letter to the governor Droupadi Murmu and to Raghubar Das have strongly objected to it.

The MPs, all senior politicians, Ram Tahal Choudhary, Karia Munda, Laxman Gilua and Bidyut Baran Mahto alleged that the local residents' policy had several anomalies and ought to be rectified before implementing. They urged the governor to take corrective steps in view of mass discontent with its current provisions. They suspected that it was a design to dilute the claims of tribals and original settlers. The policy document was passed by the state cabinet on April 7, 2016. They also expected the state government to ensure all Class III and IV government jobs to go to the adivasi and moolvasi population.

While this petition from the four MPs makes it explicit that the Das government has not taken all sections of the party leaders into confidence, it also exposes the schism between party MPs and MLAs in

the state. It also underlined that the interest of the dikus (outsiders) was more important than taking care of the concerns of the adivasis.

A day after four BJP MPs petitioned the governor Murmu the leaders of AJSU, a ruling ally of the BJP, led by its chief Sudesh Mahto, met the Assembly Speaker Dinesh Oraon and requested him to persuade the state government to bring in certain changes in the policy document that dilute the claims of adivasis and original settlers, the natives of Jharkhand. Mahto told: "We are partners in the coalition government and we had fought Assembly elections under the NDA. We want the government to make certain changes in the policy to protect the interests of tribal and original non-tribal settlers in Jharkhand". AJSU opposed the 1985 cut-off date as it was not feasible and failed to protect tribal interest.

The AJSU holds that since there are cores of landless tribal and original non-tribal settlers, respective gram sabhas should be empowered to issue certificates so that they could avail of the facilities offered by the policy. But instead of fixing 1985 as cut off years the AJSU wanted the government to consider the date of the last land survey in respective divisions/districts as the basis of the policy. AJSU held for recruitments a hundred per cent reservation should be provided for those whose names, or their forefathers', were mentioned in the last land survey record. Corrective steps needed to be taken, otherwise it will create mass discontent because tribal and original settlers feel their rights have been compromised.

In protest against this move of the Das government a 24-hour statewide bandh was observed by Adivasi Moolvasi Janadhikar Manch on April 24. Though no significant response was witnessed in major urban areas of Bokaro, Dhanbad and Jamshedpur of the state, which are mostly inhabited by the outsiders, the district towns and rural areas enthusiastically responded to the bandh call. The reason being cited for this is, the urban areas have predominantly diku population and they are not willing to concede any space to the tribals.

It may be recalled that the term 'domicile' could not be decided ever since the state came into existence. In 2002, the Jharkhand High Court had given a detailed order directing the state government to fix the definition of domicile. The first chief minister of Jharkhand, Babulal Marandi had defined residency in 2002 but the high court quashed it, ordering the government to come up with a new local policy.

The Raghubar Das government has in fact revived the old proposal of the Marandi government. The Das government has in fact underlined six criteria for defining his concept of being Jharkhandi. It charted out six criteria to define who could be called

asthaniyaniwasi or local resident of Jharkhand. These are: Those who have their or their ancestors' names in land records as per the last survey conducted back in 1932; The gram pradhan (village head) can identify the landless as a local resident on the basis of his language, cultural practices and traditions; Those living in Jharkhand

for the past 30 years for reasons of business, jobs, etc., and have acquired immovable properties, and their children, would be considered locals Employees of the Jharkhand government, or government-aided institutions, organisations etc. and their spouses and children would be considered locals.

Though the government claims that the criteria were decided after wide ranging consultations with all stakeholders; political parties, social organizations, business houses, the fact remains that no specific committee or body of experts was formed to undertake this task. The entire exercise appears to be ambiguous. In fact in the past more than half-a-dozen such committees were set up but these bodies could not evolve the mechanism for identifying local residents.

Jharkhand, the adivasi region of erstwhile Bihar was supposed to be a colony and not more than that. The minerals were exploited ruthlessly. The dikus, outsiders, targeted the region. Huge influx of the dikus took place. In fact the dikus resisted this design but could not frustrate their move. Industries and mines were set up in the hills and jungles to tap into the rich mineral wealth of the region. This process intensified after separate state of Jharkhand was created.

Adivasi activists have a fundamental question; how could the resident policy put an adivasi with those people who have been in Jharkhand even for twenty years? It is sad the interest and basic rights of adivasis have been sacrificed. There are no safeguards for moolvasis in jobs at the local level. The domicile policy is a tool to allow outsiders to get jobs and other financial benefits. (IPA Service)

Uttarakhand On Fire Politically and literally

By Insaaf

From the political frying pan in to fire, literally. As the Supreme Court continues to hear the imposition of President's rule in Uttarakhand and has asked the Chief Minister Harish Rawat to take the floor test on Tuesday next week notwithstanding the CBI quizzing Rawat on the "sting" purportedly of him offering monies to wean dissident Party MLAs, the Administration is busy dousing forest fires raging across the State. This year alone, over 20667 forest fires have taken place destroying 1,900 hectares in 1,500 villages in Kumaon and Garhwal division of the State with losses crossing over Rs.2500 crores. More. The inferno reached Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh, forcing the Centre to call in army personnel to assist NDRF, SDRF officials and pressed helicopters to contain the flames. However, according to forest officials the blaze is largely man-made thanks to a nexus of villagers and timber and land-builder mafia who deliberately set the forest on fire. The modus operandi is simple: The conflagration only damages the lower portion of the tree whereby the upper portion can be used or sold in the market. The builders too are happy as blaze clears the forest to facilitate their expansion plans on encroached lands. Thus everybody makes money. None care about the ecological and environmental disaster.

Its raining gold in Tamil Nadu

Its raining gold in poll-bound Tamil Nadu's electoral circus. Today, TPD founder NT Rama Rao's Rs.1 kg free rice offer in the 90s is history, as AIDMK supreme Jayalalitha woos her voters with 8 grams of gold, free mobiles and laptops to ration

Defection New Game in AP, Telangana

Party hopping seems to be the new game in twin States Andhra and Telangana. Wherein legislators have taken defection to new dizzy heights, albeit by adroitly switching loyalties to the ruling Party, that too without being sounded out to do so. Shockingly, a dozen TDP MLAs, seven Congressmen and three YSR Congress lawmakers have defected to Chandrasekhar Rao's TRS in Telangana. But the obverse holds true in Andhra, where 13 YSR Congress legislators have shifted allegiance to Chandra Babu Naidu's ruling TDP. Taking the ruling Party to a total of 117 MLAs in the 175 member Assembly. Predictably, this has led to a total decimation of the Opposition in both States. More so, against the backdrop that both the TRS and TDP already enjoy a comfortable majority in their respective States and did not need to poach rivals to stabilize their Governments. Clearly, the defecting MLAs view it as a ghar wapasi to 'greener pastures'.

No Toilets in 11 States

Prime Minister Modi's pet project of making Bharat Swachha has got mired in a cesspool. Scandalously, just 54 per cent of last years toilet target has been met in urban areas, whereby against a target of constructing 25 lakh toilets only 12.2 lakhs have been built. Worse, is the situation in 11 States which have failed to build even a single sauchalaya. These include poll-bound Assam, J&K, Meghalaya and Tripura. But there is a silver lining

The inferno reached Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh, forcing the Centre to call in army personnel to assist NDRF, SDRF officials and pressed helicopters to contain the flames.

card holders, 50 per cent subsidy for women to buy scooters, mopeds and 100 units of free power for two months in her election manifesto. If this is not enough, she has also dangled the carrot Rs.40 thousand crores in loans for farmers and Rs.18 thousand as maternity assistance and leave for nine months from 2016-21 for women. Its another matter that this coincides with the five-year term of the new elected Government. Not to be left behind the DMK has upped the category of phones by promising smartphones and tablets for 16 lakh school students, cheaper milk, waiver on education and farm loans. It remains to be seen whether their respective electorate believes in their leaders' bonanzas.

Centre-SP Clash On Water

As acute drought grips India there our Parties in UP to play politics over water with an eye on next year's Assembly polls. The ongoing tussle and accusations between the Centre and ruling Samajwadi Party underscores how lightly the aam aadmi is treated by their political maai baap. In parched Bundelkhand district, Akhilesh Yadav Government has slammed the brakes on a water train sent by the Centre on the fallacious grounds that the crisis was "not serious" as in Maharashtra's Latur. Worse, it accused the BJP of sending an empty train sans water, wanting to snatch credit from it and show the Administration in poor light. It's another matter that the State Administration has requested the Modi Government to provide 10 thousand tankers for distribution in the scorched region. In this continuing slugfest who will quench the peoples thirst?

to this culvert. Urban Andhra is set to become the first State to be Open Defecation Free by Mahatma Gandhi's birth day October 2 by completing its target of building 194,336 individual household toilets. While Modi's home State Gujarat has emerged the best performer accounting for more than one third of the total household toilets constructed during the last year, UP has improved its position by completing over 1.78 lakh toilets. Will the willful defaulter follow in their Swachha counterparts footsteps?

Bihar's Maikhana Express

All roads in Bihar lead to UP. With the Nitish Kumar Government enforcing prohibition in the State, tippers cross over to Uttar Pradesh's Ballia district for their daily dose of nasha. All it takes is a 40 minute train ride on the "Maikhana Express", 55017 Chhapra mail. Predictably, not only are liquor vendors laughing all the way to the bank with booming sales and new customers but also rail authorities as ticket sales have shot up by 31 per cent. But there is a fly in this jaam. Ballia does not represent the entire State, where excise inspectors have earned the ire of Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav for low revenue collections and dwindling sales target this year. Meanwhile, in neighbouring Odisha, women envy their Bihar sisters as the State's liberalised liquor policy continues to ruin families due to their men-folk being inebriated. They demand immediate closure of liquor shops in their localities. Will Naveen Patnaik do a Nitish Kumar and oblige? ---INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Why not cleanse rivers too?

Editor,
What the Government of Meghalaya and the High Court has done to restrict Wines Store and Bars is commendable. Kudos to them! Now the next best thing they can do is to restrict the construction of houses near the rivers. Since they have put the distance of having a wine store or a bar to about 200 meters from Hospitals, Educational Institutions and Places of Worship, they should also keep some distance for constructing houses, shops etc. near the river. The distance from a river should be about 30-50 meters. Thinking about the welfare of the environment is equally important as that of safeguarding the interest of society. Rampant construction of houses near the river has turned rivers into drains thereby making them an eye sore. Our rivers have been raped and killed by unethical people. These people should be thrown away to the jungles; then only will they realize the importance of nature. SAVE THE NATURE AND ITS BEAUTIFUL SURROUNDING. THEN ONLY WE CAN PROUDLY PROCLAIM THAT WE ARE RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS. God has given us a wonderful world to live in. Who are we to dirty and destroy it? Is the High Court listening? If so why are encroachers on the Umkhrar River treated as holy cows?
Yours etc.,

Lamphrang Nonglait,
Via email

Who needs parliamentary secretaries?

Editor,
The PIL filed in the Meghalaya High Court against the unconstitutional appointment of parliamentary secretaries by the Congress-led government in the state is commendable. The necessity to accommodate so many parliamentary secretaries in the post of Chairman, Co-Chairman, Vice-Chairman etc and giving them the status of ministers is nothing new. It has been going on for a long time. Prior to this Mr Kyrshan War had filed a similar PIL but nothing came of it. The argument that PS's are useful and help in lessening the burden of the cabinet ministers is the funniest joke we've ever heard. It is nothing but creating unproductive self-interested individuals. Another irony is that since as tribals none pay income tax so the perks, facilities and amenities given at par with minister of state are a waste of public money. That money could be used for development purposes. We hope that the government has a reasonable justification and perhaps it could give out a report card on the performance of these parliamentary secretaries.
Yours etc....
Dominic S. Wankhar
Shillong-3

On the Internet

Editor,
"An Idea can change

your life!", as one popular advertisement of a mobile service provider put it. Yes, the internet can change lives, where in the ad a boy living in penury, but with a mobile phone in his hand that has internet access, invented a flying robot that could fetch things for his master. The boy was not an IIT student, being too poor. His parents couldn't afford. He was not well educated, but read downloaded e-books and web pages. In this age of the internet, if we use wisely, it can change our lives forever. A poor college student who has a cheap Chinese smart phone that he purchased somewhere in the alleyways of lewduh, can be a topper in his class reading digital books and watching You Tube university lectures that he had patiently downloaded, not having money to buy books. A struggling amateur writer/poet can make a name for himself in just a year's time by submitting and getting his work published in prominent international literary magazines and journals.

These are some of the blessings of the internet. It has helped equip ourselves with a global consciousness, a global perspective on things, a positive self-belief that "anything is possible". It has made everything accessible, with it being the widest distribution system. It has opened our eyes to endless and limitless possibilities making the world to appear to us to be small, and not "broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls", as Tagore put it. The very fact that the good, the bad and the ugly all exist there reflects a picture of our progressive modern world. But it is also transformative and can help us evolve if we are carefully selective.
Yours etc.,
Willie Gordon Suting
Shillong 1

ern world. But it is also transformative and can help us evolve if we are carefully selective.

Yours etc.,
Willie Gordon Suting
Shillong 1

R R Colony - indiscriminate car parking

Editor,
The indiscriminate parking of vehicles on both sides of the RR Colony main road is a malignant issue and traffic police don't seem to have the inclination to discipline errant drivers. Letters to your esteemed daily highlighting the constraints of pedestrians and those driving on the main road of RR colony in the past has not resulted in any response from the appropriate authority nor the local Welfare Society! One can hardly walk or drive freely on this road due to parking by the taxis, private vehicles etc on both sides. The irony is that "NO PARKING" signs are boldly written on the walls but who cares? Since this main road of RR colony was given the nod to by the local Welfare Society to become a thoroughfare some years ago such troubles and indiscipline has aggravated. Before it is too late, I once again request the authorities to take a serious view of the matter.
Yours etc.,
Anjan Kr Das,
Shillong -6

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

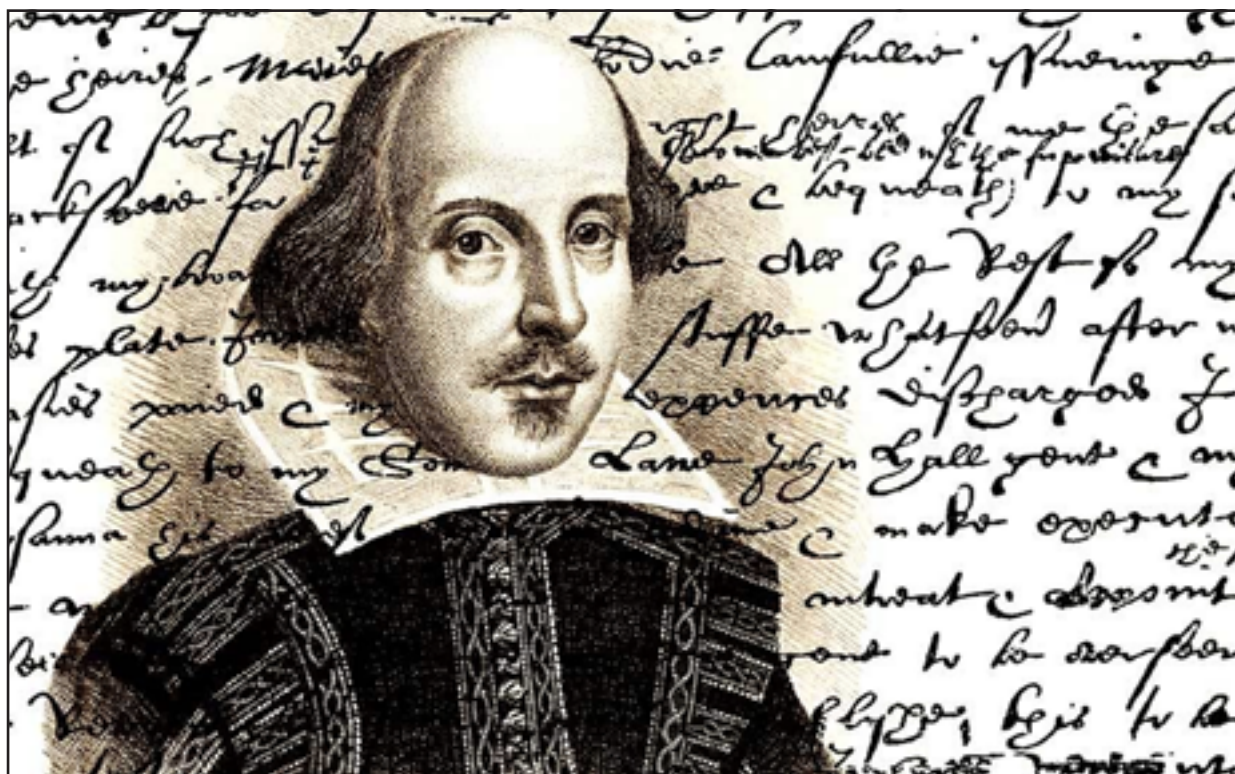
By Uma Ramachandran

Shakespearean wisdom

You will surely recognise one of English Literature's most memorable quotes, "Now Is the Winter of Our Discount Tents..." Wait, that's not right. Sorry, the above is just a cheap, fun-with-a-pun advertisement that was displayed by an outdoor activity shop in England. Unfortunately, this shop later shut down. This advertisement, of course, is a witty variation of the opening line of the play Richard III (Act I, Scene I, Line 1), that reads, "Now is the Winter of Our Discount"

For those of you who are not familiar with winter discounts, this play was written by William Shakespeare, who, fortunately or unfortunately, refuse to shut down or shut up -- in spite of being dead for 400- years. Even in today's media cluttered world of communication communities, movie mills, interactive internet, television talkies and digital distractions, Shakespearean lines (or funny variations) are being tweeted, twittered and texted regularly.

As we pay tribute to Shakespeare on his 400th death anniversary, one wonders how someone could be celebrated so avidly after four centuries. Whether you are in a dilapidated high school classroom in the Third World, or an ultra hi-tech theatre in the western hemisphere,



chaic, but Shakespeare's word might and artistry is still loved and lauded today. What's in a phrase? Heard any good Knock-Knock jokes recently? But before

and thoughts of global generations. And made Shakespeare the most quoted author in the Oxford Dictionary.

His plays stir up such familiar emotions within us

the question asked by confused and emotional Shakespearean characters on stage. And they don't stop with just kissing and killing, these frenzied souls portray frenetic emotions like elated

remorsefulness -- all the while holding up either a skull or dagger to emphasise their inner turmoil. This, of course, is known as Shakespearean skullduggery. But skull-dagging aside, the Bard brings to life timeless human issues like love and loathing, friendship and forgiveness, vanity and vengeance so vividly that readers or audiences feel a sense of déjà vu.

His extraordinary and flamboyant characters actually turn out to be quite ordinary and fallible. Grand kings enter and grander queens exit. But between their entry and exit, we find that these upper class royals have the same tension inducing problems as us. They fall madly in love, get red hot angry, jump for joy, slump down in the dumps, yearn for things they cannot get, and want to smash and bash their enemies. Romeo falls in love with the wrong girl, Hamlet mourns the untimely death of his father, and Macbeth gets over-ambitious and comes to grief. These upper class kings and queens exhibit the raw emotions and feelings

of common humanity. In fact, they are just like us, the only difference being that they tend to wear Elizabethan era clothes, while we wear what advertising companies tell us to wear.

Shakespeare gave a voice to marginalised minorities. Today we are able to micromanage nanotechnologies, split innocent atoms, splice misbehaving genes and reach for the stars with our rocket science. But yet our progressive, multi-plural society has been unable to climb out of shameful social swamps like sexism, male chauvinism and other dubious discriminations. Imagine then the gender prejudices prevalent during Shakespearean times, when women were relegated to a socially stunted, secondary stature. But Shakespeare came to the rescue, giving his female characters independent identities and defiant voices. In his plays, strong women speak their minds and express harsh opinions. The beautiful, intelligent Portia disguises herself as a male lawyer in The Merchant of Venice and wins a case using her wits. Lady Macbeth taunts and forces her husband to commit murder. Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing is a feisty feminist who looks upon men with contempt. And Shakespeare also forces us to look at social lower rung personalities like jesters and servants. Feste of Twelfth Night and Touchstone of As You Like It prove they are not really fools but unappreciated philosophers. In the words of Touchstone, "The more pity, that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly."

We are more Shakespeareanised than we realise. Which college boy wouldn't feel collar-lifting proud if someone referred to him as a "Romeo"? But unfortunately, today the term 'Romeo' refers to a persistent skirt-chaser and consistent philanderer rather than a faithful-till-death-do-us-part lover. And you might know 'Hamlet', a person who thinks and rethinks but cannot make decisions. Such names have gone beyond being stage characters to become cultural identities. And not just his characters, but Shakespeare himself has become part of our language.

A New Yorker cartoon depicts a man and woman walking to a movie theatre, with (Contd on P-VII)

Transgender wisdom from a bear

A woman was sacked for having short hair and wearing trousers to work. "They said I was gay," she complained to an unsympathetic labour tribunal in the city of Guiyang, southwest China. How could her employers get it so wrong? A pixie cut and skinny pants are what all the babes wear these days. Only guys have long hair, handbags and dresses. The growing gulf between modern and ancient attitudes became evident a few days ago when I sat through a discussion on gender politics. No one is born male or female, an American friend insisted. In evidence he offered a recent US court judgment saying, in an unmistakably skeptical tone, that the law should not give much credence to "birth-assigned sex", or so-called "biological sex". This casual dismissal of science irked some of the nerdy Asians in the group, who pointed out that every strand of DNA in each of the 30 trillion cells in your body specifies male or female. I could see both arguments but luckily avoided having to take sides by diverting attention to an astonishing gender-related news item which popped up on my email feed from reader Austen Au Yeung. A wallaby in Sydney's main zoo managed to get pregnant more than a year after her male partner had left, according to the Sydney Morning Herald. The discovery followed soon after a report in New Scientist that virgin births are not

"overtun everything we knew about parthenogenesis". (The magazine's letters page should expect a one-word email from a Jewish woman writing from a PO Box c/o Heaven: "FINALLY.") I made a note to hide my copy of New Scientist from my daughters in case they got funny ideas - and then expanding mid-sections. ("Dad, you know you said we couldn't have a puppy? Well.") As for the "trans debate", I used to believe that anyone can use any toilet, until I stepped into a public restroom beside a wild nightclub in Pattaya and came out convinced that no human should be allowed to use any public toilets ever. So who can use them? About a month ago, a US reader told me the true story of Ricky Hernandez of Phoenix, Arizona, who decided that he was really a transgender woman, and had a series of surgeries. After he had become Eva Tiamat Medusa, he decided that he'd made a mistake. He wasn't a woman - he was a dragon. He's recently had more surgeries to get scales, horns and a snout and describes himself as "transspecies". The reader expected me to be shocked by this, but having grown up on "The Sword in the Stone" and the Animorphs novels, I could see the cool side. If transspecies operations ever became available on welfare, I would wait until the next time someone called me "a bear with a sore

only head" and possible sneaking off to hospital and come back as one. RAWWRR. Clearly skyscrapers of the future will consist of one small office and 95 floors of toilets, one per person. I can get over my Pattaya trauma. Finally.



Shakespeare continues to be in your face. You go to see an innocent children's cartoon, but The Lion King turns out to be Disney's adaptation of Hamlet, complete with a murdered king, a usurping uncle, a prince trying to get back on his throne, and his two clownish, fast talking friends, Timon and Pumbaa (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the original). And good luck if you are trying to count the number of films, television shows, plays musicals and operas that have been Shakespeare inspired.

you go knock-knocking with stale or stolen punchlines, please be aware that the expression "Knock, knock! Who's there?" is from Macbeth (Act 2, Scene 3).

There are so many popular expressions that we throw around in casual conversations without knowing that Shakespeare said it first. If "All of a sudden" you "Go on a wild goose chase", "Vanish into thin air" or end up "Dead as a doornail", then it's Shakespeare's fault for coining these gloomy phrases. On the brighter

that we get a 'been there, done that!' feeling.

To kiss or to kill... that is

ecstasies, despairing desires, pathetic passions, shameful sorrows or raging

It's not time yet to say goodbye to the sequins. In fact, glitter is getting all the attention in the current apparel scene, finds Pramita Bose

Bling in fashion and lifestyle refuses to wane, even in this hot and humid season, it seems. From flashy cars to jazzy outfits to sparkling jewellery, glitter spells glamour for the trendy. Yes, you got it right. Sequin in fashion is back with a bang this season.

Spangles, paillettes, shimmers are ruling the runway. They prove popular for detailing of the ensembles. Subtle sequins, gilded ornaments, rhinestones, diamonds - all conjure up a beautiful canvas combined with intricate embroidery, wacky motifs and attractive designs. A hint of glint on jackets, gowns, dresses and suits glow all the way from women's wardrobes to men's jackets.

"Sequin has evolved from being an on-ramp appetiser to becoming the favourite OOTD (outfit of the day) for the party circuit.

"It lends a bold and eccentric edge for those who love sporting quirky sequin outfits," points out designer Rozina Vishram.

She is supported by designer Swapnil Shinde: "Sequins are conspicuously in vogue now. Be it basic shirts, gowns or skirts, it definitely enhances your dress by adding a dash of glamour and elegance to it," adding, "You can further incorporate your own ingenious ideas and creativity to play up the sequins. Internationally too, it's catching the eye because of the kind of drama it evokes."

Normally associated



A Ridhi Arora collection

All that glitters

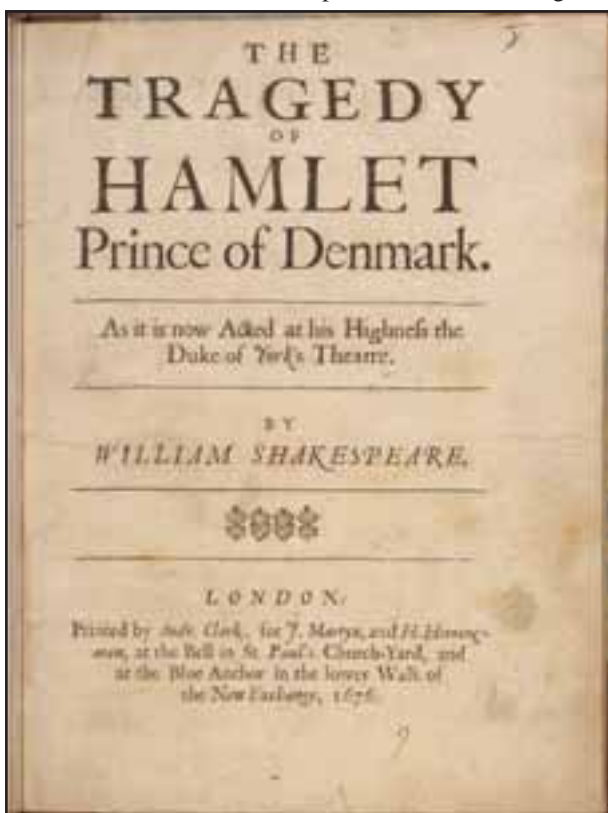
with star-studded glam circles and social dos, sequin fashion is traditionally seen as gaudy. But new-age designers give it a cool twist to make it as smart and sassy as possible. Remember the king of pop Michael Jackson's moonwalk with a glove in one hand? The mitten attracted special atten-

tion because of its high-fashion statement. Adorned with Swarovski and Loch Rozen crystals and sequins, the bejewelled glove became a trademark accessory for the talented performer with a huge following worldwide. Even a diamante gauntlet emerged as a style symbol after the rock star donned it.

Incidentally, Indian garments are compatible to any given style as fashion analysts observe. In case of shimmery fashion, the picture remains the same. For they give no less competition to their western counterparts. "Gowns, lehengas, saris, suits et al can flaunt some sort of shimmer embel-

ishments on them. This adds more charm to the occasion and makes it authentically glitzy," says draper Ridhi Arora. On the western front, "formal gowns, club dresses and nowadays, even denims and T-shirts display shimmer works to spell an element of strange oddness."

Shinde cites the classicness of Indian outfits when crafted with sequin work. "Take any Indian apparel, be it lehengas, Indo-western gowns or wedding costumes to name a few - sequin embroidered garbs are a perfect fit for any Indian event. You may also select various colours according to body types, skin tones and suitably show up as a ravishing diva," he says. Chipping in further, he informs (Contd P-VII)



But why is the Bard so popular? Or, in other words, to read or not to read Shakespeare, that is the question that school syllabus setters are arguing about. Here are a few reasons why Shakespeare is still fussed about and fought over worldwide. His language might be ar-

side, if you have a "Heart of gold" and are good to your "Own flesh and blood", then "For goodness sake" "All's well that ends well". Such Shakespearean phrases have not only survived the winds of change, but have also helped shape the ideas

By Ranjan K Baruah

Effective CV writing

CV stands for curriculum vitae, which is Latin for 'course of life'. It is a summary of your experience, skills and education. There are some differences between CV and resume. We are more familiar with the term Bio Data. Majority of us have heard about bio data which stands for "Biographical Data" and this was used over years in our place for applying for different jobs. Bio Data could mean anything that involves particular information like guardians name, marital status, nationality etc. It also contains personal information - gender, date of birth, race, residence, etc. On the other hand Resume is to the point. It is short and talks exactly the point without any divergence. The basic use of a resume is to land you in getting till the interview. The CV, which is the detailed form of your academic qualifications, gets you through the interview.

There is no page limit for it when it comes to CV. One may include research papers and everything under the umbrella that have been done. CV could be different for students, fresher and experienced persons. One needs to prepare the CV according to qualifications and other skills and experiences.

There are many ways to create an exceptional CV but we need to concentrate on certain points while making our CV.

- 1. Grammar** - there should be no mistakes in your CV. Try and include as many active words as possible to increase the impact of your CV.
- 2. Layout** - place your most attractive skills and talents or achievements towards the top of your CV to boost your chances

of impressing an employer. Though there is no specific lay out but one must try to make it more attractive.

3. Presentation - Its important how we present our CV. Presentation needs to be attractive and bullet points should be used to tidy up any lists.

4. No False Information - Wrong and false information must be avoided. We should not try to mention any false information or wrong information.

Work experiences are needed in CV but for a fresh graduate it may not be possible to mention anything as s/he is not experienced. If you're a recent graduate and don't have much relevant work experience then it will be best to begin with your education. But there might be some volunteer work experiences and in that case those can be included. But remember one should not put any false information.

It's not compulsory to include hobbies in our CV, but we may mention about it according to the job for which CV is prepared. Different people have different hobbies and one must be prepared to get some question on interview related to hobby. So, mention the real hobby and don't try to put something which is not your hobby.

We must remember that candidates are shortlisted based on the CV that we submit. CV must be attractive and contain the facts. Apart from academic qualification we may mention about other qualification, co-curricular and extracurricular activities if we are associated. We may mention about awards and prizes that we have received. We

can also mention about published articles in newspapers and magazines.

We must know that CV conveys our personal details in the way that presents us in the best possible light. A CV is like a marketing document in which we are marketing ourselves or branding ourselves. We must know how to "sell" our skills, abilities, qualifications and experience to employers. It can be used to make multiple applications to employers in a specific career area. Every college going student must prepare their CV as they may also use it when they apply for any scholarships or for any competitions. To participate in different events CV is needed even for the students, so, we must start preparing our CV and keep modifying it with our expertise and experiences.

Exam Update: Preliminary Examination of the Civil Services Examination for recruitment to various services and posts shall be held by the Union Public Service Commission on 7th August, 2016 in accordance with the Rules published by the Department of Personnel & Training in the Gazette of India Extraordinary dated 27th April, 2016. Last date for applying is 27th May and the aspirants may apply online from the website of Union Public Service Commission.

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

By Shweta Patwardhan

Understanding teens mind

A recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association tracked how sluggish children become once they hit the teen years. The study, funded by US National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, shows that while 90 per cent of 9-year-olds get a couple of hours of exercise most days, fewer than three per cent of 15-year-old do.

For parents to watch their active young 'star' turn into a lazy couch potato can be frustrating and disturbing. But most kids go through this phase. After a couple of fights, the conversations can bring you closer to your teen even though you think the devil's gotten into him. Take Harmohan Singh for instance.

His 17-year-old son Gurkaran suddenly wasn't keen on any activity. "As a child, Karan was always active. But as he grew into his teens, he stopped going out or enjoying any outdoor activities. When he wasn't sleeping, he was sitting in front of his computer," says Harmohan. "I tried talking to him, but he just wouldn't listen." Though a small percentage of teenagers still take part in sports, a large number of them become inactive as they grow older, says senior paediatrician at Max hospital, New Delhi. Obesity, heart disease and high blood pressure are sometimes the outcome of those lazy teenage years. This is also a time when the teen's diet and schedule goes hay-wire. Needless to say, at a stage when nutrition is most important due to hormonal and physical changes in the body, this change in diet can cause your teen harm.

Dr. Anand says this is because a number of students get busy with their studies and by juggling school, classes, tuition and sleep; they barely manage enough free time for any-



thing else.

"The environment, with the pressure of exams and mark-sheets leaves the child too tired for sports," adds Dr. Shyama Chona, former principal, Delhi Public

School. But for Dishant Sheth, school work wasn't entirely the problem. The 15-year-old Class-X student couldn't concentrate on studies. He'd much rather "freshen up" with a game on the computer before open-

ing his books. Madhvi, his mother was fed up. "Five minutes after sitting down to study he says he has a headache but after hours on the computer he's all right," she says. "All he

not sleep till 2 pm and stop playing games, he'd turn around and tell her that she didn't understand the stress he was going through. "I'm already confused about if I want to do and to top that I have to deal with my parents' unreasonably high expectations," says Dishant. "I don't even sleep all that much, even weekends I'm up early in time for school and tuitions. I only oversleep when I'm stressed or if I'm on holiday."

Clinical psychologist Samindara Sawant says this is a period of stress for teenagers. "They're getting messages that they're older and should take more responsibility. But when they take decisions on their own, parents and elders tell them that they're



Every time she told her son to take life seriously,

does is sleep, play on the computer and go out with friends. And to think that he won medals for his game of table tennis only a few years ago."

When they take decisions on their own, parents and elders tell them that they're

difficult dealing with his son because they shared a close bond as father-son. "A lot of kids answer back, but luckily Karan never did. He didn't fight, he did start to understand. He didn't shut off his computer, but he did make an effort to mingle with other boys in our building," Harmohan says.

Now 28, Gurkaran is a software engineer. At 24 he realised the importance of exercise and even started swimming and jogging. They key is to make sure you can communicate with your teen, say experts. "Parents have to try and find out if the child has a problem because the teen may not feel comfortable expressing it," says Dr. Anand. "I know of this man who hated noise, but his son loved rock music. So the man bought two tickets to a rock concert. When the son asked his father who the second ticket was for, the father replied 'that's for me'. I know it can be frustrating for the parent, but remember, we were all teenagers once."

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, May 8, 2016

There would be positive developments which will give you tremendous courage and confidence to pursue goals convincingly as Moon parallel Sun on your solar return chart. A lot of excitement will also be there as passion for sharing, learning and developing your communication skills overflows in many areas of your life. It's a good time to initiate new projects and follow your dreams. You may have to undertake many meetings, journeys within as well as out of the country. Relationships reach a turning point and you are able to renew your love and strengthen your relationships. Be vigilant while traveling and stick to a healthy diet.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

This phase brings glory, gains and success in professional and personal relations. You would express yourself with charm and grace as you are exceptionally articulate and your writing takes on a poetic quality about it. You are emotional, loving and caring in personal relationships and family situations. You manage to communicate with moody and angry people with a sensitive approach and gentle manner. You are physically energetic and enjoy the feeling of well being and confidence. Beware of over indulgence of any kind by maintaining a balance in all areas of life.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

Commercial transactions and business deals could be conducted successfully. You are unlikely to be display a whole lot of self-discipline. It's a great time to exert your personal influence, as you come across as especially cooperative. You are frank, outspoken and can be outrageous or undiplomatic on occasions. Money matters take priority as some unexpected expenditures have to be met. Avoid being lazy and laid back as temporary gain or success in business needs to be followed up with hard work and dedication.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You would improve your professional and personal relations, as you express yourself in a gracious and exalted manner. There could be alterations in ideas or plans. Increase and decrease in finances and fluctuation in business. You can be lead away by enthusiasm unless careful inner balance is maintained. Marriage, business partnership and collaboration are strengthened through understanding and commitment. Beware of a covetous and suspicious person around you who could cause misunderstanding in your personal relationships.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation with overseas contacts. You are likely to get business and work opportunities from overseas and engage in a variety of activities and meet new people. Financial benefits also may come your way through investments and insurance. You may be tempted to spend lavishly on things that make your life more comfortable and pleasant. You are physically energetic and enjoy the feeling of well being and confidence. Beware of over indulgence of any kind by maintaining balance in all areas of life.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

You are frank, outspoken and can be undiplomatic on occasions. Political correctness and diplomacy are the call of the hour. You are more willing to adapt to new circumstances, ideas, and unfamiliar situations this week. You put in a lot of efforts and then find that this has established a strong professional base and this brings in desired and even unexpected gains. It is good time to organize your workplace. This would help you to get a better perspective to achieve goals. It's time to expand your social circle and to make more contact with groups and friends. Romantic notions start to take on a realistic shape.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

It's a great time to exert your personal influence where it can prove to be beneficial with the larger picture in view. You exhibit individualism and brilliance in handling business ventures and collaborations. This helps you build your self-confidence and strengthen your financial posi-

tion. You may take up assignments and projects and this would end on a winning note for you during the week. Your efforts to reach out to new people will be accepted and welcomed as you get success in foreign matters too. You extend your hospitality to family and expenses rise this week on purchase of luxurious household items. Health and energy need to be conserved through a busy time at work.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

This phase brings joy, understanding and harmony in personal and professional relations. You wield power and authority most effectively as you bring perspective and order in chaotic situations at work and home. You gain money and influence through business ventures. Success brings rank and respect as you dominate the professional scene. You win appreciation of people in senior position and this opens the doors of new opportunities. You carry yourself with confidence and style that attracts much attention and draw attention of interesting people around you. You would express yourself with charm and grace in professional life and this brings financial gains and new contracts. You feel full of energy and indulge in sports, physical activities and a structured exercise routine.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

This brings success, glory and cordial relations with family and loved ones. Cooperation and focus on harmony and understanding benefits you professionally and enhances your reputation and public relations. You are patient, laborious and clever with material aspects and manage finances and business ventures with ingenuity this week. You need to drop comparisons and rivalry in personal relations and competition in professional aspects as they lead to a feeling of inadequacy and stress. You would regroup your energy and thoughts and focus on the basics.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You extend hospitality to family and friends as you entertain and organize meetings and get-togethers. You would perform tasks that involve cooperation and team harmony. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation and favor from seniors. You would have a positive feel towards spiritualism. You are passionate in what you do, although you display self-discipline with people around you. It's also a good time to break bad habits.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

Confidence, pleasure, and a deeper involvement in personal and professional relations comes to the fore. This enhances work opportunities for people in the creative line, marketing, arts, show business and related fields. A romantic affair would give a big boost of confidence and personal magnetism runs high to be appreciated and admired. This is a time where you bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships in family and loved ones. Socializing and making new contacts could help to boost your career. A healthy lifestyle and fitness remain on your agenda.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

You would face new circumstances, changes and unfamiliar situations. A positive approach and well chosen words would benefit. You may take up new assignments and projects that would incorporate and utilize your ideas. Your inner hopes and desires come to the fore even as you tackle your job with a realistic and practical purpose of mind. You incorporate and utilize your ideas. You would be loving and appreciative of the love you receive especially from children. Romance heightens your personal magnetism.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

You feel the fragile bond of friendship, romance and love in personal relations. You curb your natural reaction to situation and focus and gather information and take care not to hurt any relationship. You will be needed to provide inputs and your presence may also be required at home and work and you will have to divide your attention according to priorities. It is time to heal friendships with tender, love and care. You may also display more responsibility towards your family and take them for outings. Your thoughts turn to philosophy and worship during this time. This is a good time to organize yourself and your thoughts and attend your health and well-being.

All that glitters

(Contd from P-VI) that dresses, jackets, pants and gowns are making a huge noise on the runways at western fashion weeks. "If you discernibly add that extra sheen to your wardrobe, you are bound to make heads turn."

Shimmers not only come in sequins but also in detailed 'stonework'. Many precious stones are used to adorn fabrics. "Semi-precious stones are imported depending on the dress type and its hue in order to decorate its entire expanse. Stones do stand out in heightening the worth of attire to its wearer and lends a dramatic value to it. To me, it is always a right choice," Shinde asserts.

Arora sets her sight on rubies, pearls and very importantly, Swarovskis to raise

the standard of the fabric. "The price of the material can be jacked up resting on the rich quality and cost of the ornate stones being sewn or attached to the fabric surface."

The look and the overall feel also varies when one walks down the fashion-lane clad in exquisite gowns, saris or lehengas stitched with luminous pearls or stunning quartz crystals," she explains.

Vishram stresses upon the bright rhinestones and radiant crystals to gladden the yards of thick slinky saris. "Even glitters are super examples to fine-tune with a shimmering outfit and aptly elicit that coveted attention," she finds.

Georgettes, crapes, polyester, satins are some of the materials mostly used for formal wear in sequin fashion. While neutral tones ideally blend with shimmering fashion to the tee. "Whites, blacks, greys and blues are a few good instances. Other than this, neons and silver too are clubbed with this style. Also, the golden hue in traditional wear looks awesome," says Arora.

Obviously, it's sizzle time with sequins for the fashion conscious. (TWF)



Shakespearean wisdom

(Contd from P-VI) a caption that reads, "I don't mind if something's Shakespearean, just as long as it's not Shakespeare." The Daily Telegraph of London writes that "throwing a children's party can be a drama of Shakespearean proportions." The Bard would never have guessed that his name would become an all-purpose adjective used to describe anything that's great or grand, intense or ironic.

It's not just literature, but also fields such as psychology, sociology, political theory, business, medicine and law that have fallen victim to the Shakespeareisation phenomenon. For example, Psychology loves Shakespeare since most of his characters are quite mad. Psychology students would probably get outstanding grades if they are able to explain why Hamlet was talking to a skull instead of his therapist or friends. But jokes aside, Shakespeare was an intuitive psychologist, creating characters that reflected the mental turmoil and problems of his audience.

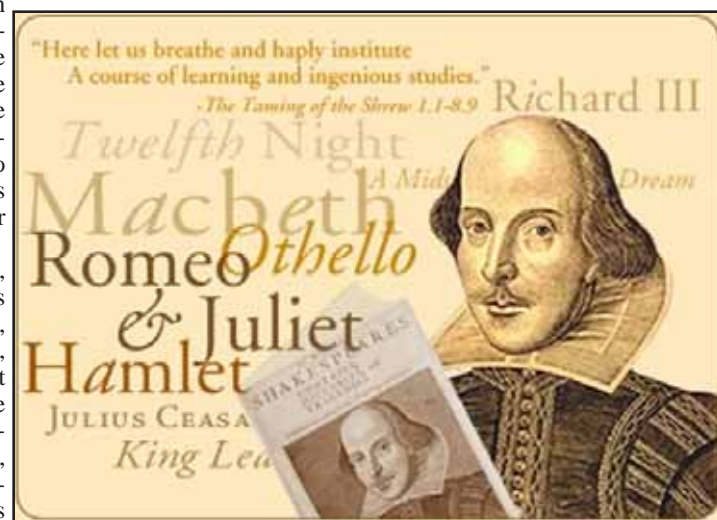
His lines reveal a clear understanding of human psychology -- "most ignorant of what he's most assured". This statement nutshells a common psychological ailment we suffer from -- overestimating our own knowledge and wisdom. In other words, we think we are always right, and

people who disagree with us are stupid and ignorant.

And, could leadership institutes and business schools find better case studies than Shakespearean plays? When his soldiers are about to turn tail, King Henry V launches into a long and boring speech. But instead of running away from his monologue, his soldiers get motivated and fighting mad. This is a classic example of Transformational Leadership, where a leader motivates and changes the attitude of his followers. And how should one handle a suicidal person like Hamlet with his depressing "to be or not to be" thoughts? That is exactly what a crisis management student should study. And if you are a business student, Julius Caesar is a case study in how to execute a ruthless takeover, just don't kill the CEO in the process.

But to answer the question, "Wherefore art thou now, O Shakespeare?", evidence indicates that he might be hiding in the town of Vellore, Tamil Nadu. Because, in this town,

I saw a large sign that boldly stated, "Don't Fear Shakespeare!" Though an obvious attempt by a high school English teacher to scare students into joining his coaching centre, this does prove that a playwright's leaky pen is mightier than bloody swords. Attila the Hun, Ivan the Terrible and other merciless murderers have become the subject of silly jokes. But Shakespeare is able to reach across countries, cultures and centuries to shake up impressionable imaginations and put the fear of literature into the hearts of school children. Long may we be spellbound by your ghost stories, your love epics, your murder plots and your war tales.



"If there were in the world today any large number of people who desired their own happiness more than they desired the unhappiness of others, we could have paradise in a few years."

—Bertrand Russell

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Instability in Nepal

THE political situation in Nepal became unstable early last week with the Maoist Leader Prachanda threatening a split in the coalition government of CPN-UML and UCPN-Maoists. Prime Minister K P Oli was accused of failing to implement the new Constitution. He has not succeeded in addressing problems relating to Madhes and speeding up reconstruction after the earthquake over a year ago. Prachanda has decided not to withdraw support but only for the time being. Nepal's Ambassador to India, Deep Upadhyay has been recalled. He has been accused of trying to topple the Oli Government and cosy up to India.

India is concerned about the possible instability caused by the accord with the Madhes. This accord is expected to remove the inequalities in the new Nepal Constitution. Delhi has stated that it is not interested in Nepal's internal developments. Upadhyay's recall is significant as he was instrumental in improving relations between India and Nepal. So is Kathmandu's decision to cancel Nepal President Bidhya Devi Bhandari's visit to India indicative of its present policy? The Nepalese President is known to be very close to India. India should follow Nepal's attempt to externalise an essentially domestic situation with great interest. Clearly this Himalayan Kingdom has not seen the last of instability which is also reflected in the Government's attempts to clamp down on the media. Recently Kanak Mani Dikshit a respected journalist who has stood unflinchingly on the side of truth was arrested on very flimsy grounds. He was later released only after international pressure was brought to bear on the Nepal Government. All this does not portend well for democracy.

LOOKING BACK

February 8, 1989

Buta Singh's visit

Dissidence in Congress(I) is endemic everywhere and it makes no difference whether the party is in power or in the opposition. In Manipur where the Congress(I) is in office, the dissidence threatens the life of its own Ministry handed by Mr Rishang Keishing; in Tripura where it is in opposition to the CPI(M), it threatens law and order in the State in its effort to find a political foothold strong enough for a fight with the ruling party. Mr Buta Singh, the Union Home Minister and also supposed to be in charge of the Congress(I) affairs in the state, must be a bold man indeed to have undertaken a two-day tour of the two states, in expectation of providing a ready-made solution for the Congress ills in both the units. There is enough indication that he has failed to achieve anything tangible, which is why he made the statement on the eve of his departure for New Delhi that he would now be reporting to Mr Rajiv Gandhi, as if he was not expected to deliver the goods himself on the spot!

It requires no extra intelligence to suppose that a high dignitary that he is, he was surely empowered to dispose of the ministerial tangle in Manipur at Imphal itself. He did have his own impression, which would only be relayed back through the mouth of Mr Gandhi. Even so, there appears to be no doubt in interested circles that his verdict in the chronic dis-

pute may have gone against the dissidents of whatever hue and, in fact, this has been so because of the many hues have the different groups of dissidents presented to him. That the tide has turned accordingly in favour of Mr Keishing would be only too evident from the spate of withdrawals of earlier resignations for his Ministry, which started flowing after the close of Mr Buta Singh's series of parleys with Congressman at Imphal. The bane in the dissident camp is that there were too many too willing to be projected as Mr Keishing's substitute and successor-in-office and this only strengthened Mr Keishing's case for continuance in office.

At Agartala, where he spent the only day against two nights at Imphal, Mr Buta Singh summarily rejected the Opposition talk of imposition of President's Rule. On the law and order situation also, he made the very obvious point that it was state subject to deal with, and not a fit case for the Union Home Minister to dabble in. The message do something themselves politically and not expecting to get everything done for them through the instrumentality of New Delhi. It seems the dominance of the Congress(I) at the Centre is proving to be its undoing in most states, big and small. In Tripura the chance of capturing power is not yet despite the renewed agreement just forged with the TUJS, in Manipur the dissidence lingers.

MNREGS: The Game Changer

By H H Mohrmen

Since the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) was launched in 2005, people have criticized it. Some even concluded then that it is a non-starter and predicted that it would not do any good to the country. The Deputy Commissioner of West Jaintia hills Arumkumar Khembhavi was right when he remarked recently that even now there are a lot of people who criticize this program. There is also no denying the truth that the implementation of MNREGS has had its fare share of bad publicity but we cannot blame the scheme for the wrongdoings of a few villagers who misused the scheme for their vested interests and ulterior motive.

The truth is MNREGS has had its impact in many villages. And for many of these villages, had it not been for the Scheme, people would not have seen any development at all. It is also true that the impact of this program on the villages has not had good publicity too because of lack of space for development stories in the press or for dearth of rural reporting in the media here. Or perhaps as they say there are no takers for good stories because it is only bad news that sells. But it is only by seeing that one can believe that the villages which have been able to make the best use of the program have indeed been able to bring development and change in their respective villages.

In West Jaintia hills few villages have developed manifold since the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) was implemented. But of these, Nongtalang Mission, Moosakhia and Shnongpdeng are the three villages which apart from having good footpaths, good drainage system or in other words, have been able to build assets for posterity, some interesting stories have also emerged. There were also other surprising developments in these villages which were rather not expected. I was taken by surprise when I visited Nongtalang recently and the village elder I talked to told me that they did not have to hire skilled masons or skilled cement labourers from outside any more. When I asked him why? He said that it is because now Nongtalang

Mission which has made the best use of MNREGS scheme has produced good masons and skilled bricklayers who could cater to the needs of the entire Nongtalang village. This is another (rather) unexpected outcome of the implementation of MNREGS which in other ways has helped people hone their skills and made them skilled workers.

The successful implementation of MNREGS has empowered Moosakhia village to welcome the International Terra Madre's international guests last year, because they have been able to bring change which they are proud of, in the village. And it has also helped the village become (perhaps) the first Open Defecation Free (ODF) village in West Jaintia hills. Add to that the fact that the village is also now one of the cleanest villages in the district and you have a success story. The story of Shnongpdeng also began with the villager's pride of being able to keep the village and its surrounding clean which again is the outcome of having well-paved footpaths, good drainage and of course a beautiful environment. In fact it was Lasting Gadow the Secretary of the Dorbar Shnong Shnongpdeng who once said to me that if it is just for putting up footpaths, construction of playground and developing other assets in the village, we don't really need MLAs or MDCs anymore. What he did not say is that the successful implementation of MNREGS by active Village Employment Committees (VECs) can bring enormous change to the village without any support from our political representatives.

But the question is whether MNREGS scheme is meant only for providing hundred days employment for the villagers and creating assets in the village? Till recently I was also of the opinion that the scheme is only meant for providing jobs for the villagers during the lean season as well as building assets for the village.

The one day interactive session and sharing of ideas for implementation of MNREGS on the theme 'Breaking barriers, building bridges' organized by the Deputy Commissioner's office in collaboration with the office of the Project Director of DRDA

most important reason that wages should not be the determining factor is because there will be less attachment to the work and there will not be a sense of community ownership of the Scheme. This is also akin to the traditional practice which already prevails in the community and which is that the of the community working together for common good. In many villages communities regularly organize community work for common good which is known as 'ia treilang/trei-paidbah in Khasi and kreh-ionglang in Pnar. Linking MNREGS as an extension of the customary community best practices of working for the common good (albeit at the same time earnings daily wage) is another brilliant idea shared in the session.

The one day conference at the Deputy Commissioner's office West Jaintia hills was a very good initiative. Other BDOs present in the meeting agreed that they too had benefited from the sharing of ideas and best practices and hoped that they could replicate some of the ideas in their areas. The next important step is to disseminate this information to the public at large or in particular to the VECs which will select projects for implementation under MNREG scheme in their respective villages. Or better still similar kind of programs should be organized in many places and at regular intervals by inviting all stake holders to the meeting.

In the last budget the Central government has allotted considerable funds for rural development. Perhaps, it is in the best interests of the state that the VECs and other machineries for implementing the Scheme are strengthened to ensure maximum utilization of the funds. The government should make hay while the sun shines and ensure that the Scheme is successfully implemented in the entire state, because it is obvious that MNREGS can bring development in the villages which the state government with its funds constraints will not be able to do. This can also bring much change in the rural landscape. The state government should see that the respective officers ensure that the villages make the best use of the Scheme that we can develop our villages as well as create livelihood opportunities for the rural folks.

Passah is also of the opinion that wages should not be the driving force to determine the community's participation in the activity, for the simple reason that they can get much higher wages elsewhere. But the

most important reason that wages should not be the determining factor is because there will be less attachment to the work and there will not be a sense of community ownership of the Scheme. This is also akin to the traditional practice which already prevails in the community and which is that the of the community working together for common good. In many villages communities regularly organize community work for common good which is known as 'ia treilang/trei-paidbah in Khasi and kreh-ionglang in Pnar. Linking MNREGS as an extension of the customary community best practices of working for the common good (albeit at the same time earnings daily wage) is another brilliant idea shared in the session.

The one day conference at the Deputy Commissioner's office West Jaintia hills was a very good initiative. Other BDOs present in the meeting agreed that they too had benefited from the sharing of ideas and best practices and hoped that they could replicate some of the ideas in their areas. The next important step is to disseminate this information to the public at large or in particular to the VECs which will select projects for implementation under MNREG scheme in their respective villages. Or better still similar kind of programs should be organized in many places and at regular intervals by inviting all stake holders to the meeting.

In the last budget the Central government has allotted considerable funds for rural development. Perhaps, it is in the best interests of the state that the VECs and other machineries for implementing the Scheme are strengthened to ensure maximum utilization of the funds. The government should make hay while the sun shines and ensure that the Scheme is successfully implemented in the entire state, because it is obvious that MNREGS can bring development in the villages which the state government with its funds constraints will not be able to do. This can also bring much change in the rural landscape. The state government should see that the respective officers ensure that the villages make the best use of the Scheme that we can develop our villages as well as create livelihood opportunities for the rural folks.

Agusta-Westland affair turns into theatre of the absurd

By M J Akbar

The ancients knew their metaphors. They classified the state of a human mind into four categories, or 'humours', based on bodily fluids: blood, phlegm, melancholy and choler [or bile]. It struck me that criticism, or opposition, in a democracy can also be usefully divided into these four conditions. As the second anniversary of the NDA government approaches, all of them are coming into play.

Blood is the first. Like any other body, the body politic also cannot function without free flow of blood, and if the heart and mind of a democracy are in the charge of government then the arteries of opinion are with the estates that can stand up to authority. An Opposition has every right to see everything wrong in any government; exaggeration and twist are part of the weapons of the duel, with Opposition given some indulgence. Government always has the means to smoothen any warp.

Phlegm denotes calm. This is the humour of independent analysts from the sciences of economics or politics. Their verdict will tend to tilt towards the negative, but that only enhances the credibility of the positive when they do praise a government's performance. Those in power appreciate criticism that is not motivated by self-interest.

Melancholy is probably the best description of media's attitude towards power. Journalists like to be sardonic; it gives their queries a sarcastic frisson, and their challenge a combative edge. This is true of perhaps 80% of media; the rest are, unfortunately, on the take, and therefore should not be taken seriously. The debate about yellow journalism began with the birth of a free press in the United States and will not end as long as there is freedom of speech. We imagine that censorship is the only solution, but that is not strictly true. The audience also has the ability to reject such journalism: it can stop purchasing a rag, cutting circulation, or turn off a TV set, reducing TRPs. The big problem lies in the fourth humour, bile.

Bile is the bitter, slimy fluid secreted from the liver, and stored in the gall bladder. When bile enters an individual's mind, it turns vicious, and poisons nurtured in frustration creep towards the tongue. An infected person begins to rant instead of respond, accuse instead of argue, vilify instead of explain, froth instead of talk. One television station has already aired a vicious personal attack on the Prime Minister in which

accusations were paraded without proof, cloaked in barely disguised malice. Fortunately, such hatred becomes its own enemy; vilification makes a villain of the accuser rather than the target.

It is notable that the proper noun just after bile, in the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, is bilge.

But there is a fifth, and new, humour in democratic Opposition which the ancients never considered, possibly because the theatre of the absurd is a more modern phenomenon. Witness, for instance, Congress reaction to the conviction by an Italian court of Agusta Westland helicopter company executives for giving bribes in the VIP chopper deal with India.

If bribes were given they were taken. The money was not handed over to any missionaries of charity. It is axiomatic that cash went to those with influence in the UPA government; men with money are not fools. So far, investigators have reached only those Indians at the lower end of the bribe chain, and not the big bananas. But protest trumpets from Congress seem more reminiscent of the Biblical Last Judgement than an Italian first judgement.

Mrs Sonia Gandhi accused the present government of "murdering democracy" during a demonstration in Delhi, at which incidentally, the duopoly at the head of Congress officially became a triumvirate: Robert Vadra's picture was placed amidst that of Sonia and Rahul Gandhi. How precisely does an Italian judgement murder Indian democracy? Is democracy safe only if a particularly powerful Congress "family" [this term is from the judgement] is allowed to keep the bribes it took? So far, we only know that it is a "family"; hopefully we will get more specific information after further interrogation of suspects. How do you crush democracy by asking police to do their duty?

I suppose this is what happens when a party leadership loses its good humour, or balance. Nothing brings the Congress to its feet faster than any threat to the family that is now in permanent control of the party. If the alleged recipient of the bribe had been any non-family Cabinet minister, he would have been abandoned with a shrug. The shrill outcry is telling us something.

TO THE EDITOR

Rejoinder from NEC/DoNER

Editor,

This is in connection with the letter of Mr. Dominic S. Wankhar (ST April 29, 2016) in your esteemed paper This is a clarification from NEC that anybody can meet any NEC Officer of the level of Deputy Secretary/ Director and above on prior appointment. This is the prevailing practice in all Govt. of India offices throughout the country. In case of enquiries where no prior appointment with the concerned officer in NEC has been obtained, one may contact the Director, Information and PR, NEC on phone number 2522668 or mail ID iprsector(pgmail.com) for facilitating entry. Contact details of other officers are also available on the NEC Website www.necouncil.nic.in

Yours etc.,
Manas Ranjan Mahapatra

Director, Information and PR
North Eastern Council
Shillong-3

Dire shortage of judges

Editor,

It is a matter of grave concern that one of the pillars of our great democracy - the Judiciary is currently in the throes of afflictions in terms of imbalance in manpower ratio of judges to the population at large. It was precisely this issue over which Chief Justice of India T S Thakur shed tears in the presence of Prime Minister Modi et al in the recent conference in New Delhi. And coincidentally on April 27 last, during the Legal Awareness programme for women in the city, the Addl. Chief Secretary, Mr H Marwein, had passionately underlined the need for more women Judges to ensure expeditious convictions and justice to deserving women victims in the present try-

ing circumstances where violence against women has become wide spread.

Apropos of news reports regarding shortage of Judicial magistrates of Grades II & III in Meghalaya the numbers are four and twelve, respectively. The Meghalaya Public Service Commission in its website has recently recommended the name of twelve candidates by way of written tests followed by personal interviews (mandatorily in the presence of an 'eminent expert' from the Judiciary) for appointment to the post of Judicial Magistrate Grade III which is under its jurisdiction. The results would definitely lie on merit alone. It was a music to the ears that more than 80% of the successful appointees were lady candidates. So even before the pressing concerns of the Chief Justice of India and the poignant appeal of the said bureaucrat, the matter in Meghalaya has squarely been dealt with to a larger extent with the timely response to the crying need in filling up the existing judicial vacancies, as com-

pared to other bigger States. Kudos to the MPSC ! Let's hope that the concerned appointing authority for Judicial Magistrates Grade II and above would similarly be expedited. In fine, the said action taken by MPSC could not have come at a better time.

Yours etc
Jerome Diengdoh,
Via email

India-Pak must rise above differences

Editor,

This refers to the article "Another case of missed opportunity" by Amrita Banerjee (ST, May 6, 2016). Our PM Modi's short visit to Pakistan on December 25th 2015, surprised everyone and just after that the Pathankot air base was attacked. It is observed that there has always been one or the other stumbling block whenever India-Pakistan plan a joint effort to curb terrorism or for that matter other important is-

sues. Both countries should now focus on joining hands to create an effective resistance against the militant outfits, who are busy plaguing the entire world.. There are many important issues between India and Pakistan such as business and economic ties, Afghanistan, the condition of Hindus and Sikhs and their places of worship in Pakistan etc. Both India and Pakistan should discuss all the issues frankly as it is of utmost importance that the two governments carefully plan their next steps. Both countries should act as a mature democracy play the right leadership roles.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad- 15

Should culture be static?

Editor,

So Sadiq Khan becomes the first ever Muslim to be elected as Mayor of London with an annual budget of 17billion pounds. To me it is

one of the greatest cultural changes of this century. In nearby Mizoram too some records were made in 2008. Aizawl had its first Mayor, PC Lalhmingthanga. The missionaries came here in 1897 and began a transformative process that changed a primitive society into what it is today. By any standards is a worthy achievement. But Shillong where the missionaries came 56 years earlier (1841) and which even became the headquarters of the British Govt still has to dream about getting a Mayor.

Up to you dear readers to decide which is a better definition of culture. A nih nih tangmuri dance every year or some real achievements in the sand of history.

Yours etc.,
Rasputin Bismarck
Manners
Kolkata

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

"At times one remains faithful to a cause only because its opponents do not cease to be insipid."

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 267 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, MAY 10, 2016

Tura elections – no roadmap for future

IT is unfortunate that elections today are more like slugfests than about articulating a road map for progress and development. Listening to the tone and tenor of the campaigns by the NPP and the Congress candidates for the Tura by-poll we get the sense that things that had happened nine years ago are being dug up and made a spectacle of. The cancellation of power projects hastily signed by the present chief minister before the 2008 elections, when he was Power Minister, and other such matters have become the talking points for the Lok Sabha election. The NPP candidate Conrad Sangma has had to clarify why the Donkpar Roy Government, of which he was Power Minister, had to cancel the deals because they were allegedly 'detrimental' to the interests of Meghalaya. This is an issue that needs further debate.

One of the reasons for Meghalaya's slow progress has been its unstable governments. Whenever a government changes, policies also change. The assumption always is that policies articulated by the previous government are steeped in corruption. It is precisely because of such inconsistent development paradigms that the Meghalaya Economic Development Council was constituted by a Resolution of the Assembly. The MEDC which was envisaged to have as members, MLAs from the ruling and opposition parties was intended to build political consensus on economic policies. Successive governments never understood this intent and turned this important agency into another yet another drab institution for accommodating defeated MLAs with no idea whatsoever about the larger objectives of the MEDC. Now the MEDC has become redundant. Coming back to the Tura by-polls, apart from the blame game we are yet to hear of any coherent programmes of development that the candidates have outlined in case any one of them is elected as the next MP. The unfortunate part about elections is that they are driven by political parties as if voters are secondary when in fact it should be the other way round. It is the electorate which should organize public meetings and get the two candidates on a common platform and ask them searching questions. Why should voters listen passively to candidates and political parties trying to hurl abuses at each other? The voters have nothing to gain from this but everything to lose. They should be asking their prospective MP as to how what issues he/she intends to take up on a priority basis. In this interface between the voters and candidates there should be no mediator. Candidates must be able to stand for themselves and explain their agenda to the voters. They should not rely too heavily on their party stalwarts, because the stalwarts will not be able to accompany them and hold their hand in Parliament. It's time to change the rules of the game! We need a smart electorate.

LOOKING BACK

February 8, 1989

Vamuzo blames Election Commission for defeat

Nagaland People Council (NPC) leader today termed the election commission as the "stooge of the Congress(I)" and alleged that it has lost its "credibility and impartial nature". Addressing newsmen here Mr Vamuzo claimed that the commission favoured the Congress (I) candidates during the recent state assembly elections 'denying justice to Opposition candidates.' The NPC leader held responsible the commission for his narrow defeat in the Chazouba constituency. Repolling was ordered in the Thenyuzumi booth under the constituency following disappearance of 50 unused ballot papers, which he claimed, were later found in the briefcase of the presiding officer.

A seemingly agitated Mr Vamuzo regretted that the election commission, while ordering the repoll "ignored

the fact that the inner seal of the ballot boxes from the booth remained intact." Vamuzo chared the polling officials with convincing with the Congress (I) workers to a brighter their poll prospects. The commission flouted established rules while ordering repolling in Chazouba. The NPC leader said he was confident that he would still win from the Chazouba constituency if votes polled on January-1 were recounted and the repoll declared void.

He indicated, that at least four defeated NPC candidates are likely to file election suit against the commission. He claimed that the Congress(I) had rigged the polls in nine constituency. He said the centre instead of healing the wounds had added fuel to the fire. How long will the people of Nagaland tolerate such injustice.

"Opposition skips Ampareen's meet on Municipal Poll" were the front page news headlines of ST May 3, 2016. On May 5, comes a rejoinder from the UDP Working President of the party's readiness to hold exhaustive discussions on the subject but not on logistics only. For once let's face and accept an inescapable truth. Firstly, Shillong is going, if it has not already gone, to the dogs. There is no overall strategy waste and garbage management. The city water supply system has collapsed. We are highly suspicious of the quality of water supplied to our homes. On the other hand we are the only people in the entire world who tolerate the laying of drinking water pipes through public sewers. More than 40 years of statehood and no one has a clue on how to manage Shillong's civic affairs. It is sadly obvious that we are a people who are incapable of managing the city we live in.

Amid this dark and dismal urban scenario politicians continue to spar and bicker on who is right and who is wrong. Logically speaking why can't the opposition and the Govt sit together and come up with a solution to the civic crisis that confronts Shillong? In the interest of the people, why do MLAs refuse to work together? Please remember you came begging for our votes. You promised to serve the people but that pledge was broken no sooner it was made. This charge is being made with all the sorrow it conveys but it happens to be the truth. Meghalaya's body polity is interested more in political posturing than in working out solutions to iron out Shillong's woes. As long as people continue to vote, even if they are up to their necks in squalor, it is OK. The ethics of politics has lowered itself to that miserable level and no one seems to care.

The second truth is even more perplexing. It is no secret that our political system has failed in providing an answer to the city's civic misery. The news headlines mentioned above is a typical case of how politicians of all hues have been approaching the problem of civic administration for the last 40 years since statehood. First they took over the Shillong Municipal Board, superseded it, appointed Govt Chairpersons and CEOs and then found it just didn't work. The Shillong Municipal Board was, not surprisingly, then abandoned and left to its fate! MLAs and politicians then started turning to the Dorbars for the civic management of Shillong city. In our euphoria for tradition we demanded that dorbars use their traditional leverage in running the civic affairs of the city. Dorbars are excellent traditional institutions for Shnong/village level administration. We tend to forget that tradition never had need to come up with an institution to manage a city. Therefore expecting traditional village dorbars to manage Shillong's growing and expanding civic needs is like trying to fit in mobile hardware into a laptop. It just won't work. We need to come up with a more effective and workable solution.

So, how do other cities manage their civic affairs so efficiently? The answer is simple - they do so through an institution called a Municipality! In Shillong most people sincerely believe (why and how is a mystery) that a municipality is a monster; a trap set up by the Govt (whoever is in power) to take away our tribal rights. In Shillong the word municipality has assumed the notoriety of a four letter word. It is not mentioned in polite Khasi society! Truth is a municipality is simply a public institution to look after the civic needs of a town or a city. Nothing more nothing less! This simple truth, despite directions from both the High Court as well as the Supreme Court, has been consistently ignored and lost sight of.

There are elected municipalities of New York, of London, of Delhi, of Kolkata, of Singapore and of Tokyo. Municipalities provide civic amenities to the citizens and keep the cities clean and safe. The Shillong fear arises out of the unfounded belief that an elected municipality is inimical to our tribal ethos. No one has challenged the validity of such fears. No politician has ever stepped forward to say "Ok, come let's debate the issue". Our leaders simply love to be led! They shun leading. No one has dared question the intellectual integrity of those who propagate such outrageous ideas. They have instead been accepted as Gospel truth and left at that. In the meanwhile the entire city is under threat of being buried under its own filth. The real threat from filth, squalor, faecal contaminated drinking water and unattended garbage is quietly being accepted as part of our tribal culture and identity! How

can we accept such absurdity?

Coming back to the topic at hand, the reasons put forth for not holding Municipal polls are four in number. There is fear that elected non tribal ward commissioners would ultimately dominate the Municipal Council. How this can happen in a council of 27 wards where 22 wards are reserved only for tribal candidates, is hard to explain. Next there is this fear of party politics polluting municipal polls. This too is unlikely to happen as there is a Govt ordinance prohibiting contest of ward elections on party lines. Thirdly there is a strong resentment against Meghalaya continuing with the Assam Municipal Act. The demand is for a Municipal Act of our own. The fact remains, however, that all Municipal Acts deal with aspects of civic administration. A Meghalaya Municipal Act of our own will more or less be the same as any other Municipal Law the world over. So there is hardly any justification for reinventing the wheel. What is actually called for is an amendment of the existing Act to suit Meghalaya's specific requirements. That can easily be attended to and should in no way prevent Shillong Municipal polls.

The fourth reason revolves round the fear that an elected ward commissioner will usurp all the existing powers, prestige and importance of the Rangbah Shnong and that the existing traditional system of governance will be adversely affected. He will manipulate and channelize the coveted MLA scheme to his advantage. The ward committee will be dominated by his nominees. Who then will bother with the Rangbah Shnong when he becomes just a mere puppet of the Ward Commissioner? Some grounds for concern and tradition definitely cannot be sacrificed at any cost. Fine, but why sacrifice tradition at all in the first place? Why can't we empower tradition instead; make it relevant to the needs of our times and make it the fulcrum on which we run our urban civic governance system? Why can't we do that? Why can't we think out of the box? There is ample scope in involving the dorbars in municipal affairs and to bring in real community participation in civic administration.

Instead of a top down Ward Commissioner led paradigm why can't we have a dorbar led municipal ad-

By Toki Blah

ministration? Why can't the modern needs of urban governance be amalgamated with the existing traditional system of administration? Why not indeed! It's possible. We only need the vision and the courage to try!

In any attempt to bring in a meaningful Dorbar led community participation in Shillong urban governance, there first has to be an amendment of the Meghalaya Municipal Act to accommodate the desired changes. The Meghalaya Community Participatory Bill of 2010 provides for the setting up under the chairmanship of the Ward Commissioner, a ward committee composed of members to be nominated by him. In all probability only stooges, chanchas and family members of the Ward Commissioner will ever be nominated to this committee. Its hard to see how this top down approach can be called community led and participatory in nature. If therefore real meaningful change is to be initiated, it has to begin with the composition of the Ward Committee. Instead of the Ward Commissioner filling the Ward Committee with his nominees, why can't the Ward Committee Members (WCM) be elected from the various localities/shnongs/dongs that make up the ward? Each locality/shnong/dong (as the case maybe) within the ward, elects and sends in a specified no of WCMs that will include women. Rangbah Shnong, office bearers of the dorbar and other prominent members of the locality are not barred from being elected as WCMs. Once the Ward Committee is setup and ready, it then elects a Chairman from amongst its own members. The exercise ensures that the Ward Committee is made up of persons who represent the community; are chosen by the community itself and are not mere stooges of an individual. Real community participation is ensured.

The process of election of the ward commissioner then comes next. Each ward committee comes up with a panel of names, anyone of whom is considered fit and competent to represent the ward at the Municipal Council. Ward Committee members are not exempt from being so identified. The persons so listed will be urged to contest the ward elections which accordingly to existing Govt notification will be on non party lines. This exercise brings in a pre-

election community screening process of the persons who are considered the fittest to represent the community at the ward level. It ensures too that the elected remain conscious that they owe their election ticket to the community and to no one else. This however does not in the least prevent or prohibit any citizen, not so empanelled, from trying his luck at the Municipal Polls. No one's democratic right to contest an election will be barred. It is simply a candidate screening process to get the best representation through a community led pre election process. There is no intention to circumvent the Constitution of India nor to defy the People's Representation Act.

It has been made clear above that one of the amendments to the Municipal Act is the constitution of the Ward Committee where it will elect its own Chairperson from amongst the chosen Ward Committee Members. There will also be an amendment where the Ward Commissioner will no longer be the Chairperson of the Ward Committee. Instead he will now be known as the Ward Secretary. The Ward Secretary in the new amendment, reports to the Ward committee instead of chairing it. As such he becomes a true servant of the people in its most practical terms. The Ward Secretary carries the will of the ward community to the Municipal Council and reports back to the Ward Committee irrespective of the office he holds in the Municipal Council.

In such a setup two basic issues that have plagued urban governance of Shillong will be settled. Firstly the fear of the dorbars of being sidelined and marginalised by a Ward Commissioner would have been laid to rest. Instead of being sidelined they will now be the driving force and the prime movers for everything that the Ward Secretary will be doing. The amended Municipal Act will also clearly spell out the powers and functions of the Ward Secretary. These Powers and Functions should be strictly confined to issues of civic management and betterment of Urban Governance. The Ward Secretary shall not interfere nor meddle with the traditional administrative functions of the Traditional Dorbars. The Ward Secretary will be acting strictly on the directions of the dorbars that constitute his respective ward. In keeping with the time honoured traditions and best practices in local self governance, the provision for RECALL shall feature prominently in the amended Act.

Secondly once the amended Act is in place elections to the Shillong Muni-

pal Board can be held. This will instantly open up doors and opportunities that have so far been closed or partially shut to Shillong Municipality. Funding from various schemes and projects under urban development can start flowing in. Real urban development can take place. There is no need to sneer at such a statement. Shillong needs to replace and improve its outmoded urban infrastructure. We need money to improve our drainage systems, our sewage system, our roads, our garbage disposal system and a host of other urgent civic issues. The beauty of these proposals is that they can be applied to even the so called 6th Schedule Areas and the designated town committees of the Autonomous District Councils. Why should these semi urban institutions be left out of any urban improvement and funding project? This proposal is inclusive inasmuch as it offers structural uniformity to others outside Shillong Municipality. Semi urban entities can also benefit. And why not?

In conclusion it must be mentioned that these proposals were at one point of time, presented by ICARE to members of various NGOs of the city; to some members of the Synjuk Ki Rangbah Shnong and to Office bearers of two prominent women's organisations. There was unanimous agreement on two points. Firstly, if the state is to have a Municipal Act of its own, then this was it. It reflects inclusiveness, greater community participation and most important, it recognised the role and responsibility of our traditional dorbars in urban governance. Secondly, it introduces a new paradigm on what 'public service' really means and provides continuity of control by the electorate over its elected representative, an issue that needs to be embedded in our system of democracy. No doubt these possible and potential improvements in the relationship between the voter and the elected will be looked at askance by Meghalaya's body politic. It will mean introduction of greater transparency, accountability and service delivery from our elected representatives. It will mean an end to the disgusting system of political patronage that thrives in Meghalaya. It will be of no surprise therefore if these inconvenient proposals are trashed into the nearest political rubbish bin.

(The author is President, ICARE)

TO THE EDITOR

No justification for enhancing MLA Scheme

Editor,

I am deeply troubled by the news report regarding the enhancement of the MLA Scheme to Rs 2 crore per annum. I recall how I had tried to oppose it's enhancement to even Rs 50 lakhs, but to no avail. My opposition is not because I envy the enhancement, but because it goes against the spirit of development and the ethos of democracy.

Elected representatives, once they become members of the Legislative Assembly, have the Government machinery at their disposal. Whether they belong to the treasury or to the opposition, they can summon, discuss, question, or even demand information and support from the bureaucracy. If the system does not respond, they can raise a hue and cry inside the august

House. If "red tape" delays the implementation of the scheme, then ask to review the guidelines. That is their right as elected members of the Assembly. In this manner, they can bring development to their constituencies by making proposals that conform to the departmental guidelines, and ensure that the schemes are implemented for the welfare of their constituents. They do not require a special allocation to develop their constituency as this can cause duplication of work as well as difficulties in monitoring the development process.

While agreeing that some expenses incurred by MLAs do not fall within the guidelines of departmental schemes, such as assistance given to the bereaved family of a constituent. To facilitate quick and easy assistance in such, and similar, cases, each MLA may be given an annual scheme that should not exceed Rs 15lakhs per annum. When such huge amounts are given to MLAs, it creates potential problems for everyone except the MLA

concerned. First and foremost, the scheme is used to develop the MLA's political career rather than the constituency. Only those that support the MLA during the election are given assistance, while opponents are completely ignored. In this manner the electorate can be put under pressure to support the elected representative. This goes against the spirit of democracy.

Further, those whose names do not appear in the electoral rolls are not given any assistance, even if they are deserving of that assistance. In fact, I know of MLAs who refuse to meet people staying in rented accommodation within their constituency because their names are not in the rolls of that constituency. Don't these persons also deserve a hearing?

Secondly, in a scenario where the Government does not have money to buy medicines for it's PHCs and to pay salaries to their teachers, or to maintain the quarters allotted to constables in the police reserve, how do we justify giving such

huge sums for the development of a person's political career? This, to me, is bad in law and bad politics.

If the present MLAs lack the confidence to approach the bureaucracy to justify their proposals for the development of their constituencies as they should be doing, shouldn't we be electing more capable representatives instead of diverting development funds to help them overcome their handicaps? As it is, we judge an MLA's success by the number of times they are elected instead of by the number of developmental schemes they bring to the constituency. This enhancement of the MLA scheme only helps them distribute fish to make them more indispensable - I read that they want to "buy gifts like handbags and utensils instead of creating public assets" (ST dated 9thMay, 2016) Teaching the constituents to fish, rather than the distribution of fish, is true development.

The Chief Minister is happily pushing the enhancement through because it makes him more

politically powerful. An example is the reason given by the Tura MLA to support the Chief Minister's candidate in the MP election. Your newspaper quoted him giving enhanced MLA scheme as one of the reasons.

I call on all right thinking people, who truly care about the right type of development and the right type of democracy, to register their opposition to this enhancement and to call instead for its reduction. I have registered my protest herewith.

Yours etc.,
R G Lyngdoh
Former MLA.
Via email

Recharge card menace

Editor,

Recently I had purchased a top-up card of Reliance Company to recharge my phone but when I scratched the card in order to see the recharge number for recharging my phone, some of the numbers were torn and became illegible. I broached the matter with the shop keeper but he expressed that he could not help me in this re-

charge so finally I had to forego my Rs 30. In other words I lost Rs.30 and this has happened to me several times. I feel that the main reason behind this is the use of thin paper for covering the number in the recharge voucher and also use of delicate encryption of the recharge numbers therein. This practice has been adopted by almost all the mobile recharge vendors and due to this problem the consumers are suffering monetary loss and the entire benefit goes to the company. Earlier these companies used thick paper for covering the recharge number in the recharge voucher but nowadays it is apparent that they are using this deceptive method in order to dupe the public. I urge the state and the central government to check this problem and curb the menace.

Yours etc.
Md Sageer,
Shillong-2

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

“Many people wait throughout their whole lives for the chance to be good in their own fashion.”

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 268 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2016

The death sentence

IT is reported that there were 385 persons awaiting capital punishment as of January 2015. Nearly two thirds of them belonged to the backward classes, religious minorities, dalits and adivasis. Two thirds of them belonged to the economically underprivileged and 80% of them had not completed their school education. A great many of them have to go through custodial torture and many of them actually admit to their guilt in police custody. Hardly 70% had any dealings with lawyers. Less than 5% of the death sentences delivered by lower courts are confirmed by the Supreme Court. That can only confirm a simple belief. It is that the lower courts rarely adhere to the principle that capital punishment can be delivered only in the rarest of rare cases. It is also to be noted that 25% of the convicts are juvenile and 8% of them have no past record of criminality. It may be argued therefore that capital punishment should at least be suspended till the judicial system is thoroughly overhauled.

After a court delivers the death penalty to the accused, there is hardly any scope for remedial action which strengthens the argument for the abolition of capital punishment. 120 countries in the world have abolished capital punishment without any rethinking on the issue. It is also arguable that the death penalty is not in any society a deterrent against heinous crimes. In India, the Law Commission proposed abolition on the death penalty in a phased manner last August. However, against all these arguments can be mentioned the recommendations of the Verma commission. One does not know what should be done in the cases of brutal rape and murder.

LOOKING BACK

February 8, 1989

C.M's bid to tone up administration

Having survived the Opposition torment over the PHE scandal in the State Assembly, the Chief Minister Captain W.A. Sangma has engaged his attention to streamlining administration and toning up state's vigilance machinery.

Talking to newsmen at his residence on June 30, he said that he held separate discussions with his cabinet colleagues and the senior officials underlining the paramount need for offering “clean and efficient” administration. Captain Sangma said in reply to a question “how can you provide clean administration when the society is not clean?” He said that the society, including the press, would have to be cleansed first.

A reporter asked the Chief Minister if his decision is not dismissing the two Ministers was not tantamount to going against the wishes of the people. He said that he had taken over Vigilance Department under him which would operate through the Vigilance Cell headed by the Chief Secretary. The Cell had been asked to ensure that cases referred to it were expeditiously dealt with.

The Chief Minister has also directed his Cabinet colleagues that on every second Tuesday each month the Cabinet Minister will meet his Minister of state, Secretary and Head of Department to review the functioning of the departments under his charge. In this meeting a review will be conducted, among other things, on the functioning of the Vigilance Cell, general discipline in the department and action against delinquent officials. The meeting will also review the implementation of schemes against targets fixed in the action cum-work. Calendar prepared by the departments with specific reference to bottlenecks holding up implementation and

remedial measures taken to over-come the same. A detailed review of the progress of expenditure district/divisions wise will also be conducted in this meeting so that steps are taken to ensure even flow of funds and to avoid excess expenditure. The performance of 20-Point Programme will also be scrutinized.

The proceedings of the monthly meeting will be sent by the Secretary of the concerned deptt. Within a week after holding of the meeting to the Chief Secretary. The Chief Minister will be kept informed of matters of importance arising from such meeting. Directions have also been issued stressing the need for regular and proper inspection of offices.

Directions have also been issued to set up vigilance units in all the department of the Government to be headed by an officer not below the rank of a Joint Director/Deputy Secretary to look into various allegations. This unit will bring to the notice of the State Vigilance Cell important matters so that the latter can keep a watch about follow up measures and to sort out problems of inter-departmental co-ordination. Similar arrangements will also be made at the district level.

Amended draft rolls ready for inspection

The list of amended draft electoral rolls in respect of Sohryngkham, Dienglieng, Nongkrem, Lyngrdem, Nongskhen, Mawsynram, Laikroh, Mylliem, Laban, Mawpjem, Nongthymmai, Laitumkrah-Malki, Mawkhar, Jaiaw, Mawlai, Mawphlang Dienglei and Nongpung-Sohiong District Council Constituencies have been prepared and are available for inspection in the office of the Deputy Commissioner (Election Branch Shillong).

Clinton Or Trump Who is best for India?

By Amrita Banerjee

The march of Donald J Trump and Hilary Rodham Clinton as their respective Party nominations for the US President in the upcoming Presidential Elections on 8 November has an air of inevitability. Their nominations have set the stage for a general election unprecedented in modern history between two of the most well known figures in American politics as the potential trajectories for America's future global role.

However, the Indiana primary elections gave a twist to the story as it reversed the talk of a contested Republican convention and a triumphant Democratic nomination for Hillary Clinton. Notably, the Republican camp witnessed the billionaire property mogul and Grand Old Party front-runner Trump becoming the de-facto Republican candidate by scoring a major victory which made Senator Ted Cruz and Ohio Governor John Kasich drop out of the Presidential race. On the other side, the Democrats saw Bernie Sanders' winning Indiana and witnessed his determination to stay in the race until the Democratic National Convention in July.

Thereby, putting two crucial scenarios for both the Presidential front-runners today. For Hilary, the situation suggests that her energy and resources will be tied up for another month in her primary campaign and the focus will be on California, which votes on 7 June. For Trump, its about not only winning the support of a higher proportion of white men as also balancing out his current deficits among every other demographic besides patching the Party together. Politics just like life is unpredictable. Till some time back, almost all American political pundits while talking about Republican candidates, had declared Trump dead on arrival and instead backed the young, conservative and charis-

matic candidates. Such a response was obvious considering his hateful rhetoric against Muslims, immigrants especially Latinos, women and bigoted policy proposals that threatened to obstruct the path towards a more open and fair country.

Pertinently, Hilary's path too had stumbling blocks as she was often criticized for being a weak nominee because of her history of mishandling the 2012 Benghazi attack in Libya and use of a private email server while serving as Secretary of State in the Obama Administration which made a clear case for negligence about an issue as important as national security.

Thus, in the public eye, both candidates face extraordinarily high negatives and specific polled vulnerabilities detrimental to their campaign efforts: Trump among women and minorities and Clinton on matters of trust. As the saying in Washington goes, Democrats have to be good but Republicans need to be perfect to win the White House today.

The changing electoral make-up of the States that matter --- Ohio, North Carolina, Virginia, Nevada, Colorado, Iowa and Florida --- heavily favors a Democrat, even after eight years of having one in the Oval office. Additionally, with the political fortunes of candidates swinging on a daily basis, it would be interesting to analyze who would be a better President for India. Even though at present Donald Trump appears to be a loudmouth about certain issues, he would be a better contender for Indian-Americans and Indians due to the following reasons. One, from an Indian-American's point of view, Trump's loud anti-immigrant sentiment might be a turnoff, but his Administration would balance it with a pro-business attitude, which would be in contrast with the Left-

leaning, pro-trade-union perspectives of Clinton.

Two, despite the widespread belief that Democrats are better for India, but given past experience with Robin Raphael and later with Modi's visa-denial circus it is clear that Clinton is not a friend of India. Three, it is the Republicans who are more worried about China, and wish to bring India on board as an ally. Democrats tend to be like dictators and are far more enamoured of the Pakistani Army. President Obama and John Kerry's largesse to Islamabad in terms of financial aid or sale of F-16s despite New Delhi's loud protest underscores their perfidy. It is likely that in a Hillary Clinton Presidency, her Chief of Staff might be Huma Abedin, a close aide who is a Pakistani-American and no friend of India. Whereby, the situation might get worse for New Delhi.

Four, Trump's policies on illegal immigration focus on reviving the American economy, defeating terrorism and establishing peace through strength resonates well for India. Fighting terror, upholding US interests and guarding her borders against illegal immigration are closely associated with national security which any leader should advocate.

Five, if Trump's establishment of peace through strength is criticized then one should also recall Clinton's credentials. She has a calculating, hawkish reputation with her votes for interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan and preference for such tactics in Libya and Syria. She can be described as a hold-over from the Cold War. Remember, it was during her Foreign Ministership that the US 'tilt to Asia' was initiated. India, on its part has traditionally opposed the great power presence in Asia.

Last but not least, if Trump is called anti-woman because of his views on

abortion, Clinton's record of female advocacy, being women, is uneven as she has evaded the abortion and maternity leave debates in the past with expediency being her watch-word.

She has opted to play the woman-power theme and feminism to prove her 'progressiveness' yet stood by her husband even when he was involved in a sex scandal in the Oval Office, much to the annoyance of American women and feminists. With a 'Make America Great Again' punch line along with the aforementioned reasons, Donald Trump's flag seems to be sailing high in the Indian sky. A group of Indian-Americans have even formed a political action committee called 'Indian-Americans for Trump 2016' with an aim to garner support for him. Whether he will be elected or not time will tell but as of now both Trump and Clinton should play it well on the national platform as the nature of this high-profile race might augur a messy, personal and enormously expensive fight with no boundaries for political discourse. Especially with issues like sexual exploits, accusations of criminality, both which have the potential to marginalize discussion over America's greatest policy challenges.

Moreover, external events such as a new wave of terrorist attacks or a poor performance by either candidate in the debates could change opinions in unpredictable ways. As voting in the US is not compulsory and a good turnout is crucial which in general favors Republicans. As the political spectacle unfolds in America, Sanders supporters threaten to sit out the election if he is not the Democrats' candidate while Clinton faces the challenge of persuading a high number of youth and African-American voters who supported Obama to vote for her as well, we in India can just hope for the best candidate to win. --- INFA

(The author teaches at School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi)

Narendra Modi's visit to Iran has special significance Energy cooperation, regional security to top agenda

By Nitya Chakraborty

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Iran later this month has special significance in strengthening India's west Asia policy in the wake of the withdrawal of the sanctions against Teheran by the western powers headed by USA. Iran is now an active regional player and in the emerging geo political scenario, Iran is seeking to play an increasingly important role in collaboration with China, Russia and also with India. Mr. Modi is set to make use of his visit to build a strategic relationship with Iran which will cover both energy collaboration and regional security.

The PM's visit has been preceded by the visits of external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj and the petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Swaraj held discussions with the senior Iranian leaders and the basis for PM's visit was laid at that time. Iranian leaders were not happy that Mr. Modi visited Saudi Arabia and UAE earlier and could not choose Teheran before those countries. Iran has emerged very crucial for India in relation to Afghanistan and India can ill afford to hit sentiments of Teheran since so much vast energy potential lies untapped between the two countries. Prime Minister is therefore going to Teheran with a package of economic proposals which should be attractive to Ira-

For Teheran, the highly positive development is that the banks and the Indian oil companies have reached an understanding on paying Iran US\$6.5 billion dues for oil purchased during sanctions period. The payment will be made in euros and accordingly, Indian officials are finalizing arrangements on the basis of discussions with the Iranian banks.

The Reserve Bank has already cleared the draft for new payment mode prepared by the Indian officials and this has been reportedly given approval by the Iranian authorities. Now only the Iranians will identify their banks for getting the payment. The issue of combating terror in the context of activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan, is also figuring on the agenda for discussions. India is fully alert to the latest foreign policy initiatives of new Iranian regime under which Iran is trying to take along other countries like Pakistan, China and Russia, apart from India to look after its national interests. Investments in oil and gas require Iran to pass a new law which will liberalise the rule for the participation of the foreign countries in the extraction of gas and oil.

The US has still retained many financial pen-

The Reserve Bank has already cleared the draft for new payment mode prepared by the Indian officials and this has been reportedly given approval by the Iranian authorities. Now only the Iranians will identify their banks for getting the payment. The issue of combating terror in the context of activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan, is also figuring on the agenda for discussions. India is fully alert to the latest foreign policy initiatives of new Iranian regime under which Iran is trying to take along other countries like Pakistan, China and Russia, apart from India to look after its national interests.

TO THE EDITOR

Beggars cannot dictate terms!

Editor,
I stand in support of Bah Toki Blah's 'Inconvenient proposal' (ST, 10th May, 2016). Traditional institutions are meant for the management of traditional ways of living and traditional resources. Urban living (if we want Shillong to be an urban centre), has to be managed and governed in a scientific manner through modern democratic institutions.

In traditional way of living people can practise open defecation in the bush, which in Jaintia area and in some parts of Ri Bhoi, called 'lai khlo' because there were then miles and miles of 'khlo' (jungles) around the house. But in urban centres today, 'lai khlo' should be replaced by scientific sanitary management, otherwise all would have to face ka 'iap them' (plague) and run to the hilltops like the ancestors. Moreover, traditional institutions have the right to govern the use of local and traditional resources, but they cannot claim all the right to manage resources that are granted from outside through taxpayers' money, to the exclusion of others.

Most of the funding required to maintain Shillong, comes through Government's grant, not through local resources. But the funny thing is, we like to be called 'ki nongsor' (urban dwellers) but governed by a village dorbar: Mawkhar village dorbar, Jaiaw village dorbar, Laitumkrah village dorbar, Nongthymmai village dorbar, etc. governed by the KHADC Village Admin-

istration Act. It is the time to think seriously; we can choose only if we don't have to beg.

Yours etc.,
Fabian Lyngdoh,
Via email

Why give undue importance to cricket?

Editor,
The news item "BCCI recommends Kohli for Khel Ratna" (ST, May 4th 2016) came with a coloured photograph of the cricketer. His achievements were also clearly depicted in colour. This was followed with some details of his feats. Some Indian television news channels also elaborated on this. In both cases there was only a mention of the names and the disciplines of the other contenders for the awards and nothing more. This seems to reflect a bias of the Indian media towards cricketers over other sportspersons of the country. But then cricket often gets major coverage in the Indian media than other sports.

The Rio Olympics is less than three months away. It is expected that by now the Indian media would focus more on the disciplines that India will take part in and the preparation and aspirations of the Indian participants and their enthusiasm level. It is strange that the Indian media instead focuses more on the IPL (cricket) as if this is bigger than the Olympics. Moreover, since the Olympics take place once in every four years it is expected that cricket would be given a back seat

by the Indian media at least for the short period before the games.

This huge attention given to cricket is understandable if it is a world-wide popular sport where winning its World Cup would be impressive. Instead we compete with few countries where most are minnows in the world of sports and we are not doing that good there either. The World Cup is elusive to India now and in the last T20 World Cup we nearly lost to Bangladesh a country which is relatively unknown in the sporting world.

The Indian team in the recent past have not done so well while touring countries outside the sub continents. At times these visits have become embarrassments.

The popularity of cricket in India is also contentious because it is watched mostly on television here while the spectators attendance on the ground is often poor. Barring the international cricket matches India played and the IPL which has glamour and entertainment attached to it, the matches of many local tournaments in India are often played in almost empty stadiums.

In the recent T20 World Cup in India, the stadiums were not packed in most of the matches where India does not feature and the attendance in the same World cup for women was pathetic. All these in a country where cricket is deemed popular. On the other side, Tata Motors, a major Indian Automobile Industry chose Lionel Messi as its global ambassador instead of an Indian cricketer. This is an indication that our cricket stars are known and wor-

shipped mostly in India while Messi is known and revered the world over because his country and its people chose to promote football which is a global sport.

Indian television, the print media and Indian advertising have certainly promoted cricket in India to an extent that it makes cricket absolutely dominant here and personalities are created out of it at the expense of other sports and sportspersons. This probably happens because of the size of India's population, its hopelessness at many things but cricket and cricket's ability to monopolize India's vast television audience. Television revenue has buoyed up everyone's boat here with the BCCI at the helm.

The world's richest and powerful cricketing body has successfully steered cricket to this dominant position in India and even in remaking of world cricket in its own image. Other sports bodies in India are struggling. While the BCCI can make cricket grow in India, one only hopes that the other sports here cannot continue to simply warm the benches for cricket. A country of 1.2 billion people and growing cannot be cut down to size during every global sport event just because of its lopsided emphasis on cricket. But the Indian media has a big role to play in steering our approach towards other sports. Focusing intensely from now on the disciplines that India will take part in the Olympics and on its sportspersons involved can be a start.

Yours etc.,
KL Tariang,
Via email

nian leaders who are itching to induct foreign investment in their vast oil fields.

In India-Iran bilateral relations, energy is the key area and Iran is on an expansion spree after the end of the sanctions. The Iranian government has opened up oil fields to the overseas investors and India has been in touch with Teheran for some of the rich oil assets for quite some time. ONGC Videsh Ltd led consortium had discovered the Farzad-B offshore gas fields in 2008 but the negotiations could not proceed earlier due to sanctions. Now further negotiations had been held and the Indian Minister for Petroleum Dharmendra Pradhan during his visit to Teheran in April this year followed up the negotiations and requested the Iranian government to speed up the process of finalization.

Iran is equally interested but there are differences on a few issues. Indian officials are in touch with the Iranian petroleum ministry and efforts are on to agree on an agreement on Farzad-B gas fields to be signed during PM Modi's visit. Even if the agreement is not made ready by that time, there is a possibility that both leaders will express their intention to collaborate for the production in this oil fields. India has also identified few other oil fields which have huge potential. Negotiations are on at officials level and efforts will be made to speed up the process so that a positive picture emerges before the PM visit.

alties keeping riders to combat terror and abuse of human rights. The US administration may make use of these clauses to hit at Iranian economy. Iran wants to expand its economy now and it seeks the support of the countries like China, Russia and India in making a success of this programme. Prime Minister Modi is aware of this stance of Iran and he will make all efforts to persuade the Iranian leaders to the Indian proposals which open up vast opportunities for the expansion of energy and connectivity in the region.

Indian side has given big emphasis on expanding connectivity in its relationship with Iran. Talks are on to build rail link between Chabhar port and Zahedan in Iran that will link India with rest of Iran's network. A team from IRCON had already discussed the details of the rail projects in Teheran in the last week of April this year and the report has been given to the PMO so that the issue can be taken up at the Teheran summit. IRCON proposal recommends supplying US\$ 400 million of steel rails for expanding the network in Iran. India is also interested in going ahead with the work on International North-South Transport Corridor of which India, Iran and Russia are signatories. (IPA Service)

"Battle not with monsters, lest ye become a monster, and if you gaze into the abyss, the abyss gazes also into you."

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

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SHILLONG, THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2016

The Uttarakhand drama

THE Congress government in Uttarakhand led by Harish Rawat which was dislodged by the Centre has won the trust vote on the floor of assembly. It is one more setback for the Bharatiya Janata Party. A sordid power play was on in the state for two months. The Congress was accused of horse trading, the BJP of using its clout at the Centre. Though the Supreme Court finally decides on the issue, the Congress has more or less reinstated itself. The Congress tally came up to thirty three including twenty seven of its own. One Congress MLA had defected. To the Congress strength was added two from BSP, one from Uttarakhand Kranti Dal and three Independents. It was the BSP's support which proved decisive. The whole episode shows that Article 356 should be enforced cautiously and only when a state is in political turmoil.

The Supreme Court had taken a decision in the S.R. Bommai judgment that a government's majority can only be tested on the floor of the state assembly. The Arunachal Pradesh earlier and then the Uttarakhand offensive had gone flat against the judgment. The fate of Himachal Pradesh and Manipur hangs in the balance because of political divisiveness. Nagaland experienced similar tremors of instability not long ago. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often been complimented for his advocacy of cooperative federalism. It gives states considerably more manoeuvrability. BJP will be totally misguided if it tries to strengthen its position in states where it is weak and vulnerable by clamping down President's rule which fouls democratic governance.

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

Verdict in Garo Hills

Congress(I) notched up a convincing victory in the Garo Hills District Council election to keep up its victory trail since last month's twin successes in Nagaland and Mizoram. The party achieved a two-third majority - a distinction not achieved many times in the past. Out of the 29 seats it contested in conjunction with its coalition ally, the ruling combination captured 20 seats. In East Garo Hills out of the seven seats, the Congress(I) won six and its ally HPU(B) picked up the seventh. Thus the opposition was completely blanked out in this district. This is in sharp contrast to the results of the Assembly elections held exactly one year ago. In West Garo Hills of the 22 seats, Congress(I) bagged 13 seats leaving four for the HPU, three for APHLC(A) and two for the Independents.

The Leader of the Opposition and the HPU General Secretary Mr S D Khongwir has attributed the Congress(I) victory to superior material strength of the winning side. Few can dispute the fact that ruling side pressed into commission all that it could fall back upon. From that angle, it was truly an uneven fight. However, it would be naïve to suggest that elections are won and lost depending upon how much a party or a candidate is able to spend. If that was the crucial deciding factor between victory and defeat, the HPU would not have been able to inflict a licking to the same resourceful Congress(I) party in the 1988 Assembly polls.

The truth of the matter is that the political scenario in Garo Hills has changed radically since the last Assembly election. The Hill People Union itself has witnessed a major split in the legislature wing. An eminent HPU leader Mr B B Lyngdoh, who is perhaps the most acceptable Khasi leader among the

Garos, canvassed for the first time in favour of the Congress(I). Moreover, the appeal and charisma of Chief Minister Mr P A Sangma hardly found a match in the rival camp. It would be unfair to him to deny the fact that the Congress(I) victory in Garo Hills owes a great deal to Mr Sangma. It may not also be an exaggeration to say that the verdict in Garo Hills is a vindication of Mr Sangma's sway over the Garo masses. Come to think of it, Garo Hills has a long tradition of voting for the Congress(I) and therefore there is nothing so unusual about the verdict. The outcome may be a damper for the Opposition, but there is scanty hope that it will have much impact on the remaining two districts which are on the threshold of election.

District Council Poll

RDF partners fail to meet on understanding

The meeting of the opposition parties HPU, HSPDP and PDIC to chalk out an 'understanding' for their strategy for the coming Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council elections scheduled for Thursday did not take place. The leader of the Opposition of the Meghalaya Assembly, Mr S D Khongwir, when contacted said that the leaders of the HSPDP, who were campaigning in Jowai could not make it possible to attend the meeting.

Mr Khongwir said that the Regional Democratic Front (PDF) leader would find time on Friday to meet "informally" and hold talks in this regard. The formal and talks and announcement of the nature of the understanding would come at a later date, he said.

The HPU leader will be leaving for Jaintia Hills to lend his support to the campaign of the HPU candidates.

"It is necessary to emphasize that this piece is neither intended to pour venom on menfolk nor is it an oestrogen jamboree, but a hope that blind eyes will open and SEE".

Crimes against women have never ever been a new phenomenon that we see only in this 21st century. It might seem so because it is being reported in the many avenues of media available today; additionally education has opened people's eyes to gender violence and such dust is being swept from the familial or clan carpet out into the open.

A very offensive example of gender violence is how female rape survivors are treated. The abysmal rate of arrest and conviction is demoralizing. Let us not forget the inconsiderate suggestions made by various national and regional leaders about dress codes, makeup and women's reputations. Examples abound where two of our high-ranking politicians have in effect, suggested that women who are raped or have consensual sex outside of wedlock should be hanged. In the same context, consider Abu Azmi's (Samajwadi Party leader) shocker, 'Rape is punishable by hanging...the woman is guilty. Any woman if, whether married or unmarried, goes along with a man, with or without her consent, should be hanged. It shouldn't be allowed even if a woman goes by consent.' [http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/abu-azmi-shocker-on-yadavs-rape-remark-women-having-sex-should-be-hanged/1/355087.html] Mulyam Singh Yadav declared that men who were convicted of rape should be forgiven as boys will be boys. The Jamaat-e-Islami Hind sent its suggestions to the Justice J.S. Verma Committee (set up to review anti-rape law in the country). One of its suggestions includes, 'Co-Education should be abolished and proper education facilities meant for only women only should be available at all levels of education'. Another point, 'educational institutions should prescribe sober and dignified dress for girls'. Note the restrictions and finger pointing on women in the statements.

Closer home, the conversations in our homesteads is just as prejudiced as vicious whispers of 'she asked for it' (Who asks for rape?!); 'what was she doing out at that time of the night?' (As if rape occurs only at night); 'just look at her short dress' and such

Reflect on the varied solutions to curb rape. The so called resolutions focus on women changing their behavior and lifestyle. The imposition of dress codes takes the cake. How the salwar kameez, hijab, tapmohkhlieh or neck to toe shapeless ugly dress can halt rape is beyond comprehension. These pathetic solutions point to the victim. In the case of a murder, would such inane solutions be banded about? The murderer is taken into custody and dealt with. Similarly, the rapist - be it juvenile or adult - should be treated as a criminal. If one can commit the adult act of rape, then he cannot be treated as a child (Gag yourself with a

nonsense is tossed about with zero empathy for the pain and trauma of victims. A victim's character is tarred with a promiscuous brush (read character assassination). Promiscuity should not even be an issue in a crime such as rape. In the case of a two year old victim, how does the licentiousness angle apply then? It is a known fact that a predator preys on those weaker than him/her. One cannot attack someone stronger. Imagine with me for a moment, if the victim brandishes a 9mm or a.44 Magnum, would the rapist continue with the crime? He certainly won't because self-preservation trumps pulling down his pants anytime. The chauvinistic argument about the woman being the tempter to rapists, who cannot help themselves is unacceptable, obnoxious and indefensible.

Rape is about power - perverted twisted sense of power the perpetrator feels over the victim. Rape is about silencing and punishing the person who is seen as deviating from the status quo, especially retarded chauvinists who want to teach the 'erring' female a lesson, thus keeping her in her place.

It only gets worse when it comes to the brutality and intensity of sexual violence against women. Consider rape as a weapon of war. It is a subject that the state tiptoes around lest it offends those in uniform who go on a rampage pillaging women's bodies and souls. In this sickening scenario, it is the 'occupiers' who display their strength and power over the 'defeated' by 'branding' the womenfolk in that occupied territory.

Let us deliberate that in some LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) cases, rape is viewed as an act of 're-ordering' or 'reinforcing' as a means to coerce them into toeing the line of what is deemed 'normal' in society.

Reflect on the varied solutions to curb rape. The so called resolutions focus on women changing their behavior and lifestyle. The imposition of dress codes takes the cake. How the salwar kameez, hijab, tapmohkhlieh or neck to toe shapeless ugly dress can halt rape is beyond comprehension. These pathetic solutions point to the victim. In the case of a murder, would such inane solutions be banded about? The murderer is taken into custody and dealt with. Similarly, the rapist - be it juvenile or adult - should be treated as a criminal. If one can commit the adult act of rape, then he cannot be treated as a child (Gag yourself with a

RAPE

By Vanessa Kharbudon

spoon if you're going to defend a 'child rapist'). Imagine the pain of reliving that act of violence, then being hung out to dry by the justice system and the society. Keep in mind the trauma of having to live with it, not minimizing at all the mental and psychological ramifications of a rape survivor. The rapist is a murderer who kills the victim slowly on the inside - he is killing again and again.

An extremely annoying solution to stop rape is for women to cease 'roaming' beyond a particular time (I see a crooked gnarled finger pointing to women...again!). Some dim bulb came up with the idea of solving rape by curfew timings! This is another stab on a woman's right to movement and her freedom. Why should women hide behind the bars of their houses for protection while men gallivant wherever they please? When any attempt is made to curtail a woman's freedom, this cannot fall under the gambit of curbing crimes against women.

Another concern is that of marital rape. Marriage is not legalized rape. The marriage license is not for sexual abuse where husbands demand whatever they want from wives. A wife has the right to refuse what she feels uneasy with. Even making her feel unwanted, unattractive and ugly if she does not acquiesce to his sexual deviancies is rape of her self-esteem cum inner self. How many wives are silently suffering in this area because they do not want any trouble with the self-proclaimed lord of the manor, thereby gritting their teeth when the act takes place? How many dread the sound of their husbands' footsteps? How many wives become bitter, eventually stone cold and die a thousand deaths because of their husbands' cruelty? Matrilineal hog-wash!

A woman has the right to choose who she wants intimacy with. She has the absolute right to say 'haoid' (yes) and 'em' (no). She can also change her mind halfway and say 'na' (no). Rape is a violation of her free will where somebody else forces his will upon her.

It is the duty of the state to tackle crime and protect its citizens. Are women not citizens? It is extremely disturbing to see the A, B...Z category overindulgence called security given to our politicians when the security of women is more at stake than any of these netas who suffer from an acute case of megalomania. The state is more anxious

with minting more cash to go on foreign jaunts rather than seeking speedy justice for rape survivors. The dire need is prompt justice. Justice delayed is injustice. Are lawyers so dehumanized that they have no qualms bearing the flag of injustice? It is a repugnant skill that this community of black crows has acquired in delaying the protocols needed for prompt justice. It is a scary reality when parents wonder if it is a safe world for their little girl to play with her male cousins in her own house; when even in school and tuition environs, porn addicts who need to seek help lurk around instead; when husbands abuse their wives in secret and don a 'decent good' mask in public.

Why is the state going at a snail's pace when it comes to prosecuting rapists and molesters? When the predator is a megalomaniac politician, a perverted affluent businessman, a debauched priest or clergy, or worse, a deranged father, then things get hushed up, papers 'misplaced' and the law department suddenly suffers from chronic amnesia. Let's not go into denial at this point. Why is it that in our society issues cannot be discussed openly and objectively? Why can't the rights and opinions of others - even of adult children, be respected?

Another retarded attitude in our society is the use of the term 'awria' (promiscuity). I am becoming allergic to this word because it is thrown around to debase women. This word has become a tool in the smear campaign of tainting women who are perceived as deviating from the 'normal' (a word which I hate) standards of what a woman should and should not be. It is used as a bullet intended to maim another woman's reputation because she does not toe the line of antediluvian definitions shackling womanhood. I hear it repetitively in pastor's sermons, religious discourses by priests, maulvis and mullahs from other religions, in workplaces and in our homesteads. What kind of hypocrisy and double standards are we promoting when men can do the 'booze and sex' lifestyle but a woman is told from the time she gets her period that she should latch on to her virginity lest she fails to 'catch' a 'good decent man' (Note: this extreme unhealthy obsession with virginity). It is high time that these 'decent good men' also be subjected to the

same scrutiny and interrogation a woman is. Alas! Even the term period is mentioned in such subtle barely detectable whispers as to cause the hearers to wonder if they have suddenly gone deaf. If a woman is to be condemned to the gallows for being 'awria' then the same standard should be applied to a man as well. Consider how we inconsiderately malign a woman for her relationship choices, for posting pictures of herself on Facebook and for creating videos (whether objectionable or not is debatable), but the man in those relationships, pictures and videos is strangely obscured? The woman is thrown under the bus and even threatened with violence and barbarism and for what? For making her own decisions like any man in those situations does? If legal action is to be taken, then both men and women should face the consequences of their actions in face of the law of the land as found in the Constitution, not in some insane quasi court based on archaic and biased customs which is always skewed against women.

'Ka kynthei ba tip sngi kadei ban poi ing haka por kaba biang' (A good woman should reach home at the proper time). Here's another extremely irritating one: 'Ki kynthei ba don burom kidei ban riam don akor' (A decent woman should dress accordingly). I want to pose to you readers and the society at large a question: Who decides what is the 'decent' timing, dress, mannerism, et al for an adult? If we treat a woman differently from a man, then we should cease at once from calling ourselves a democracy. In a democracy, a woman is regarded at par with a man. If men and women are not equal, then we need to stop this pretense of egalitarianism and just come out and state in the open that women are an inferior species, substandard to the all superior male who can do whatever he wants; a weak little female who has to serve the testosterone king as she becomes useful only in the bedroom and in the baby making and rearing factory. How about enshrining it in black and white that women are useful for one thing only? Therefore they are commodity to be displayed on the shelf and taken out only when it is time for use. Therefore, a woman is a use and throw property. By the way, we will need irrefutable statistics for this.

Please stop pronouncing that rape was born in the laps of 'indecent immoral' women who dress provocatively to trap poor weak males in the dating field. What is considered 'provocative' is actually a state of the mind. I might

disagree with what you term provocative, but does that mean disagreement should amount to rape? Reflect on the sad reality that in some countries a woman without the burkha is labelled immoral or provoking men's lusts. In other nations, women have the freedom to don bikinis on the beach. Now, who is right and who is wrong? Who gets to decide? Why should anybody decide for that matter? Closer home for instance, I have heard so many Khasis self-righteously holler that they would never drape themselves in the tummy-baring sari when this is supposed to be the national attire! Fashion choices are personal matters. It is very superficial, stupid and gossipy of a society to be all hot and bothered about what a person wears. Don't you all have more profitable and worthwhile subjects to delve into?

It is high time for society to teach men not to rape. It is crucial for men to take back that mantle of honour and chivalry that is lying dusty and rusty in the dungeon somewhere. Please refrain from crudely stating that a 'loose' or 'leh tad dor' woman deserves to be violated. By making such vulgar proclamations, you think you are civilized? Please consider that your idea of 'leh tad dor' is not one that all of humanity agrees with. 'No' means just that - 'NO'. In addition, when a woman changes her mind, respect her decision. What part of mutual consent don't you understand?

Mothers, kindly teach your sons the value of womanhood and how to treat a woman as your son will one day marry and live with one - not you. Fathers, please demonstrate to your sons the meaning of honour and chivalry. Gentlemanliness is not summed up in dress trousers and shirts with sleek short hair. It certainly is not in skillfully intoning the English language. If that is what you think it is, then it is very shallow of you.

Men, your physical strength is given you to defend, protect and stand up for freedom, equality and fraternity. Why would you not stand against and fight human slavery, poverty, injustice? Your strength was given for a reason. Use it for the good of humanity. Don't you want this world to be a safer place?

My parting words: A real man does not rape - he has no desire at all to use his brute force upon an unwilling woman.

TO THE EDITOR

On shifting of IAF and AR Hqs

Editor,

Apropos the news item where the NESO President, Samuel Jyrwa gave a call for shifting the Assam Rifles and the Eastern Air Command headquarters away from Shillong (ST May 1, 2016), I find this the biggest joke ever. Jyrwa justifies his demands by citing that the tribal land owners are aggrieved. Being a tribal myself, I strongly condemn the said statement. The simple logic is that once the land has been transferred to whoever person or agency in exchange for money, the question of land ownership no longer arises.

The compensation for such plots of land has been made a long time ago to the then land owners. Now if the children and grand children of those land owners want to take back the land, then they ought to dig the graves of their grandparents to find the land or the

money, if any. I suspect that few unscrupulous land agents must have influenced the president of the NESO to make such foolish statements or with ulterior motives. Anyway if the caliber of the president of NESO is that low, I cannot imagine what the future of the North East will be like. Likewise, may I also make a suggestion to shift the KSU office to Tura, the IIM, NIIFT and NEIGRIHMS to Assam, the Civil Hospital, the Secretariat, schools like St Edmunds, St Anthony's, St Mary's, Loretto, Pine Mount, etc to the jungles of Balpakram to solve traffic congestion in Shillong. Is this a good idea?

Yours etc.,
Jophthaw Basaiawmait
Shillong-2

Should MLAs skip an important meeting?

Editor,
Apropos the news item, "Opposition MLAs skip

Ampareen's meeting on municipal poll (ST May 3, 2016) I would like to highlight here that the proposed municipal election in Shillong is a very vulnerable issue that needs threadbare debate and discussions to arrive at a solution and to erase all the apprehensions and doubts from the minds of the citizens. All MLAs of the urban area of Shillong ought to sit together and discuss the matter at length. The absence of the opposition MLAs from the meeting reveals their irresponsible acts, shirking their duties and responsibility as important representatives. If this be the case these opposition MLAs are not worth the salt of being out representatives.

Yours etc.,
T L Lyngdoh,
Shillong-2

Why waste public money?

Editor,
I wish express my support to Mr. R. G. Lyngdoh's protest against the enhance-

ment of MLA Scheme (ST, 10th May, 2016). This scheme had only provided an opportunity to some MLAs to boast of their kindness and capability by just distributing schemes and material things to the people from the fund that is already available without their intelligent effort, to compensate for their lack of competence as leaders and legislators.

In the same way, it is advisable that the MDC scheme in the District Council should be abolished, and development works be undertaken in a planned manner and implemented by competent line departments of the Council (if there are any), as is being done in other ADCs in North East India rather than through haphazard distribution of doles by the MDCs. There is no MDC scheme in other ADCs of North East India.

Yours etc.,
Fabian Lyngdoh
Via email

Well done PAC!

Editor,

The Public Accounts Committee of the State Assembly has done right in calling the officers of the respective departments to enlighten the Committee as to why matters like land compensation, safe drinking water, transport services etc., have failed. The fact is tardiness, slow implementation and absence of benchmarks have resulted in under-development which cannot be entirely blamed on any single agency. A thorough investigation needs to be carried out before arriving at a conclusion. The PAC should also look at the pathetic health care system prevailing here ranging from non-functional health centres to lack of staff, pay and grade parity etc. These are issues that plague most departments. We need to also have an accident and trauma care centre at every Block, CHC and PHC due to rising road accidents. The PAC would do well in not just

summoning the officials and take their answers at face value but also conduct surprise checks on critical public services so that immediate measures are adopted to redress public grievances.

Yours etc.,
Dominic S. Wankhar
Shillong-3

Noise pollution!

Editor,

In Motinagar, in front of the building which has been banned by the Hon'ble High Court there is another building under construction. Due to the noise emanating from the machines till late night the neighbours are disturbed and cannot sleep. I have brought this to the attention of the people at the site but there is no response. Who will control the noise pollution in this city?

Yours etc.,
T S Singh
Via email

"Insanity in individuals is something rare - but in groups, parties, nations and epochs, it is the rule."

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, FRIDAY, MAY 13, 2016

India's NPA's worse than admitted

THE magnitude of India's bad loans is much worse than the banks are willing to admit. This has squeezed banks' profits and consequently made it imperative for banks to recover debts that could be bigger than New Zealand's \$170 billion economy. This was revealed last month when two of India's largest private sector lenders provided a full disclosure on non-performing loans. This lends credence to RBI Governor, Raghuram Rajan's repeated warnings to the banks to clean up their balance sheets. When banks make provisions to cover the losses from bad loans it begins to hurt their profits and to curb credit growth thereby unleashing a vicious circle of lower economic growth and triggering more defaults and choking off business investment and production. Bank loan growths in March 2015 stood at only 10.7 % and was the slowest in nearly two decades, partly on lower lending to debt-heavy sectors such as iron and steel that account for the lion's share of bad debt. Profits at most lenders have also taken a hit in the past six months as they set aside a higher sum to cover for defaults after a clean-up exercise was ordered by the RBI.

Financial experts estimate that about 13 trillion rupees (\$195 billion), or a fifth, of bank loans are already stressed. The RBI chief now wants banks to fully disclose and provide for bad debt by March 2017 in what he calls a deep surgery to clean up the balance sheets. Investors and analysts have long suspected that Indian lenders, especially the dominant state-run banks, are not disclosing the true extent of their troubled loans to avoid having to raise provisions. Only when ICICI and Axis banks released granular details last month was the problem highlighted. State-owned banks account for more than two-thirds of the sector's assets and about 85 percent of bad debts. This is a major challenge for policymakers keen to support a slowing economy. As financial experts say, it will only get worse before it gets better. But the question is how the banks were able to camouflage these huge liabilities. And what about the regulatory mechanisms and the ombudsmen who are supposed to keep watch on the propensity of banks to lend arbitrarily? These are troubling questions indeed!

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

PM: Fresh package for jobless, poor

Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi today promised to announce soon a fresh package of schemes to solve the twin problem of poverty and unemployment. Speaking at the plenary session of the Uttar Pradesh Congress(I) committee here, Mr Gandhi said the Centre planned to strengthen panchayati raj institutions and a bill in this regard would be introduced in the next few months. The day-long session was attended by about 20,000 Congressmen from various parts of the state besides members of Parliament and Central Ministers. Veteran leaders Mr Uma Shankar Dixit and Mr Kamalapati Tripathi were, however, absent at the session, held after about a decade. The Prime Minister in his thirty minute address informed about the measures taken to infuse new strength into the organization.

He said these efforts had brought dividends such as their party's performance in Nagaland and Mizoram elections and also the local bodies elections in Uttar Pradesh. He said only Congress (I) could keep the country united dubbing the opposition alliances as "unprincipled and opportunis-

tic." Mr Gandhi said with the achievements made in the economy and food production, the country could now fight poverty and unemployment in a much better manner. Mr Gandhi told the workers that till recently, the Congress(I) was nowhere in the north-east but now it was almost everywhere.

"A lot of work has been done in the cities but now with only a year left for the elections, we must concentrate on the village.

CPI leader bemoans "black money"

The total wealth of the country was managed by just twenty families CPI National Council Member, Mr Promode Gogoi said while inaugurating the fifth conference of the parties State Unit in Shillong on Friday.

Expressing his concern of the role being played by "black money", Mr Gogoi estimated that total amount of black money in circulation was in the region of Rs. 35,000 crore. Meanwhile, unemployment in the country has touched the fifty million mark and fifty percent of the population still remained below the poverty line, he added.

Election heat and dust and the loss of social capital

By Patricia Mukhim

Each election is getting worse than the last one in terms of money spent. The Lama Gyatso from Tawang who left his life as a monk and became an anti-dam activist confessed recently that he had a strong urge to fight elections because that's where one can bring change. But he backed out of politics because an MLA election said Gyatso costs nothing less than Rs 10 crore. This is a mind boggling amount for the large majority of us who are unlikely have seen a crore in our safes or our bank accounts. And coming from a monk I would not easily discount what he said. So this brings me to the Tura bye-elections. If an aspirant has to have at least Rs 10 crore for one assembly constituency, how many crore would it cost to get votes from 24 constituencies? And even if elections in Arunachal Pradesh are more expensive than in Meghalaya, might it not be possible that it would cost half the amount which is 24x5 or Rs 120 crore to mop up votes for the Tura by-polls? And where would this money come from?

Now if one were to go by the assets of the two contenders, Ms Dikkanchi Shira is far wealthier as she owns several coal mines and businesses which Conrad Sangma does not. The Congress has 14 + MLAs and 7 MDCs to mobilise votes for their Party candidate. The NPP has only 2 MLAs and about a score MDCs. The MDCs don't have the financial wherewithal that MLAs have. So if we are looking purely at money as an asset for a candidate then the richer person would win hands down. But does it always work out that way? It is hard to understand voter behaviour.

But whatever be the outcome of the election one thing is for sure. Issues don't matter during elections. If you lay out a list of what you plan to do for your constituents but lack the moolah it is not going to take you very far. Oratorical skills were good at one time but not anymore. Today politicians are talking to sullen and cynical voters who want to cash in on the windfall immediately because it does not rain money all the time. Election time is like lucky dip time except that you get a lucky number with every

dip into the raffle box. Which voter has the time to go back to the MP or MLA and tell him, "Hey you promised us roads, bridges, electricity and jobs; why are we not seeing any of these coming up?" Time was then the angry voter turned bitter and waited her turn for the next election when she would crucify the politician who could not fulfil the electoral promises. Now they know better. Voters don't care what an MLA/MP does after being elected. So they demand a price for their votes. After being paid they could not care less who does what and whether they continue to live in abysmal conditions. It was abysmal when they voted conscientiously; it will continue to be abysmal now that they have done "paisa wasool." This is the reality of elections today!

So in the middle of what is increasingly turning out to be a depressing election campaign of name calling and candidates taking pot shots at each other, there comes a legal eagle called Nalin Kohli who represents a party that the Congress love to hate - the BJP. Kohli is otherwise quite long-suffering on national television debates but even he has developed the killer instinct after landing at Tura. The other day Kohli said, "Meghalaya is not a kingdom and Mukul Sangma and his wife Dikkanchi are not its king and queen." Wow that was quite something man! But isn't that what every MLA in this country does? Which is to treat the constituents with disdain and treat the constituency like their little kingdom? And not only that! The children of these MLAs/MDCs behave like princes and can shoot and kill anyone they choose to (The Bihar example is right before us). When they are driving past they don't want to be overtaken by lesser mortals! Indeed it is common to see children of MLAs/ministers, IAS and IPS officers move around in their parents' vehicles as if they are entitled to that privilege! In the case of Dr Mukul Sangma, since he is the chief minister so Meghalaya is indeed his oyster. Mr Kohli has only reminded us of what we knew all along which is that being an MLA and a minister is not about service to

people but about building personal wealth and resources and of using that wealth to retain one's seat and win over and over again so that wealth multiplies many times over.

So yes, as long as people charge money for their votes the wealthy will continue to win and those with an ideology to serve the state and its people will end up frustrated and probably die of bitterness. Hence it is increasingly clear that democracy as it is being interpreted today - the winning of an election once in five years and cobbling together a majority comprising incongruous partners - is not working for us. But we also have no alternative because no political party has the courage to suggest, much less to implement electoral reforms. And as for the Election Commission is concerned it has failed to check election spending! What happens behind closed doors is none of the ECI's business. The ECI did not see or hear anything and elections have been conducted smoothly. That's it! End of election story and the State Chief Election Officer gets an award for mobilising voters and conducting an incident free election. Hurrah!

We are indeed a country that has perfected the business of 'pretending' into such a fine art that we no longer know the difference between a mirage and a reality. Frankly speaking we are a dysfunctional society and the roots of that dysfunction are embedded into our society because politics is too much with us. So what do we do? Where have we failed? Where has the social connection that translates into social capital disappeared? Earlier we would openly discuss in our localities who to vote and why to vote that person. Today because money is at stake we have become secretive and individualistic. Money has killed the social capital and sense of community that tribals claim they still have. In healthy societies people do not live as individuals. They are members of a family, of a neighbourhood of a civic or faith organization and each of these layers of life is nestled in the others to form a varied but coherent whole.

When politicians see that they cannot divide society

they will not play the kind of divisive politics they unleash today which is like a good-versus-evil blood sport. In the book 'Bowling Alone,' Robert Putnam laments the loss of social capital and the rise of individualism among Americans. Putnam's study shows that by 2005, 47 % of Americans knew none or just a few of their neighbours by name. He also noted that there was a sharp rise in the number of people who say they have no close friends to confide in. Hence civic life or community life has suffered. Marc J. Dunkelman in his book "The Vanishing Neighbourhood," writes that Americans spend less and less time with community members in the neighbourhood even while they spend more time on social media. Dunkelman argues that community membership helps people to bond and also develops their skill at deliberation. In a community, members may have different political opinions but they still have to work for a larger cause within the community. Hence they have to learn to agree to disagree without isolating themselves from the community. When politicians see this cohesion they are unlikely to try and bribe members of a community to sow the seeds of divisive politics. And if people think as a community they think of the larger common good. It is the individualistic thinking that provides politicians a ready-made pond to fish in.

When politics begins to decide our common good then we have lost something precious. And if we allow partisan politics to decide who are friends and enemies are then we are a lost cause. Of course we need politics but if we are going to salvage our social capital then we would have to shrink politics, and nurture the web of social relationships that politics rests within. Dunkelman believes that if we make this cultural shift, we might end up happier. The paradox of life is that if each of us fulfil all our individual desires, we will end up with a society which is not what we want at all.

I am not sure who is winning on the 19th of this month but of this election divides the people of Garo Hills to a point where they cannot be civil with each other, then whoever wins has not really won.

Nitish failing to ensure law and order Bihar policemen serving only politicians

By Arun Srivastava

The feudal mindset in Bihar is not restricted to the upper caste landed gentry. The neo rich people even belonging to the intermediate castes have been more ruthless in their approach and action. On Saturday Rocky Yadav, son of the Janata Dal-United Member of Legislative Council Manorama Devi shot dead the 20 year old Aditya Sachdeva, a class 12 student simply because he dared to overtake his vehicle near police line in Bihar's Gaya district.

Poor Aditya was not aware that the person in the other car was the maker of his destiny. By overtaking the car Aditya had hurt the prestige and honour of Rocky, son of a famous criminal, to such an extent that he retaliated with brutal force to refurbish his image and of his parents'. For him this is manifestation of their right to behave as they will and do what they want. Over the years such minds have proliferated in Bihar.

On his return from Kerala, the chief minister Nitish Kumar on Monday accused the BJP of unnecessarily politicizing the Gaya road rage case involving ruling JD(U) MLC Manorama Devi's son. He also assured the people of the state that police would not spare anyone found guilty in the case. Of course the police arrested the MLC's husband Bideshawri Yadav, alias Bindi Yadav and her bodyguard Rajesh, it could not succeed to lay its hand on Rocky till the MLC came forward to lead the police to Bindi's farm house where he was hiding.

What transpires is that Manorama relented under the political pressure. Though on Monday Nitish had reiterated, "Police have complete 'azadi' (freedom) in investigation and anybody found guilty in the case will not be spared," the administration was not moving fast until political pressure forced Nitish to get Rocky arrested.

Aditya's killing has many important dimensions: while it underlines that the politicians treat themselves above the law, the police administration is non-existent. It is shocking indeed that the police body guard of Manorama helped and aided Rocky in killing Aditya. This points to complete lawlessness and absence of fear of rule of law. If there has been a rule of law and the police functioned under the control of the government, this situation must not have arisen and the guard should not have helped Rocky to accomplish the task.

People are skeptical of police role. They point out that after taking over the office, Nitish at least on four occasions pulled up the police and its top brasses, directed them to completely smash the reign and rules of criminals, but ironically the criminals continue to call the shots and dictate the political actions. Apparently the police establishment has not responded to the directives and desires of Nitish. Even on Monday he said that arm of law was quite long and no criminal would go scot free. But sad enough the long handed law took at least three days to reach the culprit. The reason for a change in public perception about the Nitish Kumar-led government is that criminals defy the police and engage in criminal activities in the public domain. "Sarkar ka iqbal khatna ho gaya hai (the government has lost its authority)" is a common refrain.

It is pure case of misuse of the police security. The fact is the bodyguards are not merely a symbol of personal security and prestige for VIPs in Bihar, they have become the tools of carrying out unlawful acts by VIPs and their kin. Rajesh was arrested and subsequently sent to jail for his complicity with the MLC's son Rakesh "Rocky" Ranjan, the accused. True enough Rajesh, a constable of the Gaya district police force, was not supposed to accompany

Rocky in the Land Rover. He not only violated the rules but also remained a silent spectator when Rocky shot Aditya dead. Being a policeman he should have prevented Rocky from indulging in killing. What is worse he even concealed the incident and helped the accused to flee. Rajesh is not an isolated case. This has been the usual feature of the functioning of the bodyguard system. The body guards are in fact the personal domestic servants of the political elites and bureaucrats.

Nitish got angry with his political opponents for their allegation that Jungle Raj has set in Bihar. But the fact is he cannot outright deny this allegation. During the last six months, the crime has attained new dimension. Only during January 2016, around 200 murders have taken place in state besides 15160 cognisable offences; dacoity 34, robbery 129, riots 170 and kidnapping 581. This certainly does not go well with Nitish's claim to provide good governance. During the last six months, a large number of killings and murders have taken place. The incidents have happened notwithstanding strict warnings of the chief minister.

During the assembly elections, the BJP had been accusing of return of second phase of Jungle Raj as Lalu Yadav was the major partners of the grand alliance. Apprehensions were expressed that Nitish would not be able to handle the muscle power of his ally Lalu Yadav's outfit RJD. But what we see in the present context is the law breakers are Nitish's own colleagues and comrades. Bindi and Manorama were earlier with RJD and Bindi was involved in many criminal cases. Bindi Yadav charged in 2011 with sedition for storing 6,000 rounds of assault rifle bullets -was arrested for "harbouring" the killer. True enough Nitish should have been more prudent in admitting the couple in his party. Instead he enrolled them as members of the JD(U). As if this was not enough, he made Manorama a member of the Legislative Council.

Nitish Kumar's biggest USP has been law and order control and good governance. The image-conscious CM has been trying to arrest the drift but the results are not showing yet. The killing by the JD(U) MLC is bound to further embarrass Nitish Kumar and escalate attacks against his government for deteriorating law and order. What is most scandalous is the incident took place in front of the police guard, but he did not tell Rocky not to indulge in such action.

Nitish Kumar is known for using every opportunity to exhibit his achievement of improving the state's law and order situation. Nonetheless in recent times, there has been a sharp rise in crimes, especially those against women. This has put Kumar in a piquant position. In 2005, when Kumar took the reins of Bihar, his first meeting was with the senior police and administrative officers. In that meeting, he gave clear instructions that all measures be taken to ensure rule of law in the state, which had been notorious for murders, kidnappings and other heinous crimes. Interestingly the police adroitly carried out his instructions, but the same police establishment is not willing to give its full to the state and respond to Nitish. In the prevailing situation the onus lies on Nitish to reactivate the police and put the Machiavellians in proper place. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Will the CS take action?

Editor,
Through your esteemed daily I would like to ask a question whether the rules in the Government apply to all irrespective of the position they hold or only to a small fry like me. As per the rules only the Chief Secretary of the state out of the serving officers is entitled to use the VIP red light. Then how is it that the Chairman MeECL is travelling in a vehicle of the Corporation with a red beacon? How is it that this officer who does not miss a single opportunity to preach code of conduct rules and regulations to others is still retaining a vehicle of the Education Department under the programme Sakshar Bharat along with the driver whose salary is still being paid by the Department, after more than 2 years of handing over charge of that Department? This is a clear case of gross misconduct and misuse of public property and money.

I urge the Chief Secretary of the state who is well known for his impartiality and integrity to conduct an enquiry and take nec-

essary action immediately in the best interests of credibility of functioning of the Government and public.

Yours etc.,
Daniel R Lyngdoh
Shillong -3

Rude SBI staff!

Editor,
I am amazed by how the SBI staff get away with rude behaviour. They should be grateful to get a job and get paid good salaries. On the May 10, 2016 at around 1pm I went to SBI Marowang branch to pay my MPSC challan fees (since I am applying for a job). I was the only customer present at that time in the Branch. When I handed the challan to the lady in the counter, she rudely told me she was busy and that I have to wait until she finished counting the cash (manually) in her drawer which I obliged. But she kept on taking out bundle after bundle of cash and kept on counting then without a care for the lonely customer.

If I had to wait for her to finish counting the remaining bundles it would take at least half an hour so I approached the 'Service Manager' to see if she could help because I know that payment of challan fee

is just a two minute job whereas I have been waiting for at least 10 minutes. But the service manager directed me again to the counter when the lady behind the counter does not even care for a customer like me but instead gave me a dead stare. Unfortunately, I left the bank disgusted without paying my challan fee. I felt humiliated and insulted by this staff. Good job SBI. You hired yourself one hell of an employee out there!

Yours etc
Manuel Lymba
Shillong - 8

What is hate speech?

Editor,
This refers to your news report, "Dikkanchi in hate speech trouble" (ST May 12, 2016). I am no supporter of anyone, just a seeker for the truth. The BJP is a political wing of the mother of a cultural or religious RSS. Its brand philosophy is based on Savarkar's Hindutva published in 1923. According to this philosophy a citizen of Bharat Mata has to follow the Hindu faith. Muslims and Christians are excluded as their punyabhumis is elsewhere (see Khushant Singh's, "The end of India").

In other words it is a communal party by writing and by definition (not only speech). The British banned it (it was known as Jan Sangh). The prophetic words of Ambedkar in 1936, warning Christians that they have to reckon with "militant Hinduism masquerading as Indian nationalism is being acted out before our eyes today. Members of the Hindu group like Praveen Togadia and Giraj Kishore once criticized the 3-member Election Commission and singled out JM Lyngdoh because he is a Christian (by name) and described him as anti-Hindu. Just recently (Outlook May 16, 2016) Subramaniam Swamy, himself a BJP MP, described the RSS not as 'pro-Hindu' but 'anti-Muslim'. He even questioned the Constitution for not allowing outsiders to buy land in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. In the light of all this, who should get an FIR filed against them (election or no election)?

Yours etc.,
Rasputin Bismarck
Manners
Kolkata

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

"Talking much about oneself can also be a means to conceal oneself."

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

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SHILLONG, SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2016

DMK schizophrenia

ELECTORAL politics in Tamilnadu is extremely muddled. The DMK which is the major opposition party is on a sticky wicket. The campaign for the DMK's elections has exposed fissures in the party. DMK chief M Karunanidhi's son, Alagiri told the press that his father's party did not know how to use his own political skills. He will keep out of the coming elections. Earlier the old patriarch, Karunanidhi said that he would head the government if the DMK was voted power. His son and heir, M.K. Stalin will have to wait his turn. Stalin is 63 and the architect of the DMK campaign. He may not be very happy with the wait for the leadership. The DMK was born of a mass movement to bolster the ideology of social justice. The party however became divided in the nineties over the succession question. Stalin was rising to the top. His elder brother Alagiri was sent to Madurai to prevent a fight between brothers.

Stalin held his own in the bastion of Chennai. He became Mayor of the city and held ministerial positions in the cabinet. The territories of the two brothers were carved out for three decades and Alagiri remained the supremo in the south. But his muscle power proved counter-productive a number of times. M Karunanidhi is the only chief who can put his party together and steer it along the right lines but he should realize that he is getting on in years with several terms as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. In any case the DMK is fighting a losing battle with Jayalalitha's AIDMK in spite of all the crises which she has gone through.

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

Is our technical manpower socially effective?

A few years ago the Chinese Government had formulated a twelve year science plan which provided for training for its engineers and scientists so that they could orient themselves to the tasks of economic development of the country. Edgar Snow's book on Communist China, "The River" which gives the account of the above plan quotes the educational authorities in China! "We made one big mistake and we are correcting it. We tried to build up a huge mass educational system without sufficiently enquiring into the needs of production. From now secondary and higher education has to be combined with rational solutions of manpower distribution. Experience has taught us that it is the only way."

This serve as a lesson for India where the population is so vast that it is almost impossible to spend monstrous sums on research which may hardly have any bearing on its economic development. It is estimated that more than Rs. 4000 crores have already been spent on the development of science. In 1980, a view Committee was appointed by the Government of India for the purpose of assessing condition of technical education in the country. In his preface, the Chairman observed that there was mismatch between educational objectives and social needs and also between university products and industry's needs.

The elitist institutions like IITs have large investments and recurring expenditure of about Rs. 50 crores. It is essential to evaluate these institutions critically and to reorient their courses and research programmes more towards design, production and development technologies. And observation of an eminent educationalist with

regard to the education pattern of IITs have been eminently successful in training the minds of the students, but not their hearts. Their products become, by large insensitive to the social and human problems around them. Mr Russi Mody, the eminent industrialist and Chairman of the Board of Governors of IIT, Kharagpur, made a pertinent recent convocation address at the Institute. He stressed that it was no longer enough for IIT to produce engineering graduates and carryout research. The need for the moment was "to scan the scientific horizon, to anticipate the changes that are to engulf the society and to be prepared to launch the new educational revolution."

The IITs have comparatively weak links with local industry and technology. This is partly because local industry has so far found no use for higher technological institutions. When Indian industrialists go abroad they deal with manufacturers, not MIT and Stanford or Oxford and Cambridge. Our industry has till now been in a purely commercial, phase as distinct from developmental phase. A typical example is that of Hindustan Motors which obtained the technical knowhow for manufacturing cars in 1959 and have persisted with same model for 25 years where as the Japanese who did the same have developed their technology by leaps and bounds.

Modern industry needs institutions like the IIT even if Hindustan Motors do not even now the national industrial policy has proceeded only towards instating in competitiveness and is far from encouraging technological development, it will still be difficult for IITs to interact meaning fully with industry. But the effort has to be made.

Supreme court judgement on neet is welcome

Entrance test should be allowed in regional languages also

By Nantoo Banerjee

The latest Supreme Court judgment on the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for MBBS, BDS and their post-graduate courses is most welcome. It is good that private medical colleges and their associates will no longer be allowed to hold separate admission tests for these courses. Some of these institutes are often accused of being easy money making organisations, offering poor quality education. But, it remains still somewhat unclear as to how a common entrance test for medical and dental education will solve the problem of shortage of quality medical professionals across the country? The apex court judgment does not quite link it with a more important unresolved issue of ensuring a uniform educational curriculum, syllabus and right to quality education at the school level across the country.

It is not that the Supreme Court is unconcerned about the discriminatory, and often weak, school level educational system in India. In fact, another apex court judgment in August, 2011, considered this vital issue in threadbare before concluding that a uniform and quality school education is must for all children in the country. It also held political interference responsible for the unequal and often dismal state of school education in India. Unfortunately, the important SC judgment and observation have changed little in the general standard of school education. Unrestricted and, often bogus, private college and university education, which had lately attracted criticism by no less a person than the Reserve Bank governor, Raghuram Rajan, have added new dimension to the country's unhealthy progress of the

educational system.

What the apex court said in 2011 and how it was ignored by political authorities at the centre and states over the last five years, are highly noteworthy. The court said "The State government should have acted bearing in mind that 'destiny of a nation rests with its youth.' Personality of a child is developed at the time of basic education during formative years of life. Their career should not be left in conditions with uncertainty to such a great extent. The younger generation has to compete in global market." The judges further said: "Uniform education system would achieve the code of common culture, removal of disparity, depletion of discriminatory values in human relations. It would enhance the virtues and improve the quality of human life, elevate the thoughts which advance our constitutional philosophy of equal society. In future, it may prove to be a basic preparation for uniform civil code as it may help in diminishing opportunities in those who foment fanatic and fissiparous tendencies."

But, where is the uniform basic education system and civil code in India? Justice Chauhan, writing the judgment, said: "The government has to rise above the nexus of vested interests and nepotism and eschew window-dressing. The principles of governance have to be tested on the touchstone of justice, equity, fair play and if a decision is not based on justice, equity and fair play and has taken into consideration other matters, though on the face of it, the decision may look legitimate but as a matter of fact, the reasons are not based on values but to achieve popular accolade, that decision cannot be allowed."

The Bench, quoting a

catena of decisions, held that unless it was found that the act done by the authority earlier in existence was either contrary to statutory provisions, was unreasonable or was against public interest, the State should not change its stand merely because the other political party had come to power. "Political agenda of an individual or a political party should not be subversive of rule of law." Pointing out that the uniform system of school education law had already been upheld by the Supreme Court, the Bench said: "Bringing [in] legislation in order to nullify a judgment of a competent court would amount to trenching upon the judicial power and no legislation is permissible which is meant to set aside the result of the mandamus issued by a court even though the amending statute may not mention such an objection. The rights embodied in a judgment cannot be taken away by the legislature indirectly."

"If 1.20-crore students are now to revert to the multiple syllabus with the syllabus and textbooks applicable prior to 2010 after the academic term of 2011-12 has begun, they would be utterly confused and would be put to enormous stress. Students cannot be put to so much strain and stress unnecessarily. The entire exercise by the government is therefore arbitrary, discriminatory and oppressive to students, teachers and parents."

Expressing its anguish, the court then said: "The State government should have acted bearing in mind that 'destiny of a nation rests with its youth.' Personality of a child is developed at the time of basic education during formative years of life. Their career should not be left in doloric conditions with uncertainty." Unfortunately, nothing much has changed. Education is un-

der the joint list of the Constitution. States follow their own laws and practices, generally choose their own medium of instruction and hold their own board-level secondary school leaving examinations. The ICSE, ISC, CBSE and various state board level secondary and higher secondary examinations follow their own independent systems.

The question is: Where does NEET-style uniform national post-school level admission tests fit in under such diversified school level education system following independent standards, independent curriculum, modes of education and teaching, using multiple languages of instruction and different text books and examination marks giving systems? Why is it important that NEET be conducted only in English and Hindi? What happens to those who followed Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya, Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati, Assamese, Urdu, etc. as principal medium of instruction in schools? The Constitution recognizes these state languages. How can any post-school national level entrance test ignore them? Why include only Hindi if other regional languages are untouchable? If the medium of instruction for higher level technical education such as medical, dental, engineering, information technology, cost and financial accountability, management, aeronautics, marine education, etc. is generally conducted in English, why should the entrance test to these disciplines be carried out only in one Indian language, Hindi, which is not considered as the first language in large number of Indian states? Unless these fundamental issues are addressed politically, the tests like NEET will only promote a vested interest group in post-school speciality education. (IPA Service)

If we follow their speeches since the beginning of their campaign till now, there is this same chanting, "P.A.Sangma's chapter is closed, BJP undermining minorities/Christians, NPP is a gone case, and finally, to lead a fight to obliterate the NPP completely and defeat its candidate. Is not it a shame to read such speeches in the print media? Don't aspirants for the MP's chair not have higher plans to lay out before the electorate? What are the schemes that Garo Hills needs from the Centre? Aren't these more important than tearing apart a political rival?"

While listening to a politician's election promise, I pity the electorate in his/her constituency who have to listen to promises of converting government lands into private property for those inhabiting government lands near Soshanghat, New Walbakgre, ITI complex Civil Hospital areas. Why cannot these people themselves submit memoranda, representations, ask for dialogues from government instead of listening to the lies spouted out by the MLA? Remember India was won by the Father of the Nation's relentless struggles through his Satyagrahas and non violent movements? In spite of having been hoodwinked with every election the electorate never learn that every election promises are never fulfilled. Wake up, people. Don't

Modi govt allowed agusta backdoor entry No documents given to italian court in two years

By Devsagar Singh

The continuing AgustaWestland slygust has exposed both the previous UPA regime and the incumbent Narendra Modi government even as the much-needed arms procurement project suffers.

Documents in the possession of the Italian courts, now out in public domain, confirm that approximately 400 million Euros were allegedly paid as bribe to politicians, bureaucrats, air force personnel, middlemen and others in the Rs 3600 crore AgustaWestland deal during the UPA regime. This was despite Mr Clean A.K. Antony presiding over the Defence Ministry as Union Minister of Defence.

Such was the aura created in the then Defence Ministry under Antony that not even the specially accredited Defence Correspondents were allowed entry into South Block beyond a point apparently fearing sensitive leaks. Defence procurement processes were at their slowest pace during Antony's stewardship. Disappointed, top serving defence personnel across the three services teamed up to secretly brief the media that the country's security was in jeopardy because of shortage of high grade weapons due to indecision or slow pace in decision making at the highest level. Imagine how much time it took to sort out the Rafael aircraft purchases from France during Antony's regime. It virtually took all of ten years of the UPA regime, no matter how vital these aircraft are for India's airspace security in the face of Pakistan's acquisition of the deadly F16s from the US.

It is entirely sound and prudent to take all possible precautions to prevent slush payments in big defence deals. But is it wise to inordinately delay decisions affecting national security for fear of getting bad name? And look at the end result: AgustaWestland bribes to the tune of 400 million dollars under the very nose of Mr Clean.

It is true that Antony moved fast once the facts about the bribe came out in the open. Proceedings against the helicopter company began in April 2012. CBI and Enforcement Directorate were immediately involved into the investigation. Agusta's contract was cancelled on January 1, 2014 by the Ministry of Defence under Antony.

Not just that. In a move to ensure that the public enquirer was not compromised, the UPA Government encashed the bank guarantees given by AgustaWestland and recovered Rs 2068 crore. The Government also kept in its possession the three AgustaWestland helicopters it had received. In other words, the financial loss was

minimal but exercise your minds. The news reports about John Leslee Sangma making friendly overtures towards Congress has indeed made headlines. Though he means well, he is also on the lookout for better prospects for himself, and we don't blame him, but I for one strongly believe that a strong opposition always makes a stronger person and wiser too and he is respected while he is in the opposition chair. Dear people the Election Commission has a commitment to give fair and just election for the people. It's an arduous task but we have a duty to ourselves too. Our duty as voters is to honestly elect the candidate of our choice without any obligation or binding and fear, but what Congress workers are doing is the antithesis of the above. As per news reports about seizure of huge amount of cash (ST May 19, 2016) one must say that these workers are a belligerent lot. They are on a vindic-

almost eliminated. To that extent, credit must go to Antony and the UPA government.

But look where the UPA government erred again, perhaps unknowingly. Towards the end of its regime, it appointed in constitutional positions two senior functionaries who were involved in the decision making on AgustaWestland deal. While the then Defence Secretary Shashikant Sharma was appointed as Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), immediately upon retirement, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's close advisor M.K.Narayanan was appointed Governor.

Questions are now legitimately being asked if the UPA government appointed the two persons to shield them from possible enquiries in future. Both Mr Sharma and Mr Narayanan were placed in key positions at the time the AgustaWestland helicopter deal was taking place. Mr Sharma, indeed, was a key figure in the entire deal, first involved as Director (Acquisitions) in the Ministry of Defence and later as Defence Secretary.

What was the response of the Narendra Modi Government failed to supply documents to the Italian courts for all of the two years it has been in office in spite of full knowledge that the demand for the documents was pending for long. Defence Minister Manohan Parrikar told the Rajya Sabha earlier this week that the documents could not be supplied to the Italian courts because they were in the possession of the CBI. This is a very weak argument. Is the CBI away from the Government of India? Similarly, a decision to ban the AgustaWestland company was taken by the UPA government and the order for the ban was actually issued by the NDA government as late as July 2014. Surprisingly, within 40 days of the ban order, AgustaWestland company was allowed backdoor entry as a sub-contractor and vendor in all defence contracts despite the corruption charges and the CBI enquiry. Not just that. The Narendra Modi government even allowed AgustaWestland to participate in the PM's flagship 'Make in India' programme and gave FIPB (foreign investment) approval to it for setting up joint venture in defence production.

The Modi government seems to be pursuing just a facade in the name of the enquiry perhaps believing that it would be a wild goose chase ending up with nothing. Or is there a tacit complicity? (IPA Service)

tive spree, wanting to tear honest and courageous officers apart. Such upright officers are always at the receiving end of their venomous attacks after every election. This election will also be not be different. Wait and Watch! Transfers? Suspensions? But you are doing your job, converting our people into an honest race and able to hold our heads high as Tagore in his song "Ekla Cholo Re" exhorts the listener to continue his or her journey, despite lack of support, I say, "Keep going officers, Salute!"

Yours etc.,
Mery Jelinda Sangma,
Viaemail

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

TO THE EDITOR

History of the Hill State Movement

Editor,
Let me through your esteemed daily correct the facts for Ms Deborah Mark Hon'ble Minister Social Welfare Meghalaya. It was the concerted effort and determination of the Garo people living now in Goalpara and Kamrup (Assam) including the whole of Garo Hills that compelled the then Union Government under Mrs.Indira Gandhi to carve out Meghalaya as a Hill State from the then Assam. The Hill State Movement under the banner of GNC in mid 1950s was then spearheaded by venerable sexagenarian Late Modi K Marak (Duff pa) ably aided by his lieutenants like late Nollindro Sangma, Late Kamesh R Marak (Fillipa) Late Bronson W Momin (Kosloka) late Levisond N Sangma (Percy pa) Late Horen (Barnapa) and many others like Keong Sangma the then president GNC unit of Hahim Kamrup (Assam) Late Emphen S Marak (Chutpa) of Nishangram (Assam) who sacrificed their all to the cause of the Hill State movement from the late 1950s till its creation. This same GNC was re-baptized into APHLC to broaden its base which included the late Khasi stalwarts like SDD Nichols Roy, Prof G G Swell, B N Lyngdoh, D D

Pugh, P R Kyndiah Prof. M N Majaw, J D Pohrmen and last but not the least hon'ble late Hopingstone Lyngdoh which was later led by late Capt W A Sangma (Trumanpa) eclipsing out his mentor late Modi K Marak. Mr Modi K Marak, Bronson W Momin, Jackman Marak and other handful of followers remained loyal to the APHLC/GNC unto their death when Capt. Sangma and his host of followers merged with the Congress in Nov 1976. Why Capt. Sangma and others left the APHLC to merge with Congress leaves a big question mark better buried with them.

The saga of the APHLC/GNC in Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam was written with blood, sweat, toils, bruises and sacrifices of many a Garo now left in the lurch in Assam. Most of these unsung heroes of the Hill State movement suffered torture in Goalpara jails when the movement reached its peak but were abandoned to fend for themselves in hostile Assam when seeking jobs. I bow my head in shame when I think of their most invaluable contributions to the creation of our State that now we all enjoy. Let the sons and grandsons/granddaughters of these unsung heroes of the Hill State Movement in Assam during mid 1950s till 21st January 1972 multiply and flourish.

Yrs etc.,
Sonaram Sangma
Tura

Let's do our duty as voters!

Editor,

These days news makes interesting reading as candidates in the straight fight for the Tura Lok Sabha seat are trying to hard sell themselves to the electorate. The voters can judge for themselves what kind of a person the candidate is when he or she opens her/ his mouth. As long as the candidate does not open his/ her mouth the real person is hidden but once he/ she opens the mouth the real truth tumbles out and we can gauge whether that person is shallow, intelligent, foolish, immature, hollow, mean or has the making of the great man/woman with virtues of true leadership. Dr. Mukul Sangma and his MP Candidate wife Dikkanchi Shira scathingly declare that NPP will become history and that P A Sangma will be a closed chapter. What a bold pronouncement! Someone said thus, "Speak when you're angry and you'll make great speeches you'll ever regret and words that comes out from inside cannot be whistled in back again." What gives Mukul and Dikkanchi such bold confidence so as to make such rampant speeches? Are they counting on money power to win the battle? If their issue this election is only to crush and vanquish the NPP into oblivion and have no other worthy issue, is it worth wasting my precious vote on such a party?

By Ranjan K Baruah

Interview skills - Part 1

Once we finish our higher studies, we are ready to face interview. Interviews are being held for jobs and recruitment in government services or in private agencies or corporate. There are differences when it comes to interview. The process of government interview is little different than corporate interview. Interviews are held to select the right candidates for jobs. We must prepare well for the required skills to face interviews and also to do well in the interviews to get selected.

If you want to excel in interviews then you must to prepare thoroughly. The most important thing to remember about any interview is that it is a two-way process. We may start preparing for mock interviews in our final years of studies. We need to have an effective CV or Resume to be shortlisted for the interviews. Many aspirants apply for jobs and only effective CVs get shortlisted. First and foremost is to have an effective CV. We have published in our last edition how to write an effective CV.

Interviews may be face to face or sometime telephonic interviews are also held to shortlist candidates before they appear for face to face interviews. We must follow certain tips while preparing for the interviews.

Research the Organisation/Agencies/Companies/Corporate: When we apply for any job and if we are selected or shortlisted for the interview then we must do research on the organisation. Look at their website, and any information that they have sent you, and see if

you can find their mission, objectives, any value statements and the like. It's helpful to be familiar with the organisation's guiding principles. More we do research; more confident we would be when appearing in the interviews because there might be some questions related to the organisation.

About You: Your CV speaks about yourself but one must prepare about her/him self. One may focus on the expertise or skills which can attract the person taking interviews. Always speak positive things and initiatives that you have taken in the past. One may take help from the expert to make the CV and also describe him or her effectively. In most of the interviews it is asked to express oneself within a short span of time. One must avoid common things like address but focus more on the skills and expertise.

First impressions should be impressive: Be polite and offer warm greetings to everyone you meet - from parking attendant or receptionist to the hiring manager. Employers often are curious how job applicants treat staff members - and your job offer could easily be derailed if you're rude or arrogant to any of the staff. When it's time for the interview, keep in mind that first impressions - the ones interviewers make in the first few seconds of greeting you - can make or break an interview.

Review Common Interview Questions and Prepare Responses: A key to interview success is preparing responses to expected interview questions. First, inquire as to

the type of interview to expect (which you can do by asking your contact person at the organization or seniors who had appeared in recent interviews.) One may search online for sample questions. It is advisable to have good networks with your seniors from campuses or neighbours who might give you some ideas from their experiences.

Tests and Presentations: Some interviews require you to make a short presentation, or to take a test. The details will always be included in the letter inviting you to interview, so you'll have time to prepare. It is good to be familiar with power point presentation or presenting with hand outs.

Be Authentic, Focused and Confident: Once we are in any interview we must be authentic, confident and focused. Our goal should have authenticity and we must speak the truth. More we are focused with our replies and speak confidently then we have more chances to be selected.

We shall publish more information related to interview skills in coming editions. Preparation might vary for freshers and for experienced persons but here we are mostly focusing for the freshers and these tips are helpful for aspirants and freshers in particular.

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

By Veturi Srivatsa

The pace of Olympic qualifications has gathered momentum and Thursday's cut-off date for badminton showed that India will have a record seven players at the Rio Games in August.

It could have been eight if the the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games gold medallist Parupalli Kashyap had not pulled out following a delayed knee surgery last month.

Kidambi Srikanth is the lone singles player and he has worked his way up with some sensational play in the last couple of years. Though he may not be among the medal prospects, he should go a fair distance if he gets a favourable draw.

In the last Games four years ago at London, India had five players and much of the credit for the phenomenal growth should go to arguably former All-England champion Pullela Gopichand whose academy in Hyderabad's Gachhibowli is now a centre for excellence.

Over the years, outstanding men and women players came from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Bengal, Bombay and Hyderabad and the national championships had great flavour.

None of the great stalwarts had the good fortune of playing at the Olympics as the sport debuted at the Games only in Barcelona in 1992, though it was a demonstration sport way back at the momentous Munich Games in 1972.

Then 29-year-old Vimal Kumar, now Saina Nehwal's coach, and Deepankar Bhattacharya, 20, were the only players to play in the men's singles and at 27 Madhumita Bisht is the

first Indian woman to play at the Olympics.

Bhattacharya, who was ranked ninth at that time, did well to win two rounds before losing to China's Zhao Jianhua and Vimal lost in the first round. And would you believe it, China did not win any gold medal, Indonesia and South Korea dominating the events, though they had swept the major titles at the world championships before the Games.

As things stand today, only Saina appears to be a good bet for a medal, and P.V. Sindhu, the second women's singles player in the Olympic draw for the first time, could have been in a better shape if only she had not cracked her ankle and stayed out of the game for a long spell. Now that she has qualified she is determined to push ahead.

Saina has recovered from



Vimal has done well with her to give the confidence to become World No.1.

Among the top eight can beat any other on a given day and Saina, notwithstanding her none-too-inspiring record against the Chinese, can still pull it off.

If she could reach semi-finals and final regularly on the circuit, she is in good shape and can get physically fit by the time the Games get underway.

After winning back-to-back bronze medals at the World badminton championships, international coaches pre-

dicted a phenomenal rise for India's second singles player Pusarla Venkata Sindhu and a potential to be a world beater.

At least one Malaysian coach thought the Hyderabad girl would surpass her more illustrious citymate Saina Nehwal. Over two years ago, one of the famous five Sidek brothers, Razif saw in Sindhu great physical attributes to go with her enormous talent.

Whether she stands is 5ft.10 1/2 inch or 11 inch, her height is Sindhu's major advantage. Suddenly, she finds she has to adjust her movements and footwork on court to pick dropshots and low smashes. She feels she has to think of negotiating her shorter opponents and that she cannot do with only her speed.

Sindhu is no day-dreamer. The day she saw Saina return to Hyderabad to a huge reception after

winning the bronze at the London Olympics, the 16-year-old daughter of professional volleyball players, in her own words, was determined to be there at Rio Olympics and possibly come back with a medal.

Razif, a top-notch doubles player in his time, was pleasantly surprised to find six Indians among the top 50 men players in the world rankings at that time, but he was unhappy that the country was not paying enough attention to the doubles play.

Talking of doubles, India will have a men's doubles pair at Rio in Manu Attri and Sumeth Reddy, while Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa will be playing in their second Olympics women's doubles.

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

Celebration time for Indian badminton



Kidambi Srikanth

both her psychological issues as well as fitness problems after splitting with her long-time coach Gopichand.

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, May 15, 2016

You would make some positive decisions during this year as Moon opposite Neptune on your solar return chart. Long cherished dreams are likely to be fulfilled. Efforts for a job change or switchover can be stepped up. Family life will be fantastic you can look forward to a lot happening at home. You enjoy the changes made in your lifestyle. If involved in social work or political activities then you take centre stage. Contacts need to be cherished and revitalized.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

This week highlights friendship, romance and love in your life. You would be successful in any field that requires a lot of imagination and vision. You would express your unique individuality, and if this involves changing careers or jobs, a new relationship, or a new hobby. Your domestic life takes on top priority. You attempt difficult tasks, resolve complicated issues and connect with unapproachable people in higher position. Your hobbies, moments spent with family, all come into focus.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

You meet difficult tasks and resolve work related issues confidently. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering. You would admire and adapt new circumstances, ideas, and unfamiliar situations. You are able to find novel solutions to problems now. Your efforts have been establishing strong professional base which brings in desired and even unexpected gains. It is good time to organize your workplace. Avoid being laid back as any gain or success in business needs to be followed up with hard work and dedication.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

Your ideas and goals are higher than usual, teaching may be part of the picture, and your cultural and spiritual awareness increases. Happiness and fulfillment through the expansion of your mind, widening your social circle, travel, and overseas connections is indicated during this phase. Those connected with the media, journalism and arts get an opportunity to showcase their talent. Students in fine arts and related fields attain success and good results. This is the right time to share your loving and personal relationships and share thoughts and ideas and spend good time in the association of your loved one.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

Travel, contact and communication are the keywords of this period. Opportunities and invitations from overseas take you on an unplanned journey. Visitors, friends and family make this a happy time as an event in family is celebrated. You are full of hope and enthusiasm as you make new beginnings at work and home. You are appreciative and caring as you give total support to loved ones through a difficult time. The desire for some form of recognition and financial success is stronger than any other time enhanced now.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation with outcaste and foreign people and this brings financial growth. You move on the path of success and betterment in terms of better financial stability, emotional and mental satisfaction and intellectual growth. You handle conversations, seminars, meetings and express yourself more specifically about the subject. This is an excellent time to make some financial investments and adopt new strategies in financial matters. This is a time when you renew your energy and consider what things are important to you.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

You would be successful in the fields of creativity, writing and entertainment industry or in any field that requires a lot of imagination and vision. You would be able to make an impact on important people. Your creativity will assist in your output at work and help you undertake redecorating your office. You may especially enjoy working with a cross section of people. Your ideas are higher than usual, teaching may be part of the picture, as your cultural and spiritual awareness increases. Happiness and fulfillment through the expansion of your mind, widening your social circle, travel, and connections with new associates indicated during this

phase. Students in journalism, law, management and related fields attain success and good results.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation of business associates and this brings financial growth. You move on the path of success and betterment in terms of better financial stability, emotional and mental satisfaction and intellectual growth. You expand your circle of influence and these new associates would prove to be beneficial in the long run. You handle conversations, seminars, meetings and express yourself more specifically about the subject.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

This period highlights friendship, romance, love and children. You give a new approach to love, children and creative projects. A new set-up in existing love affair or a new love affair altogether may be formed. Your professional life brings rewards and recognition. You are working hard and inclined towards more detailed work. An exciting job offer, reward, recognition, or promotion is possible in this period. An opportunity to expand business arrives now. Increased connections and experiences come into picture. Increased public recognition and professional success characterizes this phase. You would become more particular about your health and diet.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You may begin to take on more responsibilities on the job or in another service-oriented capacity. Your job could become rather tedious or boring, or working conditions may be poor, tiring and frustrating. You may have to draw some boundaries with friends and the demands of others. This is a good time to belong with a friend or a group who shares your own ideas and thoughts. You would attach yourself to unusual, more spiritual, friends. This is an excellent period for starting new regimens to improve your health and well-being, such as regular exercise, more structured and productive use of your time, and so forth.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

It would be wiser to face difficult people and situations rather than avoid them as there would be victory and success in professional ventures. Don't take the one you love granted but show your love and appreciation. Communications from overseas are hopeful and exciting as business opportunities are extended to you. Tackle sensitive subjects and difficult people and get your point across. Business projects and associations are opening up and widening your horizons so you need to think expansively from now onwards.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

You would achieve a lot in business and professional aspects by combining creativity and practicality. You play the role of the elderly in the family and personal situations by taking on extra responsibility and giving direction. You can expect superiors to support you and stand up for you in tough situations at work. You can trust your intuition about people and situations when called upon to mediate in conflicts and collaborations. You are bold and adventurous and you cannot tolerate delay that prevents you from behaving exactly you want. How willing you're prepared to experiment and explore new approaches will determine your success this time. You will be considerably more productive, healthy, and focused.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

This is a favorable period for people in sports, media and other related fields. It's a great time to exert your personal influence, as you are coming across as especially cooperative and graceful. You are more willing to adapt to new circumstances, ideas, and unfamiliar situations. It's a good time to join organizations and groups and to attend meetings or social events. This would be a right time to go for long term investments and speculations. This phase brings excellent opportunities for those in creative and related fields. You would work more creatively and express yourself with more sensitivity, compassion, and warmth. You have been more determined and hard-working and this brings fulfillment of desires particularly in your personal and domestic life. You are physically energetic and enjoy the feeling of well being and confidence.

A tiny house to call home

(Contd from P-VI) imaginative regards what is possible," he says.

"If the exhibitions and festivals that we have attended are anything to go by, we have hundreds of potential customers, but only if we can get the land issue sorted. Maybe our initial client, therefore, could be a local authority with its own housing needs."

QB2 has been lived in for a year now, in an urban setting, as part of a trial with a London Borough. "If we

could provide land with planning permission, my view is that we would have many, many customers. However, the people that would be most interested are the same people who do not have access to land. So there are issues other than just the design that will affect the uptake of our microhousing solutions," he says.

"Our microhouses could be used for leisure purposes in picturesque places," says Page.

According to Page, in countries like India they can be a solution to eco-friendly urban housing in future too.

"India has more sunshine and, therefore, great potential for use of, say, solar energy. Our designs can be deployed under license in India using a local workforce and local materials. The Cube Project microhouses, QB2 and QB3, are very comfortable to live in, and are much less polluting than previous generations of housing. The modern approach would match very well with the emerging image of India as a vibrant, hi-tech, and forward-looking country."

Another version of upside down boat shaped size tiny homes that grabbed attention at the festival is from a company called Armadilla. A total of 506 Armadillas have been

already sold to date. Armadilla is a family business based near Edinburgh. Archie Hunter, Managing Director, and his son Ross Hunter, designer, built the first prototype in 2009 and have honed and perfected the design during the last 6 years.

"All Armadillas are designed to be constructed with three core principles in mind; durability, quality and longevity. Our unique steel base which is integrated into every Armadilla provides a rigid and perfectly level and square chassis to build from. Built from Grade a Siberian Larch and marine grade stainless steel fixings - every aspect of the armadillas design is to last and remain beautiful," said the makers.

Dr Simon Gage, Director of The Edinburgh International Science Festival, says the tiny homes are meant for building a better eco-friendly world where

people are grappling for space in urban centres. "We need interesting and economical solutions to urban space shortage. We have to make our infrastructure look beautiful. We have to think about how to make more beautiful cities. "The houses in display here are all designed keeping in mind that people can actually live there. They are the poster boys of this festival and they provoke you to talk about issues [environment and urbanization]," says Dr. Gage.

"I also strongly believe that a house like QB3 have takers in countries like India or China. These are houses for young people and here you are not slave to electricity companies," he says.

"Also at the price of 40,000 British Pounds, a house like QB3 is costing only one sixth of a normal house in the UK," he says. (TWF)



Tagore and his women: Works that ...

(Contd from P-VI) as the ultimate goal of a love affair.

Tagore travels inside the traditional Indian concept of an arranged marriage through the life of Haimanti, the lead protagonist of the book of the same title. The story takes on the whimsicality and hypocrisy of the 19th and 20th century middle class society that restricts Haimanti's free spirit.

Taking another dig at the patriarchal rules that probably still persist, "Strir Patra" voices the struggle of self-identification that Mrinal faces in her life. The story revolves around a letter sent to a husband by his wife for the first time in 15 years conveying how her intelligence became a hindrance to her livelihood and led to misery,

and how writing poetry gave her solace and made her feel free from the patriarchal bond. Through Mrinal, Tagore reflected how a woman's life was meant not to be restricted within the inner walls of a home.

Not just on pages, but Tagore's stories and novels have been brought alive a number of times on celluloid. Satyajit Ray went on to make a number of movies based on Tagore's writings. So did Rituparno Ghosh and the legacy is still being carried on by other directors.

What will be remembered forever about Tagore is his contribution to literary society and his attempt to create a world "where the mind is without fear and the head is held high". *(The writer can be contacted at somrita.g@ians.in)*

"Education is the best provision for old age."
—Aristotle

The Shillong Times

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BJP shooting itself in the foot!

THE BJP has not set up a candidate for the Tura Lok Sabha by-poll yet the Congress candidate's main election plank has been to create an image of the BJP as the Party with the evil intent devil of destroying every vestige of Christianity in Garo Hills, if not the whole of Meghalaya. The BJP has lodged a series of complaints with the Returning Officer (RO) who is also the Deputy Commissioner, West Garo Hills on the hate speeches spewed by the Congress candidate Dikkanchi D Shira. In fact the Congress has been obsessed with attacking the BJP instead of outlining its own programmes and policies and a road map for the development of Garo Hills. On the penultimate day of the campaign, the Congress filed a complaint with the RO about a pamphlet that allegedly terms Christianity as a samasya and the mission and purpose of the distribution of pamphlet is for gharwapsi. It defies logic as to why the RSS or the BJP would shoot itself in the foot and circulate such a damning pamphlet on the eve of the election. And the timing is what creates further suspicion. Campaigning for the Tura by-poll ended on Saturday evening and the complaint was lodged that same evening thereby leaving the BJP as a party supporting the NPP candidate, with no opportunity to clarify its stance. In a society where religion has been the uniting force, even word of mouth about the threat to Christianity could polarise voters in favour of the Congress. It's a no brainer therefore as to who the pamphlet seeks to benefit. The RO has registered the complaint lodged by the Congress. The Congress believes that the voters of Garo Hills would vote against the NPP candidate based on pamphlets whose origin and manner of distribution are questionable. In fact the Party has pulled up all the stops to use a section of media persons to disseminate information about the distribution of the pamphlets, especially through web-based news portals that have an all-India reach.

The bye-election in Tura is held against a peculiar backdrop. The Congress Party is ruling the state; many officials are loyal to the government in power and would do its bidding to safeguard their own interests. Such officers are easily identifiable. That they were not transferred before holding the by-polls and replaced by officers known for their objectivity and integrity is surprising. Is the State Electoral Officer oblivious of the closeness of some of his colleagues to the government of the day and that free and fair elections would not really be possible under their watch? What indeed is the use of the so-called 'flying squad and the surveillance team' other than their being just a showpiece? If the flying squad was doing its duty it would have been able to nab the pamphleteers. So much for free and fair elections in Meghalaya!

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

'India incapable of punishing perpetrators of communal violence'

Janata Party leader Syied Shahabuddin has said that India could not be called a democratic state if the state proved incapable of punishing people involved in communal violence.

Speaking to newsmen here last evening on his arrival from Vancouver where he attend a conference, Mr Shahabuddin denied a report that in Vancouver he had participated in a demonstration against Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Dismissing a suggestion that he had compared Mr Gandhi to Nazi leader Adolf Hitler, the Janta Party leader said, "I am not saying that he is Hitler. I am saying that if India does not punish culprits, it will no longer be a democracy."

Citing the reported killing of 50 people in Hashimpur in Meerut, he said authorities

had yet to act on the findings of an investigation into the incident.

Mr Shahabuddin said the incident was investigated by a special team under former state Secretary Gyan Prakash even Amnesty International had sent out an alert having investigated the incident, he added.

He said Home Minister Buta Singh had admitted to him that a prima facie case was borne out but the government was still being liberating on the action.

Citing another incident for which he blamed the administration, the former diplomat said that during the recent curfew in Meerut, shops belonging to "a particular community" were burnt.

He also accused the Rajiv Gandhi governments of exploiting communal feelings to seek itself in power. That was why Punjab continued to burn, he added.

Threat to Pollinators: The fate of beekeepers

By H H Mohrmen

Since it was declared as one of the missions in the IBDLP program, it is heartening to note that quite a number of people had opted for apiculture and beekeeping as a livelihood activity in the West Jaintia hills district. Beekeeping has been a traditional activity in the rural areas, but it was merely a hobby for some and was never considered as another potential livelihood option. People simply keep one or two colonies of bees for self consumption and commercial apiculture was never in the farmers' mind. But after the Basin's intervention people began to take the activity seriously.

It is also heartening to see how a one-week training on beekeeping can change the mindset of traditional beekeepers that used to keep one or two beehives to consider it as a livelihood option. The training has been able to change a traditional beekeeper to suddenly think of ways to commercially exploit the huge potential that apiculture offers. The three stories are case studies which testify to the fact that with training and right support, traditional beekeepers had changed their mindsets on apiculture.

Sanki Shylla is a resident of ?ongnoh village which falls under the Thadlaskain Development Block of West Jaintia Hills District. He is a farmer by profession and during lean season he used to engage himself in coal mining business. In the early part of 2013 he met the President of the Society of Urban and Rural Empowerment (SURE) who informed him about the training in Beekeeping at RRTC Umran and asked if he was interested in the training.

Like anywhere else in Jaintia hills beekeeping is also a tradition at the ?ongnoh area where few individuals keep one or two colonies of bees just for their own consumption. Sanki already has two traditional beehives which he also kept just for his own use. Taking the opportunity he along with few friends from ?ongnoh

and Moosakhia accepted the offer and went for the training on bee-keeping.

The one week he spent at Umran had changed his views of the activity. On returning from the training he immediately went on a buying spree and approached all the traditional beekeepers in the villages around ?ongnoh to sell their beehives to him. In a matter of three months he had been able to acquire more than 30 traditional hives which also changed him from a mere traditional beekeeper who started with two colonies to a serious entrepreneur.

Field Coordinator of SURE later suggested that he register himself at the Entrepreneur Facilitation Centre Thadlaskain and few months later in January 2016 he was again sent for training at Mawlai, Shillong by the Basin Development Unit (BDU) West Jaintia hills and the District Commerce and Industries Centre, Jowai which is a nodal agency for apiculture mission. On completion of the second training on beekeeping he had gained more knowledge and is confident about moving ahead and without any hesitation decided to upscale his activity.

SURE then was able to help link him with Canara Bank, Ladthalaboh Jowai and with the support of BDU West Jaintia hills he was able to avail a loan from the Bank. Larry Shabong Branch Manager of the bank said that on March, 17, 2016 the bank sanctioned a loan of rupees 93, 000 in his favour with no investment from the partner. He only needed to indicate in the boxes that the project is hypothecated to Canara Bank, Jowai.

With the credit offered by the Bank he now has 49 bee-hives and 27 modern beehives which will help him collect honey in a modern way. Of the 27 modern beehives 22 boxes were bought with the loan from the Bank and supplied by RRTC, Umran and 5 boxes he arrange from himself. And of the 49 beehives he

now has, 28 are modern beehives and 21 colonies are still kept in traditional beehives. Through the bank loan, RRTC also supplied him one extractor and other utensil needed for collection of honey. Sanki is equipped with skill and tools and he can now collect honeybee in a modern way which will also help increase his production.

Another successful partner is Ngeitsuk Suchiang from Yniawkmak village which falls under Laskein development Block of West Jaintia hills district. After he registered himself in the EFC Laskein, Ngeitsuk was also sent for one week training in beekeeping by the BDU, Jowai at RRTC Umran. Ngeitsuk was earlier involved in coal business and after the training he was also convinced that he can take beekeeping as an alternative livelihood activity. The opportunity came at the right time for him because the NGT ban was beginning to have an impact on his earnings and for him the training was like a silver lining in the dark sky. Few months after the training he invested one lakh rupees from his own pocket and spent the money in buying planks and other materials needed for making modern bee boxes.

Shahjop Khongjoh from Moosakhia village which falls under the Amlarem subdivision is perhaps the first person in the area who had taken the business of keeping bees seriously and had been keeping more than thirty colonies of bees for many years together. During the time when Sanki and Ngeitsuk started to have some interest in the activity, Shahjop now has more than thirty traditional beehives in his kitty. Like Sanki, Shahjop has already undergone two trainings one at Umran and another in Mawlai but the only difference between the two is that Shahjop is reluctant to change to modern beekeeping methods. He is comfortable with traditional beekeeping system using beehives made by carving a log

than the modern bee box. He is also averse to taking any loan from financial institutions.

The three individuals who come from three different parts of the district have their own stories, but the one narrative that all three beekeeping partners have in common is the fact that the loss of forest cover in the area and in the vicinity of their village has affected honey production in their areas. This is a matter of grave concern for them, in Moosakhia where broom sticks had replaced trees and forests in many parts of the village and honeybee production in the areas has drastically declined.

In ?ongnoh too forest cover is dwindling due to coal mining and logging. This has affected honey production in the area and Sanki is convinced that if we continue destroying the forests the first casualty would be the bees and the honey production. In the Laksein block also people continue to cut trees for commercial purposes and this has impacted the bees and ultimately honey production in the area.

Bees or pollinators have an intricate connection with the forest and the environment. One cannot exist without the other, so for the business to thrive forest cover in the area needs to be kept intact. Beekeepers have now realised that their livelihood activity depends to a large extent on the kind of forests that exist in and around the villages or their absence. The survival of this one livelihood activity that our people have practiced since time immemorial depends so much on how we can conserve forests and the environment around us.

If the government considers promoting apiculture seriously, then it also needs to come up with a plan to help people plant flowering trees or fruit orchards in and around the vicinity of their villages. The government could also consider encouraging people to grow flowering crops like mustard and others. This will enable people to have two livelihood options at the same time.

TO THE EDITOR

Homeward bound!

Editor,
After being away from the country for some time it is nice to be back home in Shillong which, apart from the dirt and garbage lying around, the chronic traffic jams, the indiscipline drivers, the unruly crowds, the power cuts, the water shortage, the closed booze shops and the scary earthquakes, is a great place. I wish to thank The Shillong Times for keeping me in touch with my home through their on line newspaper which I diligently read every day while abroad.

Yours etc.,
D M Pariat,
Via email

Where is the dignity of the legislature?

Editor,
Sixteen years and four months have passed since January 9, 2001 when the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly was gutted in an engulfing fire. For almost fourteen years the Legislative Wing of the state is functioning temporarily in the Chamber of the Arts & Culture building, Rilbong. Being the most important secretariat and durbar where state government policies are being debated,

framed and passed, it is an unpardonable lapse on the part of the State Government. Sixteen years have passed and it is still temporary! It is sheer irresponsibility on the part of the Government of Meghalaya. The indifference has exposed a serious shortcoming in the functioning of the Government: its lack of foresight on the functioning of the Legislature. The indifference has seriously brought down the dignity of Meghalaya as a state.

Side by side in the past few years new buildings have been constructed by the Government. Now the state has its own multi-crore state constructions; the multi crore State Convention Centre, the multi crore palatial residence of the State's Chief Minister and the ongoing construction of another multi crore residence of a Government official at Rockside. Where is the permanent chamber of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly?

On the issue of a new Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Building, the Government has put the people of the State in a poor light. It shows the world that the State of Meghalaya has already forgotten the most important issue. We are living in a State without a permanent Durbar Hall. Where is the dignity of the legislature?

Yours etc
Baston Singh Lyngdoh,
Shillong-2

How liberal is India?

Editor,
Sadiq Khan's appointment as mayor of London Mayor is being termed by many zealots as the "triumph" of the non-Whites, Asian from the Indian sub-continent, minority, Muslims of the erstwhile British colony!

But the fact is just the contrary. Actually the elevation of Sadiq Khan, the son of a Pakistani-origin bus conductor, to the post of London Mayor provides direct proof of the unfathomable broad-mindedness of the British society. Yes, cosmopolitanism is neither a gift of God nor does it just fall from the sky at a particular place. Cosmopolitanism is nothing but the end product of supreme liberalism and humanity. Unlike the rest of the globe (barring a few exceptions) which builds an Iron Curtain so as to prevent the entry of migrant population and suppress the human rights of the minorities or marginal groups, Britain offers a fertile ground to all so as to prosper in each and every sector irrespective of their roots.

Instead of exploiting Khan's elevation to the post of London Mayor so as to flaunt the "victory over the British Empire" and viewing it as a "triumph" of Indian sub-continent, Muslims or other narrow identities; India and the rest of the world

should learn from Britain what liberalism and humanity are all about.

The UK offers a contrast to this self-declared liberal nation which shamelessly brands a certain lady politician as a "foreigner" despite her Indian citizenship or belittles another leader by invoking his childhood avatar of tea-seller! Yes, narrow regional identities and "colour of blood" shamelessly dominate the Indian society which beats its own trumpet of liberalism, equality and democracy.

I vividly remember how the country, specially the North Indian heartland, raised a shrill hue and cry when H D Devegowda assumed the post of Prime Minister because he did not know Hindi! The incumbent President Pranab Mukherjee once revealed how his handicap in Hindi acted as a disqualification and obstacle in the race for Prime Ministership! It seems that only Hindi speakers hold the monopoly of leading this multi-lingual heterogeneous secular democratic nation! Perhaps to be seen as a part of "mainstream", Narendra Modi has preferred to remain as a MP of Varanasi by forsaking the Baroda seat and promotes Hindi much more vigorously than even the North Indian politicians! If a Kannadiga, Bengali or Gujarati Hindu has to face such predicament, it is a foregone conclusion as to what would happen if a Muslim or Christian (specially in this communally vitiated times),

The aberration that is India

By Ananya Guha

As an academic I feel rather insecure at the grisly turn of events in the academic institutions in the India of today. While I am not going to go into the JNU events specifically my mind is disturbed at the kind of damage that is being done to academia and the academic world. Firstly a man of the stature of Amartya Sen has lost favour with the current dispensation. Not that he needs it or has been currying favour. He is not a man given to diatribes, and even when he protests, he does it gently. But to dismiss his writings as glibberish, as some have tended to do, is profanity of the worst order. Yet many academics have kept quiet on this. His economics studies apart he is an acutely sensitive writer on social and historical matters. Perhaps his rationale of the argument exegesis working on Indian history and society has not gone down well with many, for whom the line of argument of a nation is linear, based on dominant thinking of a Hindu nation. So he has to be ignored. But disrespect is something that has to be dealt with, especially when it comes to people who have attained international recognition. This is point one. I am surprised that despite all the protests made against treatment meted out to historians and students, this has got little attention. Though he couldn't care less I suppose, the wounds inflicted on him must be understood, and if we are academics of any worth we should raise our little and already muffled voices. We can't and won't. What a shame.

Again, the charges levelled against prominent historians is something we should first understand. Liberal historians like Romila Thapar spoke of a country based on society, not on creed. They focussed on the common man or woman, be it Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist. The wonder that was India according to A.L. Basham has now truly turned into the wonder that IS India, keeping our mouths both shut and agape. Romila Thapar in the meantime has continued with her protests against this upturning of history, based on premises of dynasty, rulers, removing conveniently Mughal and Islamic presence in the annals of Indian history. What IS History is now not answered by E.H.Carr, but by decrepit stick wielding politicians. The second shame and calumny of Indian history! Indian history is suffering one blow after another, but thank God the presence of people like Romila Thapar is saving it out of its skin. She is continuing stoically with her interpretation that India has been, is and will be a secular democracy.

The third shame. Recently historians like Bipin Chandra have been attacked for naming Bhagat Singh as a 'terrorist'. This word has been totally misinterpreted and taken out of context by mud slingers who want to perpetuate this unrest in colleges and universities. They want a total disturbance in text books, and desire a new Indian history feverishly written, with an extreme or what may be called rightist slant. The 'terrorist' movement in the Indian national struggle is well known, as distinct from

the moderate schools of thought. There is nothing new in this. But the varieties of a new India, interpret the word in present international contexts, where terrorism is identified with the likes of ISIS & IS. This is a deliberate act to create confusion and discord, in minds of people who otherwise were not thinking about this. The Indian national struggle for independence has always been largely described as extremism and moderation, the latter camp led by Gandhi.

There are now frenetic attempts to change the beautiful rhythms of Indian history. We forget that the Taj Mahal a symbol of the nation's pride has been brought by one of these 'foreign' interlocutors against whom the new cult of historians is on the rampage. Let us save history from the present totally uncalled for, aberrations taking place. The recent deletions of chapters on Nehru, Gandhi and Nelson Mandela from school text books is Rajasthan, is an example of spite and high handedness. It shows how not only efforts are being made to change Indian and World History, but also how doctrinaire thinking is being infused into school children, with attempts to brain wash them. These instances are being reported in the international media and reflect the country in poor taste. After all today you cannot delete Alexander, Napoleon or Hitler from the annals of history, however much megalomaniacs they were. And in trying to rework history, by rubbing of names like Nehru and Gandhi, who were great dissenting forces in the world at that time, the entire vision of world history is distorted and slurred upon. And when it comes to Nelson Mandela, what simply can one say? The forces behind such machinations are not only ignorant but are acting with vicious vendetta. This is sad and tragic. Worse still it is historically aberrant, throwing all winds to historical logic and causality. Introducing this kind of politics in education, to retard growth of young minds is an attack against educational liberty and the freedom to think and act on one's own on the basis of reading texts and knowledge. Nehru's "The Discovery Of India" is in itself a delightful tract on Indian history meant for popular reading. School children should read it and find it pleasurable.

How long such tyranny will continue is a matter of conjecture. How long historical strands in India will continue to be polarized or decimated is up to the powers that be. But one thing is certain, the citadels and artefacts of history are not only preserved in books: they are there to be witnessed in monuments, temples, mosques, gardens, forts, fortresses, indeed in all the beautiful manifestations that history masterminds, and works wittingly or unwittingly in. These can never be erased, unless of course by brute force!

South or North-East Indian (specially if Hindi-ignorant) vies for the post of Prime Minister! Even a ticket for a Panchayat/Municipal election gets handed to an individual by taking into account the demography of the constituency and his/her racial, linguistic, religious, caste and even sub-caste status! Yes, election results do get influenced not by the intellect, efficiency or honesty of the candidate but by his/her demographic credentials! Yet we are all Indians and have to raise the slogan "India First"! And also Royalty and "blue blood" in the

veins act as a great qualification for garnering tickets and votes!

Hence instead of engaging in cheap rhetoric, Indians should draw lessons of humanism and liberalism from the Sadiq Khan saga and try to raise themselves above all divisive credentials of race, religion, caste and "colour of blood" which are nothing but accidents of destiny. Let Equality and Humanity be our only guiding force.

Yours etc.,
Kajal Chatterjee,
Via email

"You can cover a great deal of country in books."

—Andrew Lang

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2016

Anti-defamation

THE Supreme Court's decision sometimes causes surprise and shows lack of knowledge about the past. There was a furore over defamation during the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi wanted to push through an Anti-defamation Act to prevent people from allowing freedom of speech to degenerate into personal attack and go beyond what should be legal propriety. Under pressure, particularly from the private media, he dropped the idea. The Supreme Court's decision recently not to decriminalise defamation and make it a penal offence appears to have followed up Rajiv Gandhi's idea. The Court has said that the right to free speech cannot mean that a citizen can defame another person. After all defamation is a pejorative word. Underscoring criticism is not defamation. The Supreme Court has ruled that the trial court must be very careful in scrutinising a complaint before issuing summons in a criminal defamation case. It will, however be untrue to say that Defamation or the Anti-defamation Act was in existence in the past.

By criminalising defamation, the law inflicts the extreme punishment of loss of liberty. The question of reputation to a dispute between the defamer and the impugned party has been reinterpreted. Society agrees that a person has a reputation but it can be reappraised. However, the Law of criminal defamation is not clear as the crime is very broadly defined causing much vagueness. Some of the complaints may be on flimsy grounds. The Law Commission has spoken of the chilling effect of the threat of criminal defamation on the media. The NDA government is supposed to have supported the Anti-defamation Act. One wonders why Rajiv Gandhi's move for it caused such media flak and finally had to be abandoned.

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

Massacre in Tripura

As apprehended earlier the Tribal National Volunteers have resumed indiscriminate killing of innocent non-tribals in Tripura in a bigger scale. Its latest assaults surpass all previous records in savagery. A gang of 15 TNV outlaws armed with automatic weapons swooped down on Taidudepha village in South Tripura in broad daylight on December 18 and indiscriminately gunned, down five children, one of them a child in arms, and a woman. The victims, it appears, were chosen with care, because the murdered woman was a tribal married to a non-tribal. With this incident, the casualty in the TNV raids in Tripura last year now went up to seventy in all.

The motive behind the fresh spurt of TNV violence in tripura is primarily to disrupt peaceful election process in the State while at the same time make their presence felt. If they allowed the election to pass off peacefully with the tribals partici-

pating in it, their image of saviour of Tripura tribals would have further diminished. Apart from whipping up communal passions among the non-tribals, the TNV by their murder of non-tribals aims at compelling the Government of India to initiate a peace dialogue with them. The latest acts of TNV violence are obviously the result of a feeling of desperation which must have overtaken them. The indiscriminate killing of children is a pointer to this.

The reaction of the non-tribals and also of the tribals to the senseless violent acts of TNV has so far been singularly rational. Both tribals and non-tribals regard these acts with a feeling of repulsion and disgust, and neither community has reacted communally as desired by the TNV. But the ease with which the TNV has carried out their murderous assault possibly for the first time in broad daylight was a sort of moral booster for them.

Mysore Fire

Toll 44, Sanjay Khan Critical Mysore, Feb 10 : The toll in Wednesday night's fire at Premier Studios has risen to 44 with four more succumbing to burns. Eleven people continued to be in critical condition at various hospitals here. The proprietor of the Premier Studio Mr Naga Kumar, was arrested on charges of negligence and violation of the Karnataka Fire Forces Act, and produced before a magistrate here today.

Karnataka Forest Minister B Rachiah told newsmen that the government would order a judicial inquiry into the fire caused by bursting of crackers and

fireworks during the shooting of the television serial The Sword Of Tippu Sultan by Actor Producer Sanjay Khan. Meanwhile the condition of noted actor - producer Sanjay Khan continued to be critical today. According to hospital sources as Bangalore, the actor was still being kept under constant vigil

Sanjay Khan was brought here from Mysore after he suffered severe burns in the fire at the Premier Studios on Wednesday night while shooting the television serial "The sword of Tippu Sultan. He is likely to be shifted to Bombay for further treatment.

Political Profiteering

By Babet Sten

It is of some interest to follow the developments that have been taking place throughout the state in recent weeks. While I write this with regards to news items which have been widely circulated in the Shillong-based media, the other sources of information are word-of-mouth and hearsay. But that should not discredit them, I feel. Anyway the topic I would like to touch on is one of my least favourite of all: INC-BJP politics.

It is now out of the bag that NPP and quite possibly all regional parties within the state are unable to defeat the Congress except with outsider firepower i.e. Hindu Majoritarian Right Corporate Development Engine called BJP. Their inability is not only because of inept and incompetent leaderships but because they are unwilling to be game changers. By this I mean that these regional parties are as moribund in their love of hierarchy, money power and political capture as the INC. They are still trying to beat the Congress at its own game, a game which is already rigged from the start. They have no ideology worth mentioning (and no accountability to the people) so they continue this farce which has two big seasoned players within it as team captains - the national giants, BJP and INC.

Common people have been losing out for a very long time now. Congress is not the answer but neither is BJP. However, depressingly, I must admit that very few people who read this will want to effect change. It is primarily because there is a caste system already in place in Meghalaya. The privileged set who will read this (upper and middle class) already have political allegiances. The rich actively pursue them for more wealth and power while the middle class are happy to suck up if it means they get government jobs. It is that easy to bait them. Real change which should come from below is going to be ignored and disregarded as

usual. I hope I am wrong though.

Democracy is not for Mukul or Purno's family to use as a magic whip. It is not for Hopingstone's kur nor for retired or retiring IAS/MCS officers and their progeny. It should start from the ground not the clouds. I saw the assets that the candidates have on myneta.com and I think about the poverty, strife and lack of "development" that Garo Hills is reeling under. It seems such a contrast for people to come from such poor areas and live such glamorous lives. Or maybe it is just me who

gets and secret canvassing. Most are just talking idly but some are serious. All are people who come from privileged backgrounds, none come from humbler backgrounds. Today the BJP is trying to reach out to the state's many disheartened (politically shallow) people - professionals, semi-religious, self-righteous development mongers - who are tired of the way things are within the Congress regime. This is tragic because they are quick to choose BJP to swat INC only because they hate the Congress not necessarily because they believe in the tenets upheld by the BJP.

gal respectively. Please forgive the crude joke but I could not resist. Wonder what Michael Syiem would say to that?

The BJP aka RSS political wing has been very quick to slap anyone who criticises them with lawsuits, defamation cases and recently an FIR for hate speech was lodged against Dikkanchi Shira. Pravin Bakshi, please watch Ram Ke Naam by Anand Patwardhan. I understand you have to follow protocol and all these wonderful things but that aside History shows us otherwise if you really look at it well enough. Anyway, that digression aside, it seems that I have been unfairly bashing the BJP. Please don't take me to be "anti-national" and a traitor to Bharat mata. I also equally despise the Congress which has made our society politically enslaved and widened inequality. The Congress is as corrupt as the BJP is power-crazy, both are two sides of the same coin. We need a new coin. We need many new coins.

The rest of the world is desperately trying to find the "third way", an approach to government which is fairer, more accountable and driven towards welfare. In Meghalaya we should be ahead of that curve. Instead we are content to be led by the greater currents and patterns that define Indian politics today. There are some reasons for this which are greater than us of course but politically we are capable of many things but we refuse to acknowledge our own powers. Our older forms of polity and society are in many ways vastly superior to anything "modern" that India can teach us, let us re-look at them. We must not worship them though. Perhaps the most important thing to be in this day and age is sacrilegious, we must refuse governance through "experts" trained in some Mussourie cabin, we must refuse hierarchies of family and office; we must refuse to let anyone frighten us with legal jargon. Let us start taking a little more responsibility.

Democracy is not for Mukul or Purno's family to use as a magic whip. It is not for Hopingstone's kur nor for retired or retiring IAS/MCS officers and their progeny. It should start from the ground not the clouds. I saw the assets that the candidates have on myneta.com and I think about the poverty, strife and lack of "development" that Garo Hills is reeling under. It seems such a contrast for people to come from such poor areas and live such glamorous lives. Or maybe it is just me who thinks it too unfair!

thinks it too unfair!

I cannot imagine why Conrad Sangma would need BJP support if he is such a stalwart and all-round 'good guy', someone people already look up to, someone who is as seasoned a politician (if not more) than Sonowal and Nalin Kohli. Today many of the opinions I read on Shillong related forums are dangerously Right wing. For the sake of strengthening their bases, our politicians don't mind making all sorts of alliances. It is very obvious that the INC has become lazy and it is also obvious that much of this is political positioning for 2018 which is fast approaching. Today I hear many rumours from people who whisper about election tick-

This path is dangerously narrow. People might be happy to imagine a future of bipartisanship but I am not. If you look at how 'outsiders' Sanders and Trump struggled for party legitimacy despite popular backing you can gauge the vast gap between the official dictat of the party and grassroots aspirations. This sort of thing would be very common in India should regional parties disappear. The 'national' interests would be deemed more important, the 'party leadership' would decide everything for everyone just like Nalin Kohli did recently for the Garo Hills unit. The NPP, UDP, HSPDP (matrilineal parties) need to learn from patrilineal Amma, Didi from Tamil Nadu and West Ben-

TO THE EDITOR

Sinful act of getting land by church elders

Editor,

The recent confessions by the Catholic, Presbyterian and other church leaders and elders that they paid several lakhs illegally to the Syiem of Myllem and his Myntris without any receipt from their office for land purchase but which is termed as gifted land is shocking. As a Christian I am ashamed and shocked that they indulged and encouraged blatant corruption. The top authorities of the Church must investigate how they knowingly condoned such acts of corruption. As per the PCN and other Khasi cable news channels money was paid to some Myntris who were in charge of Land Department under the Office of Hima Myllem. These Myntris were conduits for the Syiem and his Dorbar. If this is true it is a shameful act by the respective Myntri who has brought dishonour to his own clan. He ought to be prosecuted by the law of the land. The KHADC must file an immediate FIR at the nearest police station if they are not hand in glove with this shameful act of corruption. We also request the Income Tax Department to investigate the matter. If the different churches are registered as NGOs how can they pay cash when the law demands that they pay by cheque? These church elders must bow

their heads in shame for flouting the laws of the land.

Yours etc.,
Lydia Marbaniang,
Via email

Where are the award wapsi dolts?

Editor,

Where is our award wapsi brigade? Where are they hiding now? These opportunists who returned various government awards and honours in protest against the gimmick called "intolerance debate" in the country in the recent past are found mysteriously and notoriously silent now when a youth in Bihar's Gaya was shot dead in a cold blooded murder by the son of an MLC. This brigade of dolts, among whom is also one from Shillong, were vocal then against the national intolerance debate. However, it looks like they have lost their entire tooth suddenly to remonstrate when this Gaya youth was shot down because he overtook the vehicle of the son of an MLC in Bihar government. The move by the award wapsi brigade then looked as if they will not tolerate any unrighteousness and immorality whereas its members have themselves gone inhuman now when they should have been rightly raising their voices, in unison. Their muteness only proves that they are nothing less than "mere politicians" who politicize issues to their advantage. Some of the brigade members who were

seen on television channels brazenly voicing their concerns against terrorists being sentenced by the highest court of the land are today mute and blind on the cold blooded murder of this youth and rising VVIP racism in the country. But luckily we have a few electronic and print media houses asking direct questions and revealing all of this criminality because of whom there has not been a cover-up so far.

Yours etc.,
P. K. Dwivedi
Shillong - 1

Beautification work on Howell Road

Editor,

For the past few weeks the Howell Road in Laban is being dug up through its entire length starting from the Red Cross bridge. This is being done so as to have a better drainage system and also to accommodate the water pipes. This digging work has caused great inconvenience to pedestrians, adjoining shop owners and nearby residents. Roadside parking of vehicles is well night impossible. Several people have fallen into these pits and injured themselves. However, short term inconveniences are worth the trouble if the long term goals are fulfilled.

My bone of contention is, however, different. About a decade ago a similar exercise was undertaken on the right side of the same road and a similar drain constructed for the same purpose. In the past few years a lot of water, plastic bags,

plastic bottles (to name a few) have been thrown into the drain. Now this drain is clogged. When it rains heavily the shopkeepers have to be on their toes to prevent spillage of muck from the drain into their shops. Moreover the stench emanating from the drain is unbearable. As far as my knowledge goes, the drains have not even once been cleaned in all these years. Health hazards cannot be ruled out as the water flowing through pipes which pass through the drain could get contaminated at any point in time.

I hope the concerned authorities have taken all these into consideration otherwise we may very soon be confronted by water borne diseases.

Yours etc.,
Dr G Kar Purkayastha,
Shillong-4

Solar power as a viable alternative

Editor,

I would like to highlight some of the major problems regarding power supply in the North East. Everyone is aware that most hydel projects in the North east are executed by NEEPCo. Examples are the Kopili and Kathalguri hydel projects (Assam), Ranganadi and Kemang hydel projects (Arunachal Pradesh), Doyang hydel project (Nagaland) and the gas and solar-based projects in Tripura. It is admirable that NEEPCo is contributing its sincere efforts for generation of power not only in

Nitish Kumar should focus on law and order

By Amulya Ganguli

Another icon is failing. Up until Nitish Kumar's success as leader of the mahagathbandhan (grand alliance) in Bihar last year, his stars were on the ascendant. However, there was nothing surprising about his rise. His electoral victories in 2005 and 2010 were against an opponent like Laloo Prasad Yadav who was mired in malfeasance and misgovernance. It was a cakewalk, therefore, that digression aside, it seems that I have been unfairly bashing the BJP. Please don't take me to be "anti-national" and a traitor to Bharat mata. I also equally despise the Congress which has made our society politically enslaved and widened inequality. The Congress is as corrupt as the BJP is power-crazy, both are two sides of the same coin. We need a new coin. We need many new coins.

But once Nitish Kumar broke with the BJP, he stumbled badly in 2014 and thought that it would be best for him if he resigned as chief minister to regain his bearings. To his credit, it didn't take long for him to recover. But he could only do so by taking the help of his former adversary, Laloo Prasad, who brought the support of the Yadavs, who comprise 14 per cent of Bihar's population, to Nitish Kumar's side.

But the marriage of convenience is now revealing its unsavoury aspects. Realizing that a support base of his caste brethren, the Kurmis, who make up a mere 3.8 per cent of the population, is not enough to challenge Laloo Prasad, Nitish Kumar has decided to court another vote bank - that of women.

The bouquet which he is offering the women is prohibition. The chief minister apparently believes that by sacrificing Rs 4,000 crore of annual excise revenue at the altar of moral rectitude, he will considerably strengthen his political position. So much so that he is now promising to bring about a Sangh-mukt and sharab-mukt Bharat - a nation free of the Sangh parivar and liquor.

But he is making a mistake. The pitfalls of prohibition have been known since the 1920s when it gave rise to Al Capone and the Mafia in America as they illegally catered to the demand for drinks. The same thing happened in Morarji Desai's Bombay - as the city was known in his time - with the appearance of various "dons" who built their empires on smuggling.

It is not only the revenue loss about which Bihar will have to worry, but also the criminalization of the liquor trade via bootlegging, the corruption of the police and excise departments and the conversion of law-abiding social drinkers into liars in front of inspectors.

Moreover, as the industrialist, Adi Godrej, has pointed out, bans can hurt the economy. If prohibition projects India as a country of killjoys, thereby keeping out foreign tourists, the restriction on the eating of beef can saddle the peasants

with the woes of maintaining worthless cattle and starve the leather industry of raw material.

Nitish Kumar's policy has another disadvantage. A vote bank inevitably pits the favoured group against a rival - Dalits against the upper castes or the Muslims against Hindus. In this particular case, men as a group will regard themselves as being unfairly stigmatized for the drunkenness and loutish behaviour of a few.

Since women, too, drink nowadays more widely than before, they, too, will believe that they are unnecessarily having to pay a price for the indignities suffered by the women of abusive husbands who are not large in number.

In their eagerness to acquire a new vote bank, proponents of prohibition like Nitish Kumar, Jayalalitha, Karunanidhi and Oommen Chandy do not realize that drinking has become a much bigger social phenomenon than, say, half a century ago when Devdas characterized the typical drinker in the eyes of the middle class. Now, it is not only the men and women of the upper strata who belong to the so-called cocktail circuit who are fond of their sundowners, almost every middle class home maintains a stock of liquor and wine.

If Nitish Kumar believes that he will become the new hero of the "secular" parties by wearing a halo of moral rectitude by championing the cause of prohibition, he is barking up the wrong tree.

His USP from 2005 was not prohibition, but a strict enforcement of law and order. However, his present focus on banning alcohol is apparently leading to the return of the "jungle raj" which was associated with Laloo Prasad's reign by himself and his wife, Rabri Devi, from 1990 to 2005.

It will be a pity if Nitish Kumar throws it all away by chasing a policy which several states have tried - Haryana being the last one - and found wanting. A leader cannot gain in popularity only by trying to secure the support of selected groups, but by looking at the population as a whole and considering how his policies will help the economy to prosper, thereby providing the necessary funds for roads, electricity, health centres, schools and so on.

Since it is doubtful if Nitish Kumar's prohibition will help to lift Bihar out of its BIMARU or sick status, he is likely to go down as another man who disappointed his admirers by pursuing a flawed policy. (IPA Service)

North East India but also other parts of the country. It must be noted that most of the hydel projects under NEEPCo are generating approximately 30-40% of power out of the total capacity. This deficiency in hydel power generation can be overcome by solar power. NEEPCo has advertised for procurement of land for solar projects but this is yet to be finalized.

The Kopili project with a total capacity of 275 MW is non-functional since 2013 because of major renovation works. So is the case with other hydel projects. It has also come to light that China is constructing mega dams at the source of the Brahmaputra river and its major tributaries which feed most of the hydel projects of North East India. These projects have now become

non-viable. At the same time, solar energy is not feasible in the North East because of moisture and humidity in the atmosphere. Nevertheless about 35-40% energy can be generated through solar power and it can be an alternative and stable source of power. I therefore request the NEEPCo authorities to execute solar projects at the earliest.

Yours etc.,
Dominic Lyngkhai,
West Khasi Hills

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

“Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving”

—Albert Einstein

The Shillong Times

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Nepal on the boil

Nepal is in trouble again and as about 1000 madhesis and other minority groups scuffled with the Nepalese Police. They want more rights and representation in the country's new Constitution. Prime Minister KP Oli warned that his government would take action. Protestors demanded the dismissal of what they called Oli's incompetent government. The madhesis are of Indian origin which drags India into Nepal's political crisis. What the problem is with re-demarcation of the seven province model of federal government, representation of marginalised groups—especially of ethnic communities—and proportional representation is not clear. The Constitution had to be drafted a number of times and the demands addressed to the extent possible to enable its adoption. To incorporate these against the integrity of the country should only be in the right direction.

Prime Minister Oli urged madhesis to cooperate in the reconstruction of Nepal after the severe earthquake. If work has been slow, the government had been deadlocked by the Constitutional hassle and agitation in the country. The border blockades organised by the madhesis caused economic disruption. It cannot be said that India had nothing to do with it. Furthermore, Delhi did not make Kathmandu happy, slashing its economic aid to Nepal. PM Narendra Modi's policy of neighbourliness has decidedly been hit in Nepal. It is lucky that Oli has not yet been offered an overfriendly hand to Beijing.

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

Phukan fears fresh agitation in Assam

The Assam Government wants the Centre to expedite the implementation of the Assam Accord on a faster pace, otherwise an atmosphere for resumption of the Assam movement is very much on the cards. This was expressed by the Assam Home Minister Mr. Bhriku Kumar Phukan while talking to Shillong Times here yesterday.

Mr. Phukan was very critical of the centre's role for the delay in amending the Immigrant (Migration Determination by Tribunal) Act, 1983 even though the bill was introduced in the last session of the Parliament. Mr. Phukan also demanded that the electoral rolls of Assam should be updated in line with the amendment since a large number of foreigners are included in the rolls.

When asked to comment on the recent allegation of the AASU that the AGP Government was equally responsible for the non-implementation of the Assam Accord, Mr. Phukan said both the AGP and the AASU have the same goal so far as the implementation of the Assam Accord is concerned.

Mr. Phukan made it abundantly clear that at no cost the Assam Government would allow the Meghalaya Government to set up polling booths in Assam territory.

Asked about his comments on the recent spurt of violence in Karbi Anglong by some anti social elements, Mr. Phukan told that the state Government was aware of it and strict measures were being taken to prevent the recurrence of violence.

Asked about his opinion on the Centre's request to

Mr. Mahanta to persuade the AASU to call off the oil blockade, Mr. Phukan said that the Chief Minister was negotiating with the AASU and added unless the Centre agreed to the AASU's demands, nothing positive could be achieved.

Security tightened in Assembly after heckling of Minister

Security arrangements in the Meghalaya Assembly premises have been further tightened following reports of an incident of heckling and abusing of a Minister belonging to the HPU (B) group on Wednesday.

According to reports, a group of person, mostly women, from Cherrapunjee button-holed PHE Minister Mr. S. P. Swer in the Assembly corridor and expressed their displeasure over his decision to join hand with the UMPF. Some of the women allegedly hurled choicest abuses on Mr. Swer. Reports said the Minister, who stood unruffled, also received severe threat. The group it is reported, told Mr. Swer to return to the HPU or else face consequences. He is reported to have said “I shall consider the matter.”

Report said that Congress(I) MP Mr. J. E. Tariang whisked him away. Later security men took control of the situation.

Meanwhile, the Assembly Secretariat has decided to withdraw all premises passes and issue fresh ones only to the genuine persons in need of it. Watch and Ward staff of the Assembly have been directed not to be lenient towards anybody. Even the staff of the Assembly Secretariat have been asked to carry their identity cards.

Guns call the shots Darlings, welcome to anarchic india

By Poonam I Kaushik

Violence is the rhetoric of the times as India reverberates to the sound of gunshots. Of a lawless and order-less State where brutality calls the shots, killing yet another signpost of our increasingly enfeebled law enforcement machinery. Symptomatic of the free-for-all which has gripped the country establishing a new cult, an “order” of rage. Wherein, the wails of sorrow are drowned in the cacophony of a paralytic Administration. Darlings, welcome to anarchic India!

So lucidly brought to the fore in Bihar, Delhi, UP, West Bengal and Kerala recently. From corrupt netas to goons and criminals. Desh drohis juxtaposed with private senas. A gory account of muscle, money and mafia in politics. Down to the gutter level. Replete with blackmail, intimidation, hustling and muscling. Behaving like the devil incarnate.

Let's start with Bihar synonymous with “jungle raj”. Last week, it lived up to this analogy when an 18-year old boy was shot dead by the son of a JD(U) legislator Manorama Devi and Bindi Yadav a “history sheeted” aka as Bahubali.

The motive for the murder? The Maruti in which the boy was travelling overtook the MLC ladla's Land Rover which led to row and in a fit of rage, the neta's progeny shot the teenager dead. Thanks to public pressure, the father-son are in jail and the MLC suspended from the Party. A satisfied State Government preens, “Now let law takes its course.” Sic.

This is not all. Since Laloo's RJD and JD(U)'s Nitish formed the Government last year, in two

months alone over 687 murders and 400 cases of murders and kidnappings. Last December four murders took place in 72 hours. Reported, as many as 11124 armed license holders need to be verified. Over 10600 warrants and challans are lying unserved at different police stations.

It is pointless to argue that the State has withered away in Bihar. Which has reverted to being a battleground of caste senas, armed brigades and ideologically indoctrinated lumpens. In the absence of gainful employment and goaded by senseless courage and caste vendetta, a large number of unemployed youth are attracted to the senas.

Notably, Delhi is not far behind. Last month a young dentist was bludgeoned to death in front of his wife and son by neighbourhood miscreants simply because he scolded them for rash driving. Naturally, the police was missing as usual. So much with you, for you always.

Remember Haryana in February when for a fortnight it was in the throes of angry bands of Jats who went on a burning, looting and raping spree, demanding backward class reservation for themselves. So immense was the scale of disorder that they threatened to cut off the Union Capital's water supply whereby the Army had to be called in to protect Delhi from them. Akin to anxieties last evoked in 1857.

Shocked? There's more. Five rapes occur every minute across the country. Early this month, Kerala reverberated to another

Nirbhaya, a gory rape of a 30-year old woman with her body totally mutilated. Another 20-year-old mentally-challenged was gang-raped in a UP train, a 19-year-old mother is ravished in front of her husband in Odisha and another defiled by five men in a moving car in broad day light in Delhi...an 80-year-old grandpa deflowers an innocent five-year-old in Haryana.

Worse, the manner in which gun licences have been issued to arms dealers in UP is a pointer to the growing culture of violence. Today nearly 7.5 lakh people are licensed to carry arms and nearly three lakh applicants are pending clearance from the district magistrate. Interesting most of the applicants have a political map baap. Imagine, out of 425 legislators in the State, over 165 MLAs have criminal record.

In far flung Kerala, too, there is complete political subversion of the rule of law. The probability of a political killer, arsonist, rioter or failed assassin to be brought to book is an unbelievable 0.3 per cent, according to a recent report of the Intelligence Branch of the Kerala State Police. In other words, those arrested in 99.68 per cent of such cases are discharged by courts for one reason or another.

Bombay is replete with instances of mafia don's vice-like grip on politicians, industrialists real estate developers etc. who extort money at gunpoint. Who is responsible? The onus lies on all sides --- politicians, bureaucracy, police, ‘protected’ criminals et al. Politicians and the police are but

two sides of the same coin. Both widely viewed nowadays as venal and incompetent.

Nobody sees red at the sight of blood any longer. Even if some blood is spilled in an ever-populated nation, what difference does it make? Fake encounters. Torture deaths. Want to get rid of somebody? Call up the “Police-wala Goonda”.

Criminals in khadi herald the new dons of tomorrow, hustling and muscling is the way to fulfil the people's aspirations. And what should one say of hot young blood? Who will rape for kicks and kill for a drink. In this milieu can criminalized mafia dons be far behind? Who now have taken recourse to “out of court settlements” and extortions. Only last week two such encounters took place in UP and Delhi wherein an approver and accused were shot dead.

Add to this, one gets nothing or little from the courts. Remember, justice delayed (often indefinitely) is justice denied. Promising widespread social unrest at best and descent into anarchy at worst. Where might is brazenly right and “jo jeeta wohi sikander”.

For those who enjoy the ruinous events now unfolding in the country, there is some good news! The end of the tragedy is no where in sight. And the bad news? The tragedy is turning out to be a comedy of errors for the powers- that-be.

It's simply a system's failure! They collectively coo. Who failed the system? Not the politician or the bureaucrat. All point an accusing finger at each other. Nevertheless, everyone is agreed that there is something rotten in the State of Denmark! --- INFA

TO THE EDITOR

IDPs not refugees

Editor,

Apropos the news item entitled, “Reang refugees torch houses in Tripura district” (ST May 17, 2016), the use of the term “refugees” in relation to Reang tribe is misleading and should be avoided. They are not refugees but “internally displaced persons” (IDPs). As per Article 1 A (2) of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), refugee is a person who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

In simple words, a refugee is a person who is outside the country of his nationality. On the other hand, according to the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), IDPs are “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.” It means that IDPs, unlike refugees, do not cross an international frontier, but for whatever reason, also flee their homes. And obviously the Reangs have not crossed an international border. Albeit they have fled from their place of habitual residence i.e. Mizoram, but they are staying within their own country. Hence, the Reangs are IDPs and not refugees.

As an avid reader of your newspaper, I consider it my humble duty to point out the conceptual inaccuracy in the said news item. Yours etc., Shishir Tiwari, Assistant Professor, Department of Law, North-Eastern Hill University

Shillong then and now

Editor, Quaint neat Assam-type houses reminiscent of a colonial era of Shillong's past, that the old boisterously narrate to us the young. Police Bazar's few humble shopping complexes (that people impatiently rush to in Christmas) that look to surprise one amid a line of small shops and kiosks here and there—some selling watches like HMT, magazines like ‘Auto India’, novels like Wordsworth's Classics etc. And Yezdis and Yamaha RD 350s in smooth traffic zooming between Ambassador cabs and those blue and yellow wooden Tata buses with beautiful artworks on the sides. Now, they are replaced by architect-designed full concrete houses, malls that offer more than five brands, streets chaotic with angry-looking mini super bikes, sleek Hyundai sedans, intimidating Renault SUVs and bug-eyed Chevrolet hatchbacks. Back in my childhood during the nineties I would regularly accompany my mother for grocery shopping in Laitumkrah's small marketplace, and we would afterwards stop by in some dukan sha (tea shops) for some tea and pu-syep. There was a certain joy that we derived spending time there. In those days, dukan sha were places for having those long endless chats.

‘Hearts and Minds’, winning back Garo Hills

Editor, Who is to going re-stabilize the militancy torn Garo Hills? It would be interesting to see the outcome of the political battle between Conrad Sangma and counterpart Dikkanchi D Shira and whether the political leadership take the initiative to bring solutions. A glimmer of hope in the form of a major success came by as the entire ‘Northern Command’ of the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) surrendered including its top honchos. The spate of surrenders and aggressive operations have rattled the morale of the banned insurgent group. The question which comes to mind is why so many surrenders at a time when the bye-poll was at hand? Could it not have taken place in the previous months which could have saved a number of lives?

Operation Hill Storm III was launched with a twofold objective—combating militancy using local policing tactics and mobilizing public approach (hearts & minds) for restoring peace. What is strange is that the goals of counter insurgency operation cannot be achieved with only firepower, neglecting basic services such as education,

infrastructure, health etc which make the population vulnerable to penetration by guerrillas as in French Indo china and Soviet-occupied Afghanistan. The failure of counter-insurgency operations and the root cause of insurgency can be traced to government disregard towards these elements.

What is needed at this crucial stage is an appropriate political framework. Better examples which explain this is Kashmir where Lt General Arjun Ray of the 14 Corps in Ladakh and India's deputy military advisor in London redefined the armed forces by launching Operation Sadbhavana (Goodwill) and setting up 13 Sadbhavana schools, 11 Women's Empowerment Centres, and 60 Adult Education Centres for non-literate women along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. (Wikipedia). During the Malaya Emergency in the 1950s, British High Commissioner Sir Gerald Templer a dynamic leader strived for political and social equality of all Malays. He elevated the region by constructing schools, clinics, electrifying rural villages thereby changing the overall environment and driving the people further from accidental guerrillas and closer to the government.

Finally for the police and political leadership, at the end of the day the approach must be environment centric rather than enemy centric. “You cannot win the war without the help of the population, and you cannot get the support of the population without at least beginning to win the war,” was what Oliver Lyttelton, UK Colonial Secretary said while referring to the Malayan Emergency, 1951.

Yours etc., Christopher Gathpho Shillong-14

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

Political power becoming intoxicating

Crime and corruption order of the day

By Nantoo Banerjee

Even 66 years after the Constitution of India opted for a multiparty democratic system and adult franchise, the country is showing practically no sign of turning into a matured democracy offering good governance to its people. Instead, the political parties, run mostly like family-owned business, are turning into more and more power hungry and financially greedy. And, elections — for both assembly and parliament — are exposing the worst of them, before and after the franchise.

The latest killings, lynching, hacking and heckling of political activists, innocent people and even journalists in the last few months, mostly at the instance of powerful political party satraps at various levels, point at the state of democracy in the country. The events in states like Bihar in the last few days that witnessed the political killing of a senior journalist and presumably an innocent young motorist overtaking the vehicle of the son of a powerful political family in Patna are among the most horrifying. What will follow after the election results in the five states that are to be announced on May 19 looks rather scary considering the prevailing levels of crime and the mood of political criminals.

The political crime is increasingly vitiating the atmosphere in India and its pursuit for real democracy and good governance. Worse still, the political power is making a mockery of the investigating agencies at all levels — from the police and CID in states to ATS, NIA, CBI, ED, serious fraud office and economic offence wings and other enforcement bodies at the centre. It is so much so that the findings of one enforcement agency of the centre under one political party rule are being overturned by another investigating agency under its political successor as ‘fake’ or ‘rubbish’, be they in Gujarat, Maharashtra or Madhya Pradesh. The people of the country are becoming increasingly confused about the truth. No one can be trusted. Not even a four-star general, admiral or an air chief marshal. The political system and politicians in power seem to have corrupted them all.

The administration is becoming increasingly spineless and politically pliable, sometimes even at the cost of the country's national security. Questionable defence and economic deals spared few national leaders, starting from India's prime ministers and their kin, including such prominent personalities as Pandit Nehru, V K Krishna Menon, T T Krishnamachari, Rajiv Gandhi and his wife, son and son-in-law.

Few are truly aware about how the country's currently most condemned bank loan offender, Vijay Mallya, managed a prestigious Rajya Sabha membership from Karnataka, nearly unopposed by the state assembly members, including Congress and BJP. Mallya was given heroic ovation by Rajya Sabha members after he financially ‘rescued’ some Mahatma Gandhi relics set for auction in the United States. No one bothered about the fact that such an act could have been performed by the government of India if it chose to. No one questioned Mallya's real source of funds. Like Mallya, another businessman member of Parliament, a Jindal scion, allegedly robbed the country of hundreds of crores of rupees in a coal block allotment scandal, but not before he man-

aged to send in jail two senior TV media journalists, exposing his role in the deal. Mallyas and Jindals of India's family owned business could not prosper without support and backing of the power that be in the country's political administration. Several state and national leaders at the levels of chief minister, union cabinet minister, ministers, MPs, MLAs and elected municipality members have, in the past, gone to jail on charges of massive corruption across political parties and across the country, especially from the states such as Bihar, UP, Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. But nothing seems to change the dirty and ruthless nature of politics in India, which is increasingly eating into the country's bid to bring about an economic reform.

Actually, India needs a strong political reform more than an economic reform. Without a meaningful political reform, economic reform will not deliver the desired goal. The presence of goons and corrupt businessmen in politics is a major concern to the society. Corrupt business persons have mastered the art to embrace politicians in power, irrespective of their party affiliations, while more and more musclemen like Pappu Yadav are finding their way to legislatures. It may be worth to recall what one of the country's few former clean prime ministers, Inder Kumar Gujral, once remarked in Parliament that he had to look over his shoulders to find whether there was a criminal sitting in the benches behind him or not. Prime ministers like Lal Bahadur Shastri, Morarji Desai and Inder Gujral had been rare exceptions in Indian politics. Unfortunately, all of them had a brief stint as the country's top political executive.

It is not surprising that the country's print and television news media have, for long, remained nearly occupied with political crime and corruption. There is little development news in India's daily media that attract serious attention of the general public. The news around political killings and corruption change in quick succession as new episodes of political crime and political corruption overtake the previous stories. Today's news and debate on such saucy subjects soon become stale as new developments hit the headlines. How many TV news viewers and morning newspaper readers really remember the cases of disproportionate assets (DA) pending against some of the country's top politicians for over a decade? Several of them held tops posts in the government and some are still holding.

The JD (U) leaders' hi-profile, gun-trotting son, who allegedly shot down a boy for overtaking his vehicle in Bihar a few days ago, is yet to be properly booked on charges of murder. Instead, a wall of defence is being built up around him to save him and his powerful parents belonging to the ruling party. The practice to shield political criminals and their corrupt ways to amass wealth goes on while they prepare for the next election to become the country's most privileged people's representatives and constitutional power. (IPA Service)

“The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently.”

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2016

What the BJP win in Assam portends

EXIT polls by various agencies, some with established credentials, have predicted a BJP win in Assam. The Assam election results are important as they will create a ripple effect in the neighbouring states as well. Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh are the closet neighbours of Assam. Of the three states the last has already gone the BJP way. Nagaland's ruling party – the Nagaland Peoples' Front (NPF) is one of the constituents of the BJP-led NDA Government at the Centre. So in effect, Meghalaya is the only Congress-ruled state at this juncture, apart from Mizoram. With no exit poll conducted for the Tura bye-election it is not clear which way the results would go. But gauging by the popular mood the results of the Lok Sabha poll could go to the Nationalist Peoples' Party (NPP) which is also a constituent of the BJP. This will give the BJP a foothold in Meghalaya. There are already whispers doing the rounds that Meghalaya could witness a leadership change which could be orchestrated by the BJP. While these are in the realm of speculations they are not new to Meghalaya's unstable political culture.

Since the NDA government took over the reins of governance at the Centre there have been several unsavoury developments such as the ban on beef eating, rewriting of school text books, polarization of students' bodies in universities and politicisation of the academic space. Then we have the RSS and its brand of fanatics spouting out all manner of profanities on those who do not agree with their line of thinking. Their conservative ideological stances have sent a chill down the spine of many in this country such as tribals and religious minorities. There is a fear that if the BJP spreads its wings into the tribal states of the North East then the rich culture and tradition of the tribes would be subsumed into the dominant mainstream Hindu culture. Yet, a time has come for the tribes to learn to negotiate their own spaces within the larger Indian socio-political and cultural atlas. It is important for tribal leaders from here to get into the BJP and interpret their culture and liberal outlook to those in the Party who have a limited view of the people and culture of this country. To oppose is one thing; to engage is another. Engagement has the potential to bring about a mindset change in the opponent. The tribal leaders in the BJP fold had better maintain their independent stances and not get sucked by Hindutva and its divisive tentacles.

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

PM: Fresh package for jobless, poor

Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi today promised to announce soon a fresh package of schemes to solve the twin problem of poverty and unemployment.

Speaking at the plenary session of the Uttar Pradesh Congress (I) committee here, Mr. Gandhi said the Centre planned to strengthen panchayati raj institutions and a bill in this regard would be introduced in the next few months.

The day-long session was attended by about 20,000 Congressmen from various parts of those besides members of Parliament and Central Ministers.

Veteran leader Mr Uma Shankar Dixit and Mr Kamalapati Tripathi were, however, conspicuous by their absence at the session, held after about a decade.

The Prime Minister in his thirty minute address informed about the measures

taken to infuse new strength into the organization.

He said these efforts had brought dividends such as the party's performance in Nagaland and Mizoram elections and also the local bodies elections in Uttar Pradesh.

He said only Congress (I) could keep the country united dubbing the opposition alliances as unprincipled and opportunistic.

Mr Gandhi said with the achievements made in the economy and food production the country could now fight poverty and unemployment in much better manner.

Mr Gandhi told the workers that till recently, the Congress (I) was now here in the north east but now it was almost every-where.

“A lot of work has been done in the cities but now with only a year left for the elections, we must concentrate on the villages”.

Assam – Of Electoral Boats and the Modi Wave

By Rahul Saikia

Whilst discussing contemporary political developments in Assam, a progressive friend of mine recently remarked, “I have always believed that Assam will show the way for the rest of India”. Given his progressive leftist ideas, I naturally assumed that my old friend was referring to the diverse communities of Assam and their respective histories of resistance against various colonial and nationalist hegemonies. In all probability, he now hoped that this complex melting pot of ethnic identities and political movements would work as a bulwark against the contemporary pan-Indian ascendancy of the BJP and its right-wing Hindutva agenda.

With exit polls suggesting a BJP led government in Assam, it would be tempting (and partly correct) to suggest that this hopeful hypothesis of ‘ethnic resistances to counter mainland nationalism’ has suffered a serious setback. That said, the BJP's predicted success in the state makes it all the more pertinent to carefully reconsider the limits and possibilities of such a hypothesis. Given its recent Hindutva flexing on the national stage, it is entirely possible that a BJP government in Assam has the potential to intensify the already fragile and fractured fabric of communal co-existence – both in the state and the larger north-eastern region. For the people of the north-east – with our collective (albeit uneven) experiences of state oppression and militant violence – the entry of Hindutva is probably the last thing we need at this particular moment.

From a progressive perspective, the primary fear here is that government in Dispur will provide Modi and Shah with a firm frontier base from which they could slowly knit and propagate their divisive right-wing agenda over the entire region. At the same time, a BJP victory will also confirm another dangerous trend – the emergence of a new Assamese middle class that is re-fashioning itself in the image of the emerging mainland Indian model of monetary arrogance and secular ignorance.

To be sure, the potential emergence of right-wing

majoritarian fascism is perhaps the single biggest threat to the ideas of Indian democracy – especially in states like Assam which have a complex demographic situation. That said, it is also rather evident that the BJP's recent electoral popularity is not so much a reflection of popular Hindu support for Hindutva, as much as it is an en-masse rejection of successive Congress governments and their politics of corruption, nepotism and pseudo-secularism. There is definitely some merit to both these arguments. In the case of Assam both these arguments come together in the contentious illegal immigrant issue.

Apart from its promises of good governance, it is the general perception that the BJP will be able to resolve the problem of ‘illegal influx’ from Bangladesh which has assured the party a powerful support base within the state. This perception of the BJP as a saviour of Assamese Hindus is highly problematic because it effectively provides the nationalist party a licence to pursue its Hindutva agenda with the full support of the local majority. Still, it should be noted that this fertile ground for Hindutva aspirations has only been made possible through the Congress government and a section of the state's population.

With its relatively secular credentials, the state Congress government was well positioned to develop a long term and realistic strategy of negotiating with the issue of illegal immigration. Aside from failing to secure such a viable solution, there is a growing perception that the Congress instead adopted a de-facto strategy of creating and appeasing minority votebanks to ensure its own political supremacy in the state. While this ‘secular pragmatism is indeed a major cause for the current backlash, it will be pointed out that Assamese angst and mobilization against illegal immigration predates the Tarun Gogoi government.

After all, Assamese Hindus (or ‘caste Assamese’ as scholars prefer) have long been wary of the threat of being demographically

overwhelmed by large scale illegal immigration from Bangladesh. Even as some of these concerns are genuine, the popular reaction has often been to project a sense of cultural self-purity in the face of this ‘dangerous other’. At best, this kind of communal pride can act as an opiate balm in an uncertain and changing world. At worst, it can lead to bloody riots (Godhra in 2002) and horrible massacres (Nellie in 1983).

To be sure, the problem of illegal immigration throws up significant cultural and economic challenges for Assamese's various communities – including the Assamese, the Bengalis and the Plain Tribals. These concerns become all the more pertinent given the recent ascendancy of radical fundamentalism within Bangladesh – the adverse effects of which – could soon reverberate onto states like Assam. In such a scenario, it would be both wrong and rather condescending to simply equate these Assamese concerns with a broad scholarly label of ‘fanatic nationalism’.

Still, it could be argued that the Assamese sense of cultural insecurity and communal pride against a common enemy (i.e. ‘illegal Muslim immigrants’) has several striking commonalities with certain aspects of the RSS's Hindutva ideology. These common interests would explain why the BJP has found such a fertile valley of right wing nationalist support within the state. Moreover, it is not just the Assamese but several other communities within the state (e.g. the Bodos) which share this perceived communal enemy along with the BJP and its parivar.

To some extent, these national-and-regional alliances will temporarily weaken the real and imagined threats associated with the influx issue. At the same time however, these de-facto Hindutva backed agreements will severely limit the extent to which these regional stakeholders can effectively counter the BJP's right wing agenda within Assam. For its part, the BJP could further use this strong anti-immigrant feeling as a powerful tool to continually divide and rule

the state along communal lines.

One can only hope that the BJP and its nationalist supporters in Assam will realize that such a divisive strategy could be disastrous for the people of the state and the entire north-eastern region. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was hegemonic incursions of Indian and Assamese nationalisms which sparked numerous ‘hill tribal’ mobilizations culminating in the creation of states like Meghalaya and Mizoram. This time around however, it is Assam itself (as well as the rest of the region) which runs the risk of being torn apart – in a manner which no peace loving people could either support or endure.

(The writer is M.Phil Research Scholar at the Delhi School of Economics... and a long time Shillong resident)

Given this possibly bleak scenario, it is perhaps important for all the concerned stakeholders to make certain conciliatory acknowledgements. Firstly, could we acknowledge that the BJP and many of its supporters in Assam have both – their own legitimate concerns and development aspirations – as well as certain communal misgivings and shortcomings? Secondly, could we also acknowledge that Assamese Muslims and Bengali Hindus are equally legitimate and important stakeholders who could possibly alter longstanding fears over illegal immigration and radicalization? Thirdly, would it not be important to explore the potentially diverse impacts of labour immigration from Bangladesh – from positive (e.g. for the state's booming construction sector) to possibly negative (in the case of indigenous peasant groups)?

One could compile a much longer list of such important queries – but they would all be underpinned by the same basic question to be directed at the concerned stakeholders. The question is – do we negotiate with one another to find some sort of sustainable peace – or do we keep fighting for our own self-interests? Even if Assam cannot show the best way forward for the rest of India – perhaps it can still find a peaceful way for itself and the people of the region.

China at odds with new Myanmar Govt

India seeks collaboration in industry

By Barun Das Gupta

Myanmar's transition from army rule to full-fledged democracy is going on. The undisputed leader of the country, Aung San Suu Kyi, is the chairman of Myanmar's National Democratic League which swept the polls in the general elections six months ago. But a provision deliberately inserted in the army-drafted constitution prevents her from becoming the president of the country. Amending the constitution will take some time. But she is already the de facto head of State in her capacity as State Counsellor – a post specially created for her. She also holds the portfolios of foreign affairs, education, power and energy and the president's office. The President, Htin Kyaw is one of her most trusted colleagues.

So, when Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met her in capital Naypyidaw last month, he was virtually meeting the Head of State. They had a lot to discuss. China was not happy with the end of the army rule and Suu Kyi's policy of opening up to the outside world. The Chinese did not conceal their unhappiness either. In fact, strains started developing between the two countries toward the end of the army rule in Myanmar.

The main disagreement is over a number of Chinese projects to which the people of Myanmar are totally opposed, mainly because these would have a negative environmental impact besides re-

lobbying hard with the government of Suu Kyi to give the green signal. They are keen on going ahead, without caring for people's sentiments and opposition.

A third irritant in Sino-Myanmar relationship is due to ethnic conflicts in northern Myanmar which often spill over to the adjoining Yunnan Province of China when people chased by the Myanmar army flees across the border and takes shelter in Yunnan. Once Myanmar air force planes, while chasing the rebels, had inadvertently dropped a bomb on Chinese territory drawing strong and angry protests from Beijing. This was during the army rule. Suu Kyi is keen on improving relations with China while protecting the interests of her people.

As far as India is concerned, Myanmar occupies a central place in New Delhi's Look East policy. The 3,200 km long Asian Trilateral Highway, starting from Moreh in Manipur and ending at Mae Sot district in Thailand, when completed, will open up the ASEAN region for India. Similarly, the 900 km long Multimodal Transit Transport System connecting Calcutta Port to the Sittwe Port in Myanmar, passing through Mizoram, is another big project which is coming up. The route will be partly riverine and partly land.

Now that China is

The first to be cancelled in 2011 was the \$20 billion high-speed railway line running north to south through Myanmar and connecting China's Yunnan province to the Bay of Bengal in the south of Myanmar. If the project had come off, it would have given China an opening in the Bay of Bengal just as the Gwadar port in Pakistan has given it an opening in the Arabian Sea. It would have been a development of concern to India.

quiring displacement of a huge number of people at every project site. The opposition is so strong and fierce that even the military junta had to bow to public sentiments and cancel many of these projects some of which would have had significant implications for India also.

The first to be cancelled in 2011 was the \$20 billion high-speed railway line running north to south through Myanmar and connecting China's Yunnan province to the Bay of Bengal in the south of Myanmar. If the project had come off, it would have given China an opening in the Bay of Bengal just as the Gwadar port in Pakistan has given it an opening in the Arabian Sea. It would have been a development of concern to India. It was abandoned because of people's determined opposition to destruction of forests over large areas besides creating problems of eviction and resettlement of the people concerned.

The second, kept on hold by the then Myanmar president U Thein Sein, is the Myitsone Dam project which was to have been built by the Chinese Power Investment Company for generation of 6000 MW of power, primarily for transmission to Yunnan Province of China. The Chinese company claims it has already spent over \$800 million on the project. The entire project includes construction of one dam at Myisone and six more in contiguous places. Nearly 18,000 people would have had to be evicted and resettled elsewhere.

The Chinese are still not reconciled to the abandonment of the projects and are

strengthening its military footprint on India's border, Myanmar and Vietnam will be two neighbours India has started to cultivate and deepen its relations with. During the junta rule India had cooled off to Myanmar. That was first changed by former Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao. Now with Suu Kyi at the helm, India wants to walk the extra mile to win the trust of Myanmar as an all-weather friend. Suu Kyi still fondly remembers her student days at the Lady Sri Ram College in Delhi.

She has many problems on hand. One is the amending of the constitution drawn up by the army to make it a truly democratic one. Another is the resolution of ethnic rebellions involving the Karens, Kachins, Shans and Mons. These conflicts have bedevilled internal peace and harmony in Myanmar for decades. Even the army rule had failed to end them. Suu Kyi wants now to hold out the proverbial olive branch and persuade the tribes to lay down arms and usher in permanent peace.

Then there is the immense challenge of industrializing the country. Though Myanmar is endowed with rich mineral resources, industry accounts for only 20.3 per cent of its GDP. Agriculture accounts for 38 per cent and services for 41.7 per cent. One-third of the people has no access to electricity. India seeks to play a positive role in Myanmar's development. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

The guilty must be punished.

Editor,

Under the Indian Penal Code the receiver of stolen property is deemed as guilty as the criminal who sells such property. So how do people steer clear of such a crime? Most law abiding citizens depend on sheer common sense for not indulging in such offences. Firstly one is always suspicious of any offer for goods or property that is well below the prevailing market rate and for which no official receipt is likely to be issued. Such offers stink and our hackles of doubt and distrust are immediately roused. Secondly, those who are able to spurn greed and the desire to get something for nothing are usually spared the pain of being charged with the crime of receiving stolen goods. The trick is called “listening to ones conscience”.

In the news is the reported story of some 17 churches paying the Syiem of Myllem for land that was not his to sell. The land belonged to the people. The land was an environmentally protected forest. Encroaching and defiling such land constitutes a

crime. The Syiem had no authority to sell it. The current value of the land in question, as per its location at Mawpat/ Mawroh cannot be less than Rs 500 per sq ft. It would not be less than rs 2 crore an acre. It was sold in between 10 – 18 lacs to each balang (church). Sold at an undervalued rate; sold without proper receipts; the Sunday collection from sincere church goers used in a fake transaction; that transaction then fraudulently shown as a gift. The market value of the total land sold cannot be less than 34 crores. It was sold for a mere Rs 3 crore. It's one of the biggest land scams of Meghalaya with the Christian church bang in the middle of it. The surprise is that there are some very respectable people trying to justify this misdeed - on TV.

What do we do with this massive scam? Do we simply sweep it under the carpet? How can the Church and its leaders be allowed to abet corruption? What has happened to conscience? What happens then to all those sanctimonious sermons from the pulpit every Sunday? I am a Christian myself but I sincerely believe that an example has to be set. A crime has been committed. The criminals have to pay. The KHADC together with the new Syiem of Myllem are

strongly advised to call for a CBI enquiry into this scandal. Let the guilty be exposed irrespective if it is the Syiem of Myllem, his myntris, pastors, church elders or priests. No one should be spared for breaking the law. No one is above the law!

Yours etc.,
JB Lyngdoh,
Via email

Injustice to students!

Editor

The issue is addressed to the leaders and the people concerned. Thousands of students of the state are waiting anxiously for their scholarships. Many have graduated one and half years back but have still not been paid our scholarship. I wonder where all the money has disappeared? What might have happened to the money sanctioned for the purpose? The authority stands for justice and rights and they are supposed to defend and promote the common good, and the people look up to them as leaders. But the crime and the unjust practices seem to stem forth, from the very people who govern the state. No wonder our state is rated as one of the most corrupt states in the country, and it is not something

that we are proud of. When a citizen commits a crime, he or she is taken to task and punished immediately; we are happy about it and sincerely appreciate the action. But, what about the bigger crimes, that those at the helm of government commit on a regular basis? Very often they go unnoticed and practically no one questions them. Can't they be punished? Are they exempted from the law which they themselves legislate? Is the rule meant only for the common people?

Crime and injustice will continue to prevail unless the law-makers make an effort to instil values in themselves first. Today in a special way we need leaders who are committed and are true to their words. Alas! They make a lot of promises for their own gain and fail to keep the same when the time comes. It is a big injustice to the people and the society at large.

Yours etc.,
Dibacor Chisim Sangma
Sacred Heart Theological College
Shillong - 8

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

"The advantage of a bad memory is that one enjoys several times the same good things for the first time."

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

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Congress debacle in Garo Hills

THE result of the Tura parliamentary bye-election is a decisive one for the Nationalist Peoples' Party (NPP) candidate Conrad Sangma. He surpassed even his own father the legendary PA Sangma in terms of votes polled. Conrad won over his rival from the Congress by over 1.92 lakh votes. This victory for the NPP can also be interpreted as a mandate against the Congress. Many factors led to the defeat of Congress candidate Dikkanchi D Shira. Firstly, she is the sitting MLA of Mahendraganj constituency. In a political scenario where the debate on the one-man, one post issue is alive, it is suicidal to go against public opinion. Secondly, the Congress campaign was fixated on the BJP instead of laying out its development action plan for Garo Hills. There was no point attacking the BJP upfront since it did not put up a candidate. This only revealed the nervousness of the Congress at the growing clout of the BJP in neighbouring Assam. This fact is not lost on the shrewd Mukul Sangma, whose beta-noire Himanta Biswa Sarma is leading the charge for the BJP in Assam. Negative campaigns tend to create confusion in the mind of the voters. Even the posters put up by the Congress were unimaginative. A positive campaign that is free of rancour creates positive vibes and does more to pull votes than a constant reviling of the opponent.

The Congress Party in Meghalaya is tried and tested; the BJP is not. It is a fact that the BJP pulled all the stops to campaign for the NPP candidate. Humans by nature crave for change, hoping it will be for the better. Voters also know there is merit in voting the NPP candidate since the Party is a constituent of the Narendra Modi led NDA government which is ruling the country today. There are better chances of getting cooperation from a friendly government than one in opposition. That is basic political logic. As a Party, the Congress holds no promise. Its Vice President, Rahul Gandhi does not inspire confidence. Sonia Gandhi the AICC President is unable to counter the allegations of corruption against her family. Over and above there is the Agusta Westland helicopter scam which allegedly involved the UPA Government and Sonia Gandhi personally which raised the political temperature at a time when people were making decisions about who to vote for. Since 2014 when the Congress party ended up winning only 44 seats in the 543 member house, it has adopted an attack mode against the BJP. The phrases 'suit-boot ki sarkar' framed against Narendra Modi had become clichéd and tiresome. It showed up the Congress's inability to reinvent itself. All it did to draw attention to itself is by disrupting the Parliament sessions. Redundancy has set into the party. If the Congress does not seriously introspect and does nothing to reinvent itself soon it will perish. Perhaps it is the burden of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty that is wearing the Party down!

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

Army alerted in Assam on eve of ABSU bandh

Troops have been alerted in Assam in view of the 120 hour state-wide bandh called by the All Bodo Students Union from Thursday morning. Assam Home Minister Mr Bhriku Kumar Phukan told UNI today that the army was alerted to stand by to assist the civil authorities in maintaining law and order, the railway and other essential services during the bandh, if necessary.

The All Bodo Students Union has called the bandh from five AM of February 16 to press for its demand for a separate "Bodoland" rejecting the Government offer for a discussion on the issue on February 28. Mr Phukan said all precautionary measures would be taken to main-

tain normal life in the state. In any case the train services would not be allowed to be dislocated in Assam since that would affect life in the entire north eastern region, he added.

Meanwhile ABSU volunteer force president Dr Phukan Chandra Boro said that they declined invitation for a discussion because of the "apathetic attitude" of both the state and central governments on the demand. He said in a statement that they took the decision to intensify the movement as both the state and the centre had not given any importance to finding a solution to the Bodo problem despite their suspending the programme for three months in the past.

You cannot play the proxy game in politics

By Patricia Mukhim

Let me not begin this article by analysing the Tura bye-election results but look at the larger picture. The verdict of the electorate in four of the five assembly elections (Assam, West Bengal, Tamilnadu, and Kerala) are all votes against the Congress. The Congress tie-up with the Left Front in Bengal cost the latter heavily as former communist voters who have inherent enmity with the Congress veered towards the Trinamool Congress while Congress voters who see the Left Front as their rivals also shifted their allegiance to Mamata Banerjee. Then there are the unattached voters who see no alternative but to vote the Trinamool which is seen as the lesser evil (despite the Saradha and Nardha scam and the recent videos released by opponents showing the Party in a bad light). To be fair to the TMC it has tried to change the face of Bengal from a decrepit communist ghetto into a more progressive state. The changes in the landscape are evident in the city of Kolkata and the several beautification projects there. But rural Bengal is also getting a facelift!

In Tamilnadu the AIADMK returned despite the electorate's habit of voting out an incumbent government and voting in a new dispensation. The corruption charges against A Raja and Karunanidhi's daughter Kanimozhi are still fresh in people's minds. Besides, here is a typical case of dynastic politics with all the political and economic resources being appropriated by one family - Karunanidhi's. The wheelchair bound octogenarian had nominated Stalin as his successor which is the anti-thesis to democracy where people should have a role in deciding who they want as their leader even in a political party. In fact, careful analyses would reveal that this time the vote was against dynastic politics.

Assam is a classic case of a vote against the dynastic politics of Tarun Gogoi. The 81-year old Gogoi wanted to foist his son Gaurav Gogoi on the people of Assam by first sending him to Parliament but with the long term goal of seeing him safely ensconced as the chief minister of the state. Since the All India Congress Committee is led by the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty where elections for the top posts of Youth Congress Presi-

dent and AICC President are never by election but by nomination, the Party has no moral fibre to prevent other regional satraps from doing the same. This time in Assam about 34 seats went to the children or family members of sitting MLAs! People are disgusted by this proclivity of the Congress to take them for granted. Added to all this anti-incumbency factor, Gogoi has been in the driving seat for 15 long years and his government has got into a stasis. But the poor performance of the Congress in Assam is also because Himanta Biswa Sarma, once Tarun Gogoi's blue-eyed boy revolted against his mentor's dynastic politics (blue blooded politics as he calls it). Biswa Sarma left the Congress and joined the BJP. That he is a vote-catcher was evident from the large crowds that gathered at his election rallies. He untiringly addressed about 7-8 rallies per day. The Congress with an aged and tired leadership just could not keep pace with Biswa Sarma. The BJP also projected Sarbananda Sonowal as its CM candidate. As Union Sports Minister, Sonowal had brought the South Asian Games to the North East. This is a credit to him and to the NDA Government.

The Congress in Assam had always projected itself as a secular party but with a slant towards the Muslim 'minority.' This minority however is threatening to become the majority since it comprises a large chunk of illegal immigrants. Perhaps this is what drove the indigenous Assamese (Muslims and Hindus) to vote the BJP. As far as the Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF) is concerned, it still has a hold over the voters who would not shift allegiance no matter who the Party aligns with. And with the NDA Government at the Centre it is commonsense politics for regional forces to align with the government in power. The AGP which was on its last legs was also energized by aligning with the BJP. On the whole therefore the BJP chose its allies very carefully.

The voters of Assam have shown their political maturity. They have voted the BJP despite it being projected as a Hindu communal party that would intrude into people's cultures and eating habits. This plank adopted by certain Leftist forces and the Congress, no

longer works. That the people of Assam also rejected Badruddin Ajmal's communal party - the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), which had surreptitiously built a vote bank of illegal immigrants, also reflects their distaste for communal forces. Also the call given by a section of Assam's Left leaning intellectuals not to vote the BJP only boomeranged on them. There was a clarion call by non-partisan voters before the Assam election that this election would be akin to the last Battle of Saraihat - a do and die fight against illegal immigration from Bangladesh which the Congress had not addressed in its 15-year rule. All these factors worked in favour of the BJP and its allies.

In Kerala the Oomen Chandy led Congress Government was voted out as a matter of course since the people of Kerala have the political wisdom to never give a second chance to any single party. Hence the Left Democratic Front is back in power!

Now let me come to Meghalaya where a bye-election was necessitated following the demise of sitting Lok Sabha MP from Tura, Mr Purno A Sangma. Here, Conrad Sangma the Nationalist Peoples' Party (NPP) candidate and late PA Sangma's son won an unprecedented victory margin of 1.92 lakh votes against the Congress candidate Dikkanchi D Shira, the MLA from Mahendraganj and wife of Chief Minister, Mukul Sangma. While Conrad Sangma is the son of PA Sangma he has proved his mettle and evolved into a politician with acumen and a political leader in his own right. He left his mark in state politics as Finance and Power Minister in a non-Congress government that presided over Meghalaya between 2008-2010. The NPP is a constituent of the NDA and the BJP refrained from setting up a candidate of its own. It decided to campaign for the NPP instead and it launched a vigorous campaign right from the word "Go." So much so the Congress targeted the BJP instead of the NPP!

Let's face facts. Dikkanchi Shira was a proxy for Mukul Sangma. He campaigned in the Presidential election mode. Dikkanchi is no match to Conrad Sangma in terms of analysing issues and articulating them in Parliament. When people elect

an MP they also want to see him/her holding forth inside the 545 member Lok Sabha. It is not enough to be a woman in politics. It is important to have the political bandwidth to fathom national politics and the varied issues that one is expected to vote on. I sometimes wonder why Dr Mukul Sangma, an otherwise intelligent politician, took this desperate step. Is there no one else in the Congress other than his immediate family members who can contest the Tura Lok Sabha election? He has himself suffered reverses in the past; his brother too lost against PA Sangma. Then Dr Sangma foisted Daryl Momin a rank newcomer into politics and pitted him against PA Sangma in 2014. Daryl Momin's only credential is that he is the grandson of Captain Williamson Sangma, Meghalaya's first chief minister.

These unilateral decisions taken by Congress leaders is what has destroyed the Party. If there is no democracy while electing people to the topmost post in the AICC there is also no democracy in the selection of candidates for state assembly and parliamentary elections.

The Tura Lok Sabha result is a vote against the Congress as much as it is a vote for the NPP and indirectly for the BJP. That Dikkanchi could only win from one assembly constituency (Amptai) and lost even from her own constituency (Mahendraganj) is a definite vote against both the candidate and her Party. If this is not a wake-up call for the Meghalaya Congress then you wonder what else is. For a long time now there has been no visible leadership other than that of Mukul Sangma. He faces no real challenge to his leadership. There are no free and frank deliberations within the Party to assess the trajectory that the Government is taking. In such a situation dictators take roots. And the grand old party whose claim to fame is that it led the freedom movement had long since degenerated into a family fiefdom both in Delhi and the states.

Now that the BJP has a foothold in Assam and a foothold in Meghalaya, it might not be long before the political rumblings begin and the clamour for leadership change becomes a real challenge. The BJP will certainly not remain a passive observer. Its aggressive campaign for the Tura bye-election says it all! Let's wait and watch real-politik playing out in Meghalaya!

Under Rockybul Hussain as the Forest Minister the killing of rhinos and the plundering of the forest resources were at their peak. Massive deforestation and encroachment of the reserved forests became routine. Not a word of regret was ever uttered by the government, instead Tarun Gogoi had tacitly encouraged poaching when he had made that infamous anthropocene remark accusing people of showing undue concern at the death of wild beasts and not showing similar emotion for humans (meaning the illegal settlers in the notified forest lands).

People had voted against such horrific inefficiencies to the sleeping inefficiency, rampant corruption and mindless destruction of Assam's ecology. It would again be a gross misreading to assume that only 'Hindus' had voted for the BJP and the Muslims had distributed their votes between the Congress and the AIUDF. BJP got the votes as a result of a resurgent ethnic collaboration, which included, inter alia, various ethnic communities of the state including the Ahoms, the Koch Rajbanshis, the Gorkhalis, the Adivisis, the Kalitas, the Assamese Sikh community, the Christians,

Yours etc,
Willie Gordon Suting,
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.

BJP Should not Misread the Assam Victory

By Jyotirmoy Prodhani

In the wake of the unprecedented victory of the BJP and its allies, being overexcited, if it allows the elements like Yogi Adityanath or Giriraj Singh types to open their shops in Assam, it will be a costly mistake on its part. One must be clear about the fact that in Assam the voters are least bothered about the Hinduvta variety of politics that many in the BJP consider as the only source of their oxygen. Though cow is intrinsic to the cultural rite and roots of Assam, nobody voted to save the 'gomata', nor are they sentimental about the 'mahan Bhartiya Parampara' or the 'shuddh Hindi Bhasha.' On the contrary, quite paradoxically, it is a vote against all this, and more importantly, against communalism. Despite the constant efforts by a section of the intelligentsia in Assam to project the BJP and its allies in Assam as the vicious network of rabid communalism, clearly enough, the people at large were not convinced.

BJP and its allies, which included, apart from the AGP, the political outfits of the Bodos, the Tiwas and the Rabhas, have won because people wanted an end to an arrogant regime. Despite the obvious anomalies, the Congress government was in denial mode. After Himanta Biswa Sarma left Health and Education portfolios, the two departments quickly went to the docks. Gauhati Medical College Hospital that was competing with the high end private hospitals soon came back to square one as well as all other government hospitals in the state. NRHM in Assam, which had one of the most efficient managements in the country, virtually disappeared post Himanta Biswa Sarma. The rural health scenario was the worst affected.

In the education sector the new minister, Mr Sarat Borkotoky, showed his legendary inefficiency by stopping the TET examinations and clean appointments, rather he was more interested to retrieve some ancient government orders to gag the entire teaching community of the state. As for holding high school final examinations during his regime, which is one of the most important responsibilities under his ministry, answer scripts in thousands were either eaten away by cattle or gutted in fire. And corruption in recruitment made a resounding comeback!

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the Bengalis, the Buddhists and other linguistic minorities, and of course the numerous tribal communities and so on and so forth and also, it must be noted, a large section of the Muslim community. The indigenous Muslims like the Gariya Marias and the Desi Muslims, like any other average Assamese individual, are hardly preoccupied with their religious identity. In fact, they see BJP in Assam as a mere political party like any other party, hence they are least bothered about it as a threat, as some observers would like to believe it, for these people are very much rooted and integral to the larger Assamese ethos of the state.

BJP will commit a grave error if they harp on the illegal immigration from Bangladesh in an accent suitable for election hooting and not at all desirable from the ones that have gained the mandate to govern, though they must take rational steps to solve the issue. A section of the Assam intelligentsia would quite uncritically lament it in their pet term as the rise of the 'communal forces' or the 'arrival of the fascists' etc. but such interpretations, apart from having some legitimacy in the left literatures, would not necessarily be reflective of the ground realities. The people that have voted this alliance to power, by any stretch of left rhetoric, are not the epitome of communal politics in the state. Instead it is the other way round. That it was against communal politics has been well reflected by the fact that in many constituencies where the Muslims are a majority the BJP and its allies have won, especially in lower Assam from the constituencies like Bilasipara East, Goalpara East, Gauripur etc.

What has turned out to be the most significant in this election is that it is the Muslim voters who have rejected, in a decisive manner, the diabolic communal politics so viciously promoted by the Attar merchant Maulana Badruddin Ajmal of AIUDF. The people of South Salmara in Manikachar, a border district of Assam with absolute Muslim majority, have shown their extraordinary tenacity and determination to frustrate the design of the merchant of communal politics in Assam by rejecting him outright through a massive mandate. They have chosen a native Congress leader, Wajed Ali Choudhury, and discarded the one who had migrated to the constituency thinking that his vitriolic communal rhetoric and promotion of medieval superstitions and subjugations would be enough to wrest the Muslim majority seat in the border district. This ignominious defeat of Maulana Badruddin should be the biggest lesson for the BJP that the people Assam, irrespective of their religion, caste and creed, are potentially capable of destroying the very foundation of the designs that is primarily predicated upon the ugly fangs of communal politics.

Nevertheless, one cannot miss the fact that for the first time in the history of Assam a leader belonging to a marginal tribal community, the Sonowal Kacharis, would lead the government. He would be the first tribal Chief Minister of Assam. For this reason alone, BJP deserved to win this election.

The writer is Professor, Dept of English, NEHU, Shillong.

TO THE EDITOR

Still Scotland of the East?

Editor,

One wonders how nice and clean Shillong might have been when it got its name as "The Scotland of the East". I have never been to Scotland but I have heard that it is a clean place where there is no scattering of garbage, no encroachment into streams & riverine system, no hawker problem, no disturbance to eco-system, etc. All these are possible when there is civic sense in its inhabitants/citizens. Looking at the present state of affairs in the city, I am ashamed myself to call it the Scotland of the East. Of late, we see garbage strewn all over the roads & pavements. The internal roads (except VVIP routes) are full of pot holes and even manholes. Whatever streams or rivulets we have flowing through the city have been turned into drains. All the discharges from houses and shops/hotels/garages are released directly to these streams/rivulets with no one to check. Recently,

we witnessed number of signboards/signages put up haphazardly by some commercial and private institutions. One such prominent one being the advertisement boards of USTM mounted on every electric/telephone poles in almost all the localities. Some are dangling dangerously in the strong winds. Did they obtain permission from the DC or concerned authorities to do so? Or, is it a free city where no one cares for no one? No one seems to care as long as life goes on and in such a situation, it appears to be a fit case for Public Interest Litigation.

May I request the concerned authorities though your esteemed daily, to take action before it is too late? Shillongites, lets take care of our city and help it to retain its past glory as the Scotland of the East!!

Yours etc.,
M S Sangma
Shillong-14

On social networking.

Editor,
It's a fact that social net-

working has stolen much of our time since we are constantly online. Some people busily chat through WhatsApp while in the middle of a traffic jam with one hand on the steering wheel; some while sitting in an important meeting pay heed instead to what numerous friends comment about one's new car bought and posted on Facebook wall. Some while sitting in a church service keep scrolling down, curious to know what each friend is doing-whether listening to jazz music or reading Janice Parlati or travelling in a plane to the beautiful islands of Hawaii. Teenagers believe in true friendship when an online best friend texts, "I miss you best pal", and in real love when an online girlfriend texts, "I love you baby. You are my everything!". The purity and sincerity that one can feel in the tone of the voice, and the facial expression that should show a deep honesty is what they miss out on. Hence we can say that such friendships and relationships are "imaginary" and "not real." That is why there are cases of duping and

"The irrationality of a thing is no argument against its existence, rather a condition of it."
--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

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The Assam Victory

WIPED out in Delhi and defeated in Bihar, the BJP has won a massive victory in Assam. Of the seats won by the BJP led alliance in the first two phases of polling, it took 73% and in the second phase 62% votes. Seven of the ten sitting MLAs who left the Congress, won on BJP tickets. One reason for the BJP victory may have been the split between the BJP and the RSS. The RSS did not like the BJP alliance with the AGP. It had seven independent candidates. It has been said that the Assam win may change the Sangh-BJP dynamics. The Congress tried to draw the BJP into external issues like the performance of the Central Government. But the BJP focused on development, Assamese identity and crackdown on illegal immigration. Complex opposition forces may have led to the fall of Tarun Gogoi. The decline of the Congress will however be associated with his efforts to promote his son, Gaurav. Another factor is the exit of Himanta Biswa Sarma. His alleged corruption and nexus with the Ulfa at one time has not undermined his position. Dependence on the Muslim vote went against the Congress. So did nepotism as proved by the daughter of the State Congress President. AIDUF lost as the Congress refused to form an alliance with it. It is good that the new government wants to seal the Indo-Bangla border. Now the BJP has to deliver to win the confidence of those who reposed their faith in it.

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

Crisis in Bihar CLP resurfaces

The crisis in the Bihar Congress(I) legislature party has once again revived with the sustained activities by both the pro-changers and Ministerial sticking to their respective stands and expecting party president Mr Rajiv Gandhi's final verdict to go in their favour on the CLP(I) leadership issue.

Being confident of a change of the leader, the dissidents are meeting daily to show their solidarity, while their opponents are busy projecting Chief Minister Mr Bhagwat Jha Azad as the savior of the state and crusader against corruption.

The latter group believes that the high command would not succumb to the pressure of some, "disgruntled politicians" as sources close to them hinted that Mr Azad, who was now in Delhi, might even propose dissolution of the assembly and his continuance as caretaker Chief Minister. The sources said the spontaneous response of the Chief Minister's recent padayatra in the state capital bore ample proof of the people's support to his "anti-corruption" measures.

ABSU refuses to withdraw bandh call

The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) will not withdraw its 120 hour Assam Bandh scheduled to be held from February 16 to 21 followed by the 175 hour Assam Bandh from March 2 to 9, according to a press release of the Central Committee of the ABSU issued here on Friday.

Reacting to the invitation extended by Assam Home Minister Mr Bhriagu Phukan for another round of talks, the ABSU maintained that the talks on the three political demands a

separate full-fledged state on the Northern Bank of the Brahmaputra, an autonomous district council on the southern bank, and the inclusion of the Boro-Kachari of Karbi Anglong into the 6th Schedule should be held without preconditions.

The ABSU leadership is skeptical about the prospects of February 28 talks. The release said that ABSU leaders were enthusiastic when invited for talks on January 11 by Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta, but when they arrived at the State Guest House, they were disappointed to find that only a Minister of State for sports two MLAs were to attend the meeting. The ABSU is of the opinion that the AGP government has no real interest to solve the problems of the Bodo tribal's, and is indulging in 'play acting.'

Saikia declines to comment on leading APCC(I)

Mizoram Governor Mr. Hiteswar Saikia today said he might go to the USA for a medical check up. Mr Saikia who is here on way to Mizoram from New Delhi, however, declined to comment on media reports that he would lead the Assam Congress (I) "I cannot comment on reports about my joining politics and leading the state Congress(I) Mr Saikia told UNI.

During the President's Rule in Mizoram, I had to govern the state without the help of any advisors resulting in lot of strain. The doctor advised me for a check-up, he said adding that he would be able to tell his future plan, after his return from the United States.

Whither church propriety?

By Daphi Shisha Syiem

I was ecstatic when all the local newspapers carried the news of thenew Acting Syiem and his Dorbar making the Law Syiem (clan-owned forest) their first priority. Being from the Syiem clan of Myllem, I believed that the new incumbent will in all honesty and truth restore the Law Syiem back to where it should belong as I have written a few times through your letters to your newspaper about the Law Syiem belonging to our kur, the Syiem clan of Myllem.

Then I read about how the new Acting Syiem summoned the various churches who shamelessly exchanged money under the table with Latho Manik Syiem, the suspended Syiem and his cohorts for a piece of the ill-gotten booty. Then I saw the names and read about some prominent senior citizens who walk only on the path of moral high grounds with position in the church as elders worthy of great respect but when they were offered a really cheap bargain for a land that the Syiem and his Dorbar were holding on to illegally, made a jump for it. They are never the ones to miss such opportunities of "making hay while the sun shines" by hook or by crook for the glory of God.

The name of one of the church elders, Dr B R Kharlukhi is associated with politics. He held the post of MP at one time and also as a college teacher and Principal of Union Christian College but besides these credentials, he belongs to one of the Myntri clans of Hima Myllem. The person representing the Catholic Church, L Shadap is an Ex. MDC. When such elders of our Khasi Society who are convincingly intelligent and well versed in our Khasi History, customs and traditions flout some basic norms then we are in trouble. They are also simultaneously serving as

Church elders and are committed to the responsibilities of being examples to the flock and leading the congregation but never hesitated to take such a daring leap of faith to sin for the sake of the Church without giving any thought to a worst case scenario if caught in the process of such shady deals, is unfathomable.

whom do we put our trust now? In our present Acting Syiem who now calls it Law Hima or do we go to the Church to pray about it? This whole business of evil and greed and destruction of the greatest Khasi heritage has left a bad taste in our mouths. And during this whole episode, our kur Syiem Myllem sits without uttering one word in the belief that the spirits of our ancestors will curse all those who try to destroy Law Syiem. Yes, I do agree because it is all happening right before our eyes - death, disease and destruction has started visiting all persons laying hands upon Law Syiem.

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omable. But the crux of the whole matter is that they connived with Latho Manik Syiem and his Myntris for a shady, illegal deal upon a land not belonging to the Dorbar of Hima Myllem. They just had to take advantage of this golden opportunity while still available and thus in their infinite wisdom, decided to exchange money for land, although it was evidently clear to them that it was not going to be a legitimate deal because the whole forest land actually belongs to the Syiem clan of Myllem. Do you think that the Syiem and his Myntris will make such a hushed-up controversial land deal if the land really

the seller? Now that Latho Manik Syiem, the Syiem of Myllem has been suspended, we believe that the law of the land will award him with whatever he deserves. But what about his numerous other partners? It takes two to tango, so when partners caught dancing together on illegal grounds are arrested, both should be awarded with the same punishment. As for Christians, we know that sins of commission are sins that we commit by doing something we shouldn't do. Then I read about the present Acting Syiem talking about Law Syiem. He has even gone a step further and talks about it as Law Hima! Seriously? On

whom do we put our trust now? In our present Acting Syiem who now calls it Law Hima or do we go to the Church to pray about it? This whole business of evil and greed and destruction of the greatest Khasi heritage has left a bad taste in our mouths. And during this whole episode, our kur Syiem Myllem sits without uttering one word in the belief that the spirits of our ancestors will curse all those who try to destroy Law Syiem. Yes, I do agree because it is all happening right before our eyes - death, disease and destruction has started visiting all persons laying hands upon Law Syiem.

We believe that the spirits of our ancestors that dwell in that forest curses anyone that enters to destroy the forest, but isn't it also our duty to safeguard our legacy and restore it to its past glory as it was meant to exist? According to the legend, when the people of Hima Myllem wanted a ruling family, they went out searching for a person who would make a perfect Chief for their Hima. When they found that person, they brought him to the village and conferred the title of Syiem on him and his clan and all their basic needs were provided for in order for them to establish and continue with the legacy of the Syiem clan. This was the beginning of the lineage of our Syiem clan of Myllem so even today, with that same mentality perhaps, it looks like our Syiem clan of Myllem is still waiting for some unseen, divine intervention to hand over to us Law Syiem on a silver platter which I think will not happen very soon.

We have to fight our own battle keeping in mind that unless we restore the Law Syiem to the forest that it is meant to be, the spirits of our ancestors will not rest in peace. "Woe betide anyone that disturbs the dwellings of the spirits of the ancestors

Congress lost touch with youth in Assam Party need dynamic leadership to survive

By Barun Das Gupta

In contrast with the electoral performance of the Congress in neighbouring West Bengal, the party has come a cropper in Assam. The main reason for this is said to be the inability of the aging leadership of the Assam Congress to keep in touch with the hopes and aspirations of the younger generation. They want job, they want better education facilities, including technical education. The Congress got alienated from the youth who believed, even after seeing two years of the BJP rule at the Centre, that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be able to deliver. This shows the extent of disillusionment of the youth with the Congress.

The second factor that was responsible for the undoing of the Congress was the loosening grip of the octogenarian chief minister Tarun Gogoi on his cabinet colleagues and the administration. This gave scope for corruption to flourish. Several departments like Animal Husbandry, Drinking Water Supply and Food and Civil Supply earned a notoriety for corruption and loot of public money running into hundreds of crores of rupees. Many ministers in the Gogoi cabinet had to kiss the dust this time.

According to a former Congress MP, the anti-incumbency factor did play a part in Congress defeat. Gogoi had been the chief minister for an uninter-

to attract and retain the youth. Some think that the High Command's insistence that Gogoi should not be replaced till this election also cost the Congress heavily in terms of public support. Replacing Gogoi by a younger leader would have helped, they feel. But when they are asked, who could have been Gogoi's successor, acceptable both to the people and the party, they fumble for a reply. The High Command also had a problem. Congress insiders say that during the later period of his office, Gogoi was not averse to quitting chief ministership but he wanted his son Gaurav Gogoi to succeed him. Reportedly, this idea did not find favour with the High Command.

The walking out of former minister Himanta Biswa Sharma with a number of Congress legislators last year and his eventually joining the BJP also damaged Congress prospects, some say. Sharma is an ambitious politician who wanted to be Chief minister himself. The central leaders were in no mood to oblige him - and for good reasons, too. But his leaving the Congress along with a number of legislators and joining the BJP was a development that could and should have been avoided by the party, they think. But that did not

Sonowal has been in public life since the late 1970s when, still in his teens, he took a prominent part in the movement against the 'illegal infiltrators' from Bangladesh led by the All Assam Students Union (AASU). By 1992, he was the president of the student body. He later joined the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) which had ruled the State twice. Later he became frustrated with the faction-ridden AGP and left it to join the BJP. He has not looked back since then.

rupted period of a decade and a half since 2001. The people wanted a change. Gogoi's was anything but an inspiring leadership. In contrast, the BJP presented the far younger Sarbananda Sonowal, the current Sports Minister at the Centre, as the party's chief ministerial candidate. It has paid off. He has won.

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Can the Congress recover from the shock of the defeat it has suffered? Not immediately, says the ex-MP. At the moment it is an uphill task and it will take time. The Congress High Command, many grassroots level Congressmen feel, could not provide the type of dynamic leadership that was needed

happen and ultimately he broke away from the party.

The Assam poll outcome has also proved wrong those who thought that the politics of polarization that the BJP had pursued in Assam, which has about thirty-three per cent Muslim population, would drive the minority voters en masse to either the Congress or the AIUDF. The Congress could not get the minority vote to the extent it expected.

To revive the party in Assam the Congress needs a collective leadership of comparatively young leaders who can interact more readily with the younger generation, attune themselves to their needs, hopes and aspirations. The old leaders have to be phased out. For the present, however, it is the BJP which will rule the State for the next five years. The Congress leaders and workers are demoralized. The process of rejuvenation will require a farsighted and imaginative leadership. Whether Assam Congress can throw up such a leadership, future alone will say.(IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Why this bias towards BJP?

Editor,

I was a little overwhelmed to read Mr. Rahul Saikia's article "Assam - of Electoral Boats and the Modi Wave". Though a very well written article, I fail to agree with his perception of the BJP that he has tried very hard to establish as a fact in his article. The party's fate in Assam was declared only yesterday but Mr. Saikia has already written them off! The article reflects a sense of embedded hatred in the author's mind against the BJP - the reason for which is best known to him. He has very strongly suggested - or must I say, established - that the party "will" divide the people and it "will" impose Hindutva on the other north eastern states as well. Such certainty in defining the party's future course of action by a very learned man is hard to digest and compels me to term it partial. Firstly, a feat like this is next to impossible in the Christian states of the Northeast (being someone born and brought up here would very well understand). Secondly, in the last two years that the party has been in power at the center, how many cases of communal violence has come up that the BJP has incited? I am not a blind supporter of any party or a politician, but I was disappointed to read such negativity about a party which has just won and has not even started its job in the

state yet. We can at least give the party a chance to prove its mettle in Assam. A "Hindutvaa" group - coming to power with such huge margins, in a state which has approximately 35% Muslim voters, super powerful opposition and a large educated population - must be doing something right to be here today with the people's mandate!

Yours etc.,
Prateek Harlalka
Tura

Congress mukt Bharat in the making

Editor,

The decimation of Congress in the recent state elections, the result of which was declared on Thursday, is a repeat telecast of the 2014 General Election result. That this party of "mother - son - daughter - damad" quartet has not learnt anything, rout after rout, is indeed playing well for the saffron party and other regional parties. In fact, what is unfolding is the BJP version of "Congress Mukt Bharat". But what is important to see now is the ensuing state election in Meghalaya? Many Congress leaders, I reckon will be rethinking about their allegiance to the first Gandhi family. We already have Manas Chaudhuri quitting from the party preceded by Frankenstein W Momin, KC Boro among others. Chaudhuri has reasoned his move to the inept manner in which the party is run in the state. With the saffron tide on the horizon in

this region, Meghalaya and Manipur remaining the only two Congress ruled states, many more are likely to switch over to the BJP at least in Meghalaya. The big gamut of change right from the dethroning of UPA led congress government, stoppage of "loyal economic baskets" for Meghalaya, ban on coal mining in the state and what have you is certainly going to effect a change. After all the days of doles from the "Gandhi dynastic government" is over. We have already had some names from the state doing the rounds vying for an entry into the BJP fold. Certainly, the two veteran Congressmen who quit the party recently must be looking for an entry after the bathing saffron show. Let us wait and see.

Yours etc.,
P. K. Dwivedi
Shillong - 1

BJP must start in right earnest

Editor,

The articles, "You cannot play the proxy game in politics" & "BJP should not misread the Assam victory" (ST, May 20, 2016) clearly shows that the Congress is losing its power base across the country, and for good reason. In Assam, secular-minded people voted for the party, ignoring its alleged 'communal' tag. Mamata Banerjee seems to have fought muscle power with muscle power. The Congress's failure to project a suitable chief ministerial candidate must have harmed its prospects. PM Modi has rightly termed the

BJP's victory in Assam as "historic" and "phenomenal". BJP has shown that tough non-populist administrative measures can find acceptance with the people. The BJP which has been trying hard for the last few years to make inroads into India's northeast, has not only assured to end the existing corruption in Assam but also to bring change and development and give employment to the youth. It clearly shows that the people of Assam have been frustrated at the functioning of the Congress government. There is no doubt that the new government in Assam will take concrete steps for overall development of Assam and other parts of the region and will come out to fulfill the dreams and aspirations of the people of the state. The results are a lesson for the Congress Party; it is on a steady decline in the country's political arena. The picture shows that one of the significant outcomes of the Assembly results lies in the stupendous victory of the two women in an otherwise male-dominated polity. Now when the BJP has won the people's mandate in Assam it must set up a model administration in the state by doing away with the corrupt governance set up by its predecessors.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad - 15

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

By Aditi Singh

A reminiscence of past glory

The Hawa Mahal in Jaipur is an unlikely backdrop for the book reborn as a visual sensation. Still here I am, braving the labyrinthine alleys of souvenir kiosks and other kitschy delights on a dusty winter afternoon for my moment with a book within a book within a... panelled rectangular space of pictures. Does this sound incomprehensible? Then any conversation on the future of the book -- or the possibilities of reading -- is nowadays caught between the techno-optimism of the market savvy and the hardbound despair of the traditionalist.

This afternoon I am walking into a space where arguments about the future of reading are made redundant by the language of viewing. A space where definitions -- of 'book', 'art', 'canvas' -- collapse in a whirl of perceptions. In the hall of book(s) -- which is not a Borgesian labyrinth but a zen master's resonant austerity -- you begin with an object, inconspicuous. Well, with a book. I am in Dayanita Singh's Museum of Chance. And what I chance upon first, before I see the walls and read them, is a book. Or, is it

'Faces' of a calf, a frozen sculpture, a suspended animation. What you miss -- sorry, what you do not miss -- is a name. No title, no author name, to prepare you for the journey, and sometimes, it is pure bliss not to be hooked. Turn the pages and you are inside Dayanita Singh's Museum of Chance, published by Steidl, and there are no words to distract you in the rustle of pages, only the randomness of black and white, held together by the viewer/reader's sensory powers.

There is every chance that you may linger here, an afternoon lost in the pure austerity of images, in the measured slowness of storytelling. The freedom is immense. The harmony between a sari blown in the



From the pages of Dayanita Singh's Museum of Chance

to the arrested curiosity of a woman faced with a perceiving finger.

An umbrella hanging on the wall accentuates the absence in a room, and you move from this confined bareness of memory to an open space where everything reminds you of time stagnant. I can go on as far as the pages let me, but I need to close the book before I realise that every image is a prelude, an intimation, not a situation but a partial glimpse of it, to be completed elsewhere, pages later. Here you are watching an idea multiplied, a moment in life stretched across seemingly incompatible but intimate pairings. So before I close the book, I see what I have left behind through different, rearranged objects. A lone Ambassador car in the dark is an image trapped between

abandonment and apprehension, and a page later, a house in the dark gives it a past, a future and offers a million possibilities of the present. Such pleasures are usually denied in a book of words, for words have restrictions. Here everything, be it an enigmatic gaze or the ordinariness of a reunion or the eroticism of stillness, is moving in unadorned pages of freedom, and it is this movement that shifts and shapes the stories.

Do not ask me how many of them; I have closed the book. That is not true. The book is around me, each page mounted on the wall. That is not true either. The frames are teasing deceptions, and their attempt to individualise the pages cannot hide the beauty of this enterprise, or what Dayanita calls the 'Museum of

Chance'. Every page has become a book, and every book has become a piece of art. The limits genres impose on forms are undone by a visual narrator's audacity -- or freedom -- to make the story as elastic as the style of its telling, and without words. Dayanita empties a few frames and, to twist the plot a little, asks me, where shall we put these books, how shall we make some new pairings? When she does, it is as if sentences are breaking out of printed pages and rearranging themselves. The story is a puzzle. The book is a permanent work in progress. You never finish reading; you take only a pause.

What else can you do in a museum of chance, which itself is a layered experience in a larger museum Dayanita has built. What makes this afternoon in Hawa Mahal special is the manner in

which she has made the book an object of art -- and vice versa. Some time ago, the author died when the post-structuralist anatomised the text. For Roland Barthes, the text is not the deliverance of the Author-God, but the experience of the reader. The unity of a text is not in its origin, he writes, 'it is in its destination.' The death of the author, in post-structuralist text, empowers the reader, to put it in simple terms. In Dayanita's hall of framed book(s), the author-visualiser does not offer you the luxury of a finished text. She keeps herself alive by constantly subverting her own narrative, by re-writing, by making the reader spectator a partner in a rare project in the art of storytelling: A moveable museum where you are not worried about the book being an object -- not to be preserved but to be reread.

The gift of persuasion

Interviewer: "And exactly how much leadership experience do you have?"
Me: "Does being admin of a Whatsapp list count? Because I had 20 names on one before I accidentally deleted it." He wasn't impressed by that or anything else I said. Some folks have the gift of the gab and some don't.

Case in point: A handcuffed villain escaped from a police station and raced across town to another police station. He persuaded them that he had escaped from kidnappers, so police from station two released him, received his grateful thanks and let him go - just before police from station one arrived to re-arrest him.

This happened recently in Taiwan, I heard from reader Steve Hyde, who was impressed at the man's cool-headed powers of persuasion.

My colleagues agreed. "People like that should not be locked up but re-trained to do something else, like work in public relations," said one, revealing himself to be an ingÄ@nue who doesn't realize that PR spokespeople are fashioned from animated slime like orcs in The Lord of the Rings.

No: silver tongues should always be used by good guys, not the powers of darkness. An example of that is a recent UK news item about a man whose shop was entered by a youth with used electronic appliances to sell.

The shop-keeper realized the stuff looked familiar but stayed cool and persuaded the seller to leave the goods with him for an hour "for examination". He raced home to find his house burgled. The unsuspecting thief returned to the shop later to walk

into the tender loving arms of the law.

Cool talkers can achieve great things. People say the best salesman ever was a US guy called Joe Girard who sold 13,001 cars in a 15-year period. What was his secret? He actually bought them all himself, cleverly hiding them in his garden. No, he didn't, but that's what I would have had to do. I knew I lacked persuasiveness when I was beaten in debates three times in a row by my daughter, who was three at the time.

Which is why I felt very sympathetic when I read recently about a UK man who cannot be even slightly sneaky with words - because he has a bionic heart valve which produces an audible tick-tick-tick sound, like a lie-detector.

Wife: Did you remember it's our wedding anniversary today? Husband: Tick. Tick. Tick. Of course I did, honey! Ticktickticktickticktick. Poor guy. Wait. A female colleague reading over my shoulder comments: "There's a much easier way to tell if men are lying. Just see if their lips are moving." Not that she has issues.

I know one way of making an impression on people around you without saying a word.

When the man at the coffee shop asks for your name, slide over a piece of paper with "Voldemort" on it. Your coffee will be announced as belonging to

who can be named", catching the attention of everyone around. Note: This works best if you are a striking appearance, for example if you are a tall, bald immortal with no nose, or a piece of animated slime. They are a lot of them around.

The Funny side

By Nury Vittachi

The affinity between India and the US as the world's two biggest democracies is often spoken of today's context. But a recent exhibition, Kindred Nations, brought out the fact that the connection goes back to a much earlier time, finds Ranjita Biswas

Kindred souls

strengthened in time.

Ironically, it was the British colonialists who facilitated one of the most interesting connections between Kolkata (then Calcutta) and America-through trade. When America won the War of Independence shaking off its colonial status under Britain, it also meant that the restrictions on American private merchants which had prevented them from sending ships to India were with-

drawn.

Trade between the countries flourished. Calcutta, then the hub of British trade in India courtesy the East India Company, had great many Europeans who yearned for iced drinks in the humid climate. So when Boston's "Ice King," Frederic Tudor sent the first cargo shipment aboard the Tuscan, arriving in September 1833, it was a huge event that figured in the local newspapers promi-

nently. Reports elaborated how people lined up at Calcutta port on the bank of the Hooghly to witness unloading of this unusual cargo. Even for Lindsay Amiri, director of cultural programmes at the Meridian International Center (MIC), it was "One of the most surprising stories" as she and her team leafed through hundreds of material to curate the exhibition. "The idea of 100 tons of ice being shipped by boat over a four-month period without the refrigeration techniques available today was absolutely fascinating. Nearly half the shipment had melted along the way."

One of the offshoots of this opening up had influenced even the educational and cultural fields in India as the East India Company lifted its ban on American missionaries in 1813. A less known fact is that American Baptist missionaries introduced modern education and literature in the Brahmaputra valley in the North East. Evangelist Nathan Brown who learnt the 'sweet' Assamese language and Miles Bronson, a linguist, opened Assamese language schools, wrote the first grammar in Assamese, compiled a dictionary, and published the first Assamese magazine called Orunodoi (1846)



Swami Vivekananda and guests at Green Acre School, 1894, Eliot, Maine Collections of Eliot Bahá'í Archives, courtesy of www.VintageMaineImages.com

loaded with information. The missionaries' contribution to 'the collective life of the Assamese people' has been well recognised by scholars. The North East connection was, however, not part of this exhibition. Swami Vivekananda's

famous speech at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893) where he charmed the audience by addressing them as 'sisters and brothers of America' is recalled by a photograph of him surrounded by admirers at Green Acre School,

Maine. The exhibit packed in some rare insights into Indo-American connection through rare photographs. Like that of a baby elephant. In 1796, the first live elephant landed in America transported by the ship

America. The elephant drew huge crowds in cities in the East Coast who paid twenty-five cents a head to view this exotic animal. Or, a portrait of Anandibai Joshee, the first Indian woman to earn a medical degree in America (1886); on return she worked as physician-in-charge at the Albert Edward Hospital's female ward in Kolhapur.

Another showed Sikh immigrants arriving by the ship SS Minnesota, turban and all. Then there was the Hollywood connection. India-born actress Merle Oberon is seen on a set (in the class-conscious colonial era she had long suppressed the fact that her mother was an Anglo-Indian); another Hollywood star Sabu Dastagir, the Mowgli of The Jungle Book fame (precursor of the current animation hit film by Disney), who later became an American citizen and fought as an Air Force officer and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross. In India, on the other hand, director R. Dungan, already a success in the Madras (Chennai) film industry, is seen with cast member on the set of Meera (1945) which had legendary singer M. S. Subbulakshmi in the title role.

The Second World War, like countries worldwide, also singled India. There is an evocative photo of US soldiers taking off their shoes to enter the famous Jain temple in Kolkata; another shows world champion boxer Henry Armstrong as a soldier giving impromptu lessons to local boys.

The 1940s were turbulent years for India's freedom struggle. One picture shows (Contd on P-VII)



American sympathizers arrested for picketing the British Embassy, 1943 Washington, D.C. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

By Ranjan K Baruah

Interview skills - Part 2

Last week, we have published about basic interview skills. We are publishing some more information related to interview and how one can prepare before appearing in any interview. There are differences when it comes to interview and one cannot rely on any one or two examples. There are no standard questions and there might be anything during interview. One needs to follow certain dos and don'ts which are same for more or less all kinds of interview.

Some Dos and Don'ts Do:
 Arrive in good time.
 Show Positive Body Languages.
 Dress appropriately.
 Greet person with smile and confidently.

Engage with the interviewers like make eye contact.

Answer the questions that are asked, using relevant examples where at all possible.

Before you leave, thank the interview panel for the chance to attend the interview and say that it was nice to meet them.

Leave a good final impression.

Don't:
 Try to speak the truth means don't try to lie of fool someone.

Be over-familiar or share too much information.

Be late at any cost else your impression would be negative and less chance to crack interviews.

We have tried to publish the basic skills needed for appearing in an interview. There are interviews conducted by Service Selection Boards for select-

ing officials for defense forces. Union Public Service Commission and other State Public Service Commission, Staff Selection Commission, Indian Railways, etc also conduct interviews for various services and posts which are under government. Interviews are also held for admission into various educational institutes along with group discussions. We shall publish about skills needed for telephonic interview in next edition. Readers may share their experiences related to interviews with others.

Civil Service Examination 2016: Preliminary Examination

Indian Postal Service, Group 'A'; Indian Civil Accounts Service, Group 'A'; Indian Railway Traffic Service, Group 'A'; Indian Railway Accounts Service, Group 'A'; Indian Railway Personnel Service, Group 'A'; Post of Assistant Security Commissioner in Railway Protection Force, Group 'A'; Indian Defence Estates Service, Group 'A'; Indian Information Service (Junior Grade), Group 'A'; Indian Trade Service, Group 'A' (Gr. III); Indian Corporate Law Service, Group 'A'; Armed Forces Headquarters Civil Service,



tion of the Civil Services Examination for recruitment to the Services and Posts mentioned below will be held by the Union Public Service Commission on 7th August. The services are Indian Administrative Service; Indian Foreign Service; Indian Police Service; Indian P & T Accounts & Finance Service, Group 'A'; Indian Audit and Accounts Service, Group 'A'; Indian Revenue Service (Customs and Central Excise), Group 'A'; Indian Defence Accounts Service, Group 'A'; Indian Revenue Service (I.T.), Group 'A'; Indian Ordnance Factories Service, Group 'A' (Assistant Works Manager, Administration);

Group 'B' (Section Officer's Grade); Delhi, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli Civil Service, Group 'B'; Delhi, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli Police Service, Group 'B'; Pondicherry Civil Service, Group 'B'; Pondicherry Police Service, Group 'B'. Last date for applying is 27th May.

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

Indians increasingly prefer private education, 71 millions take tuitions, writes Devanik Saha

In a recent "Mann Ki Baat" address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stressed that every government should focus on quality learning and outcomes rather than the school enrolment.

His concerns, expressed on April 24, 2016, are not unfounded.

As many as 62 percent of children in India attended a government primary school in 2014, compared to 72.6 percent in 2007-08 - indicating a surging preference for private schools - according to an IndiaSpend analysis of data in a recent survey on education released by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO).

At the upper primary level, the percentage of students in government schools reduced from 69.9 percent in 2007-08 to 66 percent in 2014.

An urban-rural divide is evident: Only 31 percent of children attended government primary schools in urban areas, against 72.3 percent in rural in 2014. Yet, this does not mean learning outcomes have improved, IndiaSpend reported last year.

No more than 26 percent of children in class V can do division, a drop of more than 10 percent over four years, according to the 2014 Annual Status of Education Report by Pratham, an education NGO.

Despite spending Rs.586,085 crore (\$94 billion) over the last decade on primary education, India has been unable to arrest the decline in learning, IndiaSpend reported.

Government schools shunned, rising demand for government colleges

Till Class XII, students prefer private institutions over government, with 58.7 percent citing "better environment for learning" as the major factor for studying in private schools at the primary level.

Only 11.6 percent cited "English as a medium of learning" as a reason for



Private affair

studying in private schools. However, when it came to graduation, post-graduation

in rural and urban areas-although the demand for English-medium instruction in

students) enroll for private coaching in India: 273 of every 1,000 males and 243

Assocham, a trade watchdog. (In arrangement with

and diploma studies, many enrolled in private institutions because they did not get admission to a government institution. For instance, 43 percent of respondents pursuing a diploma cited inability to get admission in a government institution as the reason to enroll in a private institution, while the same number was 27.5 percent for students pursuing graduation degrees and above.

The trends were uniform

urban areas was higher by seven percent at the primary level -pointing to growing educational and career aspirations.

26 percent of students across India sign up for private coaching

As many as 71 million students (26 percent of all

of every 1,000 females.

Further, 89 percent of them cited "augmenting basic education" as the reason for additional tuition.

India's private coaching market was likely to touch \$40 billion (Rs.2.6 lakh crore) by the end of 2015, according to a report by

IndiaSpend.org, a data-driven, non-profit, public interest journalism platform. The writer is an independent journalist based in Delhi. The views expressed are those of IndiaSpend. The author can be contacted at respond@indiaspend.org

ENGLISH & MATHS tuition for 6-16 yr olds

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, May 22, 2016

You need to strike a balance between the macro and the little details in life as an opposition between Sun and Mars indicates a mixed year. Change may not be comfortable so give yourself time to review facts. As you focus on finances and it would be a good idea to eliminate extravagant tendencies. Thinking and doing things a little differently has big effects. You could be much sought after and this could lead to benefits and gains both professionally and on the personal plane. A chance meeting could lead to an exciting and fun filled relationship.

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)
 You participate in conversations, seminars, meetings and express yourself more specifically about your views this week. This is an excellent time to make some financial investments and adopt new strategies in financial matters. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation business associates. You move on the path of success and betterment in terms of better financial stability, emotional and mental satisfaction and intellectual growth. This is a time when you renew your energy and consider what things are important to you.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)
 Your work status may change for the better. There could be a promotion or new job opportunity that enables you to come into the limelight in a positive way. Authority figures, elders, parents, 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. The more willing you are to put yourself in the limelight, the more positive the rewards. You need to keep your eyes open for opportunities that come your way.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)
 Your self-confidence gets a boost and you meet difficult tasks and resolve work related issues confidently. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering. You put in a lot of efforts and then find this has been establishing strong professional base and this brings in desired and even unexpected gains. It is good time to organize your workplace and make it more modernized and equipped with good infrastructure. This would help you to get a better perspective to achieve desired goals. Also, circumstances or your own reserve may prevent you from openly declaring or expressing your feelings.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)
 This can be a time of achievement, career advancement, and success in business. Work-related travel or the reaching of a wider society is possible during this week. You adopt new styles and spend on luxury items. Your thoughts turn to children, pleasure and romance during this week. You focus on having fun, enjoying sports and expressing yourself efficiently. You turn things around in business dealings in your favor. An overseas or long distance journey with includes pilgrimage is on the cards. You maintain a fitness routine and healthy diet program.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)
 Your creativity will assist in your output at work and help you undertake new assignments. You may especially enjoy experiencing different cultures and ethnic styles. Your ideals are higher than usual, teaching may be part of the picture, and your cultural and spiritual awareness increases. Happiness and fulfillment through the expansion of your mind, widening your social circle, travel, and connections to people of a different cultural background than you indicated this week. You might also enjoy analyzing different health or nutrition programs. It's a great time to make improvements to your regular routines.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)
 Your professional skills wisdom and craft is appreciated and fresh opportunities for expansion are made available to you. Personal relationships gain a romantic and exciting quality. Tackle sensitive subjects and difficult people and get your point across. This time takes some kind of pressure on professional and personal aspects. You may begin to take on more responsibilities on the job. Your job could become

rather tedious or boring, or working conditions may be frustrating. You may have to draw some boundaries with friends and the demands of others.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)
 You would be emotional, loving and caring in personal relationships and family situations. You manage to communicate with moody and angry people with a sensitive approach and gentle manner. You would combine your inner and outer strengths to achieve success and happiness. Some associations would be competitive in business but you shine and work well in your field of activity. Your hobbies, moments spent with family, all come into focus. Some lifestyle changes made by you begin to show results.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)
 New associations and beginnings in work areas as some unknown opportunities and changes may come. You would improve your romantic and love life by bringing more sincerity, cooperation and humanity as unusual attractions and dreams could feature this time. You may explore new infrastructure and improve office as this brings more efficiency and continuity on your work. You tend to entertain others with your conversation and your sense of humor. The desire for some form of recognition is going to be fulfilled in this phase. Financial success is stronger than any other time enhanced now. Brisk walk and timely eating would be helpful.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)
 This period brings excellent opportunities for people in show business and related fields. You would work more creatively and express yourself with more sensitivity, compassion, and warmth. Your personal charm and attractiveness would have a positive effect on your relationships. People see you as a loving and lovable person, and as someone who is aware of their needs and feelings, which can benefit you at this time. Others are willing to help and cooperate with your goals and ambitions. It would be better to go for long term investments and speculations for financial gains.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)
 A new work opportunity can change the way you work and relate with people professionally. You are bold and adventurous and you cannot tolerate delay that prevents you from behaving exactly you want. How willing you're prepared to experiment and explore new approaches will determine your success this time. You can expect superiors to support you and stand up for you in tough situations at work. You can trust your intuition about people and situations when called upon to mediate in conflicts and collaborations. You will be considerably more proactive, healthy, and focused.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)
 The planetary configuration brings more stability in relations and professional life. You have a tendency to compromise and adjust and take a soft approach while dealing with people at work and home. You give a new method to communications, projects, learning and self-expression. You may be especially focused on pleasing your family and fond of the life of the home and family. It's a passionate time, although you are unlikely to display a whole lot of self-discipline. You would work in association with senior colleagues and people in authority and learn many more things at the work place, which boosts your confidence. You use your best talents and co-relate all activities to boost the business and work opportunities.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)
 This phase brings excellent work opportunities for people in teaching, hotel, finance and in communication fields. People in marketing and sales would work hard to meet professional commitments. You would impress people from your communication skills as this brings positive results in matters related to love, family and professional relations. You would express yourself with charm and grace, whether it's through what you say or you write. Excellent professional opportunities await those students who have completed their education in fine arts, drama, music and finance. Your romantic affair would give a big boost of confidence, and personal magnetism runs high to be appreciated and admired. Spending time in solitude among natural surroundings will be therapeutic.

By Trisha Mukherjee

Greatest Bengali short stories

When penning a book of Bengali short stories, it is only natural to begin with Rabindranath Tagore's 'Kabuliwallah', the iconic tale of friendship between an Afghani dry-fruit seller and a 5-year-old girl, that continues to be recited till date in homes and classrooms across Bengal and beyond.

Award winning translator, Arunava Sinha who has taken upon himself the task of translating Bengali literature into English and make it accessible to a wider audience, has compiled a selection of what in his opinion are the 21 'Greatest Bengali Stories Ever Told,' in the form a book of the same name.

Although the book opens with one of Tagore's stories, Sinha's selection reflects a thoughtful yet personal curation that gives equal prominence to almost all the literary stalwarts that Bengal has ever produced and also those who remained unheard of.

There is Sarat Chandra

Chattoptadhyay's rare combination of sharp societal observation and high emotional quotient along with the subaltern studies of Bibhutibhusan and Tarashankar Bandopadhyay.

Satyajit Ray's introspective lens finds resonance with Sunil Gangopadhyay and Nabarun Bhattacharya's deep plunges into the darker recesses of the heart and mind.

And with writers of the likes of Buddhadeva Bose, Premendra Mitra, Ritwik Ghatak, Mahashweta Devi and Ashapura

Debi, there are also narratives laden with political, social and gender consciousness.

However, Sinha insists that it is "not a potted history of the Bengali short story" and the choice has not been determined by

any form of critical sieving or literary era.

"These are, simply, stories I have loved and that have made a deep impression on me," he writes in the introduction, titled "My love Affair with Bengali Stories" to the book.

The anthology, he says, is devoid of any design and showcases the "rich variety to be found in Bengali literature - whether in terms of form, voice, setting or subject."

Those who have read the stories in Bengali will know that loss in translation is inevitable, but it cannot be denied that Sinha has tried to retain the fervour of the original to the best of his capacities, using phrases both in Hindi and Bengali here and there, to suit the narrative.

What binds the 21 stories together is really a

very personal emotion felt by the translator alone and therefore, he admits to have given many renowned and "expected" names a miss.

Having grown up in dingy lanes of north Kolkata that continues to reek of musty history, his attachment with Bengali literature is an amorous one. And, his acceptance of a story as his "own", he says, depends on his transformation from a being reader to becoming a character "right in the middle of the action."

For the popularly acknowledged "great short stories" that are not a part of his latest feat, Sinha, very innocently reasons, "It is just that I have no romance to recall with their stories, though I have read, admired and marvelled at them. But somehow I haven't found myself in them."

Kindred souls

(Contd from P-VI) Mahatma Gandhi with President Herbert Hoover (1946) when he was on a worldwide food survey of food conditions. Another shows American sympathisers getting arrested while demonstrating in Washington D.C. with the message 'It's 1776 for India' drawing a simile with America's Independence movement.

Said Amini, who was in Kolkata during the event, "Knowing the affinity between the two countries we wanted to create an exhibition that shares not only the key historical moments, but some of the little known interactions between Americans and Indians before India's independence."

When asked if it difficult to curate the exhibition, she said, "The process was definitely labour intensive. Our team worked for a year with archivists around the US at museums, universities, presidential libraries, historical societies, and also private collections."



U.S. soldiers respectfully remove shoes before entering the Calcutta Jain Temple, 1943 Calcutta.

Even then the team was amazed at the immense amount of images and stories discovered. Sifting through these thousands of images, they worked with Susan Bean, an Indo-U.S. expert, to curate the exhibition down to around 60 images that captures the larger story.

Amini agrees that given all the content that Meridian found during the research, "It is definitely a rich topic that could be explored further Kindred Nations is just a sampling of the kinds of stories that are

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."

—Henry David Thoreau

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 280 SHILLONG, MONDAY, MAY 23, 2016

The Kerala Scene

THE CPI (M) has kept the red flag flying only in Kerala. It has struck a balance in the State organisation. Pinarayi Vijayan (72) has confirmed his position as the next CM of the LDF government. But party general secretary Sitaram Yechuri has made it clear that 92 year old veteran V.S Achuthanandan who steered the election campaign will be the "Fidel Castro" of Kerala advising and guarding the party. Of course, because of his age, health and physical limitations, he cannot be leader of the LDF legislative party. It was not clear for some time if Achuthanandan will be satisfied with the role of elder statesman. But finally the nonagenarian has agreed to be a sentinel of the people. For nearly five decades, since the 1960s V.S Achuthanandan has been steeped in politics. He rose to the position of state chief in 1980.

In the 1990s, he went deep into the labyrinth of governance. At that stage, he seemed to lack a mass base. But soon enough as he turned 70 he made himself a leader of the people. He established himself as a fighter against corruption and a campaigner for environmental issues. He sometimes deviated from the party line but did not lose his grip on the party. Vijayan is known to be an able administrator but he would do well to be guided by a veteran like Achuthanandan. Party general secretary Sitaram Yechury on congratulate himself on achieving a coup in Kerala and straightening out internal problems of the party though the CPI (M) had a severe defeat in West Bengal.

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

Police Cleanse Delhi of Obscenities

The Police are cleaning the capital of it obscenities.

Led by police commissioner Ved Marwah, the force launched a drive against salacious cinema posters and hoarding following a meeting earlier this week of an advisory panel which decided that the poster must go. The panel which includes actress Sharmila Tagore, Sociologist Mrinal Pandey is chaired by Mr. Marwah. Armed with the new indecent Representation of Women-act in force from the beginning of this month the police can put offenders behind bars for two years in the first count.

An improvement on the earlier law which dates back to British Colonial times, the act recognizes that the norm to what is obscene or indecent is not readily definable.

As an example of what can be removed, police point to a poster, on the streets recently, depicting a man, armed with a whip seizing a woman with unmistakable intentions. Both are fully clothed. Much of the suggestively of the poster emanates from the skill of the artist who at the behest of the exhibitor stay just within legal limits but ate sufficiently risqué. In fact, visual film publicity in India can claim to be a genre of its own and one of the country's celebrity painters, M.F Hussain began his career as a cinema poster painter.

It has argued in favour of posters, vulgar or otherwise, that they are merely mirror to the fantasies of the average Indian. While depictions are mostly of male in all his macho glory, there also test building up across the country against indecent posters comes mainly from feminist, social workers and those concerned with public morality. A real danger is the effect the posters could have on young minds. Last month two youths staged a protest fast

before the Bombay Municipal Corporation's office against what they called the potential of "a whole generation being deprived".

One of the first places where any real actions was taken was in Madras where as in the films themselves the depictions tend to be far larger than life and cutouts of the artistes are festooned with garlands as become their heroic status. But the limit was reached after traffic at an intersection was distracted by cloth skirt, draped around a rather ample pair of cardboard thighs, which kept riding up in the wind as was meant to.

What explains the comparatively recent increase in the lewdness of the posters which have been around as long as the films the promote? Cinema theatre owners blame the video-boom which they say is putting them at the mercy of the masses interested only in quick titillation and not particular how they get it.

Not long ago, authorities here were perplexed at Hindi-speaking audiences normally apathetic to other languages, making a beeline for a Malayalam film until it was realized that the rush had more to do with the posters than with the film.

CPI leader bemoans "black money"

The total wealth of the country was managed by just twenty families, CPI National Council Member, Mr Promode Gogoi said while inaugurating the fifth conference of the parties State Unit in Shillong on Friday. Expressing his concern of the role being played by "black money", Mr Gogoi estimated that total amount of black money in circulation was in the region of Rs. 35,000 crore.

Meanwhile, unemployment in the country has touched the fifty million mark and fifty percent of the population still remained below the poverty line, he added.

Congress's downhill slide in Meghalaya

By H H Mohrmen

The result of the recently held bye-election to Tura Lok Sabha Parliamentary Constituency has triggered conversations across the state about the fate of the major political party in the state. The landslide defeat of the party's candidate (as defined by some) had made political commentators and doomsday tellers to predict that the result is the beginning of the decline of the Congress party in the state. Dr Mukul Sangma's detractors inside and outside the party are beginning to draw their swords in the open ready to take the opportunity to punish him. But the question is will the bye-election result have any impact on the leadership of Dr Sangma in the party? Is the result any kind of an indication of the strength of the party in the Garo hills?

Readers of my column in the Khasi vernacular paper will know how I see this election. In my opinion it was a friendly match. In fact if I translate the title of the piece it goes something like, 'honour amongst the worst of enemies.' Yes, the way I see it is that there is at least some honour amongst the political enemies and the Congress is only contesting for the sake of contesting. The aura of the Garo hills strong man still reverberates in the hills and he is respected even by the Congress which is NPP's arch rival. And if that is not the case, then it is some kind of an Achik trait that there is still honour even amongst worst of enemies especially when it involves a man of the stature of Purno Agitok Sangma.

I know many writers and columnists in this paper saw this election as Dr Sangma's over-ambitiousness to have an absolute control over the state by pitching his own 'other half' as the candidate for this prestigious seat at a very critical juncture. They have even called this election a 'do or die' situation for the Chief Minister because the outcome of the

election will have its ramifications on his hold of leadership of the party in the state. But the truth is if the Congress really wants to win the election there are still many Congress leaders from the region with experience like the Chief Minister's own brother Zenith Sangma, or even Deborah Marak who would have been able to give Conrad a good fight. Or if the party really wanted to wrestle the seat from the NPP, it still had the senior most members of the party in S C Marak. The election would not have been a cake walk for Conrad like it has just happened.

The Congress already knew that it is going to be an uphill task to beat Conrad an experienced politician with the sympathy wave backing him; but the winning margin was rather unexpected. It is true every force in the Garo hills and even in the state was working against the party in the last election, because not only did the NPP candidate have the sympathy wave with him but all the political parties in the state supported his candidacy. The Congress already knew that they were up against an insurmountable hill and if the aim of the party is to win the election then pitching a greenhorn like Dikkanchi Shira is a blunder of Himalayan magnitude for the party. With due respects to Dikkanchi she is just one election old in politics and she is no match to a politician of the stature and experience of Conrad Sangma.

If there is anything that we can take from this election it is the few lessons it offers to both the Congress the NPP; the other political parties and the public at large. If it is really true that Dr Sangma was over ambitious and Dikkanchi was his proxy candidate then the first lesson is for the CM himself. Dr Mukul Sangma must realize that winning the hearts of the people is not an easy task and that the Achik people

are smarter than him and they know how and for whom to vote. He should remind himself of the famous saying of the person who coined the most popular definition of democracy that 'you can fool some people some time, but you can't fool all the people all the time.' Dr Sangma like his colleague in Assam also needs to humbly and gracefully accept the defeat as the will of the people. There is no point in whining like a child and complaining about EVM tampering because that is like a footballer blaming the team's defeat for wearing a wrong pair of football boots.

For Dikkanchi it is her second election and a first defeat. She still has to learn the rope trick of being in a political family in Garo hills where every family member is expected to be a politician. The bye-election has also brought to fore the reality that in few more elections from now the political space in the Garo hills region of Meghalaya is going to be dominated by the two families. But it is the Congress party which has a lot to learn from the defeat in both Assam and Tura. Lesson number one is that the Congress's arrogance is its worst enemy. The Congress must realize that the party is nothing if it is pitted against a united opposition therefore it is imperative that the party must scout and work out for a pre poll alliance before 2018. The anti incumbency factor coupled with united opposition, will definitely take the sail off the Congress's ship. The same goes for the opposition; a divided opposition is an advantage for the Congress, so if the opposition really wants to defeat Congress in 2018, then the only option is to come under one umbrella to fight against the Congress. That was the formula used in Assam and it worked perfectly well, but the million dollar question is whether it is possible to have this sort of arrange-

ment in Meghalaya. Is it possible to have a united opposition in Meghalaya?

The son has rightly said that the landslide win is a befitting tribute to the man, the Achik brothers and sisters and the people of Meghalaya and the entire north east are proud of. He should have been the first tribal president of the country, but the party that prevented him from becoming one, was none other than the Congress party. I think I am allowed to share with the readers of this esteemed paper that the image of P A Sangma that will linger in my mind for as long I can remember him is of a short bespectacled man trying to control the august house of more than five hundred members, who because of his stature used his hand more often than not to control the over-enthusiastic MPs. And Purno is a jolly man who when he is not lecturing, laughs out louder more than he speaks. If the Tura by-election is anything for the Congress it is but a pre-test before the main examination in 2018 and the outcome is that the strategy had failed. The party must work hard if it really wants to regain power after the 2018 general election to the state Assembly. Changing leaders at this juncture is not going to help the party and in fact it is going to do more harm than good for the party to even consider change of leadership now. Besides, is there any contender for the leadership position in the Congress party in Meghalaya today? If the party's hope is to stop this downhill slide and also avoid following on the footsteps of their party colleague in the neighbouring state, then the only way out is to work for the unity of the party. The party has precisely one and half years to prepare for the 2018 election and the first thing that needs to be done is that all the leaders should bury their hatchet and forgive and forget and put the party's interest before their selfish interests if they really want the party to win.

NPP Hat-trick Predicts Congress Exit

By B M Lanong

It was as rightly anticipated, the Meghalaya all-party NPP candidate to the Lok Sabha by-poll, Conrad Sangma, winning the traditional Tura seat of his charismatic father Late Purno Sangma, by an all time record of 3,29,383 votes against 1,37,246 polled by his only rival Ms Dikkanchi D Shira, wife of the Chief Minister Dr. Mukul Sangma, sweeping all the 24 seats of Garo Hills region, including the Ampati Assembly seat of the Chief Minister, where he captured 9318 votes, short by 2432 votes only to complete the hundredth percent mark.

Nevertheless, the record set in this election will be hard to erase, a historic solidarity indeed, demonstrated by the melancholic people of Garo Hills, who rallied behind the politically young Conrad to give him and more so to their beloved veteran god-father Purno Sangma, who left them prematurely, in a conjure-up mantra of sorts, an inimitable victory of a life time. On the other hand the landslide victory clearly deprecates and censures the Chief Minister who blatantly vowed to wipe out NPP in 2018 general elections.

Call it a sympathy wave,

party rivalry, between Lapang and Sangma warring factions, who shuttled to and fro Shillong-Delhi for almost the entire five years term 2008-2013, the Congress still returned in 2013 and by almost the required majority to form the ministry alone, leaving everybody flabbergasted.

It was the opposition NPP, UDP and others who got wind then of the electronic voting machines (EVM) manipulation and attributed the queer big margin to hacking and pre-fixing of the old worn-out EVMs and petitioned the Election Commission of India to inquire and investigate the matter to its logical conclusion. The Chief Minister Dr Mukul Sangma who had then and now too, a closer view and authority to at least protect their safe custody, has only now vented his anguish against the possible EVM hacking in Tura Parliamentary election. But no one will buy this story, because it is practically impossible to hack the EVMs in all the 24 constituencies.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) itself was fully aware about the de-

Nevertheless, the record set in this election will be hard to erase, a historic solidarity indeed, demonstrated by the melancholic people of Garo Hills, who rallied behind the politically young Conrad to give him and more so to their beloved veteran god-father Purno Sangma, who left them prematurely, in a conjure-up mantra of sorts, an inimitable victory of a life time.

as congress leaders casually like to put it or call it any wave, Conrad has won hands-down by the mammoth wave-ever, marking the third successive defeat for the Congress in Garo Hills within a span of exactly 2 years from May 2014, when the veteran Purno Sangma last retained his Lok Sabha seat from Tura, defeating Dr Mukul's prospective son-in-law, followed by the October 2015, District Council elections, where the Congress was ousted from GHADC after holding it by fair or foul means for over three decades, managing a mere 7 seats, whereas the Opposition NPP managed 10 seats, the rest 12 to others.

Come May 2016, Conrad defeated Chief Minister's wife hook, line and sinker, to complete NPP's hat trick leaving the Congress to bite the dust, which looks apparently imminent too as BJP's Nalin Kohli counters that Congress may itself exit in 2018, in a stark reaction to Mukul's vociferous overtone-against the NPP

At least for now, it can be safely concluded, along with the simultaneous conclusions of the congress Government in Assam, the major player of the Congress in northeast, that the above three successive victories are enough for the regional parties to account this new horizon as a precursor to the general election 2018.

The EVM hacking of 2013 election

In politics, there is no guarantee about anybody's prospect. So was the ostensible victory of the Congress in the last 2013 general election in Meghalaya, making a clean sweep of 29 seats, which never-ever during its heydays, when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister, Capt. W A Sangma the first Chief Minister of the State, could the Congress reach 29 seats mark. Incredibly indeed, despite its prolonged intra-

TO THE EDITOR

Leader who shoots in the air

Editor,

The victory of Conrad Sangma was not surprising as the mechanism of his campaign was plain and clear and filled the void of his father the legendary PA Sangma. Surprisingly he surpassed even his father in terms of votes polled leading with a big margin in South Garo Hills. On the other hand Dikkanchi Shira chose the wrong path while campaigning. Her tactics for luring people seems rather immature. As per the update in the daily journal, her statement towards her opposition was abusive.

The large part of her campaign was to make hate speeches against the BJP instead of emphasizing on the developmental aspect of the state. This has actually landed her in trouble (breaking the code of ethics). Her method led to her defeat so much so she even lost from her own constituency (Mahendraganj). Such political battles show up a real leader. Those who want to lead people should show by example that they have leadership qualities.

On Dikkanchi's part it was more volume than quality debate. Those who wish to enter parliament are expected to show greater maturity than ordinary voters. In this case the voters proved wiser in electing the right candidate. Hopefully the NPP

will bring change and prosperity to the state.

Yours etc,
Bracy Nongrum
Byrnihat

Congress's false propaganda

Editor

As predicted the NPP has taken the lion's share off the Congress Party in the recently concluded MP by-elections. The MPCC which was trumpeting that it would win and the CM himself stating that the NPP will be the biggest loser has been proved wrong. Such tall and false claims are utterly foolish. Secondly, communalism and spewing hatred for cheap publicity is bound to boomerang and this has happened.

In fact during the Congress regime the number of unaccounted and unreported communal violence against Christians is never reported by a so-called main stream, secular media. So before inciting and trying to trivialize sensitive issues the Congress Party should set its policy right now that it has become a dynasty and not as what was envisaged by its founders.

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

Treatment at Govt hospitals

Editor,

Water is a prime necessity but it seems that the

concerned authority are least bothered! A hospital that serves thousands of patients is seen to work without water supply. This is really unexpected and the patients coming from weaker sections and from villages are suffering a lot. They had to purchase water (in bottles) not only for drinking but even to wash things they use! If people (weaker sections) have to purchase water and incur such heavy expenses, then what is the point of saying that Civil Hospital is there to serve the poor and less fortunate. The toilets are in pathetic condition. And yes, we understand that there are too many patients and there is lack of accommodation but, it is also not a solution to place a bed next a door leading to the toilet (female ward-204).

Instead of recovering the patient would suffer more. Is this what is expected from a Government run hospital? And workers perform their duty just to get their salaries. Their dealings with patients coming from poorer sections and the least literate is rude and harsh. Such behaviour makes patients feel inferior (because they come from villages).

Many would say that such bad behaviour from the nursing and other staff is expected from Government hospitals. But should bear up with things as they are and keep silent. The Health Minister AL Hek would do well to make surprise visits to Government Hospitals.

Yours etc.,

Name withheld on request

Money without permit!

Editor,

There are events in life that are so thought-provoking to common man that they should not go unmentioned. The parking lot just behind the Synod complex is teeming with private vehicles finding just the right space for parking. As per the rule of the land, any parking space allotted to a vehicle has to be paid for. The driver will be issued a parking ticket. But yesterday to my surprise, when we parked our vehicle there, no ticket was issued either before or after the parking time. Just before our departure from the parking lot, the fee collector came and asked for the parking fee. We handed him ten rupees and asked for the parking ticket and he said that such tickets are never issued for a petty sum of money. This shocked me since any money that is collected from the public ought to be accounted for, whether the sum is big or small. Money is money. Unfaithfulness in minor things is but a reflection of unfaithfulness in bigger things. Yours etc.,
Daniel Cajee
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.

"Great men's errors are to be venerated as more fruitful than little men's truths."

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

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TMC'S SECOND INNINGS

MAMATA Banerjee is back in the saddle in West Bengal with a thumping majority. The Trinamool Congress (TMC) bagged 211 out of 294 seats in the assembly. The Left-Congress alliance proved a total failure. What about the future? The Opposition is now muted and the TMC can continue its misrule with impunity. But such complacency can prove its undoing. There is another way of looking at the victory. The Left Front has been wiped out. It is time for Mamata to consolidate her image. She is not merely a deconstructor. She can now be a genuine constructor with no opposition to reckon with. She can put an end to political violence and revive rule of law. But the attack on Rupa Ganguly, former actress and BJP legislator does not raise much hope. Mamata should take her lesson from the second innings of Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. During his first term, he won accolades for his performance which got the CPI (M) an absolute majority in the second term. But complacency and overdrive reduced the CPI(M) to its present condition. Mamata has to build on her renewed popularity.

The corruption of the party has to be eradicated. The defeat of Madan Mitra, a former TMC minister, who is in jail for charges of corruption proves that people will not have it. And the rise of gangsterism should be contained forever. Mamata Banerjee has it in her to achieve it. As for the Congress it remains a small player now in West Bengal politics. CPI (M) cadres believe that the Party's marriage of convenience with the Congress has dealt it a fatal blow. India's political firmament is itself going through desperate contortions. It will be a while before some form of non-BJP Third Front alliance emerges. Whether India is ready for such a front or will regional satraps like Mamata and Jayalalitha be reduced to despots in their own states is still a moot point.

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

Kohima Copter crash

The Pawan Hans helicopter crash near Kohima last Tuesday, which left three persons dead and as many injured, makes disturbing reading. Preliminary investigations carried out by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation shows that the ill-fated Westland chopper crashed seven kms short of Kohima apparently due to the failure of rear rotor drive shaft. The DGCA Director General Mr P C Sen and his Deputy Mr H S Khola who promptly carried out the site inspection, have informed that DGCA headquarter on Thursday that the tail rotor shaft was found broken and there was no fire. Obviously, the inference is that there was some defect in the rotor shaft which caused the accident. As an offshoot, the DGCA has ordered immediate inspection of the tail rotor drive system.

Chances are that the rotor drive system in other Westland helicopter may not show any visible defect and nothing much may be known eventually about the causes of the Kohima crash. Since the weather around Kohima on the fateful day was ideal for flying, for once the causes of the crash will have to be found elsewhere. The two pilots who were among the three unfortunate victims, have been credited with long flying experience. It is difficult to imagine that it was a case of human failure. The suspicion, therefore is likely to strongly fall on mechanical failure. More so, because Westland Helicopter has already had another disaster in Jammu last year killing all the occupants. Since the Helicopter Corporation of India has an ambitious plan for air-linking the landlocked North East; it is imperative that the Civil Aviation

Ministry takes another hard look at the type of aircraft it is going to press into service in this region in particular and the rest of the country in general.

Inter-State goods consignment tax bill to be introduced

A bill for the levy of a tax on inter-state consignment of goods on par with Central Sales Tax, which is at present four per cent will be introduced in the monsoon session of Parliament, Finance Minister Mr S B Chavan announced today at the end of two-day conference of Chief Ministers here.

Addressing a news conference, Mr Chavan said the conference approved "by consensus" the proposal for the levy of consignments tax and requested the Centre to move necessary legislation "expeditiously."

The Chief Minister rejected the proposal to extend levy of additions excise duty in lieu of Sales Tax on vanaspati, drugs and medicines, cement, paper and paper board and petroleum products, he said.

Regarding the Consignment Tax some Chief Ministers had reservation about the proposal to give concurrent power to grant exemption from the proposed Consignment Tax. Under an accepted compromise formula he would set up a committee including some Chief Ministers very soon to frame the guidelines in this regard, Mr Chavan said. The conference has decided that the machinery for assessment would be the same as the one existing in respect of Central Sales Tax. The valuation of consignment transfers would be on the pattern adopted in respect of levy of central excise duty.

Exemplary obedience displayed by a wise companion

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

This article is not meant to credit or discredit anyone but merely an attempt to ponder on few realities that we do not realize many a times but which form the basis of our associations and reveal some of the true picture of our attitudes and behaviours.

Dikkanchi D Shira may have lost and was defeated by a strong blow of wave in the electoral battle, but that does not matter at all because she has completed and faced the challenge entrusted to her as a faithful companion fulfilling her duty to defend the head of her family who is also the head of the Government. She has staunchly defended her husband from the onslaught of the imminent and visible fallout by assimilating unto herself all the brunt of political defeat.

This is a good example of extra courage possessed by her to go the extra mile despite the fact that wrestling against the giant's son is meaningless. This is also well understood in advance by everyone including those within the Congress party itself. But what matters the most here is 'family' and the relationship between husband and wife. Sometimes it is too difficult to segregate family from politics.

The point to be noted here as well is about family and dynastic politics and whether it is ideal for our democracy. When there are competent people with the potential for serving and who have the capacity to deliver, should people reject that opportunity? But dynasty here is not built by force or compulsion but by inspiration and goodwill unlike the dynasty built by the might of monarchy and cruelty of the zamindars. Yes there are family mem-

bers who do not make any attempt to draw inspiration and build rapport with people except to rely on the image of their progenitor and the person's personal appeal. Those who rely on other people's charisma will never attract voters. Instead they will meet with the wrath of rejection as we have seen so many times.

In the case of Dikkanchi D Shira, she is not the only one who has stuck her neck out for her husband. There are many more women and faithful wives and mothers who in their own spheres of daily engagement may have confronted situations on behalf of their children and their presumably respected husbands. Men are sometimes reluctant to face unwanted situations and here lies their weakness. They try to avoid confrontations because they are worried about the outcomes, (in other words the fear of uncertain or less dignified outcome). Because of the need to preserve their self esteem men often become cowardly and selfish. It is an open fact that men will not leave any important event or meeting unattended even if it means putting their family at stake. Less important events and issues with no apparent benefit are left to be dealt by the other half of our life contracted in marriage (wife). She is the last resort when all options are exhausted. And that is why in most of the Parent-Teachers Meetings in schools female parents will always outnumber male parents.

There is one thing here that I fail to understand. Why should a trusted companion like Dikkanchi not be accommodated in the governance process of the Government? In fact as a reward for her obedience and courage she should be inducted into the cabinet with an im-

portant portfolio. Here is another example of a tribal mindset. When it comes to governance it seems we are scared of women and try to invoke customary or traditional laws and rituals.

For Dikkanchi winning and losing the election is not a big difference or a big deal. If she had won the credit would not go to her but to the one who has sent her to battle. The Rani of Jhansi fighting what she believed is a threat to the prestige of her family and when that situation occurs, many ladies will rise on their feet because this spirit and attitude originates from the sense and attribute of ownership towards their own family. While men are afraid to accept defeat and humiliation, women have learnt to take things in their stride and move on.

It will require extra courage for men to accept defeat with humility. That is the courage that women display. There is no other way to better describe this quality than the loyalty and obedience shown by Dikkanchi. Had she been only a friend or a colleague she would have easily declines the offer to contest against the sympathy wave of the legendary PA Sangma - a political stalwart.

The notion that husband is the head of the family here has failed to prove its meaning and usefulness. Had the Chief Minister Dr. Mukul himself entered the fray and contested the just concluded bye-election from Tura, the picture would have been definitely different or perhaps a closer fight. But fielding a less formidable opponent is disastrous to the party.

In the tribal society like ours, it is a common practice by most of the people both working and non working class in utilising their wives' name for extra business ac-

tivities or to avail loan while the income and profit are being utilized by the husband. There are plenty of cases where the husband purposely defaulted on loan repayment and deserted the family as well. Here I have to be a little critical about our men folk for not standing up to the responsibility they have chosen. Women are pushed to venture into various activities to sustain their families and children.

Most often it is because their male counterpart is less productive or not serious enough about the well-being of the family. Nevertheless, women in tribal society are more entrepreneurial whereas men prefer less industrious job with huge returns - a system that leads to various corrupt practices. Men in our Khasi society can be like breeding bulls if we choose that option, but leadership is first bestows on man to take the lead in making a marriage work. Marriage in our tribal set up has plunged into deep confusion and disorder with relationships intertwined and their meanings degenerating. We cannot blame the system or anyone but leadership examples should be displayed by anybody irrespective of gender or sex.

'A wise companion builds the family' is a better phrase than 'a wise woman builds her home'. Would it be appropriate then to say that Dikkanchi D Shira became a soft target and a pawn used by the forces of patriarchy in what is seen by the outside world to be a matrilineal society? Indeed this election requires to be critiqued by political scientists as it is an interesting issue of gender being used to win votes and in case of a victory the accruals flow and all the accolades would be for Dr Mukul Sangma and not Dikkanchi D Shira. But she is indeed 'The Good Wife'.

Women leaders shine in polls for Bengal & T.N.

By Lalit Seth

The message of Assembly election results on Thursday, May 19, this year is that the people trust and admire women leaders when they are Chief Ministers and do not throw them out of office. The charismatic women of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu hold sway in the States they rule. They could expect to spread their wings in neighbouring States.

Jayalitha might have lost some of her shine by winning just a narrow majority, but the simplest of the simple Mamta Banerjee has shown her supremacy on the Bengal scene. She has won more than 210 seats out of 294 seats in the State Assembly. It is more than a double century.

She could play a national role, but she does not wish to be in the power games beyond Bengal. She does not see herself as a future Prime Minister. She has "so many" political friends. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi may or may not be a personal friend, but a leader all right.

She could be speaking to Bengali speaking people all over India and they are around in all parts of India. She could influence the coalition politics in future and be the next leader of the dispensation or the most powerful person in this area.

Is there a message in this for the Congress? Is there a message for Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi? Since she is the leader of her parliamentary party in both Houses, should she consider moving to the Rajya Sabha?

Should she consider vacating her Lok Sabha seat for her daughter, Priyanka, so that Priyanka Gandhi could challenge Akhilesh Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav? Would the Congress wish to meet the challenge of a reinvigorated Mayawati who is hoping to replace the Samajwadi Party for its excesses, misrule and life style of great luxury and playboy style exhibited at Saifai on Mulayam's birthday glitter? If Priyanka Gandhi were to bring Congress back U.P. where it has been out of office for a long time, could she be projected as the Chief Minister candidate?

If that is not possible because even Priyanka may not be able to win more seats for the Congress than Mayawati and Akhilesh, could the party consider a post-election alliance with Mayawati if the latter fails to win an outright majority in the State? The BJP will no doubt deploy loud mouth Smriti Irani and perhaps Mrs. Sumitra Mahajan, the suave Speaker of the Lok Sabha, but only for the General Election. But the BJP will look for effective women leaders in all States to keep Modi in office for a new term and win upcoming Assembly

elections, as in Karnataka and U.P., and elsewhere in the next three years.

The BJP has won Assam handsomely and made small gains in Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It may boast of being focused on the development agenda, but the claim rings hollow as almost 500 million in all parts of the country are very poor, most of them of poorest of the poor. The worst drought in India's history in 25 years has left Latur, Bundelkhand and 200 districts in 29 States and many parts of 470 remaining districts remain desperate and cry for food and water. The Prime Minister has met Chief Ministers of eight or nine States, but the Central Government and Chief Ministers do nothing except twiddling their thumbs. They make tall claims on TV cameras and news conferences, sounding grim and grave, but with very little delivered on the ground.

Even on electricity, less than 50,000 villages out of 600,000 of them have it. Not more than 20,000 villages will get it in a year and who will pay the power bills? Most villagers will be too poor to pay the power companies. Will the Government promise to raise no bills? Punjab does it for free power for connexions for farm tube wells even of the wealthy farmers as the State exchequer has been bankrupted.

In spite of the big victory in Assam where the BJP and its well crafted alliance partners have won more than 83 seats and reduced the Congress to just 25 in a House of 126, the coming times are full of surprises for the rulers of the day. Could they take India for granted? Is their development agenda creditworthy?

Do 40 miles of new highways per day, 15 new miles of rail track, newer ports, water ways, many smart cities, make in India initiative, big ticket foreign investment, small hearted efforts to nab wilful defaulters and tax evaders who call themselves tax avoiders, land acquisition laws, friendship with big money, the hallmark of all parties, and what have you?

Do these claims ring hollow? Do they make a big difference to India?

Has Subramanian Swamy been stopped in his tracks? If he could take on Jayalalitha, have her initially convicted and then see her come out on bail and become Chief Minister again, will he be allowed to take on Sonia Gandhi and get the sobriquet of a mere chief maker even be rewarded with a Rajya Sabha seat? Time will tell.

TO THE EDITOR

Strict action on lewdudh needed

Editor,
In a bid to keep the traditional market, lewdudh, clean and congestion free, the Acting Siyem of Hima Mylliem, Ricky Nelson Siyem has indeed taken a wise and proactive stand.

The lewdudh is in desperate need of such a move as movement in and out of the market has become cumbersome for buyers and sellers alike. It must be noted that maximum encroachment is not from those who have shops but from the numerous makeshift shopkeepers who simply set stalls on the market lanes and spread their goods just about any place they feel fit and convenient for themselves. There is no denying that these makeshift shops have widened and the goods have spread to the extent that they do not shy away from leaving only a small space as entrance to a particular shop.

They unabashedly occupy the length and breadth outside any shop and in any space. In some cases they have not only occupied undue space but have also covered the shops behind them as if theirs are the only goods worth displaying. The makeshift shops are a total discomfort and a nuisance to the eyes but more importantly to the people buying and selling goods. Shopkeepers who have encroached on pedestrian space may be taken to task through strict orders that they should limit themselves to their respective shops or face due penalty as the Siyem and his Dorbar deem fit. While it is imperative that no shopkeeper should be allowed

to encroach into pedestrian space, the Siyem should also see that no makeshift shops are allowed to spread their goods outside any shop or just about any free space they feel fit.

Having inspected the whole market, the Acting Siyem must have observed that due to the lackadaisical attitude and negligence on the part of the Dorbar to contain the people who set up shops arbitrarily, the general public are made to bear the inconveniences while doing business in the market. Yet at the same time, one is hopeful that the Acting Siyem will address the matter seriously and judiciously.

Yours etc.,
Jennifer Dkhar,
Via email

Bias or genuine concerns?

Editor,
I find myself compelled to reply to Mr. Prateek Harlarka's letter - 'Why this bias towards the BJP?' (ST May 21, 2016) It is interesting that he finds my article (Assam: of Electoral Boats) to be well-written, even though he seems to miss the larger point I was making - that all political parties and identity movements routinely succumb to their own communal passions and divisive agendas.

In this regard, the reader would have surely noticed my critique of problematic trends within the Congress, the BJP and various regional identity based movements. Still, the fact that he felt that my critique was solely aimed at the BJP is perhaps telling of his own bias and/or of his own genuine concerns. For instance, he does not object to my critique of the Congress and its perceived 'pseudo-secular image'. With regards to

the BJP and 'its communal image' however, he seems to suggest that such an image is outlandish and irresponsible - even as numerous mainland journalists and media outlets have continually raised such concerns in recent times.

Despite Mr. Harlarka's confident claim, I did not make any outright assertion that the BJP 'will' definitely pursue a divisive agenda in the north-east. Rather, I have used the terms 'could', and the prefix 'the fear is that they' (will pursue a divisive agenda) to reflect the concerns of various people have I interacted with. To claim otherwise is a partial reading of my article - and a wrongful representation of my views - which is regrettable on such a visible public forum.

As for my personal views, I am hopeful that the BJP can bring in greater efficiencies of governance and equitable development after years of Congress misrule in Assam. Still, I maintain that the party's communal passions 'could' severely derail whatever positive aspects it possesses. With its first government in the north-east, I think it would be important for the BJP to understand and negotiate these concerns of the people in the region.

Yours etc.,
Rahul Saikia,
Via email

Perception is everything

Editor,
A few days ago I got a call from a friend and what he disclosed to me, really left me wondering about what kind of a legacy, will we as a Khasi nation are leaving for to those who have come into close contact with us. This is by no means a sweeping generalization,

that the Khasi people as a whole can be fitted into one box. Realistically speaking all of us differ on how we view matters, and specifically on how we interact with non-Khasi, non-tribals. That said, at the end of the day what really matters is this term we have come to know as perception. Someone has said that perception is everything. It is about time that we work hard to bring about a change on how other people perceive us.

While it is true that the issue of illegal migrants is a complex one and must be dealt with tactfully, what is also true is that anyone who happens to be a legal citizen of India, and has lived in Meghalaya for two or three generations must be given the same kind of respect, honour and privileges that we would desire for ourselves.

I wholeheartedly believe that they surely have as much, if not more love and pride about this land of ours as we do. Our survival as a nation, will depend very less on how we have mistreated, misjudged, and hated others, but rather how well we have been able to be kind, compassionate and generous. Being kind does not mean that we do not compete, it simply means that we have learnt to develop, nurture and provide a healthy environment, where we can be the best at what we want to become.

Yours etc.,
Pyndap Warjri
Shillong-2

Abandoned in old age!

Editor,
This refers to media hype on one of Mahatma Gandhi's grandson and his

elections, as in Karnataka and U.P., and elsewhere in the next three years.

The BJP has won Assam handsomely and made small gains in Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It may boast of being focused on the development agenda, but the claim rings hollow as almost 500 million in all parts of the country are very poor, most of them of poorest of the poor. The worst drought in India's history in 25 years has left Latur, Bundelkhand and 200 districts in 29 States and many parts of 470 remaining districts remain desperate and cry for food and water. The Prime Minister has met Chief Ministers of eight or nine States, but the Central Government and Chief Ministers do nothing except twiddling their thumbs. They make tall claims on TV cameras and news conferences, sounding grim and grave, but with very little delivered on the ground.

Even on electricity, less than 50,000 villages out of 600,000 of them have it. Not more than 20,000 villages will get it in a year and who will pay the power bills? Most villagers will be too poor to pay the power companies. Will the Government promise to raise no bills? Punjab does it for free power for connexions for farm tube wells even of the wealthy farmers as the State exchequer has been bankrupted.

In spite of the big victory in Assam where the BJP and its well crafted alliance partners have won more than 83 seats and reduced the Congress to just 25 in a House of 126, the coming times are full of surprises for the rulers of the day. Could they take India for granted? Is their development agenda creditworthy?

Do 40 miles of new highways per day, 15 new miles of rail track, newer ports, water ways, many smart cities, make in India initiative, big ticket foreign investment, small hearted efforts to nab wilful defaulters and tax evaders who call themselves tax avoiders, land acquisition laws, friendship with big money, the hallmark of all parties, and what have you?

Do these claims ring hollow? Do they make a big difference to India?

Has Subramanian Swamy been stopped in his tracks? If he could take on Jayalalitha, have her initially convicted and then see her come out on bail and become Chief Minister again, will he be allowed to take on Sonia Gandhi and get the sobriquet of a mere chief maker even be rewarded with a Rajya Sabha seat? Time will tell.

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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 casual stroll through the lunatic asylum shows that faith does not prove anything.

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 282 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2016

BJP unsettling Congress ruled states

THE BJP strongman in Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma has been appointed convenor of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) by the Party. The Alliance which is a constituent of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance includes the chief ministers of Assam, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland in its fold. This leaves out Mizoram, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura from the list of eight north-eastern states. Biswa Sarma is known to drive his agenda with the passion of a preacher. If he is given a task, he delivers. Manipur is heading for elections next year. At the moment, Manipur is under siege, being held captive by different NGOs. Bandhs have been called alternatively by the hill and valley based NGOs to counter one another's political moves. It is the common people who are caught in a bind and find the Ibobi Singh Government totally incapable of taking decisions that will serve the public good. In fact, so disillusioned are the people of Manipur that they want to see a change of government sooner than later. Tripura is strongly entrenched in Communist ideology for now and it does not look like the BJP or the Congress can shake the Left bastion for now. That leaves Mizoram and Meghalaya. It is unclear if the BJP will make its moves there. It is Meghalaya that seems ready for action following the defeat of the Congress MP candidate Dikkanchi D Shira.

Himanta Biswa Sarma is known for his antipathy towards Mukul Sangma. Hence Meghalaya might be his first target. The fact that Congress took on the BJP in this election is not without reason. BJP Secretary in charge Meghalaya has been making frequent visits to the state to feel the pulse of the people here and also meeting politicians from across party lines. Kohli is quick to sense a dissatisfaction even within the Congress Party, hence his statement that the MUA Government of Mukul Sangma would fall under the weight of its own contradictions. Kohli and Biswa Sarma working together would be a formidable force for the Congress to counter. Many party stalwarts in the Congress have been voicing their concerns outside the Party forum since there is no space to do so within it. Dr Mukul Sangma held the Party and Government under a tight leash for over five years. In the bargain he has brought some stability to Meghalaya's uncertain political ecosystem. But whether political stability has had a positive impact is uncertain. Besides, the changed political equation at the Centre, with the BJP at the helm is not helping the Congress ruled states. There is a fund squeeze which indirectly impacts on development in these states. While this is not good practice as much as Article 356 is repugnant to democracy, every government in power uses these tactics to come to power in those states where it isn't. The regional parties in Meghalaya have already sharpened their knives and would be quick to form a coalition of the willing to unseat Mukul Sangma. In this game of one-upmanship the Congress stalwarts themselves might be leading the charge. It will be interesting to see if Mukul Sangma can come out of the recent election debacle in Garo Hills, unscathed.

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

Class XI, Sporting XI enter second division finals

In the second semi final of the Shillong 2nd division cricket league at Polo Ground on Thursday Abba fell to Classic Cricket Club and Sporting XI trounced Rhino Cricket Club to enter the final. Abba won the toss and elected to bat. They were all out for 140 in 33.2 overs with Rajan scoring 38 and Subash 20.

Class XI replied with 142 for 5 in 26 overs, the highest scorer being Raju on 34, with

Pawan remaining not out on 28 and Praveen on 20. In another encounter Rhino Cricket Club won the toss and put Sporting XI into bat. Sporting XI notched up 163 before they were dismissed in 38.5 overs, highest scorer for Sporting being Giri 29) Vikas took 4 for 36, and Kishore took 3 for 21.

Rhino went into bat but were knocked out for 78 in mere 20 overs Abdul claiming 4 wickets for 15 runs.

Onaatah breaks the silence

By R. Jennifer War and Glenn C. Kharkongor

The Khasi movie, *Onaatah*, has been playing to packed houses at cinema theatres in Shillong. This award-winning film, produced by Pradip Kurbah, has struck a chord with the public. Rather unexpectedly, the theme of rape did not put off the usually straitlaced members of our conservative religious community. How did the movie become a box office hit?

Every woman shudders just to think about rape. But from a young age, almost every girl child, adolescent or teenager has been crudely robbed of their innocence. The prevalence of crimes against women is nearly universal. A recent survey shows that four out of five women in India have faced sexual molestation or harassment and these high numbers are seen in all regions of the country.

In the opening scenes of *Onaatah*, a car suddenly stops alongside the victim and she is swiftly bundled into the car by the gang of rapists. She is dressed modestly, a nurse making a house call to administer an injection. It is late at night but medical care cannot be given only at convenient times. At least one of the rapists is known to her.

In a study conducted among four hundred plus tribal youth studying in a university in Shillong, more than half of them (male 61%, female 55%) blamed the victim in rape cases. Loose morals and revealing outfits (usually Western clothing) were most often cited as reasons for rape. Some students said that such women "asked to be raped". In matrilineal gender-conscious Khasi society, it was surprising to see that many women still blame their female counterparts for being raped.

When a man passes a sweet shop, where delicious gulab jamuns are temptingly on display, would he break the glass case and grab a sweet. Would society condone this act of violence and theft by saying, "the shopkeeper should not have displayed the sweets so provocatively?"

A post on Facebook said: "Ladies wearing sarees, trousers or purdah get harassed - so dress is not the problem; 7 year-

olds, 17 year-olds, even 70 year-olds get molested- so age is not the problem; Hindu, Christian or Muslim gets raped - so religion is not the problem. Everyone knows all this, yet women are still blamed.

In the movie, the survivor is fortunate to have a supportive family. They rally around her, comforting, protectively, but find it difficult to explicitly address the issue that has tragically overcome the family. The reticent father finds it easier to persuade her to watch a football match on TV with him. The warmth of the family circle is not enough to prevent her from attempting to take her life.

The frequency of news reports, almost daily, seem to indicate that the number of cases of rape and child sexual abuse are on the rise in Meghalaya. What is worrying is that our continued silence could be one of the factors contributing to increasing sexual violence against women and minors in our society. Most parents do not talk about sex-related issues with their children and so youth depend on friends, who share half-baked information among themselves in an effort to answer their questions or curiosity. Creating early awareness about sexual violence is necessary, as by the time students go to college, many have already developed misconceptions about rape and sexuality.

In one of her articles, Patricia Mukhim has correctly noted that the lack of a proper word for rape in the tribal languages somehow fails to convey the horror of the crime. In the Khasi language, rape is called *batbor*, meaning 'holding down of power'. Does this mean that women are seen as physically weaker and therefore available to be easily raped. The word *batbor* does not even begin to describe the physical, psychological and emotional trauma the victim experiences.

Onaatah's trauma does not end with the rape. She has to face the humiliation of court hearings, and even the so-called fast-track court prolongs her agony. The rapists are found guilty and sentenced but plan to appeal for a reduction of their jail sentences. In a poignant scene, she pleads, "Is there any reduction of the

suffering for me?" When the guilty are sentenced to 10 years in prison, she moans, "But I am imprisoned for life."

The recovery and healing process is hindered by the process of law and the shame of prying questions as to the how, when and what time it happened, what did you wear, why were you alone and on and on. Most of these proceedings are conducted by men and prevalent rape myths and false beliefs constantly hover in the background, sometimes tending to shift the blame from the rapist to the victim.

In a survey the question was asked "If a girl or woman is raped in India, will she have the same chances in life as anyone else? For example, to find a good husband or live a normal family life. A resounding 89% of Indians believe that she never will. So she serves a life sentence.

The city men in the movie behaved with callous disregard. *Onaatah's fiancé, a doctor, demanded that the matter be hushed up, not wanting his status to be stained. When she insisted on bringing the perpetrators to book, he broke off the engagement and disappeared. In a shared taxi, she happened to meet a former college classmate, whose main interest was to know how much monetary compensation she had received. On the other hand, the men in the village treated her with respect, accepting her into the village circle as one of them.*

So what can be done? In the last decade or so, there has been an increase in public and media attention on sexual violence against women and children and the need for sex education has been highlighted by psychologists and school administrators in television talk shows and newspapers. The Adolescence Education Program (AEP) was an admirable government initiative to address this need at the school level. But the AEP met with resistance from prudish politicians and has been abandoned in most states.

There seems to be a lack of political will to take up the matter. It was however heartening that in his first Independence Day speech Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the spate of rapes and offered parents

some advice on how to bring up better sons. He said, "In every home, parents ask daughters lots of questions as to where she is going, when will she return, and ask her to inform them when she reaches her destination. But have you ever asked your son where he is going, why is he going and who are his friends? After all, the person committing the rape is also someone's son. It's the responsibility of the parents to stop their sons before they take the wrong path."

Parents and teachers can play a major role in sensitizing the younger generation in such matters. At a university in Shillong, data is collected from a weeklong reproductive health and sexuality education workshop that is conducted annually for all students.

After the course students said they could initiate conversations within their families and in their neighborhoods after the workshops. One Khasi postgraduate woman student said, "I just wanted you to know how important this was for me. I assumed rape was the woman's fault because of the way she dresses." Evidence from the world over shows that sex education is effective in reducing gender based violence.

We urge parents, teachers, community, political and religious leaders to move out of our comfort zone of silence, create forums, big or small, to address these issues and create safe spaces for our women and children to live in. Today it seems to be another family's problem, tomorrow it can strike your own family.

Undoubtedly, the success of the movie stemmed from its entertainment value, the humour of the dialogue, the original script, the skillful acting. Yet the producer did not diminish or downplay the theme or denigrate the victim. The simple yet sensitive and friendly village folk brought healing and closure to the survivor and the film made the acceptance and discussion of a taboo theme easier for all of us. Our society needs frank dialogues and effective measures on this growing social problem, rather than stone walls of silence.

The authors are from Martin Luther Christian University

TO THE EDITOR

We are behind you; do not fear

Editor,
One fails to understand the presence of the Urban Affairs Minister, Ampareen Lyngdoh at the National Seminar last week being organized by the Bar Association of India and Meghalaya High Court Bar Association where the likes of Ram Jethmalani, Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court and other reputed senior lawyers from the country participated.

With the incumbent minister carrying on her head the infamous education scam was it a blunder in the first place for the organizers to call a tainted minister to the seminar, who may well be called for justice in the near future. Or was it an indication, "we are behind you, do not fear". Her presence at such an august gathering where the junior lawyers and fresh law graduates went to get knowledge and experience from their seniors actually sends a wrong signal to the would be lawyers. Many are of the opinion that she should have declined to attend the seminar on her own.

The CBI on the other

hand is also found wanting to take this case to its logical conclusion even as the future of so many candidates are at stake. Instead of harping for land for its permanent campus in the state, the CBI should focus on its task and win the confidence of the people, which has taken a dent in the current scenario. With so much corruption and scams being reported almost daily one has not heard much from this agency here.

And this is for Ram Jethmalani! You have, since approaching the German authorities narrated this tale of some saffron leaders not signing the papers to bring back black money. The national and other local media houses in the country are replete with your rhetoric at every function you attend. Perhaps there is a need to change the methodology or try and seek the signatures of Congress leaders now, when they are in the opposition (one would reckon even after not meeting the 10% criterion to fit into that position in the Lok Sabha) and see for yourself whether they sign it not. Whether it is BJP or Congress, all political parties are same and none is going to sign your papers and jump into the well.

Yours etc.
P K Dwivedi
Shillong - 1

Good catch MLP

Editor,
The arrest and subsequent seizure of high intensity explosives along with arms by the District Police is highly commendable. They deserve recognition for the timely action which had it been missed then God forbid we would have seen innocent bloodshed and mayhem.

Their efforts have paid off with the arrest of the HNLC cadres. It is ironic that HNLC which keeps calling for the protection of the jaitbryniew is now hell bent on killing it's own race (Jaidbryniew) for the sake of publicity. Shameless and cowards are the words which they deserve to be called for playing with the emotions of our people.

They can be called nothing short of 'U Thlen' that is ready to eat it's own for its survival. Violence and destruction only leads to more violence - a cycle which would never stop.

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

Why this fad for name change?

Editor,
The current hullabaloo

about the need to change the names of many roads or landmarks reminds me of a Bengali proverb that says, "If you don't have any work to do then fry puffed-rice (nei kaj to khoi bhaj!)". It is a pity that when four out of ten children of our country are malnourished and stunted, we are making a mountain out of a molehill like 'Gomata', 'Koh-i-Noor', 'Bharat Mata ki jai' and now raising a storm in a tea cup by focusing our attention on the name changing game. It is highly unfortunate that as many as 116 farmers and labourers committed suicide only within the first three months of this year but the attention of the Government is focussed elsewhere.

This is like drawing a red herring across the trail. This will make us oblivious of the lack of social security in our country. If India is to be rescued from her ludicrous 130th position in Human Development Index then we have to change our focus from the moon, Mars and ivory towers to the welfare of our brothers and sisters.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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Growth and jobs likely to remain elusive Actions so far see no tangible outcomes

By S Sethuraman

It is no fault of the Modi Government that, on the economic front, its overall performance in the first two years have remained less productive, given far too many challenges for stabilising the fundamentals for growth and jobs, no matter the beguiling assertions from its economic chief, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

The pause in corporate investment revival is as yet unbroken. Not that policies, mostly designed to ease doing business and ensure fiscal prudence, have not been in the making. But quite a chunk of unresolved legacy issues (whether long-delayed projects awaiting clearance or tax policy issues, somewhat messed up in Jaitley era as well) may be one major factor inhibiting investors. Growth has stayed put at a little over 7 per cent to curb ambitions for 8-9 per cent. In its first two years, the NDA Government has had a downfall in the steep fall in international oil prices, which helped to lower inflation, reduce fuel subsidy and facilitate containing fiscal deficit at 3.9 per cent of GDP in fiscal 2016. The current account deficit also hovered below a manageable 2 per cent of GDP.

The central bank for its part substantially eased monetary policy in this period by 150 basis points. But what is ominous for the outlook, going forward, is certainly the steady weakening of global growth and slowed-down trade flows - India being one of the worst performers on exports not entirely due to global factors - and even more, the asset market turmoils further adding to the negativity for highly leveraged corporates to usher in long-awaited investment revival.

It is in this context that RBI Governor Dr Raghuram Rajan, while appraising favourably government's policies thus far, has emphasised that even though policies in the rest of the world could enhance uncertainty for emerging markets - US Fed is likely to effect second rate rise in June -, India was much better prepared for global volatility.

Dr Rajan attributed this to measures taken by the government and the central bank since the "taper tantrum" in summer of 2013. Thus, he it noted, Mr Modi came to power in conditions of relative stability in financial markets. But global uncertainties since have posed challenges that emerging markets like India should focus on macro stabilisation, building buffers and reducing vulnerabilities.

India has a comfortable reserve cushion of some 360 billion dollars which helps to limit external vulnerabilities including intervention in foreign exchange market when called for and to withstand any sudden stop in capital inflows. Dr Rajan feels India needs to continue to take "sensible measures" in these uncertain times without getting "too ambitious" on growth.

At the domestic level, there are high expectations of a strong growth rebound closer to 8 per cent from a good monsoon forecast for 2016. Low oil prices are also likely to provide comfort for government finance with Mr Jaitley being able to limit fiscal deficit to the budgeted 3.5 per cent of GDP. Fiscal prudence, however, takes precedence over growth beyond the projected 7.5 per cent in 2016/17, which itself will not be a smooth ride, even if monsoon does turn out to be as favourable as forecast in 2016, until the mess in the financial sector begins to be cleared substantially.

Meanwhile, the unforeseen dimensions of drought gripping central, western and northern regions of the country have come into bold relief commanding urgent attention. The drought and acute water scarcity have triggered desperate calls for Central assistance, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi took stock of the magnitude of distress with state chief ministers. Studies show that the national economy could take a major hit in the current year on account of the drought affecting over 300 million people and its impact on the lives of the farmers likely to linger for months. It remains to be seen how far the Centre, with its concept of 'cooperative federalism' measures upto states' demands for assistance, a call buttressed by a direction from the apex court to the Centre to make a national disaster response.

At the start of the third year of Modi Government, unfinished "structural" reforms apart, macro-economic stability is far from assured with the upswing in CPI, especially the food price index, getting out of line with projected disinflationary course and perhaps interrupting momentarily the steady monetary easing of RBI over the last 16 months. The next bi-monthly monetary policy review is due in June.

The bigger challenge in the financial sector is undoubtedly the mess in the banking system with non-performing assets rising to rs.3.6 lakh crore by end-December 2015. Government has certainly made some moves like setting up of the Bank Board Bureau to work out "intermediate mechanisms" to alleviate the distress and provide some comfort to decision-making in banks. RBI has set a tough target of cleaning up of the balance-sheets by March 2017.

But, politically, despite all the electoral triumphs paraded by the majoritarian BJP since 2014, it has been struggling to usher in "structural reforms" - indeed these are considered politically difficult even in advanced economies for increasing competition in services and for greater labour market flexibility.

Add to it the "Congress-mukt" approach the ruling dispensation persists in, to rule out any consensus-building with the main opposition in Rajya Sabha to get on with the highly-touted GST which is supposed to usher in a new era of business and lift GDP growth to 8 to 9 per cent. Rather than any conciliatory approach, the majoritarian assertiveness in denouncing Congress "obstructionism" will not wash. The Rajya Sabha had in the budget session passed key legislation including one on mining reform, on regulation of the real estate sector, Aadhar, and bankruptcy and insolvency code. Mr Jaitley wants the judiciary to draw its own 'Lakshman rekha' so as not to "substitute" for executive actions but it is mainly the lapses of the Modi Government in constitutional governance that go up to the attention of the apex court.

The two years of Modi regime have seen such a weakening of institutions, threats to civil society organisations and frenzied pursuit of a divisive ultra-national agenda that perhaps the Prime Minister himself feels we should go in for fifteen-year development plans for transformational impact. He will do well to keep the planned celebrations of "achievements" at a subdued level, given the challenges - economic, political and strategic - that he has to confront over the next three years. (IPA Service)

“Reading, after a certain age, diverts the mind too much from its creative pursuits. Any man who reads too much and uses his own brain too little falls into lazy habits of thinking.”

—Albert Einstein

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 283

SHILLONG, THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2016

The drought menace

IT is time that India took steps on a war footing to fight the devastation of drought. Water conservation should not be an ad hoc measure to undertake only when a calamity strikes. It has to be a sustained process. Ten states in India are at present drought-hit and the economy has suffered a loss of Rs 6, 50,000 crore. If successive governments had put their minds to it, the present calamity could have been averted. Not many know that rain water harvesting dates back to the Vedic age. Indian kings built tanks, water channels, ponds, etc to ensure water security. But this system has rusted away over the centuries. Those ancient measures are in fact as much technological solutions as modern water saving technologies. Prime Minister Narendra Modi not merely talks about technical solutions. He has also referred to well-designed old steep wells and shallow wells in his home state, Gujarat. These structures should be revived.

What is more, people should be actively involved in the management of water. They will be partners in harvesting of water and conservation. Women can come forward to do a lot as they have done in Uttar Pradesh. The ladies groups have picked up skills to fix water pumps and hand pumps. The government engineers may do their work alongside. Citizens and technologies have to join forces as Modi has emphasized. Otherwise money and energy will go to waste in short term measures.

LOOKING BACK

February 10, 1989

Shillong Zonal Co-op seminar More women must form co-operatives

A Seminar on “involvement of Women in Cooperatives” was inaugurated in Shillong on Friday by the Meghalaya Minister of State for Cooperation Mr H S Shylla. The seminar, the first of its kind to be held in Meghalaya, was attended by 96 delegates from all over the State.

In his inaugural address, Mr Shylla emphasized the need for economic self sufficiency among the women and stressed the importance of disseminating information about the ideology, principles and practices of cooperatives so as to enhance the involvement of women in them. Mr Shylla released a special souvenir to mark the occasion.

The seminar was also addressed by the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Mr S S Gupta who termed the co-operative movement as a people’s movement which should be aimed at eliminating middlemen.

In his presidential address, the Chairman of the Meghalaya Cooperative Apex Bank, Mr G Mylliemngap noted that women, who labour more than men, have a great role to play in developing their families and societies and while cooperative societies are the main instruments to bring about socio economic development, the movement for this cannot be complete without women’s participation in cooperatives.

The seminar was also addressed by the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Mr S S Gupta who termed the co-operative movement as a people’s movement which should be aimed at eliminating middlemen. Others who spoke on the occasion were the Vice President of the Meghalaya State Cooperative Union, Mr Diengdoh, and the Chairman of the Khasi Pnar Primary Cooperative Society, Mr Massar.

Ironically though it was a seminar on involvement of

women in cooperatives no women were present on the dais at the inaugural function to address the delegates. And realizing this perhaps, two women delegates - Mrs S Marak and E L Wajri were invited to address the gathering. Mrs Wajri spoke on the lack of recognition by the govt of the work done by women in cooperative unions.

80 soccer fans killed in stampede in Nepal

Soccer fans fleeing a violent hailstorm rushed the exits of a stadium today, killing more than 80 people and injuring hundreds who were trampled in the stampede, witnesses and hospital sources said.

The storm pelted about 30,000 fans with hailstones during a match between a Nepalese and Bangladeshi team at National Stadium.

Fans rushed to stadium exits but found them locked, witnesses said. Hospital sources confirmed 60 dead and more than 250 injured many of them in critical condition. Witnesses said more than 20 bodies were left at the stadium and not taken to hospitals. None of the athletes were involved in the stampede, they said.

Strong winds accompanied the storm, uprooting trees in Kathmandu Valley surrounding the capital. The storm broke just before half-time in the match between Nepal’s Janakpur factory and Bangladesh’s Mukti Joddha in the Tribhuvan challenge Shield knock-out tournament.

Private cars and taxis helped ambulances ferry the injured to hospitals. The biggest hospital in Nepal, the Bir Hospital, has received the maximum number of dead and injured. Other hospitals in the capital were also treating injured fans, it was reported.

Challenges before the North Eastern Council

By Sumarbin Umdor

The visit of Prime Shri. Minister Narendra Modi to Shillong to attend the North Eastern Council (NEC) meeting scheduled today (May 27, 2016) is part of the special focus that the present central government is giving to the overall development of the region. Since the BJP government has come to power, the region has seen a steady and regular visit of Union Ministers to review works related to their departments and also participate in important events taking place in the region. Mr. Modi’s keen interest in the development of the region is something that he expressed even when he had not assumed the office of Prime Minister. In my meeting with him as part of the northeast delegation to the Vibrant Gujarat Summit of 2013, Mr. Modi the then Chief Minister of Gujarat had expressed concern on the lack of development of the northeastern states and his eagerness to see a faster and accelerated growth of the region.

Since the Prime Minister is coming to attend a meeting of the NEC, it is important that we critically review the achievements of this body. The NEC came into being with the enactment of the North Eastern Council Act in 1971. The north eastern region was then economically backward, lacking basic infrastructure and much behind the rest of the country on most socio-economic indicators. It was under this situation that NEC was constituted as a body with a twin mandate of planning and facilitating development and also to serve as a forum to address common security challenges of the region.

The NEC draws its mandates from the North Eastern Council Act of 1971 and its subsequent amendment in 2002. In the initial Act the functions of NEC were to (i) advise Central and states government on common

development issues concerning states (ii) formulation of regional plan for the states to address the development priority of the region (iii) review and recommend expenditure for financing of schemes and projects under regional plans including feasibility study of new projects (iv) review and recommend measures for addressing security issues.

In the 2002 amendment of the Act the role of the NEC has been upgraded from advisory body to that of regional planning body to formulate regional plans including identification, preparation and review of projects and schemes which benefits more than one states and coordinate the implementations of such schemes and projects (with the exception for schemes for Sikkim). With the creation of Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) in 2004 administration of NEC came under the new Ministry.

Since its inception, NEC has put much focus and made substantial contribution on development of transport and communication and power sectors in the region. As on 2013, NEC had sanctioned and completed construction of about 9800 kms of roads, 77 bridges, 12 Inter State Bus Terminals / Truck Terminals in the Region. It has also been involved in improvement of airports in all the states in the region besides providing viability gap funding to Alliance Air for operating air services in the region. Harnessing of hydroelectric potential is another major achievement of the Council as out of a total installed capacity of 1030 MW of hydroelectric power in the region, NEC’s contribution is around 60 percent. NEC has also funded projects in many priority areas such as in health, tourism,

agriculture and allied activities, industries, irrigation and flood control, human resources development, etc.

However despite these efforts, the north eastern region has failed to harness the huge hydro power capacity and continues to depend on power supply from outside the region. At present the region is utilizing only about seven percent of the identified hydro power potential in the region. The transport and communication network in the region is also still very poor and inadequate. The poor transportation network in the form of low density of road and scanty rail transportation have affected industrial growth and also affected tourism and development of markets and trade.

In recent years, the role of NEC in accelerating economic development has been severely affected by the limited funds allocated to it. In the 11th FYP the actual allocation was only 44 percent of approved outlays of Rs. 7394 crore. The funds earmarked for the Council during the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17) at Rs. 6108 crore is even less than that allotted in the earlier plan period. The meagre and dwindling financial resources along with huge committed liability have curtailed ability of NEC to fund new projects thereby seriously eroding the importance of the Council.

The functioning of the Council has come for criticism from state governments in the region. These have centered on the delay in sanctioning of funds as the Council does not have adequate powers to sanction projects above certain amount (approval for projects of above Rs. 15 crore has to come from DoNER) and the lack expertise in many areas needed to assess projects. Another important issue raised by the states is the absence of mechanism of funding of maintenance of

assets such as roads created through support from the Council resulting in these assets being under-utilized.

CAG reports on NEC funded projects implemented by the state governments have also pointed to recurring delays in completion of the projects due to flaws in the planning process, delay and non-release of funds to the implementing agencies and inadequate monitoring and absence of impact assessments. It is also true that NEC is plagued by bureaucratic lethargy like all government agencies and there has been no study thus far to assess the performance of this institution which if it is sincere in its commitment can go a long way to uplift the eight North-eastern states. In the past the NEC was also bogged down by corruption and granting of schemes to certain groups and individuals in an arbitrary manner. This has disillusioned genuine grantees with viable projects!

An important mandated function of NEC is its role as a regional security forum to address common inter-state security issue like border disputes and militancy problems that cut across states in the region. In a region like the North East, issues of security cannot be separated from the issues of development. Security related issue has however not got the deserving attention from the Council despite it being a common problem in all states in the region and the possibility of a coordinated approach in tackling security and border issues

It is expected that these and other issues would be deliberated in the meeting to be Chaired by the Prime Minister and that the government of India would extend all possible support to the NEC to enable it to fulfill the expectations of the people of the region.

(The author teaches Economics at North Eastern Hill University)

Scripting History on the Wrong Page

By Banlam K Lyngdoh

If politics is a game then it is like any other game. Rules of the game are clearly spelled out and one has to abide by them. But more important than respect for and obedience to rules is the acceptance and practice of a set of unsaid norms and principles that are intrinsic to the spirit of the game. One of them is, “Respect your opponent,” because he is not your enemy. He is playing the same game you are in and you are defined by his presence. Another unsaid norm is “Don’t beat your opponent when he is down.” Doing so amounts to trickery and viciousness and even if you win you win alone and your victory doesn’t taste so sweet as you would want it to be.

True victory is when your opponent is persuaded of your better combating skills and especially of your fairness in the process by which he is defeated. Like in soccer you don’t capitalize on a free-kick you’re awarded when you see that a player of the other team has somehow got himself injured. So when you kick the ball you either send it outside the boundary so that the other team gets a ‘throw’ or you simply kick it respectfully somewhere near any player of the other team. In other words, you think it below you not to care. You think the game lasts only one and a half hours and those ninety minutes should not make a selfish animal out of you even if you desperately need to win. You respect the bond more than the game itself.

It is indeed sad that a sea-

aside with his furious sword all feelings of family, friendship and cordial bonds forged in the past. Only the future matters to a tragic hero. The past he crushes for it threatens to incapacitate him some way or the other.

As long as we believe that politics is a game then we need to accept that like any other game it has its limits. Recognition of those limits strengthens the player as it moderates him and moderates as it strengthens. Appreciation of those limits makes a player realistic without losing sight of the sense of justice and decorum. To stand on a platform and announce one’s belief that in politics there is no mercy is to trample on every inch of justice that politics emanates from. It is to spell out the perception of politics in the obsolete context of kings and courts. To fight modern democratic elections with a mind to conquer and annihilate and to pronounce such intention out in the open is to comprehend and value politics only in its petty and shallow dimension of conquest and annexation and of imperialism. It all amounts to attempting at scripting history on the wrong page.

When you attempt to scribble history on a wrong page you become delusional. The three witches are always there at every shady junction to spur you on. They will invite you to behold what the future awaits for you in the

If politics is a game then likes any other game it truly has its glorious moments off-field. Magnanimity in politics rarely comes from scoring goals and winning laurels. It comes from sensitivity, from knowing when to fight, when to laugh together, when to cry together, when to let go and when to forgive.

soned politician and leader of the State did not grasp this simple equation of the game. It will be tragically sad if he had recognized it but nonchalantly had chosen to sidestep it for the sake of power and more power. I said “tragically” because in classical terms that is the fate of a tragic hero. A tragic hero is brilliant (even noble in his bearings), authoritative, confident in his own machinations, admired by all and sundry. Even the gods are jealous and envious of him. But he has a flaw and it is a terrible flaw. Hubris blinds him of the bare facts surrounding him. Blinded by pride and ambition he overdoes and overstretches trampling beneath his mighty feet all cautionary whispers of wisdom and reason, shoving

cauldron of their concoctions. Then you will be convinced that your love for Rome is at all times greater than your love of Caesar or that Scotland is yours and yours alone. But you must also stop and think awhile. For surely, sometimes the impossible happens, and the Hill is on the move, as the witches foretold.

If politics is a game then likes any other game it truly has its glorious moments off-field. Magnanimity in politics rarely comes from scoring goals and winning laurels. It comes from sensitivity, from knowing when to fight, when to laugh together, when to cry together, when to let go and when to forgive.

families and relatives, as if, this country is their personal property and only their cohorts have the right to rule. The Congress MLAs, who are waiting for long for a leadership change in the state, can try the saffron brigade otherwise and see the change that unfolds. There is nothing impossible in politics and the recent saffron coup in Arunachal Pradesh and a near coup in Uttarakhand stand out as a quintessential example in this regard. The saffron party does not have a dynastic high command culture and perhaps the local MLAs, who waste their time and energy at the national capital to meet the mother – son duo, will be able to devote more time to serve their people – who have elected them. After all, what can this mother-son duo from 3000 km away be expected

to do for this state except giving in to the demands of the rebel MLAs for whom it has become a game of a sorts that if they don’t find their way out then run to the mother – son who will fix the matter for the next six months. And after that comes the turn of the next batch of dissident MLAs. Is there any other Congress ruled state in the country where its MLAs run to the High Command biannually? Hope biannual does not become quarterly here in future.

Yours etc.
P. K. Dwivedi
Shillong – 1

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

TO THE EDITOR

Drop the word Scotland of the East

Editor,

Apropos the letter “Still the Scotland of the east?” written by M S Sangma, I would easily say that Shillong no longer deserves to be called the Scotland of the East. Look at our surroundings. Look at the choc-a-bloc traffic jams which are a daily affair. The number of vehicles are increasing but the size of the roads, lanes and bye-lanes remain the same. I have been to many cities in India but have never seen such a city like Shillong where the digging of roads by different departments and even private parties are either allowed or silenced! The other day I was travelling by a local taxi to Police Bazar via Dhankheti-Lachumiere. The taxi driver was grumbling and murmuring when he had to apply his brake at a deep road cutting in front of F S Mansion, House No.177 just opposite to Loreto Convent. I was curious to know who might have done this. The taxi driver replied that it was cut by some politically strong person staying at F S Mansion to release the discharge from his compound into the

public drain! He further lamented that had it been he who did it, the concerned authorities would have pounced on him but this one has been remaining in that condition for the last many months.

This is only an example, perhaps, where the rule of law does not apply to the influential and the rich. PWD (Roads)...are you listening? Way back around the year 2005-06, the DC, Shillong had prohibited such diggings and hanging of posters/banners on the walls, electric/telephone poles without prior permission from the concerned owners or authorities. That sounds sensible doesn’t it?

Citizens of Shillong, well wishers and all the NGOs such as ICARE, CSWO, KSU, GSU, JSU, and all the religious groups, etc., I think it is time we wake up from our slumber and do our bit now to save our beloved Shillong before it is too late. Otherwise, Shillong will lose its reputation of being a clean hill city and a tourist destination forever!!

Yours etc.,
F Lyngdoh
Via e-mail

Where roads have disappeared

Editor,

The road from Lad Umsaw to Union Christian College junction, Umiam-Khwan has deteriorated to the point where the pot holes are the size of craters and in many places, the road has all but disappeared. For some years now, the only repair work carried out was to fill these craters and even the road with stones and sand, which usually lasts just a week. For those unfortunate enough to live and work in this area, the daily commute through this road is turning into a health hazard. Expectant mothers are forced to go on prolonged leave of absence for fear that the daily, bone-jarring ride may harm the baby. For the rest of the commuters, visits to the orthopaedic doctor has become a regular affair. Adding to this predicament, there is also the danger of being hit by one of the numerous speeding trucks who have of late taken a fancy to travelling along this narrow, winding, dirt road which ultimately leads to the West Khasi Hills. With schools, houses and shops lining this dilapidated road, it doesn’t take much imagination to realise what calamitous event is waiting to happen. I therefore appeal to the P.W.D (Roads) to repair this road as early as possible for the welfare of all the people who have to travel along this road on a daily basis. Also will the Meghalaya High Court take

cognisance of this plight of citizens which the Government has failed to address?

Yours etc.,
A Khyriem,
Via email

The obnoxious High Command culture

Editor,

One is indeed fed-up to hear reports of the bi-annual running of the congress MLAs from Meghalaya to their High Command at New Delhi to air their dissidence and seek change of guard. With the decimation of Congress in both District Council elections and parliamentary by-poll in Garo Hills, this dissidence is spilling over now. It is indeed bizarre that the incumbent chief minister, Dr Mukul Sangma has no one else to choose from the state, except his wife, for the Tura by-poll. In fact, what Dr Sangma is practicing here is nothing short of what the Congress has largely done in the four poll bound states and one Union Territory recently where it earned rout after rout. One of the main reasons behind the Congress decimation is the selection of candidates. This is a party that cannot see beyond its

*"There is always some madness in love.
But there is also always some reason in
madness."*

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

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Two years of Modi Sarkar

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi can claim that in two years his government has put an end to policy paralysis and the gloom over the economy which blighted the Congress government. The NDA's policies are being aggressively pushed. Inflation has been contained and public finances have been strengthened. But all is not well. Private investment and jobs have taken a hit. One great thing however is that there has been no scam. Crony capitalism is on the wane. The shadow over coal auctions has passed away. Infrastructure is being beefed up-energy security, rail, road and petroleum sectors in particular. There have been oscillations in Narendra Modi's foreign policy but he has been energetically on it and visiting various countries.

The minus points are many. Crony capitalism has given way to crony socialism. Bold economic reform is still very much up in the air. The much talked about ease of doing business has improved only marginally. The bankruptcy bill has been passed but not GST. Efforts to achieve more flexible labour laws and land acquisition laws are yet in animated suspension. What is most regrettable is that areas such as education and culture have fallen prey to religious dogmatism. The RSS sets the tune in such vital sectors. It seems to have been forgotten that India has a secular, composite culture. The deviation from the concept has led parties with nothing in common to fight the BJP. The JD(U) and the RJD in Bihar did an unexpectedly great job. The BJP has come to power in Assam but lost in Delhi, Bihar and has just made an entry in Kerala. The HRD Ministry's handling of the incidents in Jawaharlal Nehru University and Hyderabad Central University following the suicide of Rohith Vemula have earned it the ire of a vocal section of youth who have become force multipliers, courtesy the social media networks. A political party that has to hold the country together must show magnanimity and tolerance of different ideas. Above all it must respect dissent. Let's hope the Party learns from its mistakes!

LOOKING BACK

February 11, 1989

Cong(I) bid to take advantage of Assam UMF Split

The United Minorities Front (UMF), the second largest Opposition group in Assam Assembly with seventeen MLAs, has vertically split, Nine MLAs, including the party president, Mr Shanti Ranjan Das Gupta are on one side, while eight others including the party general secretary and floor leader Mr Goiam Osmani are on the other.

The Das Gupta group has "expelled" Mr Osmani, while Mr Osmani has "suspended" Mr Das Gupta, deputy leader of the Legislature Party, Mr Ardendu Dey, of the Legislature Party, Mr Jabbar, Mr Abdul Hamid, and Mr Abdul Rouf, a member of the General Council. The UMF's political influence in Assam is much greater than is reflected in its strength in the State Legislature. It was formed in the early part of 1985 as the party of the Bengali Hindu Muslims who were the target of the anti foreigner movement. It was a significant development as Bengali Hindu Muslims had joined hands for the first time to face a common threat. That is why it was named United Minorities Front, the plural representing the linguistic minority (Hindu Bengalis) and the religious minority (Muslim Bengalis).

When Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi made the Assam Accord with the movement leaders in August 1985, the Hiteswar Saikia Ministry was dissolved and fresh elections to the Assam Assembly were called, the UMF accused the Congress(I) of having betrayed the minorities. It may be recalled the

immigrant Muslims from East Bengal constituted one of three traditional vote banks of the Congress in Assam, the other two being Bengali Hindus and tea garden labourers.

The alienation of the immigrant Muslims from the Congress(I) and their support to the UMF cost the Congress(I) dearly in the elections that were held in December 1985. The UMF could win only 17 seats but it caused the defeat of the Congress(I) candidates in a large number of constituencies. The Congress(I) still believes that but for the UMF it could have managed to secure slender majority.

Mr Osmani, a barrister from Gray's Inn, had an advantage in that as a liberal, progressive Muslim with Left leanings, he was a ceptable to the Bengali Hindus. He thus became the common leader of both communities. Trouble started in 1986 when sections in the UMF started opposing Mr Osmani's individualistic style of functioning and his habit of taking decisions without consulting party colleagues.

A section of party leaders like Mr Das Gupta were traditional Congressmen. Mr Das Gupta had once been a Congress Minister. This section also did not like some of the men who surrounded Mr Osmani Mr Abdul Hamid told this correspondent that during the four years he has been a member of the Lok Sabha, he had not received any guidance from Mr Osmani about the questions to be asked and issued to be raised in the House.

PM Modi's Meghalaya visit: Agenda for action

By Patricia Mukhim

Prime Minister arrived in Assam on May 24 for the swearing-in of Sarbananda Sonowal. After the rout in Bihar and Delhi, the Assam victory has boosted the moral of the BJP which now wants to spread its wings in the other North Eastern states after having installed a BJP-led Government in Arunachal Pradesh using Article 356 as a modus operandi. Now only Meghalaya, Mizoram and Manipur remain with the Congress, the other big state being Karnataka. We don't know where the Lotus will bloom next and frankly speaking we ought not to care too much about the ideology of a political party if its agenda remains that of a people-centric development. In the tribal areas of the North East where land is a precious commodity and is intrinsically linked to their culture and their very lives, any development that displaces the indigenous people should be avoided. The BJP should learn to respect the cultural nuances and the culture and tradition of the tribes, rather than talk of cultural nationalism which seeks to mainstream our unique cultures under one big umbrella. Rather than preach nationalism the BJP would do well to leave that to citizens. We know our duties and we do better when left to our devices. In fact the resistance to the BJP comes from the fact that the Party or its frontal wings (RSS) seek to impose sanctions on our way of life. This does not endear the Party to the people at all. In fact antennae are up in Shillong as people believe a BJP Government will come with all its baggage of Hindutva, beef ban, restrictions on minorities et al. Mr Modi will have to assure the people of Meghalaya and the north east that a BJP Government is not going to be an anti-minority, anti-tribal, anti-poor and pro-business, pro-rich government!

Agenda for Action:
Roads: The lifeline of Meghalaya
If Mr Modi has the time to drive around some of the most unkept parts of Meghalaya away from the city of Shillong he would

get to see how the PWD Minister- Engineer and Contractor nexus has eaten up our roads and how these three important constituents in our scheme of things have turned the Public Works Department into a fiefdom. Mr Modi should also know that the PWD Ministry in Meghalaya is in the hands of the biggest contractor who runs a family construction firm. Despite repeated complaints from citizens about the quality of roads many of which have lost their character and resemble *kutchas* roads where the bitumen and gravel have long been washed away by the rains and the raw earth is exposed, no action is taken. Here the roads are not built according to specifications because of the need to cut costs. Hence there are roads where two small vehicles can hardly pass without one pushing itself into the drain to let the other pass. How can this be tolerated in 21st century India? Yet this is what successive Congress Governments have done to Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram et al. In Meghalaya the Chief Minister has taken on the personal challenge of bringing international experts for road making projects in Garo Hills but he has left the Khasi and Jaintia Hills to suffer the consequences of the greed of his PWD Minister.

Airport:
Shillong has been the capital of undivided Assam yet it is the only state capital other than Itanagar that does not have a fully functioning airport. Hence passengers have to depend on Guwahati airport. The expansion project for Umroi airport is delayed because of corruption and court cases. It appears that people whose lands were taken were not compensated, while others who gave no land received money from the Deputy Commissioner's office. How such a scam can happen and is allowed to simmer without the CBI stepping in is difficult to fathom. Meghalaya needs an airport because we have the North East Indira Gandhi Regional Institute for Health and Medical

Sciences (NEIGRIHMS), the Rajiv Gandhi Indian Institute of Management (RGIIM) and North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) all of which host visiting professors/specialists from across the country and abroad to enhance the skills of their personnel/students. These professors find it a waste of their time to spend three hours each way to and from Guwahati airport and hence refuse to come here. Other than the politicians and bureaucrats who have time to kill, no one else wants to do this tiresome journey to Guwahati airport and back, given a choice. Besides if Meghalaya wants to sell itself as a destination for soft skills and become an Information Technology (IT) hub it must have easy aerial access. So Mr Modi the BJP has its work cut out here.

Why reduce IIM Shillong to a family fiefdom? Remove the Rajiv Gandhi tag

The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) at Shillong is equivalent to other IIMs in the country and was set up along with a few others, all of which go by the name of the place they are located in such as IIM- Kozhikode, IIM- Amritsar, IIM-Udaipur etc. Only the IIM at Shillong is prefixed with the name of Rajiv Gandhi thereby creating confusion in the minds of applicants that it is a privately run management institute. It is time now to remove this superfluous tag and let it be seen as a public institution named after the city it is located in - IIM-SHILLONG. This will be a great service to the Institution and help it attract more talent and management aspirants.

Health Infrastructure:
After Assam, Meghalaya must be having the worst health indicators. Studies have shown that even in this day and age children in rural Meghalaya suffer Vitamin A deficiency which affects their cognitive ability. In other words they will grow up as cretins, incapable of being productive citizens of a progressive nation. This is unpardonable, yet it continues while health practitioners and the government look the other way. Family welfare and planning are non-starters

here. And cancer which is a raging disease still does not have effective treatment facilities in Meghalaya. The cancer infrastructure is wanting and so is the human resource. We need a state of the art cancer unit at NEIGRIHMS because the state government does not seem capable of managing one. This requires immediate central intervention.

What merits mention is also the high infant and maternal mortality rates. And believe it or not the State Government has no statistics on this. Whatever we have are those from the National Family Health Survey. The last IMR survey of 2012 says there are 49 deaths for every 1000 births. Maternal mortality ratio is 291.37 deaths per 100,000 births, which is slightly below Assam at 389/100,000. Women suffer malnutrition and worse. The statistics are as bad as that of the tribals of Kerala which Modi had compared to Somalia.

Organic farming where?

Meghalaya has been puffing itself up about going organic without knowing the resistance that would come from the politicians (heading Agriculture & Horticulture) and the technocrats and bureaucrats of the Department who have a nexus with the fertilisers and pesticides industry. So we can take this assertion with a pinch of salt because no one is going to accept that we are producing organic stuff unless we go through stringent quality control protocols. Perhaps we need to humbly sit with the Sikkim CM, Pawan Chamling and learn from him how Sikkim has done it.

If these points come within the radar of the Central Government and the moribund NEC it might help our cause. Else we in Meghalaya are doomed. I am aware that some of the subjects mentioned are within the purview of the state and Modi believes in competitive federalism but as PM he ought to know how states perform and why they are laggards. On this note, I rest my case.

TO THE EDITOR

NE vision and development

Editor,
The Shillong Times in its 26th May edition carried two pertinent issues. The first a headline proclaiming that development of the NE will form the main agenda for the NEC meet to be chaired by the PM. Second, the article by Sumarbin Umdor on the Challenges before the NE. "Too many cooks spoil the broth" is an adage that instantly comes to mind when concerns over NE development is aired. DONER, NEC, other Central Agencies together with all the eight state govts concerned believe they have exclusive rights over NE development at the risk of total indifference to what the others are doing. Too many players, at times pulling at diagonally opposite directions, is the region's greatest developmental drawback. The NE has to reinvent itself and this is the most appropriate time for such an exercise. The time has come to synchronise focus of all concerned on one or two core areas of NE development concern.

The first core area of concern is vision or the lack of it. What is expected

of the region in the next 20 - 50 years? Should it continue to remain as an appendage, totally dependent on central doles for its sustainability or should the region be now allowed to blossom into an economically autonomous region, on EU lines, capable of deciding its own policies, managing its own resources and generating its own revenue? Is this possible? Why not? The development policy of the region should change from the conventionally flawed approach of a production and manufacturing economy to that of a service oriented economy. Under the aegis of the Look East / Act East Policy tourism can become the flagship concept for NE development. Let's go beyond scenic beauty related tourism and start looking also at cultural, ethnic and historically linked, educational and health-care related tourism. Can we visualise such an eventuality? Why not!

The second core area of concern is the total breakdown of governance throughout the region. In our quest for stability for our democratically elected governments, the people of the NE have been left at the mercy of opportunistic politicians, and good governance accorded the

least priority. If good governance is the "ability of the political system to manage resources (financial, human and natural) for the betterment of society" then the NE political system has betrayed us. Instead a system of political patronage has been imposed on us. We are fed lollipops while hunger gnaws at our stomachs. Governance in the region has merely focused on how to make the rich richer. This has to change. The Centre has to tighten its purse strings and not allow regional and state satraps to squander funds and resources. Together with vision there has to be political accountability and transparency on how funds are spent. Curbing the extravagance of the MLA funds is a typical example of what I mean.

The third core area of concern is the isolation of the region both physically and psychologically. The region led by its political and NGO elite has been unable to think out of this cocoon. We are scared of change while admitting that change is inevitable. The Centre too has fallen into the trap of attempting to contain the region instead of encouraging it to branch outwards. Security aspects of the region are

understandable but so is the development of its social, economic and political entity. We need to open up to the world. If the Act East Policy is India's outreach programme to its eastern neighbours then it is important for India to take the NE along with it. So far the Policy as it is today, is passing over our heads. Central facilitation is therefore required to make the Act East relevant and pertinent to the region. Left to our own local politicians this is unlikely to happen. It is hoped that the NEC deliberations will address the issue.

Yours etc.,
Toki Blah
President, ICARE

Head in the air politicians

Editor,
That our politicians have no head on their shoulders is largely seen in the ongoing drainage work at the Laban Main Road and it seems that those who are bald are doubly empty-headed. It may be a good initiative to put in place a drainage system but if that comes at the cost of traffic movement than do we need it at all in the first place? Vehicles have become a part and parcel of human

The Other Side of Legal Challenges

By B.M.Lanong

The Bar Association of India and the Shillong High Court Bar Association deserve accolades for organizing the one of its kinds, the National Seminar on current challenges on the legal profession and judiciary in Shillong and for being able to get the presence of eminent Supreme Court Lawyer of the Country Shri Ram Jethmalani among others, to attend and articulate on a variety of legal-allied issues of national and international importance.

The protracted black money issue stashed in foreign countries is still an unresolved political agenda of the BJP, committed during the last general elections to the Lok Sabha, for obvious reason, that when you point a finger at others, one has to be careful, lest the rest of the fingers point towards yourself and all that.

The people of India can only go on ruing for having elected the wrong people and pin their hope to see one day, which money, where is it lying and who owns the said black money.

But the biggest challenges are not only caused by powerful people in the government, but also in the hands of those, in whom judgemental power lies. Many judicial challenges do stem from people directly connected with judicial profession, its tribe and fraternity. Let's have a look at.

I can vividly recollect the infamous Supreme Court case of the chairman of the Bar Council of India, who was also President of U.P. High Court Bar Association, who was awarded simple imprisonment for 6 weeks, suspended for 3 years from practice and vacated all his elective and nominated offices held by him, for Criminal Contempt of Court, committed by him in violation of the Advocate Act 1961, (AIR- 1995 SC 2348).

Similar unethical and unprofessional breach of conduct on the part of some of those in the legal profession, have caused immense hardship to many poor litigants, who only have to suffer in silence.

A great many litigants in the country are deeply aggrieved over the unmitigated delay in disposal of cases in different courts in India, where a total of approximately 4 lakhs cases are still pending. This information was revealed by the former Chief Justice of India, KG Balakrishnan in the national seminar of all Chief Ministers and Chief Justices of High Courts, held in Delhi in 2009, which I also attended.

A great many are peeved over the manner in which the judiciary takes different stances on identical issues and that many prime issues involving leaders and people in high places stagnate in different courts, where the principle of justice delayed, is justice denied, is ignored within the realm of the judiciary itself.

Another infamous case that drew national attention

is the Om Prakash Chautala case. The former 81 year old Chief Minister of Haryana and his son Ajay Chautala, former Haryana Cabinet Minister languished in prison for a term of 10 years, when the special CBI Court in January 2013 convicted the duo and other responsible officers in the education scam, for illegally recruiting 3,206 junior basic trained (JBT) teachers in Haryana in the year 2000. Ironically, a similar major education scam of Meghalaya, which case has been referred to Supreme Court by the victimised primary teachers, is still pending for several years, for a number of reasons which the people are left astounded. Equally thrilling- high profile cases are being adjourned for too long in the apex court, much to the disgust of the people who begin to lose faith in the judiciary.

On several occasions the breach of professional conduct by some lawyers has been reprimanded by several High Courts. In Rajinder Singh vrs Union of India & otrs, (Punjab & Haryana HC 1993 CRI LJ 1668), the High Court having taken serious note of the matter, passed relief order that the courts are 'supposed to work and dispose of the cases themselves even when unaided by lawyers of the parties, by going through the records of the case.'

There are also several provisions in the Cr.PC, where the courts can initiate proceedings on their own accord, if they are satisfied that there are satisfactory reasons to call for records from the lower courts, the police, the CBI or any authority sitting over the matter concerned. Passing the buck from one to the other is something that sensible people who also know the law can no longer tolerate.

In Meghalaya, the ever surging crimes are being committed on a daily basis, for the simple reason that the judiciary has failed to come up with proportionate conviction orders to deter criminals. Amazingly some courts even grossly passed bail orders within 24 hours, for grievous cognizable offences.

In Khasi society, people are highly sensitive and detest those who play double games (Tuta bam ar maloi or a parrot pecking and eating from two bowls). This is where the real challenges lie for the Bar Association and all in the legal profession, to uphold utmost restraint, swear and live by professional ethics and without prejudice and to incarcerate the guilty without fear or favour as they have committed before entering the profession.

lives and one cannot think of a day without them. The heavy cemented lids that are laid conjoined over the new drain will have to bear the burden of round the clock movement of vehicles. How long are going to sustain given the standard of civic works of the state government is anybody's guess. The irony is that now the width of the Laban Main Road has reduced than that of the two parallel drains on both sides. One may not have seen such a legendary civic work being carried out in any other roads in this town. One can see the crashing sight of cemented lids near the Usha Studio junction and it is imminent that the newer lids

will ultimately cave inside leaving both vehicles and man to negotiate only the reduced four feet wide narrow bituminous road with deep drains on either sides. In such a situation how is the local MLA expected to meet the people of his constituency, too. The chaotic effect is clearly written on the wall.

Yours etc.
A. Lyngdoh
Shillong - 4

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

"The man of knowledge must be able not only to love his enemies but also to hate his friends."

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

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Of Prime Ministerial visits

PRIME Ministers rarely if ever visit the North Eastern states. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been an exception. He visited Nagaland in October during the Hornbill Festival in December 2014 which is nearly ten years after Prime Minister Vajpayee visited the state in 2003. Dr Manmohan Singh did visit Nagaland but only to campaign for the Congress Party in 2008. Modi visited Manipur in November 2014, Tripura in December 2014, Arunachal Pradesh in February and May 2015 amidst uproar from China. He has visited Sikkim too. The only state the Prime Minister is yet to visit is Mizoram. This time Mr Modi is visiting Meghalaya for the first time after assuming office to attend the 65th Plenary of the North Eastern Council but also to address people across the country on the completion of two years of his government. Modi was accorded a public reception at the historic Polo Ground where many a political leader has come and promised largesse to Meghalaya, mainly on the eve of elections. That the Congress-led state government hosted the public reception is a magnanimous gesture but it was also an opportunity for the people of Meghalaya to listen first hand to what the PM has to say about his government's achievements and engage better.

Modi's hectic schedule included interaction with different individuals and groups at the Raj Bhavan. Those who met him appreciated his keenness to listen and his ability to absorb and remember what was being told to him. After the marathon speech at Polo Ground, the PM did not appear tired or listless but engaged actively. Mr Narendra Modi himself and by extension, his Government have been victims of bad press sometimes deservedly so (because of statements and actions of the fringe elements), but at other times because large sections of the media are ideologically inclined to the Left or the Congress which they see as a centrist party. If one were to judge the two year old Modi Government one would have seen that he and the BJP have learnt from mistakes and have perhaps reined in the over-enthusiastic members of the RSS (since not all in the RSS adopt extreme rightists positions). Modi's travels to the region have informed him of the rich cultural diversity of the region and hopefully broadened his outlook towards the eight states even as his government seeks to devote special attention to their development.

Key points have also been flagged at the NEC plenary about allocating enough funds to this regional planning body so that it can speed up major infrastructural projects such as inter-state roads, railways, airports and telecommunication. There is much hope in the region that the present NDA Government will give a fillip to the development of this neglected periphery.

LOOKING BACK

February 11, 1989

Poor response to lawyers strike

The call for an indefinite country wide strike by lawyers failed to evoke much response even as a secret ballot by the Supreme Court lawyers on the strike was disrupted today.

The call for an all India strike was given by the lawyers action committee spearheading the agitation for the suspension of Deputy Police Commissioner Kiran Bedi for the Tis Hazari incidents.

All the High Courts and other subordinate courts functioned normally, reports said. However, a spokesman for the action committee claimed that the strike had affected work in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

The strike in the Supreme

Court Bar Association was stalled by a group of people who snatched away ballot boxes, causing confusion among lawyers.

Reacting to the incident senior lawyers decided to resume work from March 7 when the Supreme Court reopens after a ten-day holiday for the Holi festival.

The lawyer action committee condemned the incident and announced a fresh ballot on March 7.

The lawyers of the Supreme Court went on indefinite strike from February 19 after observing a one-day token strike in protest against the February 17 vandalism at the Tis Hazari district courts premises.

Act East Policy and Development of the North-East: Some Reflections

By Bhagirathi Panda

These days, the conceptualized Act East Policy of Government of India is being positioned as the contemporary strategy of development of the North Eastern Region (NER) of India. This explicit positioning came at the backdrop of the journey of the political economy of the North East from a relatively isolated subsistence agrarian economy to an uncertain, question marked integrated economy. This positioning and its advocacy, although came very late, is well backed by rational development thinking and established pragmatism. In terms of thought out strategy, it definitely has brought out clarity and direction to the future strategy of development for this part of the country.

However, operationalisation of this idea and conceptualized policy is the biggest challenge that all of us are realizing today.

One of the important objectives of this envisaged policy is to undo the immense harm that the earlier model of state colonialism brought to this region post partition of the country. Operation of this state colonialism model for the last 65 years has distorted the practice of development in the NER. Before the emergence of the peasant economy and its subsequent transition to state-colonialism, NER's economy and society even in the initial condition of mono-cropping hilly agrarian state was based on the universal understanding and practice that "development was basically to produce goods and services with the use of community's and individual's enterprise and available natural resources like land, forests, rivers, rivulets and minerals etc". With partition this region became landlocked and its strategy of development got caged to the deliberately perceived and propagated security concerns of interests both in Delhi and the NER.

State colonial model brought in and planted new institution of rent seeking. The culture of rent seeking subsequently became endemic with eulogisation of rent seeking capital. This subverted the age old culture of tribal entrepreneurship, led to high youth unemployment, skewed structural transformation, distressed diversification of income and employment, and inward looking economy with sub-optimal governance. The unemployment rate of youth in the age group of 15-35 as per NSSO data in the year 2009-10 at 10.2% was more than double the youth unemployment rate for

the country as a whole. Subsequent surveys for 2011-12 show improvements in this situation. However, 2009-10 survey was the quinquennial round with large sample sizes and its results are more dependable compared to the intermittent surveys undertaken till the next quinquennial round results come out in near future.

Further, up to the year 2000, the economy of NER in its income space exhibited a steady moving away from agriculture to services sector bypassing the secondary sector to a great extent. Its employment space exhibited increased casualisation of women's employment. Rural employment diversification showed signs of distress and helplessness. People and particularly rural women had to take up any kind of low-end non-farm activities because of poverty and distress (not out of their choices). Quality of governance particularly the law and order situation remained sub-optimal. Post 2000, economic growth picked up. However, this growth has not resulted in growth of substantial employment. Overall employment growth in NER has almost remained stagnant at 0.13 per cent during the period 2005 to 2012. None the less, some visible improvements are noticed in the field of physical, social and institutional infrastructures like communications, education, health and banking services. This has caused the Human Development Index of the NER to improve substantially and remain above the national average. Consequently, it has also made the NER society more aspirational.

Now having taken a conscious decision to leverage this policy as the core approach of development for the NER, the most important criterion on which the success of this policy depends, is the broad acceptability of it by the people of this region. Such an acceptance is contingent on, inter alia, linking it up with the expansion in the livelihood and employment opportunities of its people particularly the youth. Expansion in livelihood and employment opportunities depend on emergence of a strong regional and local economic base led by fragmented networked industry and high end services sector to produce goods and services specifically for export to ASEAN, Bangladesh, China and beyond. This looks more promising today compared to any period in the past because of our low labour cost of production in the NER vis-a-vis the increasing labour cost of

production in China and other South East Asian countries.

However, labour cost is only one component of the overall cost of production of goods and services. The most important component in the cost structure happens to be 'transaction costs'. This is where the NER has the most revealing disadvantage because of the existence of very high magnitude of transactions costs. Thus, eventually, the emergence of the envisaged fragmented networked industrial production centres squarely depends on the reduction of the present level of high transaction costs. Transaction cost comprises of a number of cost types. One of the important visible components of it in NER is the issue of property rights. A relevant area where this issue comes up poignantly is the tradability of land and its acquisition for construction of infrastructure and establishment of firms and industries. There are issues with respect to its definite ownership, security and tradability which have their origins in the societal norms of different parts of the region.

The next component is the negotiation and enforcement costs. Negotiation becomes costly because of presence of multiple stakeholders. In many states, there are multiple formal and informal authorities having their respective rules, norms and stipulations on acquiring properties, getting license, doing business etc. You have to negotiate with the central government, state government, autonomous district councils (ADCs, where they exist), local traditional institutions, underground and over ground elements, armed and paramilitary forces etc. Similarly, the existence of such multiple stakeholders, formal rules and informal norms and practices and the non-existence of a separated judiciary in few states at the district and sub-district levels make the cost of enforcement of contracts very high. One more factor that increases the transaction cost is the high transportation cost because of relatively poor connectivity, bad condition of the roads, frequent bandhs and road blockades in different parts of NER. As per an estimate of the Department of Economics, Manipur University, during the infamous 120 days prolonged bandh and economic blockade of NH 2 and NH 37 in 2011, Manipur suffered a loss of Rs. 245.64 crore at a rate of Rs. 2.67 crore per day.

Further, we have this prevalence of institution related transaction costs. One of the important macro institutional variables that

affect transaction cost in the region is relatively deficient law and order situation and governance. This is reflected in bandhs and blockades, smuggling across borders, collection of illegal fees and lack of effective mechanism to resolve conflicts etc. Rent seeking is another macro institutional variable that have significant implications in terms of increased transaction costs. As Murphy, Shleifer and Vishny (1991) mentioned, "in countries where more talents are allocated to rent-seeking rather than production, growth and regulatory failure will eventually ensue."

Last but not the least, NER is yet to emerge as an integrated economic entity. Although the states were created here on ethnic and political lines, today the developmental imperatives require that they have to emerge as a single economic entity. Working of firms and economic agents under such a sub-optimal regional economic arrangement increases the transaction cost. Agents can significantly reduce their transportation costs and realise more of vertical production integration if intra-regional physical and governance communications gets considerably improved. This kind of integration would lead to reduction in market related transaction costs including the costs of negotiation and enforcement of contracts. For example, efficiency in export and import of commodities and services requires critical scale of production and demand respectively. Many times individual states on their own are not able to realize it, but they can do it if they come together.

The pertinent question is how to reduce this transaction cost and promote calibrated integration that can produce goods and services, create jobs for our youth without severely compromising the environment and cultural foundations of the society. This is a difficult but not an impossible job. As it stands today the 'establishment space' in development in NER is governed by four establishments i.e. the government, community, market and civil society in varying degrees. All of them largely move and work parallel to each other. Reduction in transaction costs depends on reducing this disproportionate parallelism and realising maximum convergence in the matters of development.

(The author is a professor, in the department of Economics, NEHU, Shillong)

Election Promises

Jayalalitha On Flying Start

By Insaq

Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister Jayalalitha has got off on a flying start albeit by upholding her electoral promises. Immediately after her swearing-in, the AIADMK supreme ordered a slew of measures to underscore that she had meant every word of her commitments made to the people. First of the block, over 500 liquor shops were shut down and farmers dues waived including crop loan. Additionally, as per new regulations the State-operated Tasmac shops would remain open for a shorter duration. Aware of the after-effects her measures would have on drinkers, the State Administration intends opening many de-addiction centres. Also on the anvil are 100 units of free power every two months for domestic consumers. To keep her loyalty among her 'tribe' the Chief Minister will soon distribute eight grams of gold.

As Tamilians rejoice with their windfall, in nearby Kerala, Chief Minister Pinarai has left many red-faces in the Communist high ranks thanks to his advertisement blitz berg, as it goes against the concept of collective leadership. More so, after Pinarai announced a slew of austerity measures including no refurbishment of Ministerial bungalows. However, he intends continuing with the prohibition policy of the erstwhile Chandu-led Congress Government in the State. The beginning of a new phase in politics?

HC Strikes Jat Quota

Haryana jats are very angry with the Punjab and Haryana High Court for striking down Chief Minister Khattar's move to grant them 10 per cent reservation along with five other communities in Government jobs and education. Predictably, not only do various Jat groups and influential Khaps feel betrayed but they have sternly warned the State Government that it has to fight further to showcase its support for the community. Needless to say the Administration has only itself to blame for the legal imbroglio it faces. For reasons best known to it the State relied on a report which had been trashed by the Supreme Court to carve out a new backward class category to benefit jats, Jat Sikhs, Mulla jats, Bishnois, Rors and Tyagis. The State Administration is keeping its fingers crossed as the spectre of a second waive of unrest looms large.

Buildings In Place of Red Light Area

Kamathipura was a buzzing pleasure zone till recently in Mumbai's central district with its 'hi-fi' sex workers. Today, it has made way for malls thereby driving lust out of India's business Capital's oldest red light area. In fact, social activists and cityscape enthusiasts organized a Kamathipura Night Walk in a bid to capture the urban history associated with it before the area transforms in to another concrete jungle. To uplift the life of the poor homeless sex workers various NGOs have taken it upon themselves to rehabilitate them. Also, some enterprising sex workers have moved to suburbs or do business on Twitter and Whatsapp. It remains to be seen whether real estate will chisel out the new faces of the sex workers.

Centres Dues To States

Till yesterday the States were in the red vis-a-vis Central dues, today the boot is on the other foot. Shockingly, the Centre owes over Rs.81,000 crores to States as tax shares of the last ten years. Interestingly, this shortage was discovered during a recent CAG audit which showed that the Centre's tax and duty collections to be given to States which stood at 29 per cent in 1996-97 had now gone

up to 32 per cent in 2014-15. Of the Rs 81,000 crores Uttar Pradesh would end up with a bonanza of Rs. 7000 crores along with other big States. Even for smaller States any additional amount would be a windfall. States now hope the Centre will fulfill its promise.

Congress-Mukt State?

The Grand Dame of politics might have lost the battle at the hustings in four of the five States which went to the polls recently. But it has come up trumps when it comes to loyalty. In an unprecedented move, the West Bengal Congress leadership asked its newly-elected MLAs to give a written undertaking that they owe allegiance to the Party, read First Family. Add to this, they would not defect and if they did, they would resign from the membership of the Legislative Assembly. Scandalously, this undertaking was taken on a Rs. 100 stamp paper. Predictably, the Sonia-Rahul duo distance themselves from La Affair Loyalty even as its Spokespersons were hard put to justify it as a "voluntary exercise". This apart, the Congress is left red-faced as it has no Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha member from Tamil Nadu for the first time in history. Congress-Mukt State?

India's Killer Roads

Punjab has earned the ignominy of having killer roads in the country. Amritsar and Ludhiana top the million-plus cities where seven lives are snuffed out in every ten road crashes annually. Ludhiana comes second with two crashes followed by Prime Minister Modi's constituency Varanasi. According to the Road Ministry's Transport Research Wing Report while the number of deaths in accidents among 50 big cities including Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru have decreased over the last three years from 17,007 in 2013 to 16513 in 2015, the opposite holds true in rural areas where road fatalities are on the rise. Having risen from 83,003 to 89,155 from 2013 to 2015. Over all, the total number of road deaths in the country stood at 1.46 lakhs which is the highest and maximum among all countries. This is not all. Thirteen States including UP, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab and Haryana alone account for 83.6 per cent of all road accidents. Earning India the nick name of 'Deadly'.

South Big On Medical Tourism

As India becomes a medical tourist destination its own score card on the doctor-patient ratio is poor. Shockingly, there is only one doctor to attend to over 1681 patients. Worse, this is hindering health care services across the country as the distribution of doctors is so skewed that just four States Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and undivided Andhra account for nearly 46 per cent of the 9.5 lakh medical practitioners registered in the country. Thereby leaving big States like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, UP etc. with very few doctors. Interestingly, Karnataka which boasts of the highest number of medical colleges, 50, has 1,01,273 doctors while Maharashtra with 48 medical colleges has over 1,53,000 doctors. Tamil Nadu is next with 46 medical colleges and 1,11,000 practitioners and Andhra 71,000 doctors and 46 medical colleges. Any wonder foreigners flock to these States for treatment. ---INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Why fear the Juggernaut?

Editor,

27th May, 2016. The visit of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi to Shillong was an extremely exciting and memorable day for the thousands of citizens of Meghalaya who came up to town just to try to catch a glimpse of him and hear the voice of this great political juggernaut; a man who has swept the hearts of a billion people at home and abroad. The mere fact that he has captured the imagination of even the most common man from the most backward regions of Meghalaya is a serious point which cannot be overlooked. His visit will have its effects,

and the waves of change are imminent. I congratulate all the stake holders who made this visit successful. However, being a part of the audience that attended the public rally, I believe the pavilion erected at Polo was far from satisfactory. Hundreds of people were disgruntled with the fact that they could not even enter the 5th ground because there was no more space. It was absurd at all levels. A man of his popularity and stature could have been given a better place to address a huge audience knowing very well that the 'Modi Effect' can attract tens of thousands of admirers. It could have been organised in a better manner. Nonetheless, as a citizen of India from this part of the country, his visit was welcoming, and it helped to strengthen the truth that we are not alone; we are not

neglected. He and his government makes us all feel we are a part of this great nation, and that, is 'Modificent'. To all the critics who try to tarnish his and his government's image by bringing immature claims of religious intolerance and communal hatred, I say to you, your ploys will not work. Change will come. Why fear the Juggernaut?

Yours etc...
Keith Nongsteng
Via email

Brilliant speech Mr Prime Minister!

Editor,

Extemporaneous and candid was the speech of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is something we do not usually hear from political leaders of our

nation. The humility, dignity and respect of the Prime Minister and his humour left everyone speechless. He spoke and dwelt upon importance of cleanliness not only in society but in our mindset and our actions; he spoke on issues of women, savings, enterprise development information technology, connectivity, rural development and a mixed bag of ideas just pouring out. There was no rhetoric, no mud-slinging, no political bashing. Words just flowed subject after subject. We hope that Meghalaya's politicians will take a leaf out of the Prime Minister's speech and put things in perspective instead of being suited and booted for fame and fortune.

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

By Aditi Singh

Courtship versus dating

For lovers fresh air and hand in hand walk in a park are passé, as courting couples splurge on flowers, gift, movies, romantic meals and weekend trysts. Young couples in the 20-30 age groups spend almost 200 per cent more on their beloveds than those in the 40-50 age group did between the late 1970s and the late 1980s.

Average spending by Gen-Next group has gone up manifold. Love certainly costs and it's costing a bomb. Earlier courtship days were all about endless chats over cups of coffee in a coffee house, long walks and time spent on the lake front.

Now Gen-Next couple spent a lot of money on lunch in a good restaurant and a movie. They have more money in hand and more things to squander it on than their parents had. Youngsters get 50 times more pocket money than what we used to get when we were young, and when they are employed their spending patterns do not change. They are almost mentally programmed to just spend and spend.

Blame it on an open and blooming economy. Rising income levels, the cable television boom that brought westernised and consumerist lifestyles to middle class drawing rooms and an explosion of lifestyle products and services have combined to rewrite the rules of courtship.

Society is also shedding its conservatism. With parents rather indulgent about their children's romances and dates, splurging on sweethearts is more open. The young are increasingly living away from home, too -- a state that tends to encourage romance. In metropolises most young employees of IT and call centre firms are away from their families. They have the time, money and freedom to get into relationships.

Online florist business is flourishing. Chocolates and flowers are delivered to friends for one week. There is also "miss you messages", in the form of cards and gifts, once a week. Spending Rs. 500 a week on a gift for a fiancée is a routine affair. Have



money will spend appears to be the motto, as the salaries of young professionals rise faster than the rate of inflation.

Human resource consultancy firm Hewitt Associates' Annual India Salary Increase Survey shows salaries increasing steadily from 11.4 per cent to 14.8 per cent between 2003 and 2007. But in that period, inflation (the rate at which prices increase) at the retail level was only between 3.8 per cent and 6.5 per cent.

The rate of inflation in

made one happier than receiving a good book and a clutch of flowers, that doesn't happen these days.

Spending patterns between the two generations haven't really changed. Weekend getaways top the list among Gen-Next. The number of couples going out for dirty weekends has gone up. That's the only time these cash-rich but time-poor couples get away from their daily routine.

Young couples are more adventurous with food and liquor, insisting on the



the 1970s and 1980s was much higher (upwards of 7 per cent) while salary increases were negligible. So the older generation didn't have money to throw around. Earlier nothing

fall and stay in love in olden days. But today Madona is singing "cause we're living in a material world" even as she declared that the "boy with the cold hard cash is always Mr. Right." INAV

By Zeenat Zafar

I am newly married to a "contemporary" intelligent (IIM-IIT) kind of guy. We are very young. We set up what we believe is an "equal-equal" life in Calcutta (it was that back then). So we both go out to work. When we come back home, I put together dinner (he can't cook) but he does lay it out and cleans up after. If we are stepping out to a party, he irons his shirt, and my dress. He also makes the bed and doesn't leave wet towels on it for me to sort out. And then, Mother-in-law (MIL) arrives.

No, she is NOT Monster MIL. She is lovely. And no, she doesn't want me to slave but yes, there is a "but". She does not like seeing her son doing stuff that is not a "man's job" around the house. So, subtly, she picks up his dirty plate even as we finish lunch and sit chatting for a bit. And she is quick to snatch that kurta for ironing that he is planning to wear to aunt's place for dinner.

Given that she is mother-in-law, and a guest, I am forced to take those chores off her and soon find myself doing it all. Does he protest? Of course not, till mom is around at least. An Airtel ad opens on two working professionals in a meeting.

A woman, who's the boss, gives her male employees a task, and one protests, claiming there's not enough time to finish it. The boss is sympathetic, but lets him know it has to be done. She heads home for the day, and we watch her make dinner, while the man is seen working overtime. He suddenly receives a call from his wife, who has made dinner for him and is



The music of an unequal love

ize the boss is the wife.

But, please note, it doesn't matter she is boss; she still gets to go home and cook the meal. In this, supposedly a gender bender TVC by Airtel, the husband still doesn't get to do that.

A film called Ki & Ka was recently released. Now ad-man-turned-writer-director R. Balki's body of work, so far, does twists on social concepts. Cheeni Kum was a smartly done older-man-younger woman romance.

His latest, Ki & Ka takes

home and take care of the house husband' and She, the breadwinner? So far, so good. But it is interesting to note that even an intelligent filmmaker like Balki felt the need for Kia and Kabir to come across more like caricatures than believable characters.

The man had to be a mangalsutra wearing, kitty partying ghar jamayi to qualify for taking on housework. Kabir, in the film, actually insists that he wants to be a "housewife", not a

is ultimately the wife's job; and that a man doing it, makes him the 'wife'.

Ki & Ka reinforces the gender stereotypes it wanted to break and that is the whole point. Whether it is 1999 or 2016, gender equality in India seems to be floundering around who "wears the pants"... A sudden explosion of "gender bender" campaigns have been witnessed in India. In the Titan Raga TVC one addresses the pressure that married women face to

reers are always viewed secondary to the husband's. Pears Mother's Day 2015 is all about girls crying and sends out a message that crying, in general, is a sign of weakness. There are some showing women conquering mountains, riding bikes, and becoming pilots. Nirma takes empowerment to physical strength showing two women helping push a car out of a ditch while men stand around and watch helplessly. Sanitary napkin companies fight menstruation taboos and jewellery companies take on second marriages in a gesture of magnanimity.

But what really makes a marriage "equal-equal"? One of the most pressing issues contributing to the persistence of gender inequality is the gendered division of domestic labour. Despite their entry into paid employment, women still carry out more domestic work than men, limiting their ability to act on an equal footing within the workplace. Recently, I stumble upon a unique TVC. It gave me goose bumps. "Sorry, ki yeh sab (Contd on P-VII)



waiting for him to come home -- and, voila! We real-

on role reversals. What will happen if He is a 'stay at

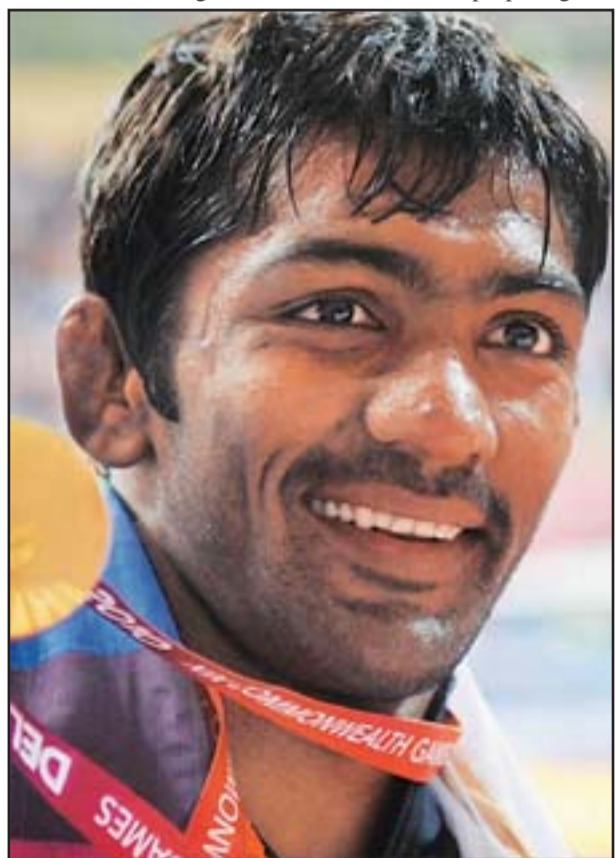
"househusband", going on to reinforce that housework

give up their jobs after marriage and how their ca-

By Veturi Srivatsa

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has tried to persuade back-to-back Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar not to insist on a trial bout with Narsingh Yadav

was told that a trial at this late stage would be affecting the psyche of Narsingh who worked hard to get the quota place for the country and also was preparing for



Yogehsvar Datt

to decide who of the two should go to the Rio Olympic Games.

Sushil met the WFI officials, with his long-time coach and also father-in-law Satpal in tow, and pleaded for a "fair trial". The federation was naturally unimpressed with his appeal and explained to him why he does not deserve a trial. He

the big event.

Sushil has given a new twist to the controversy by stating that he was promised a trial, but the WFI insists that no such assurance was given. The federation made it clear that Sushil talked of him being fit only a couple of weeks ago.

On Sushil's camp citing a precedent of a trial before

the 1996 Atlanta Games in the 48-kg Greco-Roman division, it was explained that trial was held because no wrestler qualified and India

received a wild card entry. More importantly it was a "political fight" with heavy-weight political groups backing the two combat-

ants, Kaka Pawar and Pappu Yadav.

Both Sushil and the WFI could have easily avoided the messy situation had the

sports ministry and the Sports Authority of India stepped in by monitoring the wrestler's schedule of training and competitions.

Has Sushil submitted any medical report to either the WFI or SAI about his absence from the scene with injury? Apparently, he has



Sushil-WFI bout: Indian wrestling is the sufferer

not. He could not have been injured for two years not to take part in any trials or competition. Is it believable if a wrestler says he was preparing for only the Olympics without testing whether he is bout fit or not?

It is eight months since Yadav earned the quota spot winning the bronze medal at the World Championship at Las Vegas and both the WFI and Sushil waited for the other to blink.

Barely three months to go for the Olympics, Sushil woke up to tell the world in a splashed media interview how hard he has been training for over a year living like a celibate in a bid to make it to a fourth Olympics and if possible add a third medal to his Beijing bronze and London silver.

What he did not disclose is that he had not participated in any international event after the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games in his new weight category of 74 kg. All he would say is he has been nursing a shoulder injury.

The WFI officials should have simply asked Sushil to put himself in Yadav's position and think of the situation. They have put the facts and figures before him and they could easily silence him, whatever his reputation as a tactically forceful grappler and the psychological awe he can create as a two-time Olympic medal winner.

In the last two years, Sushil was only training in camera, including a stint in Georgia while Narsingh has been taking part practically in every international championship, winning medals at the (Contd on P-VII)

By Ranjan K Baruah

Telephonic interview for jobs

We have published articles related to skills needed for interview. We thank our readers for their feedbacks and queries. This edition, we are publishing about telephonic interviews. Telephonic interviews are held to shortlist candidates for final interview. Many aspirants apply for jobs and it is not possible to invite all for the main interview, so, selectors conduct telephonic interview as one of the screening process. Candidates are selected for telephonic interview mostly after submitting their Resumes or Curriculum Vitae (CV). Some time through reference of other people, telephonic interviews are held for short listing.

Preparation for Telephonic Interview

- 1) Don't get interrupted: Stand or sit in a place from where you may reply properly. Getting disturbed by family, friends or pets as that will spoil your chances of getting selected. Make sure there are no unnecessary disturbances while you're being interviewed.
- 2) Know your CV: You should be thorough with your CV when being interviewed. You should be able to refer to the CV as and when required.
- 3) Be confident: Just because the interviewer can't see you it does not mean s/he can't hear you. Avoid being nervous as that will get reflected in your voice. Be confident and your voice will sound cool and composed.
- 4) Keep your hands free: It is advisable to keep hands free. Sometime interviewers might ask to solve something and in that case you need to solve.
- 5) Keep water handy: Telephonic interviews can be long and time consum-

ing. Hence keep some water ready for your dry throat. Water will also help you give a break and relax when you're feeling tired or nervous.

6) Don't speak lie at any cost. Interviewers are experienced person and they know who is speaking the false things. Speak confidently and speak the truth.

A telephonic interview can happen in some circumstances:

€ When you initiate a call to the recruiter and they show interest. The call from there on is an interview.

€ A company calls you based upon a previous contact.

€ You have a designated time to talk to a company's representative.

How to have a successful telephonic interview?

€ Prepare well

€ Keep your CV/ resume handy.

€ Keep your research material ready to act as reference point.

€ Stay ready to take notes.

€ Keep yourself calm in body and mind.

€ Make sure you need no break during the call, not even for getting a glass of water or attending to nature's call.

€ Turn off call waiting on your phone.

€ Do not use unprofessional language and sound courteous and polite.

€ Thank the interviewer once the interview process is complete.

Telephonic interviews are held for jobs or may be for other activities like selecting

for scholarships or some other competitions. Positive attitude and confidence would lead us towards the path of success. We can practice mock interviews with the help of mentors or other peers. More we practice means more chances of getting selected.

Updates:

Indian Forest Service Examination: The Union Public Service Commission will hold a Screening Test for selection to Indian Forest Service (Main) Examination, 2016 through Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination, 2016 which will be held on 7th August. Candidates who will be declared by the Commission to have qualified for admission to the Indian Forest Service (Main) Examination will have to apply again, in the Online Detailed Application Form which would be made available on the Website of the Commission after declaration of Results of Preliminary Examination.

WIT Indian Scholarships: Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) is offering WIT Indian Wicket Scholarship for Indian students for pursuing any of the undergraduate and postgraduate level courses at Waterford Institute of Technology in Ireland.

The aim of the scholarship is to encourage high caliber applicants to study at the Institute. Last date of applying is 31st May.

By Trisha Mukherjee

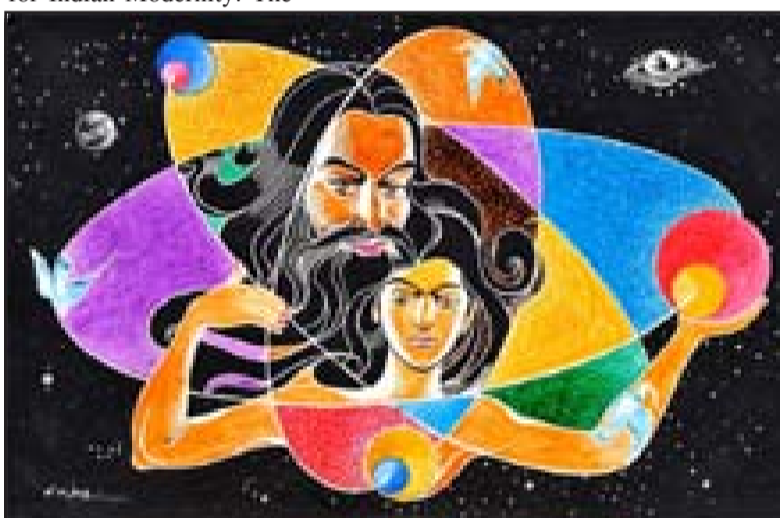
The absence of a quintessential defining style, perhaps, made maverick artist and illustrator Brij Mohan Anand fade into such oblivion that he does not even have a dedicated Wikipedia page.

The late artist whose "unusual aesthetic formed a sustained response to the politics of his time, which have shaped modern Indian consciousness" is the subject of a new exhibition here, which seeks to restore, preserve and propagate his works and vision.

The 11-day long show was inaugurated recently in the presence of filmmaker Imtiaz Ali among others.

It features 80 (out of an archive of 1500) epoch-defining works (1928-1986) including 35 sketches, 14 scratchboards, 3 scratchboard sketches, 5 ink drawings, 6 Red Cross posters, 23 book covers and 5 oil-on-canvas paintings.

"Anand is deploying to a lot of styles but he is slave to none," said theatre activist Sushantra Deshpande, who was part of the event, that also marked the launch of a book and an infographic, both titled, "Narratives for Indian Modernity: The



Epoch-defining works of B M Anand

Aesthetic of Brij Mohan Anand" detailing the life story and history of the Punjab-born artist.

The book has been co-authored by writer-

showcases the "eagle of fascism" driving its claws into the eyes of the "Compassionate Buddha," as the dripping blood swirls up in a

"conflagration" beneath. The caption describes the artwork to represent the spirit of Asia rebelling against the outrage on Buddha's ideals of peace.

Alka Pande, who has curated the exhibi-

biographer Aditi Anand and UK-based art historian Grant Pooke.

Born in Amritsar to a family that lost a pre-teen child (Anand's elder brother) in the 1919 Jallianwala massacre, Anand's art flourished under the shadow of Leftist views.

One of his scratchboards titled "Buddha Bleeds" (1962)

tion termed Anand's body of work, "a rare of combination of being lyrically beautiful and politically strong."

"He represented the subaltern and previously marginalized voice of Indian art with creations that are diverse and interdisciplinary," she said.

The ideas expressed through Anand's works render him as a social



commentator and a polemicist. He drew and painted and scribbled on far ranging issues - "from neo-colonial conflicts, cultural conflicts of the Cold War and the Vietnam War to India's assumption of nuclear power under the reins of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi."

"Perhaps, being anonymous gave him the freedom to speak his heart out. He lived his life

being a morally committed artist throughout," Deshpande said.

However, that did not imply that he was a disappointment to the "conventional" idea of an artist. His finesse in painting landscapes and portraits, designing posters and book covers, only vindicates why he should have been celebrated like his predecessors.

'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, May 29, 2016

Moon square Sun on your solar return chart indicates that there are new developments in personal and professional matters but with ups and downs. Also new attitudes towards love matters, finances, and social relationships. This is a time of preparation, chance, and refinement. It is not a time of dramatic changes. Pick and choose your challenges and fights during this period. Finances need to be handled with care as you have a tendency to overspend especially on non-essentials. If you learn from early setbacks you move on to greater success. Family support will be beneficial. Cooperation and a focus on harmony and understanding benefit you.

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. You are relaxed within and relate well with others at home and at work.

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. You are likely to get back to fitness routines and diet programs to enhance health and energy.

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. There may be minor health ailment troubling you as you need

to give more attention to your health.

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. You exhibit individualism and brilliance in handling business ventures and collaborations.

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. 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. There may be some minor health ailment as you need to give more attention to your health. Stick to a regular exercise routine and regular pattern of nutritious diet.

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. This is an especially spiritual time for you, this is a time when you renew your energy and consider what things are important to you.

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. The more willing you are to put yourself in the limelight, the more positive the rewards. You need to keep your eyes open for opportunities and furthering family relations. You would be sensible about your diet, health, hygiene, and fitness needs.

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. You accept the individuality of loved ones and that would be helpful to resolve your conflicts and move ahead in harmony. 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 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. It's a great time to make improvements to your regular routines.

Sushil-WFI bout: Indian wrestling is the sufferer

(Contd from P-VI) Asian Games, Asian Championships and World Championships.

On return from Georgia, one expected Sushil to fight in the much touted Pro Wrestling League as a star attraction but he stayed away, triggering rumours that he was avoiding Narsingh.

What's important, while Sushil stayed off the competitive mat, Narsingh beat eight of the 18 Olympic qualifiers at various meets, some of them more than once. Narsingh won medals at the Asian Games, Asian Championships before the bronze at the Worlds.

When one is consumed with personal ambition, everything gets blurred. What must be eating Sushil more than anything else is that his buddy Yogeshwar Datt has qualified to go to his fourth Olympics. Yogeshwar has also announced that he would be calling it a day after Rio whereas Sushil talks of a shot at 2020 Tokyo Games!

Sushil, a role model for budding Indian wrestlers after his 2008 medal that changed the face of the sport in India,

knew after the London Olympic Games that he as well as his childhood buddy Yogeshwar Dutt would be moved out of their weight categories under the new regulations.

The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) abolished Yogeshwar's 60kg and Sushil's 66kg categories, creating a piquant situation for the two friends.

Yogeshwar had no choice but to move to 65kg whereas Sushil had to either lose a kg or add eight to get into the 74kg category. Sushil opted for the latter, a category in which young Narsingh has already made a name for himself as a long-haul horse.

Sushil knows what the federation's stand is and he says he is going to fight it out till the end. That means knocking at the door of the Supreme Court or going to the court of the big-time politicians. If that is the case, wrestling will be the loser.

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

The music of an unequal love

(Contd from P-VI) *tumhe akele karna padta hai. Sorry ki jab tum ghar ghar khelti thi toh maine tumhe roka nahi. Yeh nahi kaha ki yeh sirf tumhara kaam nahi, tumhare husband ka bhi hai. Aur kehta bhi kaise? Maine bhi toh kabhi tumhari mummy ki help nahi ki. Aur tumne jo dekha seekha.*

This is from a man visiting his married daughter at her house. He notices her juggling chores and fixing tea for her husband while making an important work call. She walks in after work, and as her husband sits watching TV and working on his laptop she immediately dives into housework. Watching his little girl, the overwhelmed dad writes out an apology. He apologises to her not only as her dad, but on behalf of men: "Har uss dad ki taraf se sorry jisme kai kai saalon se galat example set kiya hai..."

What could have been a standard promotion for a laundry detergent brand, Ariel, has been turned into an

extended apology letter from a father to his adult daughter. In fact, the product in question is not clear until the end of the emotionally wrenching two-minute spot.

This campaign, in fact, had Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, a leading spokesperson for gender equality in the workplace share it on her personal Facebook page. She said, "This is one of the most powerful videos I have ever seen -- showing how stereotypes hurt all of us and are passed from generation to generation." A research from University of Illinois, reported in Daily Mail, UK, revealed that couples who both do the chores are more likely to stay together.

The study measured marital bliss of 220 newly married couples in US and found that couples who share more domestic tasks are more crucial for marital satisfaction of women. INAV



“To succeed is nothing, it's an accident. but to feel no doubts about oneself is something very different: it is character.”

—Marie Leneru,

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LVIII No. 287 SHILLONG, MONDAY, MAY 30, 2016

Congress's flip-flop stance

THE race for selecting a new leader to head the Government is going on in right earnest. However, the biggest hurdle for the Congress in Meghalaya is to find someone equal to the stature and competence of the present chief minister, Mukul Sangma and one who can outdo him in terms of service delivery. Leadership is not everyone's forte. A leader is a team player but he is also ahead of the team in terms of seeing the big picture, guiding the team and taking action against laggards in the team who fail to deliver. The MUA Government headed by Dr Mukul Sangma has completed its third term and some of his ministers have failed to deliver but they continue to hold the same portfolio. So what are the benchmarks that the Chief Minister has set for them to achieve? Or are the benchmarks dispensed with so long as the particular minister professes loyalty to the Chief Minister? If we were to go by performance, then one minister who has failed to deliver and certainly deserves to be booted out is the PWD Minister. The roads within the city of Shillong and beyond wear a dishevelled look and those that were repaired recently have shown signs of crumbling after the first flush of rains. At the roundabout in Police Bazar which is the city centre, the road needs major repair works but does not look like it has come to the attention of the PWD and its Minister. There are other departments that have become non-starters. Our fiscal performance is dismal. Money is circulating only within a small circle in the state.

If the leadership change sought by the Congress MLAs now is for better performance and speedy delivery of public services then that would be a legitimate reason. But if the reason for switching sides from Mukul to Lapang is only for a more lucrative ministry then that is sheer opportunism and selfishness. The public should keep an eye on such opportunists and ensure that they are voted out next time. In every state the electorate are losing patience and they have also got wiser. Money no longer wins votes and we have seen this during the last Tura Lok Sabha bye-election. People will pocket the money but vote whoever they wish to. Hence the present set of ministers including the chief minister can no longer take people for granted. It is time they realise they are public servants who are mandated to deliver public services and are not VIPs who can ride roughshod over citizens.

LOOKING BACK

February 11, 1989

Buffalo & pony development project In Manipur

A Rs. 133.19 lakh regional buffalo breeding farm and a regional pony development project are being set up in Manipur with financial assistance from the North Eastern Council, an official source said today.

The buffalo project estimated to cost Rs. 61.36 lakhs, is being established at Waobal Tera Urak in the Thoubai district in Manipur in view of the importance of the Manipuri buffaloes known for their milk. The Manipur Government took measures during the sixth plan for the development of buffaloes in the state with the Murrah breed, but with little success, the sources said.

The proposed buffalo project would try to produce a cross-breed by mating the legal Manipur water buffalo with the improved breed of Murrah, the sources said.

Sources said the project would also supply cross-breed bulls to local farmers of Manipur and some areas of the north-eastern region for upgrading their local stock. This apart, the project would serve as a place of demonstration of buffalo Breeding and management to the farmers involved in such enterprises, the sources

said. The Manipur Government began developing necessary infrastructure to ensure the breeding programme since last year and the work was expected to be completed by this year end. The stock animals would be procured during the current financial year after which the breeding operating would start, sources said.

Of the total fund, the NEC had sanctioned Rs. 10 lakhs and Rs. 40.70 lakhs for the year 1986-87 and 1987-88 respectively, the sources said.

He said the local Manipuri water buffalo was quite popular in respect of quality for draught purposes, besides its milk production. More than one thousand buffaloes were sent from Manipur to other states of the north eastern region every year.

The Rs. 71.83 lakh regional pony development farm, would be set up at Lamphuiat in Imphal district, sources said.

This farm would take up selective breeding in order to maintain pure Manipuri breed of pony for conservation of “germ-plasm”, besides, catering to the demand of the army, para-military forces and also the common people.

Modi visit to Shillong: In retrospect

By H H Mohrmen

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's maiden visit to Meghalaya has not only drawn huge crowds to see him, but he has also been able to get the media hype despite a brief altercation that the journalists had with the SPG and the state security personnel. The front page of all the newspaper in the state had maximum coverage of the Prime Minister's activities on the previous day and I was surprised that even the mainstream media like NDTV, Asian News International are competing with the social media to publicise Modi's visit to Shillong. A case in point is Modi's visit to Elephant Falls and Mawphlang Khasi heritage village was reported even before he landed in Delhi on May 28.

There is no doubt that Modi has charisma and that he can create an aura of awe with whoever meets him. Those who had the privilege of meeting him shower words of praise for Modi. Some say he is down to earth and has elephantine memory and he also takes things seriously. Others says he has the time and the patience to listen to those who talk to him. He even took part in the cultural programmes et al. But the question that we need to ask is the reason for the Prime Minister's visit to Shillong.

Modi's visit was to address the 65th plenary session of the North Eastern Council. Now what has transpired in the 64 other plenary meetings of the Council? Why does the region continue to cry foul against the central government's attitude towards the states in particular and the region in the general? Is it because of the unrealistic vision or the lack of it (as pointed out by Toki Blah ST May 27, 2016) that has led the region to come to such a pass? If the answer to the question is affirmative then what change can we expect from the 65th plenary session? If we have failed in the past then how can one impress a layman like me that this time it will be different? Or how can the mere presences of the Prime Minister at the plenary meeting bring a sea change to the region?

We are of course good

at coining catch-phrases as if mere slogans can bring instant development to the area. For a decade or so the popular catchword that did the rounds in the region was 'the Look East Policy.' In the case of Meghalaya I agree with Toki Blah that looking south towards Bangladesh will be more appropriate. Few years have passed by without any result and now we have done with looking and we are now proposing another interesting jargon 'Act East Policy.' Forgive me for my ignorance but if it has taken us a decade or more to 'look' then I cannot help but wonder how many years it will take us to 'act.' I just hope that we will not waste another decade debating, organizing seminars and workshops before we take any action.

I could only get the sense of his speech from the news reports in the press which narrated Modi's speeches in the many engagements that he had on his visit to Shillong. I was trying to see how Modi's speech in Shillong is different from speeches made by other leaders from the Delhi durbar who had visited this region in the recent past. But I was astonished to see that there is not much difference in Modi's speech. Apart from naming a few of our footballers (although his speech writer missed Rokus Lamare another Meghalaya's important footballers) I did not hear anything of much significance. Making huge promise like earmarking more than 30,000 crore for the development of north east region and fast tracking infrastructure building in the region is not new. Prime Ministers before Modi did the same but the sad truth is that the region continues to be underdeveloped.

If we are to believe the news reports then the Prime Minister also said that the Act East Policy will reduce isolation of the region by improving all round connectivity through rail, road, telecom, power and waterways. This statement is as good as admitting that the region was (purposely) neglected and isolated till the 65th plenary session of the NEC. If this statement is taken at face value, then I don't see why the youth of the region would not be

disenchanted with the government.

The Prime Minister mentioned the potential of promoting tourism in the region, in particularly eco and adventure tourism. He also mentioned that the region's is blessed with natural scenic beauty, distinct historical, cultural and ethnic heritage but is there anything new about this? Haven't we heard similar statements earlier? Promoting tourism in the region had been on the agenda for as long as one can remember, but it remains an unfulfilled promise. Many before Modi had mentioned about the potential of starting BPOs here since the youths of north east have natural flair in speaking and writing in English, but all the earlier statements became empty rhetoric. Hence we will have to wait and see how Modi's speech translates into action.

The people around Modi should make him aware that the traditional agriculture practiced by the farmers in the region was organic in the first place. It was the government which has (forcefully) introduced them to chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Now the government and the Prime Minister is again coining a very attractive slogan 'organic farming' to convince the farmers to revert to old ways and continue farming the way their ancestors had practiced since time immemorial. Please spare us the slogan. Just admit that the government has made a mistake and it would like us to go back to the basics of doing agriculture as practiced by our ancestors.

The only speech in the plenary session which resonates with popular feelings, particularly that of the youth was that of Lt Gen Nirbhay Sharma governor of Mizoram, who pointed that merely achieving highest literacy rate does not mean that all is well in the state. He pointed that as per 2011 census the percentage of literacy in Mizoram is 91.58 but the high literacy rate is no guarantee for a job. Employment generation is the need of the hour and creating immediate employment for a large section of educated and semi-educated youths in the

region is the crying need of the people of north east.

In my opinion this is the crux of the matter and unless and until every young person in the region is decently employed then development remains incomplete. If the NEC and the state governments cannot find employment for the youth in the region then they can explore alternatives where the services of the youth of the region are needed. Kerala has high literacy percentage in the country and yet unlike Mizoram it does not face much unemployment problem because its youths find employment elsewhere in the country and the world.

Okram Ibobi Singh the Chief Minister of Manipur during the celebration of Nurses' Day mentioned about the demand for Manipuri nurses in Japan. Not only in Japan but there are other countries which are in need of both skilled and unskilled labour, and the youth of the region with their command over English language already have the much needed communication skill for any kind of job inside and outside the country. It is therefore high time that the NEC explores viable employment alternatives for the youth of the region in the country and outside the country. And by the way rather than look east or look west, we would be able to do ourselves a favour if we look inwards.

In my opinion (and I am sorry to say this) I did not see anything new in the Prime Minister's speech. Modi has not promised anything new for the region. Although there is no rhetoric but the speech is general in nature. It lacks specifics and there are no details on how the proposed project or programmes are going to be implemented. Therefore for me there is nothing in Modi's speech that I can look forward to. It is like any other visit, where prime ministers come and say something which they forget by the time they reach Delhi. In few days time much water will have flown down the bridge and people will forget the Prime Minister's visit and all of us particularly the man/woman on the street will continue with what we used to do - toiling for two square meals a day.

The power of regret

By M J Akbar

Cuba. Vietnam. Hiroshima. Is Barack Obama trying to tell us something? I think yes. In the last months of American history's most unexpected presidency, he is trying to bury, as quietly as he can, the dilemmas and memories that have haunted his generation of Americans: nuclear bombs that obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, and the assault on Cuba and Vietnam in the 1960s.

As President he cannot apologise, for this would be toxic to those who fought, with courage and conviction, imperial Japan in the Second World War; and those who believed, with good reason, that they had saved the free world from Communism by their vigorous challenge to the Soviet Union. But to those who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, Cuba was a folly and Vietnam a deadly mistake.

It is not entirely coincidental that Barack Obama was born in 1961, the year in which John Kennedy authorised the failed American invasion across the Bay of Pigs; and, a few months later, Washington and Moscow nearly blew up the world with a nuclear confrontation over missiles in Cuba.

President Obama knows that even regret can induce some bit of backlash; but he is also certain that he must pay this price. It may not be enough to fully exorcise such ghosts, but they must be laid to rest. We cannot erase tragedies of the past or deny their consequences, but there is substantial merit in public acknowledgement of a grievous error.

Compared to the unprecedented bloodbaths we have seen in the last century, the wars, racism and genocide, the incident of 1914 in which Canada turned back hundreds of Sikhs on board the ship Komagata Maru, hardly ranks among the worst atrocities within memory. But it did leave deep scars on Sikhs, which continued to rankle. Canada's young Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recognised the need for healing. His statement was carefully worded: "Canada does not bear alone the responsibility for every tragic mistake that occurred with the Komagata Maru and its passengers, but Canada's government was without question responsible for the laws that prevented these passengers from immigrating peacefully and securely, for that, and for every regrettable consequence that followed, we are sorry." The important point is the regret, publicly expressed. The very fact that it took a hundred years to come indicates how difficult

it is for establishments to recognise, or at least admit, any injustice.

It took 71 years for an American President to visit the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. We should try and understand the complexity of the reason, rather than leap on to some "moral" podium and proclaim outrage. By 1945, America and Japan had been engaged in an epic war for three years, in which no quarter was asked and none given. The American leadership had to consider the human cost of invading imperial Japan, given the latter's fearsome kamikaze reputation. And yet the sheer horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is inescapable. For me, the amazing truth is not that reconciliation is complete now, but that it began in the early 1950s. We must salute the generation, on both sides, that recognised, so quickly, that peace was infinitely preferable to havoc. The world is, consequently, a much better place.

When does another chapter of history begin? Always difficult to say, except when victory or defeat changes everything radically. More often, continuity is too blurred for sharp clarity. America did not open the door to Cuba on the day that Obama landed in Havana to a warm, if occasionally awkward, reception. That door was being nudged for years, which is the way that the diplomatic process works. Doors open by imperceptible inches, not in a dramatic flourish. What Obama's visit ensured was that the gate would not be shut again.

But one decision taken by Obama in the equally slow manoeuvres of America-Vietnam relations is a game changer: America will sell weapons to Vietnam. The Vietnam war may have ended decades ago, but the last trace of enmity, which is suspicion, is finally over. This at long last is a reversal to the 1940s when the Communist legend Ho Chi Minh allied with America against Japan, confident that republican America would force Europe's imperialists to decolonize once the war ended. [Gandhi supported the British in the First World War for similar reasons.] But Roosevelt died and his successor Harry Truman chose France over Vietnam. The rest is familiar.

M.J. Akbar's Twitter handle is @mjakbar

Plenary Meet at the State Convention Centre. The people of Shillong wanted to get the glimpse of the PM and to listen to the speech at the 5th Polo Ground. The security arrangement out there was excellent but the seating arrangement was too congested and the space too small to accommodate the thousands of people. There was no proper signage to direct people to the correct venue from the Polo Bazar junction. Many people were confused and entered from the wrong entry. The security personnel who were performing their duty out there directed the people to enter from the other gate but when people reached there they were told that it was an entry for VIPs only. Thousands of people went back from the venue as they could not locate the main entrance to the venue where the PM was addressing the public gathering. The people who could enter the venue could listen to the PM's

speech but the others who could not enter and remained outside were soaked in the heavy rain.

The State government failed to correctly estimate the capacity of the ground. It also failed to understand that Prime Minister Modi enjoys huge popularity here. The public reception was not well organized. It should have been done in a larger space. Or does Shillong have dearth of space here? I hope the State government comes up with a proper plan to organize future events especially when the Prime Minister of the country visits the city.

Yours etc;
Sandeep Ghosh
Shillong-4

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

TO THE EDITOR

Mesmerized PM and stoic CM

Editor,

I don't remember if any prime minister in the past ever imbibed the rich culture and traditions of Meghalaya than the present PM, Narendra Modi. He relished them all to his heart's content. Well, the PM's visit to Shillong will have multiple effects across the Northeast. Our state will surely witness a major boost in the inflow of tourists. The leaders should grab all the opportunities that fall on their laps. Yes, Meghalaya can now certainly pull in a good deal of benefits from the Centre. The only thing it requires is the right approach by the state's leaders. Modi has clearly hinted that unlike the Congress, his Government will not discriminate against any state on the basis of which party is ruling the state. It is expected that the Congress High Command, which is notoriously self-centered and far less efficient than

the leaders in the state, would now stop filling poison into the brains of their juniors. The Congress which has lost a sense of common prudence should not dictate nasty terms from above that might deprive Meghalaya of central benefits.

What has shocked us in the recent past is the fact that in spite of a series of defeats in different state elections, the Congress which are due to the sheer incompetence and immaturity of the Vice President of the party, Rahul Gandhi, the Party remains blissfully unrepentant with no hint of introspection.

What a huge contradiction that Rahul even took the side of a student group in Hyderabad whose activities clearly attract serious charges of treason. He wilfully incited the group that was condemning the hanging of a terrorist Afzal Guru, which was after all was passed by his Congress government. What is this sickness called where one who openly gets involved in anti-national activities still passionately wants to rule the nation?

Far worse is the fact that for all his obvious acts of immaturity the party members still adore Rahul and the media still glorify him as the "youth-icon" of the country. Is an idiot lad usually chosen to hold the honour of being a youth-icon in India? Everyone is bewildered. Congress has better people, intelligent leaders, who can suitably replace the incompetent Gandhi family. Sensible leaders should not let the party fall from grace this way any further. Anyway, our pristine state must not suffer due to the aberrations of the Congress high command and its lack of vision and good-will.

On the other hand the impeccably dressed PM Modi is noticeably forthcoming and genuinely loving. Our astute CM, Dr. Mukul Sangma might not have ever enjoyed such close proximity with his High Command in Delhi than with the PM Modi here in Shillong this time. It's quite clear that the PM sincerely desires that Meghalaya should earnestly focus on tourism so that all other people of India will appreciate the rich culture and scenic beauty of this

Scotland of the East. The PM has unmistakably cheered up the leaders by visiting Elephant Falls and Mawphlang and taught them how to drum up for the tourists. He also showed whole world that it takes a genuine heart with patience not only to appreciate but also to go deeper into each rhyme of any culture of this pluralist India.

Let's sincerely hope that the PM's disarming humility, friendly mingling with the villagers and cultural troupes will surely douse the spirit of the rabble rousers. The state will surely thrive since our stoic CM will appreciate the right gestures of the mesmerized PM.

Yours etc.,
Salil Gwali
Shillong-2

Poor arrangement at the 5th Polo Ground

Editor,

We were all aware that the hon'ble Prime Minister, Narendra Modi was visiting Shillong on May 27 to address the 65th NEC

"It is hard enough to remember my opinions, without also remembering my reasons for them!"

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, TUESDAY, MAY 31, 2016

Kohli, the New Bradman

SACHIN Tendulkar was once compared to the legendary Donald Bradman. Virat Kohli has now stepped into that eminence. He did get his fast duck after 51 innings. But it has happened also to other all time greats in cricket. Like an average batsman, he can also make mistakes. Since the World 20-Twenty and through much of the IPL, it seemed Kohli was a maestro who could never make mistakes and his performance gave him a superhuman image. He has been making huge totals- 273 runs at an incredible average of 136.50 in 5 innings in the World Cup. Then came a spectacular total of 970 runs at an average of 83.54 and a strike rate of 151.94. He had scored four hundred. He had of course faced critics. It was said that he could not hit sixes. They did not remember that Frank Worrel did not specialize in sixes. Great innings are made up of singles and tools. Kohli silenced his critics later by hitting sixes 25 times.

Cricket now has many constraints. Kohli has achieved his great success within these constraints. And now he will notch up 1000 runs and joint such icons as Bradman, Tendulkar and Brian Lara. Tendulkar came to be known as little Bradman. Kohli is well on the way to enter the hall of fame. He has indeed done Indian Cricket great credit. On another note the God of Indian cricket, Sachin Tendulkar and India's nightingale Lata Mangeshkar were roasted by stand-up comedian Tanmay Bhat. This has caused a furore with political parties jumping into the fray. In India celebrities enjoy the status of gods and goddesses and any attempt at poking fun at them becomes politically incorrect. India and Indians should learn to take life less seriously.

LOOKING BACK

February 11, 1989

Forest policy still vague

The new National Policy on Forests (1988) has not drawn the kudos from the public which the Central Government might have been expecting. If anything, it has met with sharp criticism from the public and for the right reasons. Under the new policy, the Government has set a national goal of putting on third of the total land areas of the country under their cover in the near future.

"Forests not be looked upon as source of revenue. Forests are a renewable natural source," says the policy document. They are a national asset to be protected and enhanced for the well-being of the people and the nation. These are laudable objectives indeed, but they were also there when the old policy on forests was launched in May, 1952. How is it then the old policy which is sought to be replaced by a one new did not work during the last 36 years. Statistics speak the truth lauder than words.

Studies reveal that instead of afforesting the country in reality, the forest cover has shrunk to about 17 per cent (official version, again) from 22.8 per cent estimated in 1972-73.

Policy or no policy, it shows that the axing of the trees have continued to date at the rate of 1.5 million hectares a year. No one believes that it is going to stop with the drafting of a new policy of forests alone. It can if the Government is sincere implementing what it tried to profess on paper. What has happened in Uttar Pradesh is typical of the country as a whole. A survey has found that the 'actual' forest cover in this state has shrunk to a mere 1 percent from 2 percent in the fifties despite numerous a forestation plans launched during the old policy period.

However, officials take pride in saying that the old policy did succeed

significantly on at least one point. It helped arrest the annual diversion of forest land for non forest purpose from 150,000 hectares a year to only 15,000 after the 1980 Forest Conservation Act came into force. Surprisingly, this figure has been greeted with disbelief not only by the detractors of the Government but also by some people from the ruling party too.

In fact, these projects are so designed that with their completion vast areas of virgin forests gets submerged under water. Once construction begins, vested interests slaughter the trees and share the loot. Conservationists cite the latest case of controversial Bodhghat project in Bastar to illustrate this point. Once completed, the project will submerge an area where around two million sal trees (each valued at Rs. 15,000 in open market).

Its principal aim is to ensure environmental stability including atmospheric equilibrium which are vital for all life forms -- human, animal and plant. Again, forest protection will also have to be flexible enough to tackle effectively a variety of situations in different regions of the country. For instance, the guidelines equating the deforestation caused by industrial agencies is totally unjustified. Vested interests have always made the villagers' and the tribal's search for fuel wood and fodder scapegoat to hide their own misdeeds.

Detractors of the new forest policy say it can come in handy to the ruling party at the Centre for rejecting or delaying urgently needed development of projects (like electrification, building of dams and so on) in the opposition ruled states on ecological and conservation grounds.

Visiting the enchanting Shangri-La

By C K Nayak

The very name of Tibet evokes both an awe and respect. Awe, because it remains a sore thumb in the Indo-Chinese relationship even after more than half a century of conflict and poignant war both counties fought even if briefly. Innumerable border talks and several bilateral visits have not settled the dispute although the Line of Actual Control remains by and large peaceful despite sporadic skirmishes.

Tibet also inspires respect because it is the cradle of Buddhism and source of major rivers of India including both the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. It is also the citadel of Lord Shiva residing in the famous Mount Manasarovar Tibet is also home to the Dalai Lama who is in India heading a Government in Exile which no other country has ever recognized. The Garos of Meghalaya are also believed to have originated from Toura province of Tibet. Despite the majority population being Buddhists, Tibet has a sizeable Muslim and Christian population.

In such a scenario visiting Tibet was a God-sent opportunity of a life time. This Shillong Times Correspondent was part of a very small media team invited by the Government of China to visit the Roof of the World for more than a week for the first time in Tibet's history. The team comprising only three other senior journo (Strategic Editor of The Hindu, Bureau Chief of DNA and one of the Directors of the IANS and five scribes of neighbouring Nepal toured the length and breadth of Tibet for the whole week. Normally China does not allow others to visit Tibet let alone journalists that too from a publication from North East!

Why I am putting it separately is the fact that China still claims almost the whole of Arunachal Pradesh as part of Tibet. And there is a history behind it! At one point of time in history, Tawang was part of Tibet. Tawang inhabited by the Monpa people was a kingdom known as Lhomon or Monyul which ruled the area. The Monyul kingdom was later absorbed into the control of neighbouring Bhutan and Tibet. Tawang Monastery was founded by the Merak Lama Lodre Gyatso in 1681 in accordance with the wishes of the 5th Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, and has an interesting legend surrounding its name, which means "Chosen by Horse". The sixth Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso, was born in Tawang.

The 1914 Simla Accord defined the McMahon Line as the new boundary between British India and Tibet. By this treaty Tibet relinquished several hundred square miles of its territory, including Tawang, to the British, but it was not recognised by China. After the outbreak of the war with Japan in 1941 the then government of Assam undertook a number of 'forward policy' measures to tighten their hold on the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) area, which later became Arunachal Pradesh. In 1944 administrative control was extended over the area of the Tawang tract lying South of the Sela Pass when J.P. Mills set up an Assam Rifles post at Dirang Dzong and sent the Tibetan tax-collectors packing, brushing aside Tibetan protests. However, no steps were taken to evict the Tibetan from the area North of the pass under which the Tawang town remains. The situation continued after India's independence but

underwent a decisive change in 1950 when Tibet lost its de facto independence and was incorporated into the newly established People's Republic of China. In February 1951, Major Ralengnao 'Bob' Khathing led an Assam Rifles column to Tawang town and took control of the remainder of the Tawang tract from the Tibetans, removing the Tibetan administration altogether.

During the Sino-Indian war of 1962, Tawang fell briefly under Chinese control, but China voluntarily withdrew its troops at the end of the war. Tawang again came under Indian administration, but China has not relinquished its claims on most of Arunachal Pradesh including Tawang. Tibet's history is riddled with controversies and ups and downs starting from its supremacy over parts of China to become a component of the great country now witnessing massive development. In 1965, the area that had been under the control of the Dalai Lama's government from 1951 to 1959 (Ü-Tsang and western Kham) was renamed the Tibet Autonomous Region or TAR. Autonomy provided that head of government would be an ethnic Tibetan; however, the TAR head is always subordinate to the First Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, who was not a Tibetan. The role of ethnic Tibetans in the higher levels of the TAR Communist Party was very limited.

These chosen few and lucky correspondent travelled through the length and breadth of Tibet which probably would not have been possible without the massive transport and communication infrastructure the Chinese Government has built even in the hinterland. We are

carrying a series of articles with pictures of Tibet depicting almost walks of life from small villages to huge airports in what is called Shangri La. Even small towns have hospitals, schools and other basic institutions.

Almost whole of Tibet has undergone a drastic change at least as far as physical infrastructure is concerned. There are massive roads, the world famous railway lines linking Tibet with mainland China, several airports, not to speak of big official and commercial buildings and residential houses. Let alone phones or mobile connectivity most places are wi-fied. There is round the clock power and drinking water supply and busy markets at most places.

Even deep inside the TAR at some places massive steel and concrete construction works are going on either for new roads or bridges or for water supply and even for dams for hydel power.

It is now known why China is developing Tibet in such a big way. The officials accompanying us or those whom we met say it is to develop the livelihood of the Tibetans who were earlier mostly nomads leading a hard life in the hills, or rural folks toiling for food all day.

It is also possible that China wants to open up the rest of the world to Tibet as a wonderland belying normal perception that it is remote and backward. Mind it, Tibet's economic growth both in terms of GDP and per capita income is more than the mainland now. It has huge mineral reserves mainly copper, apart from most of China's natural forests. It has huge hydel power reserve most of which is not utilized and can attract tourists in lakhs from the rest of the globe with its innumerable scenic spots. With border trade rising by leaps and bounds Tibet could also be a hub for trade by China with South Asia.

TO THE EDITOR

Onaatah's myriad emotions!

Editor,

Last Sunday I had the pleasure of watching the Khasi film, Onaatah. I went with an open mind as I have never seen a Khasi film and know very little of the language.

What I found was a moving, human story. Onaatah covers an astonishing number of serious social issues. In telling the story of a young woman who was brutally raped it took me on a journey which gently exposes the injustice of a culture of victim-blaming. The film explores the impact of the judicial process, societal pressures and the disparity between the punishment the perpetrators and victim receive. In a state with worryingly high rates of domestic violence and regular reports of horrific rape cases in the news, this non-judgmental film tells a story so often forgotten; the story of an innocent young woman so ostracised by friends, acquaintances and even her fiancée that she comes close to suicide.

As if dealing with only one hard hitting issue wasn't enough as the film moves to a rural setting we are faced with issues of disability, unintended pregnancy and alcoholism. The cliché of the idyllic problem-free simpler way of life is avoided and the story told is much richer for it. One particular character was so

moving, so real that his story brought me to the verge of tears. A blind man who sees his village with such beautiful clarity and intensity through his senses that he challenged the way I view disability. What was even more impressive is that this is all achieved almost without the audience really realising it. The humour throughout had the packed cinema hall laughing out loud.

My only criticism of Onaatah was that the director clearly and needlessly sped up the driving scenes, making them look strange and stilted. Also in some of the slow motion, the shots were jerky. However, on the whole Onaatah cleverly avoids the trap of trying to do special effects on a low budget and is all the better for it. I am genuinely impressed by how with the kind understanding and non-judgmental perspective the film takes on a number of really serious social issues. This is well worth seeing for anyone who cares about the issues facing Shillong, Meghalaya and the wider world. Or if you just want to laugh and cry during the same film.

Yours etc.,
Nick Bennett, UK
(Camp: Shillong)

No way to treat church elders!

Editor,

The recent local news that drew our attention regarding the churches being caught while attempting to purchase plots of land for graveyards

from the Syiem of Myllem, Latho Manik Syiem was projected as the sin of the century. The sinner was the church making a deal with the devil. No one condoned the church action nor were even sympathetic, or otherwise, given that the church was only interested in preparing a final resting place for its adherents and thereby solving a huge problem which we know is lurking before each one of us at the threshold of our life on earth when death comes knocking at our door beckoning us to move out.

Where was the wisdom of the Acting Syiem, Ricky Syiem, when he considered to take action on the illegal land deal executed by Latho Manik Syiem and the Myntiris of Hima Myllem? What was his real motive behind putting up such a rowdy, colourful drama of rounding up all the church leaders? Do you think that acting like a tyrant by imitating Hitler who rounded up all the Jews during the holocaust will make him a great Syiem? The memory of the humiliation that this Acting Syiem inflicted on the church will live in the minds of the people for a long, long time.

The aggressive action of the present Acting Syiem is totally unbecoming of a Chief/Syiem who should have been more sympathetic to the church leaders at a time like this when they are being robbed in broad day light. Ricky Syiem did not even have the courtesy to give due respect to the church elders by separating the church from the actions of individuals. For all Christian

believers, especially for the elderly, it was a direct attack on the church.

An administrator is legally bound to provide justice therefore, the present Acting Syiem as an administrator should have used the yard stick of justice. Instead, he came down heavily on the church, whereas, inside the office of the Syiem of Myllem, he simply swept the dust under the carpet and parked himself over there so where is the justice? He is on a war-path to clean Law Syiem of all the illegal occupations and for that reason he is erasing all the graveyard plots sold by the Dorbar to the various Churches of Shillong but what about the house of the former Syiem, Laborous Manik Syiem that is still standing there? And to make matters worse, the land was given free of cost and the house was built for free.

When the sentiments of the people are hurt so deeply, there is no way that this Acting Syiem can win back the love and admiration of the people.

Yours etc.,
S. Kharkongor,
Via email.

Mainstream media's ignorance of Northeast

Editor,

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi is making history wherever he goes be it in the country or abroad. The recent visit to Shillong was no different. A leader is

As The Truth Unfolds...

By Ananya Guha

Everyone is now talking about the results of the elections in four or five states. Some have gone into a rigorous analysis of the victory of the BJP and the AGP in Assam, the loss of the Congress and the decimation of the Left Front in West Bengal. Added to this is of course the come-back of the Left Front in Kerala. If one glances at the newspapers or the web magazines, articles normally revolve around the following: five reasons why the Congress lost, how Tarun Gogoi ensured victory for the BJP, some reasons why the Congress or the Left Front lost in West Bengal (the main being the unholy alliance there) etc. Then there are articles which eulogize the Indian electorate- very intelligent, can't fool them, cannot be taken for a ride and what have you.

Undoubtedly true, but more than that elections are very unpredictable! What people are not noticing however is that victory of a political power is one thing and ensuring peace, justice, liberty and livelihoods is another. The anti-incumbency factor is raised again and again in Assam to justify the ouster of the Tarun Gogoi government. Also the surmise is that BP will now make forays into the embattled North East. People want a change and they have got it- in Assam is another untiring slogan. Peace be to all! If political change can bring about peace then nothing like it. But what about other issues like insurgency and talks with the ULFA? Some on social media have even said that Assam has now a young and dynamic Chief Minister and also good looking! Bravo.

The point is that politics in India has become so decrepit, and brazenly untruthful, a pack of lies that anything goes. Otherwise how can one explain the 'unholy' alliance between the Left and the Congress in West Bengal, when once upon a time the Left Front left the Central Government to protest against the Congress's pro-American policies? So the Left has become the Right, The Centre is of course 'Right' (!) and the Congress is far below the Centre. In West Bengal the Chief Minister has always taken a pro-people, pro-rural stance like the Left, but her party could wonderfully upstage it. Now that the 'Right' has come to the North East they have started promising the people how the immigrants, the 'foreigners' to be precise will be dealt with; how they will protect the culture of the indigenous people etc.

Of course centrally protecting the culture of the country is uppermost in their minds, a culture only defined and understood by them, notwithstanding the clamour of protests taking place among the intelligentsia, which they consider to be non-secular. In Assam an ex-Minister an important one of the

Congress, in fact a close ally of the then Chief Minister is now lauded for his political machinations in bringing the BJP into the portals of victory. He is the current brainwave in the state, the impresario who has not only brought about the downfall of the Congress Government, but a man who has taught them, not one but ten lessons. See, you do this to him, you get rid of him and this is what he does. You must pay dearly for your insidious follies!

The larger truth in India is the great untruth. There is no political will, let alone ideology. What is ideology is compromised at will and stakeholders come together only to capture power, pelf and ministerial berths. We know, how in my state of Meghalaya, ministerial positions, or positions in lieu of it are created instantly to keep people happy or quiet. In this larger frame of untruth and hopelessness is positioned the ordinary citizen, who wants a quiet peaceful living, who is desirous of earning a decent livelihood with the basic comforts of living, and who will exercise his franchise once in five years. At that point in time he or she decides what change they want. They are not interested in deep searching analyses by political commentators and buffs. What they want is to co-exist amicably in the midst of a highly plural world whether in the state or the country. One aspect noteworthy about the elections in Assam is that the people came together as one, as part of a larger Assamese society to drive out a wasted regime. That is certainly one perspective and a way of looking at it.

Having come to power, whoever it may be, our politicians must understand that even if they call the shots, politics is embedded in a society, and it has an impact on every person, which during the turn of elections become an amorphous mass- the electorate, wily and gutsy. They must also come to realize that they cannot take this electorate for granted. What they want above all is decent living and equitable sharing of wealth. Further, elected representatives must also realize that they are duty bound towards the unemployed, the poor and the suffering.

English speaking Marxists mouthing platitudes may not be accepted by all. Rather a crude Mamata Banerjee who at least can deliver some goods, literally speaking may be welcomed in an impoverished state. So beware, as the truth keeps on unfolding, unfurling a larger canvas of hope, anger and surrender to expediency. Five years can simply go in a rush. Then there's change!

known by the followers he attracts and in Polo on May 27, if space had permitted then the whole of Meghalaya would have been there. That he is popular in the northeastern region could be gauged from the presence of people from Assam and other states at the Polo civic reception. I learnt that they have come to listen the PM - whom they have only heard and seen live on television. It was no doubt a magnetic pull but one wonders what will be the fate of the Congress in the next assembly election. The High Command must be jittery in the national capital. One has rightly commented in this column that Meghalaya CM, Mukul Sangma who was seen moving shoulder to shoulder with the PM during his visit could not have enjoyed the same proximity with the mother - son duo in New Delhi. There has been several occasions Congressmen from the state returned empty-handed after they were refused audience by the high command duo. This apart,

media has a significant role to play, more so when this region is getting all the attention that it deserves from the incumbent Union Government, which it never got in the sixty year rule by the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty after it took over from the British Raj. I notice that some mainland media houses reported that Modi went to a sacred jungle of the Khasi tribesmen and beat the drum with the jungle/advivasi people there. This amounts to ignorance of one's geography, to say the least. One can understand the mainland people's perspective of this region being some foreign land but the same cannot be expected from media houses. There is lot to be done by the Governments here and by the people of the North East to change this jungle and jungle media.

Yours etc.
PK Dwivedi
Shillong - 1