

“A strong and secure man digests his experiences (deeds and misdeeds alike) just as he digests his meat, even when he has some bits to swallow.”

---- Friedrich Nietzsche

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India & CND

IT is heartening to know that a UN General Assembly Committee adopted a resolution to launch negotiations next year on a new treaty banning nuclear weapons. The campaign for nuclear disarmament CND which began in the 1960s with people like Bertrand Russell vigorously advocating it may soon come to fruition. The cold war tensions between the US and the USSR sustained is a specious logic of a balance of terror to prevent global connect. Later such tensions eased and Start I and Start II talks were held between the two superpowers and both countries effected cuts in their nuclear arsenals, though Russia more than the US complied. So the terror remained. Meanwhile, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) proved abortive. China explored the bomb in LOP developing its own nuclear technology. Nuclear technology passed on to other countries on the sly. Indian scientists with their own technology produced the bomb at Pokhran in 1999. Pakistan retaliated with three. Some other countries have secretly built nuclear plants-Israel and Iran are known to have done so.

The United Nations General Assembly dealing with disarmament and international security has taken a resolution which reiterates the universal objective of taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. India has however abstained from supporting the resolution. Although Delhi has not signed the NPT and has a nuclear weapon, it has always been committed to comprehensive nuclear disarmament. But India’s present stand is sensible. D.B. Venkatesh Varma said India had been “constrained” to abstain on the resolution. This has obvious reference to Pakistan’s jingoistic role and support to terrorism. Pakistan is a nuclear power and its intentions can never be trusted. India is on the whole not convinced that the UN move can lead to a comprehensive nuclear disarmament. Some ‘rogue’ countries may always remain out of the net. The question is: how and when can the world be free from the menace of the nuke?

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

A hurdle for city's water supply scheme cleared

The Centre has granted necessary clearance to the Meghalaya government proposal for laying pipelines along the periphery of the Reserved Forests between Mawphlang and Shillong. With this a major hurdle has been cleared for the completion of the on going Greater Shillong Water Supply Scheme. Disclosing this an official source told Shillong times that a formal communication to this effect had been received by the State Govt from the Union Ministry of Forests. The state PHE Department is now expected

to undertake the laying of the pipeline from the treatment plant at Mawphlang to the fifteen major reservoirs around Shillong. Asked when would the people of Shillong get water from the Greater Shillong Scheme, the sources said that the people might have to wait for at least three years depending upon the financial condition of the Shillong Municipality. It will be the responsibility of the Municipality to lay the water pipe network from the 15 major reservoirs to 1297 sub-reservoirs in different parts of the capital town.

Factors binding a human community

By Fabian Lyngdoh

'Community' is a group of people, hence it is primarily an anthropological concept. 'Society' is a web of social relationships, hence, it is primarily a sociological concept. The basic objective of anthropology is to study the various social groupings and their cultural expressions and genetic and historical groupings; while the basic objective of sociology is to study the various social groupings and their cultural expressions in terms of the fundamental and universal principles of human collective living. A combination of both disciplines would provide better light in understanding human beings' collective life. Let us see what are the factors binding society in general and what are binding communities in particular.

I would like to offer a basic definition of human society as, 'a naturally evolved system of balance between individual freedom and collective order'. Culture is a complex network of only those evolved values, norms and practices which have attained the function of reconciliation between individual freedom and collective order within a set of circumstances. The difference of cultures among human communities is due to the difference in the given sets of circumstances. Norms and ways of behaviour imposed on members of a society by external authority without passing through the test of balancing individual freedom and collective order are not elements of culture as there would be no spontaneity or general pleasure in their observance. Culture cannot be transmitted under coercion but only through the process of internalization; and internalization of culture is possible because it is accompanied by pleasure, as culture contains elements of collective order as well as elements of individual freedom.

The most important mutual adjustment that human beings ever made is the conscientious adjustment of the unlimited urge for freedom, for the sake of an ordered collective living. Unrestrained individual freedom is aggressive and harmful as well as repulsive and suicidal. As unrestrained freedom is aggressive and harmful, the collective feels the need to regulate the individual's behaviour. And, as it is also repulsive and suicidal, the individual is compelled

by sociological forces to submit to collective restraint for mutual benefit and security. All other principles of human society and their cultural expressions revolve around this basic principle. That is why all the laws in the world concern more with the regulation of human behaviour against possible aggressions, transgressions and trespasses than with possible cooperation. Cooperation for common benefit is already contained in the instincts; and instinctive regulatory system is sufficient to keep human groupings together as a community of beasts for mere propagation of the species by the alpha male alone. But to constitute a society of human beings, normative regulatory system is required; and for human beings, the 'don'ts' of the normative system are more important than the 'do's' of the instincts.

Among the Khasis, pre-conditioning of individuals' instincts and aspirations, and regulation of individual freedom is exercised by the 'Kur' (clan). Individuals have no independent social identity, because their identities and social interactions are subsumed into that of the 'Kur', which in turn stands as an individual in the web of social relationships. Traditionally, the basic functional society among the Khasis was the 'Raid' (traditional village) which was established by the association of a number of clans. In this traditional collective, there is a system of balance between individual freedom of the clans, and the collective order of the 'Raid'.

There are also factors which bind human beings to particular groups or ethnic communities. The primary factor is the sense of uniqueness and dignity of the human individual. The division of human population into tribes, clans and families, guarantees the identification of every human individual. The closest group that a person identifies with his/her individuality comprises his/her parents, brothers and sisters. Second, a person identifies with the closest uncles, aunts and cousins; third, with the clan, fourth with the tribe, fifth with the nation, and last, with the rest of human beings. Individual's circle of identification grows larger and larger according to the situation in which the individual is placed. So, a Khasi would consider an African as his tribesman in the community of the apes.

The birth, life and death of a single individual among billions of human beings can only be identified,

recognized and respected by the society, as he/she is a member of a certain family, of certain clan, and of certain tribe. Without these divisions, the lives of human individuals are insignificant events, and the social value of individual would be non-existent. The birth of a calf or the death of a cow among hundreds of cows is not felt by the herd; but it is not so among human beings. So, as long as the consciousness of the dignity of the human individual exists, the ideas of race, tribe, clans and families would continue to exist. Even if traditional structure of human societies on the basis of tribes and clans may disappear, other forms of social groupings guaranteeing recognition and respect to human individuality would evolve to maintain the balance.

Another subsidiary factor which binds people into particular groupings is the consciousness of possible external threat to the established order by the invasion of some savage or barbarian communities. This factor sometimes plays a negative role in today's modern world when there are no more barbarians around. When there is a perception of external threat, internal strife becomes insignificant and reserved in the cupboards. The society encloses itself in the shell to evade external danger and the cultural development of any society tends to remain static. But when there is no perception of external threat, it is internal strife that keeps any culture dynamic in a flux of change and ever enriching process, and influences renewal and development of culture from generation to generation.

The factor of external threat is now replaced by constitutional protection such as the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. It is being perceived that special protection and benefits would be provided to people of a schedule tribe on condition that they maintain their age-old customs and traditional identity in the political museum. It is assumed that if some sections of a schedule tribe deviate from traditions and customs and recreate some improved ways of life according to prevalent circumstances, then they violate tradition as well as the constitutional provisions, and therefore, lose the benefits of scheduled tribe status. Internal strife necessary for cultural development is again confined into the cupboards even when there are no barbarians around. Society is a web of social relationships of the present, not of the past. Social

relationships of the past took the form of traditions as guidelines for the present, but not as immutable laws. It is not for the needs of the dead, but for the needs of the living that human society continues to exist. Is the constitutional protection meant for the welfare of the people living in the present, or relevant only for maintaining the customs of the past?

The Khasi tradition was never rigid; it was dynamic and ever improving itself with time. It is the present perception that makes it rigid. The District Council should be made an agency for a healthy social change, and it should have the power to legislate for reformations of customs, and not merely to codify them as they are rigidly perceived. Special protection should not hinder the reformations of customs required for readjustment to the balance between individual freedom and the collective order at the point of justice according to present circumstances, and not according to the past. Customs which have become rigid and dysfunctional are not conducive for maintaining an equitable social order, or for strengthening the present identity of the tribe. Hence, perception of external threat to a particular community could be a reality in spite of constitutional protection, if it fails to evolve with time and recreate its identity on the bases of numerical strength, social, political, economical and intellectual competence in a wider inter-cultural circle.

When traditions and customs become dysfunctional, a mirage of disorder is created in the society; this mirage of disorder is sometimes seen as a deviance from 'ka hok' (truth). No amount of moral preaching can rectify a perceived deviance that is almost universal without introducing necessary changes in the cultural elements of the social system itself. To say that the morality of the Khasi society has gone down is a crude statement. If the society's morality is perceived as disintegrating, then either the social system is in the process of change in line with prevalent circumstances, or that the standard of morality taken as a frame of reference to pass judgement on people's behaviour is itself redundant. Individuals may stray, but the society as a whole can never go wrong.

Will technology take away our jobs?

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

The advent of the 21st century has shifted the focus from the manufacturing industry to the tertiary sector. The first industrial revolution in the eighteenth century started with the advent of steam power. It pulled away people from agriculture to factory floors. The second used electrical power for mass production. The third utilised electronics and information technology to automate the production process. And now the world is on the brink of the fourth industrial revolution - the digital revolution. This new revolution is taking away people from factory floors and putting them in cubicles. The fourth industrial revolution, in its scope and impact, is unlike anything that mankind has ever seen. A unique feature however accompanies this industrial revolution. While the first industrial revolution created jobs, the fourth industrial revolution seems to be taking jobs away. Machines are replacing men.

Since times immemorial, people have commented on how technological advancements deprive people of their livelihoods. These arguments have always found takers not only among Cassandra prophets but also among Luddites and left wingers. Even economists like Keynes propounded theories of "technological unemployment" which centred on the concept of how technology is a harbinger of unemployment. In 2011 Andrew McAfee and Erik Brynjolfsson published their book "Race against Time". In it the authors discuss the great decoupling concept. The authors concluded that, historically, technological employment driven productivity and employment have tended to behave in a similar manner. However, since the 2000s, there has been a perceptible gap in these two curves, and over the past two decades it has risen considerably. Thus crucial evidence seems to point to the fact that finally the gap between technology and employment generation has become unassailable.

Yet history has never been on the side of the doomsayers. The gap we are witnessing today is perhaps the starting phase of a new era of global economy. The fourth industrial revolution has opened up a new era of possibilities. Cloud computing, big data have emerged as new domains where economic and employment opportunities seem endless. Idea and Data seem to be twin edifices on which the fourth industrial revolution and the economic order are parked. An idea is worth brilliant dollars today. Who would have thought that an Instagram star would take up professional modelling because she is popular and companies would cajole the star to display products; or the Internet would create singing sensations. Organisations like Khan Academy globally and UnAcademy in India explore options in education through information technology. Today newspapers and TV media earn a significant amount of revenue from online operations and advertisements. Technology has given rise to gig economy, a setting in which temporary positions are common. One needs look no further than the taxi hailing App Uber when one tries to quantify the success of the gig economy and the use of automation in its interface.

A study of census results in England and Wales since 1871 throws up interesting results. The study carried out by Deloitte plots historical labour numbers. While dangerous, dull and hard jobs have declined, jobs in new sectors like caring have increased. In 1871, 6.6% of the workforce of England and Wales were classified as agricultural labourers. Today that has fallen to 0.2%, a 95% decline in numbers. Between 1992 and 2014, there was a 909% rise in number of jobs for nursing and auxiliary care assistants. There was 580% increase in teaching and education support assistants, 183% increase in housing and other welfare assistants. On the other hand, the two decades witnessed a 79 % drop in

weavers and knitters, 57% drop in typists and 50% drop in company secretaries. In the end, the study concluded that the advent of technology has not affected the number of jobs. It has only shifted employment opportunities and in some places actually created more jobs.

Economists Ian Hathaway and Enrico Moretti have found that every high end professional indirectly creates 4-5 ancillary jobs. While the establishment of internet kiosks in villages would render the postman useless, it would create jobs of fibre maintenance guys, internet operators among others. As the Wales and England data would prove, the numbers are a far cry from the situation the Luddites had imagined when they were on a machine breaking mission at the onset of the Industrial Revolution.

Employment would eventually catch up with technological advances, however, the fourth industrial revolution does bring in some challenges. Perhaps it is not so much in quantifiable numbers as much as in terms of what the nature of that employment would actually be. Gig economy for instance is a short term contract and is only slated to grow over time. But what protection will these workers have when they stick to a particular trade for long? Will they be adequately compensated if they are terminated?

The biggest question would, however be the issue of digital inequality and polarisation. The rise of the fourth industrial revolution has created a powerful digital asymmetry. The power of data and information lies in the hands of the few. Those who are at the top of the hierarchy would decide how the data would flow and how the economy would operate. An interesting example today would be (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) ICANN. Very few have an idea of how it operates although most people are clear on the structural formation of ICANN. What is interesting is that very few realise that the group ICANN essentially controls the internet. In a global order of emerging new economics, such asymmetrical polarisations would create inequality and hamper the growth of economies. Those at the top of the digital order can also effectively use this platform to launder money, shift profit and evade taxes.

It is in these areas that governments have to work towards restoring balance and ensuring parity in the global order. Digital inequality can be bridged through investments in digital architecture as well as skill development and skill training. The skill development programs need to be embedded with information technology at some point. The target should not be limited to creating skilled workers alone. Rather the target should be towards creating digitally enabled skilled workers. The larger challenge however lies in preventing those at the top of the digital order from manipulating the system. Economists Larry Summers has advocated a number of measures to combat this polarisation. These steps include vigorous enforcement of anti monopoly laws, reduction in aggressive protection of "intellectual property rights", improvements in corporate governance among others.

Ultimately while a gap exists, the question is not of automation itself or of machines replacing humans. Instead it is the opening up of new possibilities in forms of new areas like big data, cloud computing and new challenges. The gap that is being witnessed between productivity and employment is rather the result of our inability to respond to these challenges. Once we start closing in these challenges, the gap between automation and jobs would automatically disappear. As Andrew McAfee and Erik Brynjolfsson themselves say, "the key to winning the race is not to compete against machines but to compete with machines."

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

TO THE EDITOR

NH7 Culture!

Editor, The article by Patricia Mukhim, "NH7 Weekender...some gratuitous comments" (ST October 28, 2016), was commendable to say the least. More importantly so, when she pointed out about the "uncultured" free flow of alcohol at the venue. It concerns us as parents to see our fellows embracing something which goes against the ethics of our society. The fact that there is presence of bars inside the venue shows that the event couldn't have sold solely on music alone. As for Farhanji who wants to bash up our guys "who misbehaved in the front row," well most of them were under the influence of alcohol (a situation of your making). From a business perspective, the promoters of the event hardly care about our economy as long as they enjoy an overall positive balance in their balance sheet. If someone has to prove their

point about the positive impact such event has on our economy it would be more viable to talk in terms of numbers and percentages. I am sure it is very minuscule. There are many other "good" ways to sell the tourism of our State that if only our Government is more innovative. Overall, I would also say it was a very "constructive" article rather than a "negative harp" as someone else pointed out. We need to become more intolerant towards "wrong influences" than towards someone who offers a good vibe. There are still a majority of people who share your views Patricia Mukhim but they just, are silent. Keep writing!!! Yours etc., Lawrence Pherliam Sumer, Viamail

Triple Talaq

Editor, Further to my letter, "Polygamy in Islam Religion (ST Oct 20, 2016), I now wish to highlight

about Divorce (Talaq) in Islam based on the Holy Quran. Though marriage according to Islam is only a civil contract, yet the rights and responsibilities consequent upon it are of such importance to the welfare of humanity, that a high degree of sanctity is accorded to it. But in spite of the sacredness of marriage ties, Islam recognises the necessity in exceptional circumstances of keeping a way open for dissolution of marriage.

It is clear from various chapter and verses of Quran. (eg. chapter 2 verses 228, 229, 231, 232 & chapter 65 verses 1 to 5), where rules and procedures on Divorce are explained. However, more emphasis is given for reconciliation between husband and wife. I will quote the following chapter and verse of the Holy Quran to justify the matter. Chapter 4 Verse 35: "And if you fear a breach between the two (i.e.

husband and wife) then appoint a judge from his people and a judge from her people, if both desire agreement, Allah will effect harmony between them" It is clear that judges from both parties are appointed not to facilitate the separation rather they are appointed for reconciliation between husband and wife and to avoid a divorce. Chapter 65 Verse 1: " O Prophet when you divorce women, divorce them for a prescribed time, and calculate the number of days prescribed, and be careful of your duty to Allah, your lord. Do not divorce them out of your house, nor should they themselves go forth, unless they commit an open indecency and these are the limits of Allah, and whoever goes beyond the limits of Allah, he indeed does injustice to his soul. You may not know that Allah may, after that, bring about reunion" The prescribed time mentioned above is 3 months. So when a man

pronounces divorce twice, then a waiting period of 3 months (Idda) has to be completed. The waiting period among other things serves the purpose of allowing the parties the chance to reconcile. The injunction clearly aims at restoring amicable relations between parties and minimising chances of accentuation of differences. Chapter 2 Verse 232: "And when you have divorced women and they have ended their term of waiting, do not prevent them from marrying their husband, when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner, with this is admonished whosoever among you believes in Allah and the last day, this is more profitable and purer for you, and Allah knows while you do not know. Even after the period of waiting has passed away, the two parties are allowed, even encouraged, to remarry.

Now let us come to the rule of Talaq (Divorce).

Chapter 2 Verses 229 & 230 states thus, " After the first divorce, the parties have the right to reassert their conjugal relations within the period of waiting (3 months) and to remarry after the waiting period is over. A similar right is given to them after a second divorce, but not after a third divorce. If a man pronounces divorce thrice on one and the same occasion and thinks that the process of Talaq is completed, then he acts against the Holy Quran. Whether he pronounce divorce once, thrice or ten times, it will be counted as first divorce and has to follow the waiting period.

Finally, its wrong to assume that only men have the right to divorce. Women also have equal right to ask for divorce. This right is explained in Chapter 2 Verses 228 & 229 of the Holy Quran.

Yours etc., Kamal Khongrymai Shillong-6

“ *To any entrepreneur: if you want to do it, do it now. If you don’t, you’re going to regret it.* ”

---- Catherine Cook

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 82SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2016

The NEC-DoNER imbroglio

Reports that over Rs 15,000 crore is lying unutilized in the corpus of the Union Finance Ministry, reveals the dichotomy in the system. The reason for creating the Ministry for the Development of the North Eastern Region (MDoNER) was to speed up development in critical areas such as inter-state roads, bridges, airports and other communications networks apart from other infrastructural development in the North Eastern Region. The SP Shukla Committee report proposed a ten percent cut from all ministries for the express purpose of creating a corpus fund to service the specific needs of the North Eastern states called the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR). Since the region suffers long periods of monsoon, the time available for road and other construction works is drastically reduced. This means that funds cannot be utilised within a particular financial year. Such funds are retained in the NLCPR as a special case. But the funds have now accumulated even while the North Eastern Council (NEC) which is the implementing agency for many of the projects has been cut to size with reduced funds allocation.

The proposal for creating a new institution because an existing one has failed to deliver is not based on pragmatism. Those who proposed the creation of DoNER should also have envisaged a new, viable and more robust role for the NEC. In fact, the two institutions seem to have overlapping roles. The NEC has now new become subservient to DoNER. Ministers holding the portfolio of DoNER have not done justice to their roles. They hardly sit at the NEC office in Shillong to monitor the implementation of schemes from close quarters. What is created is in fact another centralized institution based in the national capital which defeats the very purpose of DoNER. Arguments that the DoNER ministry would act as the liaison with different central ministries to facilitate funds procurement from the respective ministries also seems to have been lost sight of. DoNER certainly lacks vision and teeth if it is unable to create project proposals where the NLCPR funds can be utilised. It's time to review the DoNER-NEC tangle and untie the knot that holds back development in the region. NEC which is more familiar with the problems of the North Eastern State must be empowered through vigorous funds flow, subject to strict monitoring and evaluation and public accountability.

LOOKING BACK

March 9, 1989

Police raid Video parlour in Laban

The police raided a video parlour in Laban on Saturday evening while the screening of a pornographic film was going on and seized the TV VCR and the cassette. The owner of the parlour has been arrested. Informed sources said that screening of pornographic films in the parlour has been going on openly for quite some time even though a similar raid had been conducted by the Police on the same parlour two years ago. Police are also investigating the possibility of video parlours operating in other parts of Shillong screening "blue" films and are determined to take stern action against them.

Earlier, the Police arrested yet another copper wire thief and recovered about ten kg of copper wire while on Friday, the Police intercepted a vehicle and seized 31 jerry cans of illicit country liquor.

Assam Garos endorse Bodo demands

The All Assam Garo Students' Union (AAGSU) has announced its "moral support" the All Bodo Students' Union movement for creation of Autonomous district Councils for tribals on the South Bank of the

Brahmaputra comprising the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara, as well as regional councils for non-Karbis in the Karbi Anglong District.

In a statement, the President of the AAGSU, Mr Albert A. Sangma held the Assam Govt. responsible for the recent violence in the ABSU movement which was initially a peaceful democratic movement. Not only the Bodos, but also other tribals like the Garos, Karbis, Rajbangshish, Koches etc have always been "neglected" and the Assam Govt. have always been "indifferent" to the problems of the tribals, the statement said.

It was because of this attitude that the tribal people of undivided Assam agitated and the State was divided into seven pieces. The Bodos of Assam have simply a cue from the past, the statement further said.

The AAGSU President called upon the Assam Chief Minister to treat the matter seriously and find out a solution through negotiation with the AABSU leaders, instead of merely criticizing the Central leaders.

Why the lack of entrepreneurs in Meghalaya?

By Sairabell Kurbah

Paradoxically, Meghalaya, meaning 'the abode of the clouds', is nowhere near the clouds but is in fact ranked almost the lowest in terms of economic and social development (Government of India surveys). This is strange given the vast natural and mineral resources in the state. The state also has 74.4% literacy rate (GOI Census 2011) and the profiles of the people from tribal background display their rich heritages and genetic endowment. So, what is the problem and can we transform the dismal picture?

The word "entrepreneur" is derived from 17th century French 'entreprendre', and refers to individuals who undertake the risk of new enterprise and act as the "change agents" of progressive economies. The term entrepreneur may be properly applied to those who incubate new ideas, start enterprises based on those ideas, and provide added value to society based on their independent initiative. Entrepreneurs generally have vision for growth, commitment to constructive change, persistence to gather necessary resources, and energy to achieve unusual results. In practice entrepreneurship has historically altered the direction of national economies, industries, or markets.

A recent doctoral research done in East Khasi Hills district by the author, using a variety of individual in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and case reports, makes critical observations on the making of a successful entrepreneur, and concludes that it is not nature but lack of nurturing the mindset, the root cause of the problem. Two outstanding qualities of the mindset which distinguishes the successful entrepreneur were hard work and positive commitment. Even 70% of the successful entrepreneurs said that failure is the result of lack of adequate effort and interest. How do we nurture commitment? 60% of the successful entrepreneurs said that interests and enthusiasm

bureaucratic obstacles and delays, more than 50% of the successful entrepreneurs took advantages of these offers.

Innovation is the key to successful entrepreneurship. In this competitive world, it is only "innovations" that will spell success, and should therefore be nurtured in the minds of the entrepreneurs. They must try and do things newly and differently, different from what others or their competitors are doing in terms of producing or marketing a product or a service and also in terms of managing their internal and external factors. According to international experts, although higher education may not contribute much to the success of entrepreneurship, but many successful entrepreneurs feel that higher education does play a very vital role in making one a successful entrepreneur. In terms of experiences, most of the successful entrepreneurs do have many years of experiences. 60% of the successful entrepreneurs believe that perseverance is the way to success in their business venture. These

one's instincts is another great advantage. A survey by the Kauffman Foundation, Kansas found 98% of the company founders said the willingness to take risks is the usual stepping stone to entrepreneurial success. Business etiquettes like, manners, politeness, spirit to serve, humility and understanding people are the other factors that can increase the chances of being successful entrepreneurs.

Finally, as part of nurturing the mindset of an entrepreneur, it must be emphasized that developing communication skills is extremely important and helps in obtaining cooperation as well as active involvement of stakeholders. Communication skills help the entrepreneur to get resources, develop innovation and support, business improvements, and increases customers. This brief article has listed about 10 traits that need nurturing as they may not come naturally.

70% of the successful entrepreneurs set up their businesses without the support of any of the family members or friends. The support, if there is any, is very minimal. The Khasi people by nature are known to be very brave and independent. And in one of the case studies, a Khasi woman went from villages to villages to do businesses. She has 11 children and is still in good health at the present age of 87 years. As per the study, 70% of the successful entrepreneurs come from the business family back ground and only 40% of the unsuccessful ones are from the business family back ground. Hence, those offspring having their parent (s) from business background should take the advantage of it, because they get many ideas and suggestions from home and even the entrepreneurial spirit is imbibed in them genetically. 70% of the successful entrepreneurs said that astute observations and learnings rapidly increase the chances of being successful. The willingness to learn more always enables a person to handle difficult circumstances. Studies of Stanford alumni (USA) have shown that people with a greater variety of roles in their previous jobs are more likely to become entrepreneurs. According to international professionals, not all entrepreneurs are experts, but successful entrepreneurs always have a broad skill set. Following

Elections to any important office in the world is not of much interest to most people, except the American Presidential election which is a contest for the most powerful post in the world, the reverberations of which will be heard for a long time well beyond American shores. As of today, nine days before the poll Clinton leads Trump, but a warning from Trump who repeatedly says he will not accept the results unless he himself is the winner. Now let's turn to another aspect which might appear far-fetched, dramatic and an unreality about the world's only superpower. It is a chance reading of Andrew Sullivan's 'America has never been so ripe for tyranny.' The passage is from Plato's Republic describing democracy as a political system of maximal freedom and equality, where every lifestyle is allowed, and the longer it lasts the more dramatic it would become. Its freedoms would multiply; its equality spread. Deference to any sort of authority would wither; tolerance of any kind of inequality would come under intense threat; and multiculturalism and sexual freedom becomes a happy hunting ground devoid of all restrictions. And when all barriers to equality, formal and informal, have been removed; when everyone is equal; when elites are despised and full license is established to do "whatever one wants", you arrive at what might be called late-stage democracy. And it is when democracy has ripened as fully as this, Plato argues, that a would-be tyrant will also seize his moment. Andrew Sullivan adds that "peak Trump" has arrived, in the wake of the latter's recent primary triumphs against more qualified political peers in the Republican Party, is this not a test of democracy's singular weakness- its susceptibility to the demagogue.

On the other hand, contrary to this somewhat bizarre interpretation American democracy has thrived over two centuries enriched by migrants from every part of the globe. To guard its democracy, huge and hefty barriers have been erected as a bulwark between the popular will and exercise of power. Election of the President and Vice-President strictly speaking is by an electoral college, the Senate structure balances State and Federal interests, the Supreme Court picked by the President and confirmed by the Senate, embodies the separation of powers as the

sturdy fire walls against democratic wild fires. Likewise it may be added about Indian Democracy which is on firm ground, not relying in the main, on the whims and fancies of intemperate voters, keeping out any would be demagogue through the tried and tested electoral system.

It is a contest between two unpopular candidates: one is more unpopular than the other. Hillary Clinton is said to be untrustworthy, bossy and greedy, picking up the riches not to be shared with others and has an inordinate lust for power. She is termed as crooked Hillary viewed against the background of the Wiki Leaks and email scandals. She was criticized for her role as US Secretary of State for not providing adequate security prior to the Benghazi attack causing precious American lives. Her harsh treatment of women involved in her husband's sexual peccadilloes came under the scanner. Trump's popularity began to slide considerably with the release of the video tapes in which he describes women as play things and of vicarious pleasures. As on 23-10-16, eleven women came forward at different times to complain of Trump's sexual misconduct. Trump represents an expression of racism, misogyny, all-round ignorance and immaturity, not thinking deeply on any issue except his own self-interest.

So the election results will not be on the strength of policies and programs of either candidate. Sad to say that neither climate change, nor the economy, nor foreign policy or jobs or gun-violence were ever discussed in a meaningful manner. America's unique system of pre-nationwide voting, about 3 million have already cast their votes. Any talk of a rigged election is nonsense because both parties participate in the voting process at all levels. A Clinton victory seems certain, but one of Trump's hatchet men, Roger Stone, has already threatened to publish the hotel rooms of delegates who refused to vote for Trump. Don't take anything for granted, while recalling the overwhelming prediction that Governor T. E. Dewey of New York would win the American Presidential election in 1948 losing unexpectedly to Harry Truman. The American public have an ominous choice 'who will have access to the nuclear codes?'. Will Donald be Hillary's "trump" card?

TO THE EDITOR

People and First Aid

Editor,

We have all been taught about first aid since our school days, be it in health education or through various programmes in our schools. From making and having a first aid box to dealing with certain emergency situations we have all been given the basic idea of first aid. The question is whether we will be able to execute all what we have learnt, when a real emergency arises. This is a serious question as an emergency might happen at any time especially in our 'Zone V' or the earthquake prone zone. We all have first aid kits ready at home but do we know how to utilize them? Or do we keep them as showpieces? During an emergency, be it in the streets or at home, our first response is to call the emergency service because we hardly know how to attend to such emergencies. We need to learn how to deal with emergency as it can help save precious lives. An

Yours etc.,
Banmankhrav Lyngdoh
Shillong- 5

On Triple Talaq

Editor,

Apropos the letter on "Triple Talaq" (ST Nov 1, 2016) the real temper of the country is that people want this Triple Talaq to end. People do not want any discrimination against women on the basis of any religious faith. Divorce laws in India are such that there are cases of harassment of women by men by not giving divorce, thereby limiting opportunities for remarriage and vice versa. Any rational person would agree that the practice of Triple Talaq needs to be abolished because it results in the abuse of women. Islam allows a wife the right of 'k'ulah' in which a woman can divorce her husband by giving up her rights, that is to claim her 'mehr' which the husband is duty-bound to give his wife, or even by disclaiming the dowry given to the man. India is a patriarchal society and

women have to wait for months and years in courts to solve the problems relating to divorce. Our marriages of whatever religion has always got sanctity and just because of the barbaric rule the relationship cannot be broken. It is high time the Muslim Personal Law recognizes this evil. Muslims in India should encourage their community to follow Indian laws and keep religion out of it, in the same manner that they expect the Hindu religion to remain secular. Does Triple-Talaq offer any mechanism to review the intent to separate as do the courts today? We must put an end to this Stone Age practice of "Triple Talaq", which is used by Muslim men to desert wives. All Muslim women must come out against polygamy and Triple Talaq practiced by Muslim men in the name of Islam. The only civilized way is a uniform civil code to ensure that every man and woman is treated equally, as promised by the Constitution of India.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad -15

Vacancies in Education Dept

Editor,

According to news reports in your paper (ST Oct 27, 2016) inspectors and other officials will be appointed to look after the welfare of schools. It may be mentioned that some Government-run schools do not have full fledged principals and vice-principals who are supposed to administer the schools. Why have these posts been left vacant for so long? This has clearly hampered the performance of these institutions. It is no surprise that private schools far exceed the Government-run schools in academic achievements. It's high time to do away with temporary appointments to tide over problems. Let's hope that the Government is able to fill these vacancies at the earliest.

Yours etc.,
Smt. Omarka Laloo
Mynthong Jowai

Durga Puja celebration in RR Colony

Editor,

With reference to the letter, "Religion a private affair" by NR Pyngrope, I only reiterate what he said, "Give then an inch and they take a mile," which I personally feel is incongruous in the context of his complaint. My suggestion to the State/District Authority is that this particular portion of the road with the RR Colony Hall and Durga Puja Mandap should be included or donated to the Community. The traffic problem and permission issues will then be permanently solved. 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.

“Every philosophy is the philosophy of some stage of life.”
--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 83SHILLONG, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2016

Optimistic Mayawati

The strange happenings in the Samajwadi Party (SP) have emboldened Mayawati, leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) to pitch her hopes high about the coming Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections. She has said that the BSP is now way ahead with the BJP a distant second. The SP is now in shambles with internal squabbles. She rubbished Akhilesh Yadav’s claim that his party has severed links with criminals and said it has surrounded itself with a new gang. His claims on reforms and development are without substance. He has also proved his party’s links with the minority community are no longer firm. The BSP on the other hand has garnered considerable Muslim support owing to the SP’s instigation. Muslims are determined not to repeat their mistake that they made in the Lok Sabha elections of 2014. Dalits and Muslims account for a third of UP’s electorate. The BSP however does not want an alliance of Dalits and Muslims at the cost of other communities. Her party has adequate representation from all castes and communities.

The BJP is not a viable challenge either. Its overtures to Dalits can have no effect. Rohit Vemula’s suicide and the atrocities on Dalits in Gujarat have counteracted that. The Congress has of course been nowhere in UP for a long time. Mayawati thinks it is pointless on the part of the Congress to parade its candidate for Chief Ministership, Sheila Dikshit as a UP Brahmin. She is actually a Punjabi who married a UP Brahmin. Besides, she blamed migrants from UP for crimes and other problems in Delhi while she was its Chief Minister. Mayawati’s optimism is not to be treated lightly. The SP has very little time to regroup. The BJP may not find it easy to repeat the miracle of Assam. Its RSS links in UP are pretty strong. However, the Dadri outrage cannot be wiped out.

LOOKING BACK

March 14, 1989

Union budget under fire in Lok Sabha

The government was accused by the opposition in the Lok Sabha today of painting a rosy picture of the economy by "brewing up" figures and underplaying its weak spots. Participating in the debate on the general budget for 1989-90, opposition members said the reality was far from what was being made out by the Finance Minister in his

budget speech. The economy they contended, was in a shamble. The ruling party members, on the other hand, dismissed the opposition criticism as being motivated. They complimented the government for proving wrong those, who had predicted that it would be a populist budget meant as it was for the election year.

TO THE EDITOR

MPSC rejoinder

Editor,
This letter is a response to the letter to the editor captioned “Wanted Transparency in MPSC!” (ST Sep 22, 2016) from S. M. Sangma, J. Lyngdoh & B. Lyngkhloi etc., and another letter captioned, “MPSC Delays in Holding Exams and Publication of Results” (ST Oct 22, 2016) from persons whose names were withheld on request. In connection with the first letter the MPSC had recommended 5 (five) persons to the post of Assistant Research Officer (ARO) under Finance (Economic Affairs) Department vide **Notification No. MPSC/Ex-C/28/2014-2015/3 dated 14th December, 2015**. But on receipt of communication from the Finance Department vide **Letter No. FE.188/2015/125 dated June 9, 2016** informing the MPSC that Ms Banylla Lyngkhloi (who surprisingly was also the signatory to the letter captioned, “Wanted Transparency in MPSC!” dated 22nd September, 2016) had communicated to the Secretary to the Govt. of Meghalaya, Finance (Economic Affairs) Department that she will not be able to join as Assistant Research Officer in Finance (Economic Affairs) Department. This letter

signed by Ms Banylla Lyngkhloi is available on record. It is also informed that on receipt of the communication and request by the Finance (Economic Affairs) Department the M.P.S.C. recommended the name of the candidate who secured the 6th position in the subsidiary list, namely Mr Lasoki Sumer. On the subject of not making public the names of candidates in the Waiting list / Subsidiary list it may be informed that as per **Office Memorandum No. PER(AR). 62/2011/3 dated 4th January, 2012**, the subsidiary list shall not be published and should remain confidential with the MPSC and the same shall be furnished to the Government when called for and when required. This instruction is based on a Supreme Court ruling after a candidate in the waiting list was killed by opportunist who wanted to take his place in the subsidiary list. With regards to the vicious accusation from unknown persons whose only intention is to drag the name of the MPSC through the mud in the letter captioned, “MPSC Delays Holding of Exams and Publication of Results” the undersigned would like to state that the vicious accusations meted out are baseless and without any proof. If the persons whose

identities have been withheld can prove that the undersigned has in any way withheld the result because of nepotism and corruption then they should expose themselves and print the names of the candidates along with their address and details of the posts that they have applied in the MPSC and prove that they have been recommended by the undersigned through unfair means. If not these persons who have wrongly and viciously accused the undersigned should refrain from spreading such vicious lies just to defame the MPSC and the undersigned and influence fragile public minds. This is also to inform the public that the delays in declaring the results were not caused by MPSC but by firms which generate results out of OMR sheets. It is also unfortunate that these so called nameless persons did not applaud MPSC for generating timely results in 2015. On checking the available records in the MPSC the undersigned suspects that these so called nameless persons of having ulterior motives as there were no complaints during the period between 2013-2014 and earlier years whereby many results were delayed and some even up to 6 (six)

Paris Accord & After

Challenges for Third World

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

developing at a fast rate and in spite of best efforts and adoption of right strategies, emissions are increasing. And this is happening quite naturally as it was in the West when it was on its path to industrialisation. It is accepted that India is the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases globally. Hiding behind the country’s low per capita emission — one-tenth of the US — is no longer a credible position for a global public bad such as greenhouse gases. Though it has promised to reduce emission intensity of GDP i.e. per unit by around 35 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030, the aggregate emission will increase, but at a slower rate. However, efforts are being made and every new investment in the economy, whether in power, buildings or factories is around 25 to 30 per cent energy efficient, thanks to new regulatory norms and to adoption of new technology. Though renewable energy has been given the needed thrust, these projects suffer from risks like inadequate grid connectivity, non-evacuation of their power or dishonouring of power purchase agreements. Obviously these need attention. Meanwhile, in its first Biennial Update Report (BUR), to UNFCCC just after the Paris accord, it highlighted that the country is well on course to fulfil its global commitment by voluntary cutting its carbon emission intensity (emissions per unit of GDP) by about 12 per cent between 2005 and 2010. The report is encouraging as it shows the country is in line to reach its 20-25 per cent reduction target by 2020 and subsequently to 33-35 per cent by 2030. According to the country’s BUR, the country had emitted 2136.84 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent greenhouse gases in 2010. About 12 per cent of the emissions were, however, offset by carbon sink action of forests and croplands and India is ranked 120 in terms of per capita emissions. India has promised to create an additional carbon

sink — system capable of absorbing carbon dioxide (CO2) from the atmosphere — of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2-equivalent through forest and tree cover by 2030. Just over 24 per cent of geographical area is currently under forest and tree cover, and the stated objective is to take it to 33 per cent. However, it would be difficult to rapidly achieve this especially because more forest areas will be cut for developmental or industrial requirements. Besides, with close to half of India’s forests of very low quality, transforming them would lead to an increase in carbon sink. In last Parliament session, the government got the landmark CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority) Bill passed to make up for every piece of forest destroyed. Thousands of crores of rupees are available for afforestation drives through CAMPA, or Green India Mission. In spite of the overwhelming response in ratifying the agreement, recent reports suggest that global temperature would rise by two degrees Celsius as early as 2050 above the norm. In a report ‘The Truth About Climate Change’, environmentalists noted the planet is now “heating up much faster”. Already the level of warming reached one degree Celsius after a 0.15 degree Celsius rise in just three years. The report warned that 1.5 degree Celsius had “almost certainly already been missed” and, even if the pledges to cut emissions are fulfilled, the average temperature is set to reach that level in early 2030 and then 2 degrees Celsius by 2050. The warming was expected due to the increase of greenhouse gases that have and are being emitted due to the slow response of the ocean and atmosphere. Drastic changes have been suggested to the production and use of energy with a switch to electric cars among steps that need to be taken at the

earliest. Meanwhile, another assessment report of the WHO found that climate change is likely to kill 2.5 lakh more people each year by 2030 and most of these diseases would be caused from malaria, diarrhoeal diseases, extreme heat stress and malnutrition. India is having a high burden of these diseases. An earlier study by University of Oxford and published in the international journal, Lancet, projected 130,000 deaths in India from climate change in 2050. The heaviest burden is expected to fall on children, women, elderly and poor, further widening health inequalities between and within populations. In South Asia, environment versus development concerns are a matter of debate and the balance has to be maintained. On the one hand, pollution levels need to be brought down through strict monitoring and enforcement of regulatory norms and, on the other, proper technology along with efficiency and higher capacity utilisation has to be ensured. The help of the developed nations both in transferring technology and financial assistance is vital to achieve the objective of checking global warming. But certain initiatives like that of India in making use of solar photovoltaic panels and, to a lesser extent, large wind mills to fight against climate change are welcome. The country plans to install 100 GW of electricity generation capacity through solar energy by 2022, of which 40 GW would be through individual rooftop systems and setting up 60 GW of wind energy. Number of villages are already powered solely through solar or wind energy and such decentralised production and consumption of electricity, is likely to become more prevalent to eventually take electricity to 200 million people still in the dark. —INFA

authorities take measures to ensure that provisions for emergency exits are made in different educational institutions and offices in the city. One can observe that schools in particular are cramped with as many as 150 students in a room. How will these children escape if an earthquake strikes during school hours? This should raise the concern of all, especially that of the parents. It is commendable that the Government is encouraging mock drills relating to earthquake situations but one can say that it would perhaps be better if schools and offices individually undertake the exercise more often. In fact, the same can be made mandatory for all institutions, even hospitals! People are by and large anticipating a powerful earthquake. We might never be able to predict the time but we can indeed take preventive measures to avoid loss of life otherwise, in the end, who will take the blame? Yours etc., PK Dwivedi Shillong – 1

Mebaaihun Blah Shillong – 6

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More questions than answers

By Ananya S Guha

Twenty five schools have been razed to the ground in Kashmir. Day after day schools are being burnt, desecrating ruthlessly the sacrosanct concept of education. The child’s rights are ruthlessly exterminated and we are bystanders. These should be mourning days for the nation, when the very symbols of learning are being assailed, as if to say that no one can be educated. Education means learning, helps make choices between right and wrong, gather wisdom, and free thinking. Perhaps the arbitrators, don’t want all these. Such actions militate against any religious conviction. So who are these people, who consider themselves inviolate, and who are tacitly supported by many? Who are these people out to tarnish the very innocence of children, and emasculate them from the right to education? Who are these people who take the law into their grimy hands, and assail venomously temples of learning? This is perhaps one of the worst catastrophes taking place in

Administrators, Academics, Parents of the children affected, Teachers in these schools- yes of course. And, if they are maintaining a stupid and stoic silence they will continue to suffer. Yes the perpetrators are making a mistake. The mistake is, that they have taken their own people for granted. They maybe chortling with delight now, but they have overlooked the peripheries of time and History. One day history will point out this grotesque aberration, and show accusing fingers at the destroyers of wisdom and knowledge, the iniquitous killers of innocence. Attacking education is like attacking a child. Have we not learnt from the history of Yousufzail Malala? Did she not stand for the rights of unfettered education, unalloyed by diktats, religious or otherwise? So such zealots are making grave mistakes. They are digging their own unholy graves. Time will bounce back upon them, in the form of intellectuals, common people or

The debates in air conditioned television rooms will continue, full of noise, signifying nothing. Intellectuals in guarded and not so guarded language will debate viciously on whether one political group is wrong, or the other. Journalist will trace history of events, professors will quote tomes, but where will the children go, even at a point in time when we have formulated a new policy on education? And even if they do go back to school, how will they behave, how will they respond to their friends and their situation? Can all the BEd and MED syllabuses have answers to such thoughtless questions? In many ways these debates in posh rooms hold the void of times.

the country in recent times. When we talk about education for all, access, equity and education for the girl child, the poorest of the poor, people have turned the tables on education, targeting it as an enemy of truth. What more untruth could there be than this? What more anachronism, could there be in our technology besotted world, where education is favored to education, talking say of e-learning and smart classrooms. This is nothing short of a state of emergency. The violence in Kashmir has reached its nadir of atavism. One could debate on the killings, but one cannot on this systemic, cold blooded attack on schools. What are the reasons, one may ask, why schools are reduced to pulp? The answer is difficult, if not complex but such people want to in breed more terrorism, so that children with nothing to do are brainwashed and led into a captive dullness, compelled to resort to dangerous and criminal activities. Are these people, call them terrorists or whatever, not making a mistake? Before I answer this seemingly innocuous question, let me state that violence in the country is such a crass habit, that people tend to take it for granted. Why are people not thundering? Why Schools? And who should answer this question? whatever, and ask the most volatile explanations from them. The government in power in Kashmir is silent witness, befuddled to say the least. But there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than those that are dreamed of in your philosophy (a la, the great Shakespeare).

Where have ALL the educators, writers, intellectuals, poets and artists gone, when on the one hand some of them think that Bob Dylan’s Nobel Award was ill gotten, what do they have to say about children being thiefed of their inalienable right- read RTE.(Right To Education).

The debates in air conditioned television rooms will continue, full of noise, signifying nothing. Intellectuals in guarded and not so guarded language will debate viciously on whether one political group is wrong, or the other. Journalist will trace history of events, professors will quote tomes, but where will the children go, even at a point in time when we have formulated a new policy on education? And even if they do go back to school, how will they behave, how will they respond to their friends and their situation? Can all the BEd and MED syllabuses have answers to such thoughtless questions? In many ways these debates in posh rooms hold the void of times.

“Touch the earth, speak of love, walk on common ground”
--- Steven Van Zandt

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 84 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2016

The Hot Line

THE Line of Control (LoC) an international border (IB) continues to be hot with Pakistani forces increasing firing and shelling. There was heavy shelling in areas of J&K. Eight civilians were killed and 25 injured. Indian forces had to retaliate. The BSF is reported to have wiped out 14 Pakistani Rangers posts along with IB. There is continuing tension since the Uri attack followed by Indian surgical strikes. It would be in the interest of both countries to bring about cessation of attack and counter attack but how. Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is facing flak from his opposition. The Pakistani Supreme Court has ordered an enquiry into the Panama Papers which allegedly tarnish Nawaz Sharif and his family. That has temporarily halted Imran Khan's threatened offensive against Islamabad. He alleges that Sharif's state-sponsored terrorism is a diversion from the canker of corruption in the Prime Minister's government.

Meanwhile, antagonism between Islamabad and Rawalpindi has intensified with the Pakistani army shielding the ISI's connivance with terror groups. Sharif has dismissed his information minister. But all this does not seem to have been conducive to India's interest. The pivotal figure is General Raheel Sharif who is pronouncedly anti-India owing to personal pique. He is due for retirement but has asked for extension presumably to keep the army gunning for India. As a rule, turmoil inside Pakistan can be expected to take its gun-sights away from the LoC but the internal problems of Pakistan on this occasion would likely have an opposite effect. India has to keep sleepless vigil over the LoC to push back terrorist strikes. The role of the IS can aggravate the crisis and so can the outcome of the US Presidential election. A military coup destablisising Pakistan's democracy such as it is will be counter productive for India.

LOOKING BACK
March 14, 1989

NEHU teachers to cease work from today

NEHU Teachers Association (NEHUTA) has decided to begin an indefinite cease work from Tuesday demanding removal of the Acting VC Prof R R Mehrotra from office. This decision was taken by the NEHUTA general body on Monday evening after a NEHUTA delegation held an hour long discussion with Mr J D Gupta, Joint Secretary to the Union

Ministry of Human Resources Development who is currently in Shillong on a fact finding mission about the deadlock created in the wake of appointment of the former Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Mehrotra as the Acting VC. The delegation of teachers presented Mr Gupta with a copy of a memorandum urging the immediate appointment of a regular VC.

TO THE EDITOR

Rejoinder
against NEHU
EC

Editor,
A S Mawphlang's letter NEHU violates UGC Regulations (ST Oct 28, 2016) has either ulterior motive to mislead the public to defend the wrongs committed by the former Vice Chancellor Prof. AN Rai or is motivated by jealousy of the teachers who got their legitimate dues from the rectification made by the Executive Council under the chairmanship of the present Vice Chancellor Prof. S K. Srivastava. The write-up is highly questionable on the following reasons:
1. There was no interview for CAS promotion for the teachers in 2012 as mentioned.
2. So far the Executive Council of NEHU under the present VC has only corrected the irregularities and illegalities of the conduct of interviews in violation of the propriety and the procedure of the Selection Committee in 2013 for fixing the due date of promotion of teachers which is within the jurisdiction of the Screening Committee pertaining to the cases of UGC Regulations 2000 and not in 2010.
3. UGC Regulations

20(I) (O) quoted by the writer is non-existent.
4. The writer should refrain from misleading the public on the decision of the NEHU EC the only competent authority which has rectified the wrongs and violations of the then Vice Chancellor under NEHU Statute 13(xii).
5. The other point about reference to Visitor is totally perfidious, as this is not a case of disagreement between NEHU Executive Council and the recommendations made by various selection committees. Executive council accepted such recommendations with a rider that selection committees cannot decide on the date of promotion, as it constituted two enquiries on the whole matter and came to the conclusion that the then Chairman Prof. AN Rai overstepped the jurisdiction of the selection committees by arbitrarily changing the date of promotion of the teachers. This has affected the academic ecosystem of NEHU and created discrimination and deprivation without following due process.
As past President of NEHUTA, we have initiated the process of correction, which is now at its final stage, when such a misleading letter of a misguided writer appears to besmirsch the process of

correction.
Yours etc.,
Professor Xavier P. Mao
Ex-President, NEHUTA
Pathetic behaviour
of CBI staff
Editor,
Through this column I would like to bring to the notice of the concerned authority the plight of customers of Central Bank of India (CBI), Laban Last Stop Branch. Here the counter clerk does not have the etiquette to deal with customers. I happened to visit this branch a couple of times and earlier this week with one of my relatives who is an elderly person only to be at the receiving end of the clerk who seems to be suffering from some attitude problems. His style of work is against the basic tenets on which this profession runs. He does not care about customers' age and his manners are obnoxious. Updating a passbook, withdrawing and depositing money and other banking transactions depend upon the mood of this uncouth clerk. This clerk urgently needs some propriety training or else common customers like us would prefer to leave this bank. He is unaware perhaps that he is there because of us. Also, the other counter out of the two in this branch always remains closed. One wonders what is it for. The

branch is severely suffering from shortage of staff. It is often seen that only one person is manning the whole branch. Customers coming and going back empty handed for want of service by staff is a sorry sight here. The CBI authorities should take some urgent steps against the clerk and improve the state of affairs of this branch or else the bank will soon shut down!
Yours etc.
A. Lyngdoh
Shillong – 4
Plea for removal
of headmaster
Editor,
Apropos the news item, 'Demand for removal of Headmaster' (ST Nov 3, 2016) it is shocking to learn that a headmaster has not attended school for 20 years but draws his salary regularly. But this is just the tip of the greater mess in the education scenario in Meghalaya. There are several teachers of pre-primary, primary, upper primary and even secondary schools in many parts of Meghalaya, especially in remote areas, who are regularly absent from school duties, some for ten to fifteen days a month, while others do not attend school at all. Some teachers depute substitutes who do not know the basics of

teaching. Others depute proxy teachers by paying them a quarter of their salaries. This has been going on for many years but the headmasters/ head teachers do nothing because they, themselves indulge in the same modus operandi. The Managing Committees also do nothing because they are under the thumb of the head teachers/ headmasters or because the teachers are their relatives or they are scared of the teachers or they are afraid to report to the DI/IS of schools for fear of repercussions etc.
Now the question is what are these engaged in other than teaching. Some of them are busy with their domestic preoccupations or family obligations. Others are busy with village durbar obligations and look after MNREGS schemes, MP, MLA and MDC schemes, Block schemes, Soil and Water Conservation, PHE schemes etc. Some are busy distributing MDC, MLA, MP and other Block schemes. Others are busy with political organisations and still others are busy with contract works or other businesses like coal and limestone export, or, selling (products) policies for Insurance Companies. The situation is pathetic!
Again, the question is how do they dare to violate their service conduct rules with impunity and who is supposed to stop all these

irregularities and illegalities? The reason is because there is no authority to supervise the schools since the Managing Committees, the Sub-Inspectors (SIs), the Deputy Inspectors (DIs) and the Inspectors of Schools (ISs) have allowed this mess to take place. It is clear that no inspection takes place. Otherwise how do these ills keep happening in and why should the salaries of school teachers who remained absent for such a long time be released? Another reason why these things are happening is because the Government from the Minister down to the level of the Commissioner, Secretary and Director have done precious little during the last 44 years to ensure that such things do not happen.
Ms. Deborah Marak, who was recently entrusted with Elementary and Mass Education Department has already found out these irregularities in the functioning of the education system in her short tenure, while visiting schools. She is trying to streamline and correct these irregularities with the co-operation of the officers but she has only one year to set things right before the next general elections scheduled in February- March, 2018. Can she clean up the mess?
Yours etc.,
Philip Marwein,
Shillong-2.

Succession
battle in states
in full swing

By Kalyani Shankar

What is common between the Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal and Tamil Nadu former Deputy Chief Minister M.K. Stalin? They are all waiting to succeed their illustrious parents.
Succession issue has its own problems of adjustment between the older and younger generations. The Congress Party is a classic example of this. While the Congress President Sonia Gandhi has practically handed over the party to her

No one can accuse Mulayam of not taking care of his clan as 20 of them are today M.Ps, MLAs, Zilla Parishad presidents holding powerful positions. He has so far been able to maintain a miraculous balance by deft distribution of government, party and local body posts.
Mulayam has adopted the identity politics as well as the emerging presidential style of image oriented politics. At another level , he is also working on a grand alliance of socialist and secular forces by bringing together parties like

“Rahul is impatient to fill up his inner circle with his own coterie. The party would have tolerated this had he been a vote catcher. The murmurs from the old guards has been growing since the humiliating defeat in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and the subsequent Assembly polls.”

son Rahul Gandhi, the transition is not taking place smoothly. Most senior leaders are upset with the style of functioning of Rahul as they are apprehensive of their future in the party. Rahul is impatient to fill up his inner circle with his own coterie. The party would have tolerated this had he been a vote catcher. The murmurs from the old guards has been growing since the humiliating defeat in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and the subsequent Assembly polls. “Is Ladka nahi kar payaga.(This boy will not be able to deliver)” is the chorus among the senior leaders, most of whom want Sonia Gandhi to continue at least until 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

In the bitter succession war going on in Uttar Pradesh, the seniors like Shivalp Yadav , Amar Singh and others would rather have Mulayam Singh Yadav as Chief Minister than his son. Although Mulayam installed his son as chief minister five years ago, but there is fight for money and power among his own family members. The SP patriarch is caught between his younger brother Shiv Pal and son Akhilesh. Shiv Pal, who lost out to Akhilesh in 2012 is eying the Chief Minister's chair. The present confrontation is a classic case of father-uncle not being on the same page as Akhilesh who is touted as a development oriented chief minister. Many UP watchers predict that Mulayam Singh might ultimately back his son. Mulayam criticised Akhilesh, supported Amar Singh but refused any disciplinary action against Akhilesh Yadav as demanded by Shivalp.

Some say that the family drama was strategised to save Akhilesh from critics who might hold him responsible for the poor governance in the state by giving him a “Bechara” chief minister who is fighting to provide a clean administration. The public is willing to gloss over the governance aspect. Also Mulayam might have a long term plan looking to 2019 Lok Sabha polls and the next Assembly polls as he fears that party might not come back this time. Some say that Mulayam's each decision — from publicly criticising Akhilesh and asking him to 'mend his ways' to sacking him as the state president, has been carefully calibrated. The father and son now have control of the party and government.

Congress, JD(U), JD(S) BJD, RLD, RJD and other likeminded parties.
In distant Tamil Nadu, the DMK , which has been languishing out of power from 2011 , was also facing a succession battle in the party chief M. Karunanidhi's family. He has declared his younger son M.K. Stalin as his political heir last week in a media interview. To pave way, he had already expelled his older son and former Union minister M.K. Alagiri? for anti party activities in 2013 . Stalin had been projected as the knight errant riding on a white horse. The timing of the declaration was significant. While he may not be able to bring new voters, he can retain at least 75 per cent of the core voters. The Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa has been in the hospital for more than two and a half months. The state is ruled by her proxy O. Panneriselvam. The DMK chief is looking for a day when the AIADMK might split. His daughter Kanimozhi, who is presently a Rajya Sabha member and heads the party's women wing, may be reconciled to play a second fiddle to her brother Stalin. Kanimozhi's political ambitions crashed after her alleged involvement in the 2 G spectrum scam and her arrest in 2011.
Like Karunanidhi, his long time friend Prakash Singh Badal too has a good personal image and can carry the party which is why despite his age, he has been projected as the chief ministerial candidate in the ensuing Assembly polls in Punjab. Between Punjab Chief Minister Badal, his son and Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal, his son-in-law Adesh Pratap Singh Kairon, Sukhbir's brother-in-law Bikram Singh Majithia and another relative Janmeja Singh Sekhon, the Badal clan has a good share in power. Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Sukhbir's wife, is the Union minister. Sukhbir is the most powerful leader in the Akali Dal today next to his father.
India is one country where democracy survives with a personality cult and charismatic leaders have their own fiefdoms. The problem for them is that they have to get elected to keep power. They go through the due process of elections and have to be accepted by the masses. This is indeed the beauty of Indian democracy. (IPA Service)

“He felt that his whole life was some kind of dream and he sometimes wondered whose it was and whether they were enjoying it.”
--- Douglas Adams

The Shillong Times

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Brexit Jammed

THE referendum which went in favour of Britain's exit from the European Union (EU) seemed decisive. Negotiations for it were to commence from March 31 next year. But Britain's High Court has now brought government plans for quitting the EU to a halt ruling that the exit cannot take place without parliamentary approval. The government says it will go to the Supreme Court to challenge the ruling. Prime Minister Theresa May's right to trigger Brexit have major constitutional implications which hinge on the balance of power between Parliament and the government. It is argued that leaving the EU will remove rights including free movement within the bloc and that cannot be done without Parliament's approval. High Court judges agreed that the government did not have the power under the Crown's prerogative. The Crown cannot change domestic law and nullify rights under the law unless Parliament gave it the authority to do so. The government however is determined to respect the result of the referendum. Prime Minister May wants to use the royal prerogative, historic powers officially held by the monarch to trigger Article 50. The powers enable decisions to be made without a vote of Parliament.

The judicial verdict may however be set aside by the British Supreme Court which will hear the appeal before the end of the year. The question is whether it will just delay the exit or put obstacles in the way of its implementation. What will happen if the matter is put to the vote in the House? A large number of MPs have reservations about Brexit. Even Prime Minister May was against it before the referendum was taken. Labour Party leader, Jeremy Thorbyn was also against it but the referendum was taken to be final. The current confusion can only rock the British economy and the value of the pound. It is however still considered that the court cannot stop Britain leaving the EU eventually.

LOOKING BACK

March 14, 1989

Mahanta leaves for Delhi

Chief Minister Mr Prafulla Kuamr Mahanta left here today for Delhi to participate in tomorrow's high level meeting convened by the centre to review the implementation of Assam Accord. Mr Mahanta received a message from Union Home Minister Mr Buta Singh requesting him to be present at the meeting. State Home Minister Mr Bhrigu Kumar Phukan, Accord Implementation Minister Mr Zoi Nath Sarma and high officials accompanied the Chief Minister.

The state government had expressed earlier its dissatisfaction at the slow progress in the implementation of the Assam Accord which stipulated among other things setting up of an oil refinery and a central university in the state. Meanwhile, official sources said while in Delhi, Mr Mahanta is also expected to discuss with the Union Home Minister the situation arising out of the All Bodo Students Union (Upendra Faction) movements and the extremists activities in the state.

Government has failed on all fronts

By Eugene D Thomas

gentleman who had a harrowing time on the 1st of this month at the dentist's. Halfway through a complicated tooth extraction, the shutdown began at 8 pm. The patient had to just sit there in the dentist's chair for half an hour because the generator was not working as the diesel was over. The power came back at 8.30 pm only to go off again 5 minutes later. It came back a second time only to go off at 8.50 pm and never came back in the Laitumkhrah and Nongthymmai areas till after 2 hours and 15 minutes. The patient had to return home with the procedure half complete and with part of the tooth still in his jaw! What trauma! But MeECL is not at fault! And worst of all is that for over four months now, in many areas of Tura like the main bazaar, the Nehru park area, and Burny Hill, there is reverse polarity; this means that live current is also passing through the neutral (negative) line, and this is extremely dangerous. Another tragedy is waiting to happen here. Despite repeated complaints made by private electrical technicians and wiremen, there is still no sign of maintenance of the transformers or their replacement - MeECL says it has no money! You apply for an electrical connection for your new home and you are asked to pay for even the poles to be erected in the public road – MeECL has no money! This corporation has time and again been bailed out for its inefficiency by the state government, and this time too, we hear that the state government is planning to financially bail it out! What an ingenious plan indeed - a good route for channelizing clean government funds for future embezzlement!

The conditions of the road in this capital city and elsewhere is pathetic. Any repair that is undertaken does not even last one monsoon season. The repair undertaken on the approach road to NEHU just before last year's Convocation did not even last 6 months. We hang our heads in shame when academicians from across the globe and country come to this institution and pass through this road. What a first impression they must have of the state! Even the roads within a Minister's constituency, like Lummawrie in Shillong, are in an unbelievable pathetic condition. Taking a walk in Shillong is courting disaster. The conditions of the

footpaths are so deplorable that many a times I have stumbled and fallen. They are uneven, stones jut out everywhere, slabs are missing, or water pipes crisscross them! But of course, PWD has no money and there seems to be no more sense of pride and feeling left in our government babus and Ministers.

Water is the other basic need of the people. Here too the PHE has failed, whether in meeting the daily needs or maintaining its quality. There is acute water shortage in many areas in Shillong and most localities in Tura. And with all this scarcity and contamination, nothing is done to improve the situation – the Minister does not accept this fact, pipes continue to leak everywhere (the PHE blames the municipality and vice versa, and no short-run action or long-term planning is done to shift the water pipes that run along and in the roadside drains. A friend who recently visited me from South India was appalled to see the water pipes on the road near my house at Shillong – he asked me whether this is a new technology for footpaths or sieving of garbage?

And the traffic in Shillong is now at breaking point. Even in Tura, traffic jams now occur during school starting and closing times. For decades now we have heard of 'thinking' of flyovers and 'expansion' of roads. These have only remained in the tank of thoughts of the government! Every new Minister makes a big show of inspecting roads for 'expansion.' The traffic cops here are at their wits end. I salute them for being made to work under such physical pressure! And here too, we often hear the complain of 'no money' or 'insufficient personnel.' We the public are not bothered about the Power Department, the PWD, the PHE, the police – we know only one Government – the Government of Meghalaya. Are we to understand that there are several Chief Ministers in this state, each working in isolation? Or is there only one CM who is supposed to coordinate all departments and their requirements through the all-important departments of Planning, Finance and Personnel? Please stop blaming one another as we see through the ruse! Just get down to business and do some actual quality work that is visible to all.

The other day, I happened to see a Facebook post where a respected Editor of

an esteemed English daily newspaper of Shillong had queried whether there was any path-breaking research from NEHU that has positively contributed to the affairs of the North-East. I know of many research results from NEHU that have been sent to, the Meghalaya state government, including the CM's secretariat. But we have not seen the policy prescriptions made in these studies acted upon by the Government. I do not know if these studies are even read, or just filed, or thrown to the dustbin! And of course, expecting even an acknowledgement is asking too much from awfully busy people!

Lastly, I found it most amusing that the present Urban Affairs Minister blamed the then Principal Secretary of the Department for the mess in the SPTS! How far have we sunk in the ethics of administration! In former times, there was no former or present government. A Minister does not blame his predecessor or a former bureaucrat, because the government is the government, past or present! It is like blaming yourself! If mistakes have been committed, then correct them! Period! And discipline among Government employees seem to have declined. Often you read a statement in the newspapers from this officer or the other making a clarification of his actions. These were not heard of in earlier times. In fact, officers refrained from going public as disciplinary action would immediately be taken on them. Nowadays, this is commonly observed and can only be allowed to happen because the political bosses in Government are weak, or incompetent, or both.

This government has forfeited its moral right to rule because there is no longer any service worth its salt that is being provided – its administration is in shambles, there is no discipline, and the only seemingly happy and satisfied lot are the Ministers and some of the bureaucrats. The present government, the worst so far as I remember in five decades, seems bent on the destruction of its people rather than caring for their well-being and happiness!

They say that the people deserve their rulers! I hope this is not the case. And 2018 is coming. Its time for a new government. Here, we people should remember the saying of Edward Murrow – “A nation of sheep will beget a government of wolves.”

Dalai Lama visit is hitting India-China ties
Modi needs diplomatic skill to tackle the issue

By Devsagar Singh

Dalai Lama's proposed visit to Arunachal Pradesh next year has expectedly raised heckles of China which has remained a sworn enemy of the tallest Buddhist leader ever since he sought refuge in India in 1959.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has reportedly cleared a fortnight long visit of the Dalai Lama with no exact time frame and the places of visit include Itanagar and Tawang, among others. The Buddhist leader had planned a similar visit in 2009 but it had to be dropped in the face of stiff opposition from China.

As usual China has objected to the visit as it considers Arunachal Pradesh as a disputed territory. While the then UPA government under Dr Manmohan Singh buckled to the Chinese pressure in 2009 denying permission to the Buddhist spiritual leader, the Narendra Modi government views it differently. For the NDA government, Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh is part of the

its success in achieving economic growth for its people. So much so, he proclaimed his intentions to make India a manufacturing nation (in lines of China). But Modi is sulking now on China after the latter's non-cooperation.

Why, then, should he not care for Dalai Lama and his sensibilities when India under Nehru gave him shelter amid much applause from across the world. Half a century after the 1962 war with China, India earnestly wanted to forget the past. But it takes both hands to clap. Border issue continues to drag. There have been unwanted pinpricks in the form of border incursions in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh.

For Dalai Lama and his million strong people of Tibetan origin now in India, the struggle still continues. Dalai Lama's government in exile in Dharamshala (Himachal Pradesh) is a living example of the faith and reverence that the spiritual leader commands

Dalai Lama, an apostle of non-violence, will be engaging in spiritual activities in monasteries in Tawang, Itanagar and elsewhere in Arunachal Pradesh. This is what he has been engaged in India. China seeks to paint him as villain. Tibetans in India staged mostly silent protests in 2009 when the Government did not permit their leader to visit Tawang on a spiritual mission. The protest was, indeed, against China outside the Chinese mission in Delhi.

diplomatic offensive.

Recently, India hosted US Ambassador Richard Varma, in Arunachal Pradesh disregarding Chinese opposition. Ministry of Home Affairs, sources say, would like to encourage similar visits by other foreign mission chiefs. The reason is obvious: India under Modi no longer wants to be browbeaten by China. It is, however, willing to extend its hands of friendship on a purely reciprocal basis. The Chinese have continued to block India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) despite most advanced nations, including US, agreeing to India joining the 45 nation grouping for nuclear commerce. Similarly, China has refused to endorse certain anti-India terrorist entities of Pakistan for a ban under a UN mandate.

Lately, India has been loosely talking about banning cheap Chinese products in the country ostensibly because of opposition from Indian manufacturers. A similar demand had been made from domestic manufacturers in the past, but it was ignored. Now the Modi regime seems to be interested in sending clear signals to China that good neighborly relations can be maintained only on the basis of mutually beneficial moves from both sides.

Soon after assuming office, Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended India's hands of friendship to both hostile neighbors—Pakistan and China--to demonstrate his intentions. Modi more than gambled by his sudden unannounced visit to Pakistan while he openly eulogized China for

from Tibetans across the world. Most countries and governments in the world, including the US, Europe, UK, among others, have ignored the Chinese opposition and received and hosted Dalai Lama. India gave him shelter all these years.

Dalai Lama, an apostle of non-violence, will be engaging in spiritual activities in monasteries in Tawang, Itanagar and elsewhere in Arunachal Pradesh. This is what he has been engaged in India. China seeks to paint him as villain. Tibetans in India staged mostly silent protests in 2009 when the Government did not permit their leader to visit Tawang on a spiritual mission. The protest was, indeed, against China outside the Chinese mission in Delhi. Modi will be only correcting the wrongs of the past by helping Dalai Lama visit Tawang Monastery, a historical place of worship for Buddhists around the world.

India needs to be wary of Chinese moves around its geographical territory. Apart from its moves in the Indian Ocean region, China has been involved in creating infrastructure development in disputed PoK region in cohorts with Pakistan. India's concerns have been largely ignored all these years. Its all weather friendship with Pakistan is largely aimed at hurting India's interests.

Regime change in India after Modi's taking over as Prime Minister was considered by observers to be an opportunity for China to signal a change. But, clearly, that did not happen. (IPA Service)

Bank employees must mend behaviour

Editor, Apropos the letter by AS Lyngdoh (ST Nov 4,2016) as an ex-banker, I strongly support Mr Lyngdoh. and respect his sentiments. It is true that customers are facing rough and rude behaviour from the banks and most of the customers remain silent. This trend is not healthy in the context of changing economic scenario of the country because we now have different types of alternative instruments. The days are not far when most of the small banks will perish! Bank managements should think very seriously on these and other issues and must talk to such badly behaved staff of their branches. Such staff should learn lessons from

PMA books and interactions with polite people. Hope, my this letter is read by the staff about whom Mr Lyngdoh has mentioned today!

Yours etc.,
Anjan kr Das,
Shillong-6

“Disruption of peace”

Editor, Apropos the letter, “Desecration of temples, a sacrilege” (ST November 03, 2016) by PK Dwivedi, the writer has been spitting venom against Islam and it would be better if he stops expressing his frustration and anger in a public platform using inflammatory language. If Dwivedi continues to reflect his imprudence and premature behaviour in this platform, he would be solely responsible for communal violence in the city. Let me remind Dwivedi that Islam is

a religion of peace and condemns desecration of religious places and Muslims would be against such attacks. Dwivedi even hinted indirectly in his letter that the earth would be a better place without Muslims but he should peep through the windows of history with an unbiased mind free of prejudices to see the enormous contribution of Muslims in the field of astronomy, medicine, mathematics, geography etc. and then you would realise the contribution of Muslims in making this world a better place. Some Hindutva brigades killed Muslims and Dalits in the garb of protecting cows and love jihad and forcibly made Muslim youths to drink cow urine and eat cow dung and the Modi government remained silent. However everybody knows this basic fact that there are black sheep in every community and if these do something wrong it

would not mean that the entire community is wrong but for people like Dwivedi it is very difficult to understand this simple logic.

Yours etc.,
Md Sager,
Via email

On Dylan’s Nobel Prize

Editor, Bob Dylan is the only man to have won the Oscar, Grammy and now the Nobel. It's been a slow train coming, but it is no simple twist of fate. Dylan undeniably a prolific poet and the literally genius of our times and whose songs and poetry inspired the toiling millions. Dylan songs in some way were predictive and indeed stirred anthems for the rights movement throughout the world. Some critics sparked off debates about the Swedish

Academy choice to award Dylan but the Academy's decision proves that Literature in the modern world is not restricted to genius like the novel, short story or poetry. To class Dylan as a mere 'singer – song writer ' is rather unceremonious. American Professor of the Boston University, Christopher Ricks wrote ‘Dylan's Vision of Sin’ in 2006, that illuminates Milton, Shakespeare, Keats and Elliot's words. The Swedish Academy rightly pointed out that Dylan ‘created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition’. Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his collection of poems, Gitanjali. In India, Dylan's creative values are also recognised, for instance Delhi's Jamia Milia Islamia - Central University introduced Dylan's 'Blowin' in the wind' in its MA English programme in 2011 a compulsory paper for those

studying English Literature. Kolkata's Jadavpur University incorporated some of his classic songs for their English Literature syllabus in 2003. Since 1972, the forever young Bah Lou Majaw, recipient of the 4th Bhupen Hazarika National Award, hosted shows each year on May 24, to felicitate Dylan's birthday celebrations.

NEHU acknowledged Cassandra Syiemlieh's thesis on Dylan's songs and poetry and in 1986 conferred her the degree of Master of Philosophy. To wrap up, Bob Dylan's quote comes to mind – ‘some people feel the rain, others just get wet ’.

Yours etc.,
Sonny L Khyriem,
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.

Weaving An Empowering Story

By Ninglun Hanghal

Behind most fine, beautiful, delicate things, there’s usually the sweat, talent, diligence and determination of a few good women. That’s also the case with the exquisite traditional weaves from India’s north-eastern states, where weaving is an essential part of everyday life, especially in the rural areas. Essentially, it is the invisible, albeit strong, backbone of the local economy, even though it’s not uncommon to find families struggling to make ends meet on the money they make from cloth woven on the old-fashioned loin loom. But this is not a story that focuses on the struggles; rather, it looks at an interesting initiative which brings designers, women’s networks and grassroots self-help groups together to create timeless fashion, even as it keeps weaving traditions alive and makes the entire effort truly worthwhile for the artisans.

For Rohila Engtipi, the 300-year-old loin loom woven Pe-Hon-Ki shawl and Pe-Kok (a square piece of cloth women tie at the right shoulder) handed down to her from her great grandmother’s collection are among her most prized possessions. Indeed, she cherishes her them with all her heart. “This is true heritage,” she remarks, as she proudly shows off the clothes made from pure Eri silk.

Engtipi is passionate about traditional weaves from the Karbi Anglong region in Assam because, “like most women here I too have grown up weaving; it’s in my blood”. In the countryside, most men are either involved in agriculture or daily wage work to make ends meet and women contribute to the family income by sitting at the loom “whenever they have some free time at hand”. It’s really tedious and doesn’t pay well but there are not many income generating options in hand so they continue to labour away. “During floods or in the absence of availability of unskilled labour work, it’s weaving that keeps the home fires burning. It’s an intrinsic part of everyone’s existence,” says Engtipi.



(Anti-clockwise from above) Platforms such as the North East India Fashion Week are ideal to showcase traditional weaves; Arunachal-based designer Yana Ngoba Chakpu retails clothes that merge traditional tribal motifs with modern silhouettes under her label, YIS, or Yana In Style; and increasingly women are finding it difficult to make ends meet by weaving on their traditional loin loom



To make sure that the weaves and their skilled creators don’t become irrelevant in today’s age of readymade fashion, Engtipi has set up the Karbi Traditional Loom Weavers Network. By way of

supporting the women, who tirelessly sit from morning to night at the loom for the sake of making a little extra money, she supplies them with yarn and they, in turn, give her the woven fabric that she

markets door-to-door or to boutiques in the nearby towns.

“I take the clothes around everywhere in the region and right up to Guwahati. However, so far, we have not started marketing these on a larger scale,” she reveals, adding that while it takes around two to three days for the weavers to make a Pe-Kok, she retails it for Rs 2,000.

In a sense, visibility for their talent and specialised marketing is what the weavers need to come into the spotlight, whether they are in Assam or elsewhere. And that’s exactly what the Arunachal-based designer Yana Ngoba Chakpu is doing these days. She has got together with other like-minded couturers in the region to showcase the best of weaves the northeastern states have to offer at the North-East India Fashion Week (NEIFW), which recently held its second edition in Itanagar, the state

capital of Arunachal Pradesh.

Bringing designers and weavers on one platform the NEIFW is Chakpu’s way of encouraging the artisans to strike out on their own and find greater sustainability. She elaborates, “The northeast has immense artistic potential but it’s unfortunate that weavers are being forced to give up their age-old vocation for jobs that would pay them better. With the NEIFW we want to promote the weavers of the region and show them that, with the right kind of exposure and backing, it’s definitely possible to make a decent living out from it.”

Like Engtipi, who, incidentally, showcased the clothes made by Karbi women weavers at the NEIFW, Chakpu is also a proficient weaver and loudly declares that she “has been born a weaver and designer; after all, it’s my legacy”. According to her, “Till around three decades back,

loom-weaving and handicraft-making happened in every household in the north-east but those are slowly on their way out because sustaining on this work has become next to impossible. There may be no substitute to the beauty of a hand-woven fabric length but there are fewer takers these days because it costs much higher than machine-made textile.”

Technology and industrialisation may have pushed the otherwise timeless weaves out of the market but Chakpu doesn’t rest all the blame there. She says, “I’m not anti-technology and I don’t want to segregate technology from exquisite craftsmanship. In fact, I think the two together can be a matchless combination. To an extent, through the Fashion Week, we are blending the two. At the same time, through this platform we are creating

mass awareness about the weaves and designs.”

Describing herself as “a natural designer”, Chakpu, through her collections, which she retails under the label YIS, or Yana In Style, merges hand-woven motifs with modern silhouettes. At the moment, she is involved in an experiment that involves working with handlooms from 28 states across the country. A real trendsetter she is creating an unusual line that uses northeastern motifs in lehengas, salwar kameezes and saris. Of course, at the heart of all her efforts to give a boost to the practice of weaving is the fact that she wants to show women weavers that not only “can they be self-employed” but through innovative ways they can also make sure that their heritage doesn’t become a thing of the past.

Chakpu is convinced that to make this a reality “weavers can open their own institute. They don’t need

big buildings for that. A simple hut is also fine. During vacations, students can come and learn weaving”.

Chakpu also plans to set up a NEIFW Collection boutique in London. “After doing London Fashion Week last year, the demand for handloom went up. I thought, instead of selling just my products, I should join hands with other designers. So, every designer who gets registered with NEIFW will get a chance to keep their products in the boutique,” she shares.

Whether its Engtipi or Chakpu, the imaginative women firmly believe that it’s only a matter of time before “north-eastern tribal motifs and traditional attire become the toast of national and international fashion” enabling the once-struggling, often exploited female weavers to become mistresses of their own destiny. (WFS)

(Photo: Yana Ngoba Chakpu)

Looking To Change Female Archetypes

By Elayne Clift

Like many other feminists, I tweeted and posted on Facebook at a furious pace after the second presidential debate that was billed as a debate. “Whether Trump did or did not do what the infamous tape suggested — and I think we all know which is true — the act of celebrating sexual assault as male prerogative and patriarchal power is deplorable,” I wrote. I addressed Trump’s stalking, stuttering and snorting in lieu of substantively addressing policy issues, and I shared my astonishment at his having received good reviews while Hillary Clinton was judged to be off her game for maintaining a calm, polite, focused demeanor in spite of being stalked, verbally abused, threatened with imprisonment and confronted with the sick stunt perpetrated by her opponent.

Then I read Rebecca Traister’s stunning analysis of the subtext of the debate in ‘New York Magazine’ and realised how much more there was to consider. Traister, a smart feminist analyst and writer, talked about Donald Trump’s loathing for any woman who might defeat him, and his hideous ways of showing that hatred, including being verbally and physically threatening: “The worldview that Trump affirmed over and over again, during decades in the public



After the second US presidential debate, Hillary Clinton was judged to be off her game for maintaining a calm, polite, focused demeanour in spite of being verbally abused

eye, is one in which women are show horses, sexual trophies and baby machines, and therefore, their agency, consent and participation don’t matter.”

Traister continued, condemning Republicans as “a party that has been covert in its cohesion around the very biases that Trump makes course and plain”, referring to their anti-woman legislative agenda, including its attempts to shut down Planned Parenthood and much worse in some states. In the end, Traister said, the weapons of choice among misogynists for beating powerful women are humiliation, objectification, shaming and sexualisation. That couldn’t have been made more explicit than by how Donald Trump behaved

toward Hillary Clinton during the debate.

No sooner had I finished reading Traister’s compelling article when my daughter called to make another stunning point. “I think Hillary is on an archetypal journey,” she said. “She has to go into that dark place and emerge on the other side intact.”

It was a brilliant observation. Think about it. Women have traditionally been denied The Quest or journey to enlightenment. Locked in their castles birthing future kings, or in convents, where they spent the better part of their lives invisible beyond the cloister gardens, they were denied their hunger for a wider world, their intelligence and courage

continually hidden from sight and declared non-existent or illegitimate.

Two of the most easily recognised female archetypes are the Nurturing Mother and the Temptress. The nurturing mother sustains the warrior on his journey, while the temptress tries to seduce him away from his quest through her sexuality. But now, in Clinton, we have a new female archetype – a warrior woman equal to, and in this case surpassing her male counterpart.

Another key element of the Archetypal Journey involves entering into and surviving the Underworld, often a dark cave. Clinton has had to survive the darkest of caves in an underworld full of deranged men and incipient violence.

Among the many symbols of the classic Archetypal Journey are mountains, water, serpents and rainbows. The Democratic candidate still has some murky waters to wade through, waters that are home to snakes continually lashing out at her. But when she finally gets to the other side of the river and ascends the mountain there is likely to be a rainbow of colours there. Many of us will be standing with her, relieved and hopeful once more, able to see the world as a place of safety and beauty again.

We will all be changed by the experience. Sometimes that’s all it takes to reach a more enlightened way of being. (WFS)

Hard to find paid work as an incarnated deity

Once had a boss who said: “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” I told her that wearing a skirt and crucifying people was against my religion.

I soon moved on from that job and indeed believed that my dream job did not exist — until recently, when a reader sent me a link to a report about a paid post of “hermit” being offered by the Swiss authorities.

Hermits live on mountains and think about the meaning of life. The downside is that they traditionally receive no pay and no company car. Yet this particular hermit was offered a salary,

free housing and paid holidays. Later, I saw a picture of the man who got the job and he was balding with a long white beard — this seems a crucial requirement for the job, but was not specified in the advertisement, probably to avoid accusations of sexism, this “look” being harder for the fairer sex to achieve.

Yet the Swiss town of Solothurn’s original hermit, Saint Verena, was female. She lived in a cave circa AD 270, so the level of perks has definitely gone up and in theory could eventually

involve a corporate credit card.

Paid, high-level spiritual jobs are becoming depressingly rare. Nepal still has a post of Incarnated Deity in the temples of the Kathmandu valley but applicants need to be female and under 13.

I mentioned this at work and a colleague pointed out that one can act in a high-minded, spiritual way even in mundane jobs. She sent me a link to a report about a police traffic monitor in the US who spotted a driver running a red light on a recorded surveillance video.

He realised it was him. Officer Tim Glover hit himself with a hefty fine and became a hero for his moral uprightness.

Any Asian examples of jobs with a moral angle? A different colleague told me that in China, professional “mistress dispellers” are being paid by married women to track down their husbands’ mistresses and persuade them to decamp quietly. But it doesn’t sound very moral. Apparently the line that works best is, “He’s not as rich as you think.”

Meanwhile, a reader wrote in with a story about possibly the least moral job of the year. Most matchmakers offer to find “that special someone” for single people, but Azad Chaiwala’s firm offers to find that “second special someone” for men who come from cultures that allow multiple wives. It’s a bit risky, since he works from the UK, where polygamy is illegal.

Chaiwala claims to be a moralist, arguing that polygamy is more moral than having love affairs. This is a bit like saying robbing old people is okay because robbing children is worse.

I guess in truth, it is harder to be moralistic now than it used to be. If sexting US politician Anthony Weiner lived in 1600, he would have had to commission fine artists to do oil portraits of him in his underpants and then have footmen hand-carry them to the fathers of girls he liked. All too much like hard work. Much better to live on a mountain and think about the meaning of life, right?

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

THE FUNNY SIDE
Nury Vittachi

Crossing the ‘bridge’

By Ranjan K Baruah

We have published career options and opportunities related to different subjects. One of the subjects that we study since our school days is Geography. It is a field of science devoted to the study of the lands, the features, the inhabitants and the phenomena of Earth. Geography has been called ‘the world discipline’ and ‘the bridge between the human and the physical science’.

Traditionally, geographers have been viewed the same way as cartographers and people who study place names and numbers. Geographers study the space and the temporal distribution of phenomena, processes and features as well as the interaction of humans and their environment.

Space and place affect a variety of topics, like economics, health, climate, plants and animals; geography is highly interdisciplinary.

The interdisciplinary nature of the geographical approach depends on attentiveness to the relationship between physical and human phenomena and its spatial patterns.

Geography as a discipline can be split broadly into two main subsidiary fields — human geography and physical geography.

The former largely focuses on the built environment and how humans create, view, manage and influence

space. The latter examines the natural environment and how organisms, climate, soil, water and landforms produce and interact.

The difference between these approaches led to a third field, environmental geography, which combines the physical and the human geography, and looks at the interactions between the environment and humans.

One may take up the subject after passing Class X exam but graduation in Geography is the basic qualification needed to get into the field of geography.

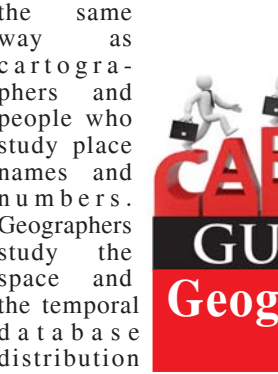
There are masters as well as PhD and other courses available. Candidates who have passed 10+2 with high marks in social sciences, including geography or equivalent, can apply for the bachelors course in Geography, which is offered in both arts and science stream.

Courses are available in many colleges and universities in the state and other parts of the country. Some of the courses are B.A in Geography, Diploma in Geoinformatics, M.A in Geography, M.Phil in Geography, M.Sc in Applied Geography, M.Sc in Geoinformatics, M.Sc in Geography, Master in Geographic Information Science and Systems, Master in Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Science, PhD in Geography, PG Diploma in Geographical Cartography, PG Diploma in Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Science, among others.

Many government and

non-government institutes along with research centres offer several career options for qualified geographers with numerous specialisations.

Some of the specialised areas are — Economic Geography, Cultural Geography, Political Geography, Historical Geography, Tourism Geography, Transportation Geography, Regional Geography, Medical Geography, Geomorphology, Hydrology, Glaciology, Biogeography and Climatology.



By Tripti Nath

A couple of years back when the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), a Delhi-based not-for-profit research and advocacy organisation, had released a detailed report on the presence of heavy metals in some of the leading Indian and foreign cosmetic brands in the market, it had created quite a furore among people; naturally, an instant fear had gripped everyone: were the cosmetics they were using safe? And was long-term use of beauty products truly going to have as many adverse effects as the study suggested?

As someone whose profession demands that she put on at least three layers of stage make-up, these questions had troubled Bharatnatyam exponent Geeta Chandran too. She says, “Dancers like me need to use cosmetics when we perform but we do not know what goes into making them. While the report was quite unsettling it definitely served as a wake-up call.”

Like her, there are several dancers, actors, anchors and models, for whom wearing makeup is a professional necessity. One cannot also forget all those women and men, who rely on expensive cosmetics and fairness creams to look good and feel great. Yet, when it comes to the \$ 950-million retail beauty and cosmetic industry in India, the alarming fact is that scant attention is paid to ensure adherence to established safety standards.

Let’s go back to some of the findings of the landmark CSE report that serves as a warning for many. When the research organisation’s Pollution Monitoring Lab had tested 73 cosmetic products for heavy metals,

Updates:

Scholarships for Girls: Maulana Azad Education Foundation is providing Maulana Azad National Scholarship to meritorious girl students belonging to the six notified minority communities (i.e. Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, Parsi and Jain). Students who have passed Class X in 2016 with at least 55% marks, have confirmed admission in Class XI and whose parents’ annual total income from all resources is less than Rs 1 lakh may apply for the scholarships.

PM’s Scholarships Scheme: Interested students may apply for PMSS, which is for wards/widows of ex-servicemen and ex-Indian Coast Guard personnel pursuing professional degree courses. The scheme will be applicable only to those candidates who have joined the professional courses in the academic year 2016-17. Last date to apply online for PMSS is November 15.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 9864055558 for any career related queries)

Price for a made-up look



BEAUTY MATTERS: Deceptively, cosmetic companies invest a lot on endorsements and advertisements that promise to magically transform a user’s looks.

it found that 32 fairness creams (26 for women and six for men) had the presence of mercury, while 30 lipsticks, eight lip balms, three anti-ageing creams and a few herbal products carried traces of lead, cadmium, chromium and nickel. These pointed to the health hazards they posed, some serious enough to put anyone off the wide range of attract-tively-packaged cosmetic products on offer today that promise “white beauty”, “perfect *nikhar* (glow)”, “luscious moisturised lips”.

Deceptively, these companies invest a lot on endorsements and advertisements that promise to magically transform a user’s looks. Significantly, the study also busted the myth that foreign brands are safer, as it found mercury in the range of 0.10 parts per million (ppm) to 1.97 ppm in 44 per cent of the fairness creams produced abroad.

Mercury lightens the skin by hindering the formation of skin pigment melanin, but as the report

warned, inorganic mercury present in fairness creams can damage the kidneys and cause skin rashes, skin discoloration and scarring, besides leading to anxiety, depression, psychosis and peripheral neuropathy.

CSE’s Director General Sunita Narain says, “Mercury is not supposed to be present in cosmetic products. Its mere presence in these products is completely illegal.”

If mercury is extremely toxic, then chromium is carcinogenic and nickel can cause allergies on coming in contact with the skin. Both these were found to be present in major lipstick brands.

Although India has banned the use of nickel sulphate, nickel carbonate and nickel monoxide in cosmetics, this obviously has not prevented their use.

Moreover, while chromium oxide and chromium hydroxide are being used as cosmetic colourants in the US and have, in fact, been prohibited in lipsticks, there is no such exception in India and no standards to limit

their use.

Although we do not like to acknowledge it openly, the reality is that Indians are obsessed with fair skin. Matrimonial columns in newspapers are dominated by suffocating expectations of “beautiful, fair and lovely” brides and celebrities endorse creams that promise to make men look fair and handsome. Students, professionals and housewives — nobody wants to be called a plain Jane. To look hip and confident, enough money and time is spent in massaging fairness creams to get that flawless complexion and lips are tinted with crimson, scarlet and bright pink shades to make heads turn.

Clearly then, stringent regulations are the only way to ensure safety. Nonetheless, CSE experts point out that regulatory loopholes result in high quantities of banned metals finding their way into cosmetic products. Since Indian regulators do not acknowledge the concept of ‘trace’, there is no maximum limit set for metals in finished products. ‘Trace presence’ of heavy metals is recognised by both the US and the European Union.

As per the CSE, seven out of 14 cosmetic companies have taken refuge in the concept of ‘trace presence’ of metals, saying the heavy metal found is small in quantity and is an indispensible ingredient. But the CSE disagrees with this defence, as its laboratory did not detect mercury in 56 per cent of fairness creams tested and found 40 percent of lipsticks chromium or nickel free.

Dr Rashmi Sarkar, Honorary Secretary of the Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venerologist and Leprologist, who has closely observed usage patterns over the years, remarks, “The growing desire of people to look youthful and, in particular, fair, in India, has led to a phenomenal increase in the use of cosmetics.”

As a practising dermatologist at the Maulana Azad Medical College in Delhi she knows the kind of problems regular use of cosmetics can lead to, “The major conditions I have seen are contact dermatitis (an inflammation of the skin), irritant dermatitis and depigmentation arising from certain ingredients in cosmetics.”

Sarkar recommends a moderate use of cosmetics and a cautious look at the findings of the CSE report. This advice is certainly useful for those who wear makeup on a daily basis.

Chandran shares, “I am glad that I got some useful advice on removing makeup quite early in my career. It is important to take it off properly. The skin needs to breathe and rejuvenate.”

Away from the stage, this exceptional performer, whose glorious career spans over 35 years, relies on time-tested natural ingredients like papaya, banana, milk, gram flour and mustard oil for her daily skin care needs.

Danseuse Shovana Narayan gives at least a dozen performances every month. She says, “The presence of toxic metals in cosmetics is alarming. The fact is that dancers put a triple layer of make-up and anything unnatural is bound to affect the skin. So I go for the medicated brands.”

While projections for India’s cosmetic industry appear bright with an annual growth pegged at 17 percent, there is an urgent need to ensure that cosmetics sold in the country are safe. The country simply cannot afford a higher disease burden for the sake of vanity. (WFS)

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi Sunday, November 6, 2016

Both work and home affairs will gain momentum as Moon conjunct Mars on your solar return chart. Strengthen your connections as they will be meaningful. You can also restructure your routines for greater efficacy. It's a time to take bold decisions and bold steps to follow a dream or an ambition. Home renovation will be creatively fulfilling. Mundane affairs will keep you busy on the domestic front. A wedding celebration in the family would also take place. Whatever your relationship status you will show extra confidence and take matters related to your romance in your hands.

'This week for you'

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)
It is time to concentrate on your career prospects and professional skills as a promotion or lucrative business opportunity is likely to emerge consequent to your efforts. You successfully perform tasks that involve cooperation and team harmony. Your tendency to control your life through some form of manipulation is strong. This is a phase that highlights romance and love in your family life. You may also experience some tangles in your close personal relationships. You're at your best when you are showing the world your practical, competent, and responsible side.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)
You would adapt to new circumstances with ease opening yourself to positive events. You are able to find creative solutions to problems now. You put in a lot of effort and find this has established a strong professional base and it brings in desired and even unexpected gains. Money issues pop up now—the discovery of a way to increase your income, an unexpected gift or reward, or a brief financial crisis that motivates you to find new ways to make money is possible.

Gemini: (October 22 - June 21)
You may especially enjoy experiencing different cultures and styles. Your ideas and goals are higher than usual, teaching and mentoring may be part of the whole picture. Your cultural and spiritual awareness increases. You are ready to make new beginnings and invest in new business and relationships. It is a good time to put your needs first, but doing so with respect for others will take you further. Whether you can succeed as a leader is tested right now. Spending time in solitude among natural surroundings is therapeutic.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)
You are presented with an opportunity to get rid of what doesn't work in your life, while also discovering what does. You are highly motivated to make money and this enhances quite a bit of energy for new moneymaking projects. You are sorting through the experiences of the last several months, separating the worthwhile from the worthless. You may be drawn into some form of service that will bring deep personal satisfaction. At this time, you seek perfection and distinction in your work and this quality takes you to a more responsible position.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)
You are more aware than before of your mental and physical health, daily routine, everyday working life, and your working methods. Now is the time to realize your own potential through your significant other. You focus on balancing your personal interests and objectives with your social life, or with those of a partner. Circumstances are such that your diplomacy skills are required. Your popularity is increasing, and is reinforced by your own ability to cooperate and harmonize. You would be able to make an impact on people with innovative ideas and work.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)
You would be successful in creative writing and in the entertainment industry. Your ego and pride are tied up in how you relate to others now. This may be an especially busy time for people who consult or work with clients one-on-one. Relationships are dynamic-full of conflicts and resolutions. You tend to take things quite personally now, and something

that someone says or does now can easily rile you. Extra care should be exercised when it comes to work, health matters, and daily routines.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)
It would be wise to be especially clear when it comes to communicating with co-workers. Re-thinking the suitability of your job is possible now, but you should avoid jumping to any premature decisions. Take this time to re-examine issues rather than communicating about them prematurely. A positive and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining the cooperation of important people. You move on the path of betterment in terms of better financial stability, emotional and mental satisfaction and intellectual growth.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)
A new set-up in an existing relation or a new love affair may be formed. Your professional life brings rewards and recognition now. You are working hard and inclined towards more detailed work. An opportunity to expand business arrives now. Increased connections and experiences come into the picture. This is a period of growth as well as some form of blossoming. This is a very fortunate time to arrange get-togethers, parties and events. Increased public recognition and professional success characterizes this week. You would become more particular about your health and diet.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)
This time takes some kind of pressure on professional and personal aspects. You may begin to take on more responsibilities on the job or in another capacity. Your job could become rather tedious or boring, or working conditions may be tiring and frustrating. You find yourself more accountable than ever when it comes to your work and output. You may have to draw some boundaries with friends and the demands placed on you. You would attract yourself to unusual, more spiritual activities. This is an excellent period for starting new regimens to improve your health and well being, such as regular exercise and a more structured and productive use of your time.

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)
It would be wiser to face difficult people and situations rather than escape, as there would be victory and success in professional ventures. Don't take the one you love for granted but show your love and appreciation. Financial transactions and professional projects go ahead smoothly with goodwill and they would be profitable. 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 head on and get your point across. Business projects and associations are opening up your horizons so you need to think expansively.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)
You would achieve a lot in business and professional aspects by combining creativity and practicality. You take on a more mature role in the family and in personal situations by taking on extra responsibility and giving direction. You can expect seniors to support you and stand up for you in tough situations. You can trust your intuition about people and situations when called upon to mediate in conflicts and collaborations. A new work opportunity can change the way you work and relate with people professionally. How willing you are to experiment and explore new approaches will determine your success at this time. You will be considerably more productive, healthy, and focused.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)
This is a favorable phase for people in sports, competition, game shows and other related fields. You have been more determined and hard working and this brings fulfillment of desires in competitive examinations. This is a good time to be with a friend or get associated with a group with whom you can share your own ideas and thoughts. Communications from overseas are hopeful as business opportunities are extended to you. You are physically energetic and enjoy the feeling of well being and confidence.

Unhealthy indulgence

By Maneka Sanjay Gandhi

More than a decade ago, when the government was putting green and red dots on vegetarian and non-vegetarian food, the milk industry, and hundreds of literate people, insisted that milk was vegetarian (even though it comes from an animal) and milk

products should be listed with a green dot. We caved in.

Even people with a plant-based diet will often admit that cheese is their weakness. Considering that cheese smells like dirty socks, why? Cheese is a high-calorie product loaded with fat, sodium and cholesterol. Typical cheeses are 70 percent fat. And the type of fat they contain is mainly saturated (“bad”) fat, which increases your risk of heart disease and diabetes.

Cheese is the number one source of saturated fat in the Western diet. About one-third of adults, and 12.5 million children and adolescents, are obese in America. We should be very far behind — with a largely vegetarian diet and a penchant towards healthy meals at home — but we have also joined the ranks of obese nations. And obesity is a major cause of death through heart disease, cancer and diabetes. In all three of these diseases we rank near the top.

One-fourth of an average, 12-inch, cheese pizza contains nearly 13 gm of fat, including 6 gm of saturated fat and 27 mg of cholesterol. An ounce of cheese contains 9 gm of fat, including 6 gm of saturated



Cheese is the number one source of saturated fat in the Western diet. About one-third of adults, and 12.5 million children and adolescents, are obese in America

fat. Partly skimmed milk versions of cheeses have just slightly lower amounts of fat. But we will continue to drink milk and eat cheese or paneer. Now, many years later, I learn why people drink milk and eat paneer and cheese. Not because it is necessary for you, or because Krishna drank it (which he didn't). No, the reason why people insist on it is because it is an opiate.

You can get hooked onto cheese. There is a scientific reason. As milk digests, it produces mild opiates called casomorphins. In 1981, Eli Hazum, and his colleagues at Wellcome Research Laboratories reported traces of the chemical morphine, an addictive opiate, in milk.

A casomorphin is a protein fragment derived from Casein, a milk protein. Casein is the major protein in the milk of all mammals. The distinguishing characteristic of casomorphins is that they have an opioid effect. Opioids are among the world's oldest known drugs. Opioids are well-known for

their ability to produce a feeling of well-being, calm, intense feelings of pleasure, followed by a drowsy feeling. Opiates are addictive. Dependence can develop, leading to withdrawal syndromes if you stop at once.

Concentrated milk products, like cheese, ice cream and milk chocolate, contain concentrated quantities of these addictive narcotics. (Incidentally, Casein is sometimes even added to certain dairy-free and vegan cheeses.) It takes 10 lbs of milk to make 1 lb of cheese. As milk is turned into cheese, most of its water is removed leaving behind concentrated casein and fat. So, concentrated dairy products, like cheese, have especially high levels of opiates, so the pleasure effect is greater. That is why, for instance, many people take a glass of milk at night. And why it is given to bridegrooms on the wedding night!

(To be concluded)

Diwali lights must shine round the year

I watched fascinated as a stray rocket rushed into the twinkling sky and burst forth sprinkling hundreds of multi-coloured stars. The Diwali celebrations have ebbed away but the enthusiasm and gaiety still linger.

As another rocket brightened the sky, I watched the colourful spectacle in awe. Some of the stars were so different from the nucleus that I could not stop wondering how the essence of creation was being enacted out there.

It is during the days of Diwali and other festivals that we are reminded of our essentially divine nature. This is the time to contemplate, meditate, gain self-realisation and ultimately celebrate our existence on Earth. It is the time to realise the purpose of our existence and the endeavour to live our life in a way that makes Earth a better place to live in.

Days before the commencement of Diwali, houses are cleaned. This cleanliness of that which is outside us has attained such paramount importance in recent times that the actual spiritual significance has faded into oblivion.

But is only the cleansing enough? Any vacuum left will be promptly filled. So sustained efforts have to be made perennially to ring out the old and bring in the new. Negative traits and thoughts must be replaced by positivity, hate by love, injury by pardon and despair by hope.

(Contributed by Sapna Deb Sarkar)

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

The Shillong Times

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‘We did it’

Rio, Kyoto, Cancun: it has been a long but halting passage. At long last, the Paris climate deal signed on October 5 has in the shortest possible time become international law. Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi had signed it without reservations in a conflict-torn global atmosphere to free it from pollution. China and the US, the two biggest polluters had signed the accord even earlier. The Paris Agreement on climate change is meant to save the world from the catastrophic effects of global warming through various country-specific actions and its becoming international law is a landmark event. The countries are to take climate actions under the deal from January 1, 2021 but the rules of implementation will be framed in the next 4 years. The rule-making process will start at the climate conference in Marrakech, Morocco to be held today. It has been agreed that the swift coming into force of the Agreement reflects the changed sensibilities across the world and wide appreciation of the need for speedy action. The Paris Agreement is also a testimony to the collaboration of nations who debated so long to ultimately reach a consensus and the contribution of NGOs and multilateral organisations. The prolonged friction between two groups of nations-between the developed and the developing-has been significantly ironed out.

Under the agreement, countries have to take action as per their pledges over an agreed period of time. A transparency mechanism will enable countries to report on progress towards meeting their pledges. Periodic stock taking will evaluate progress towards keeping average global temperature rise within 2 degree Celsius by the end of the century. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon called it a momentous day. Delhi celebrated the success displaying the smiley 'we have done it'. It may however have sounded ironic on a day which witnessed the worst spell of pollution in years in the Indian capital.

TO THE EDITOR

Safety of women in India

Editor,
India has been making monumental strides in numerous aspects of development such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, rural development, defence etc. But one major sphere where the development graph shows a downward trend and we are still light-years behind is women's safety. As a country, we still need to do a lot more to ensure that women feel safe and protected both at home as well as outside.
Be it in the cities or villages, India is a not a safe country for women. In the last decade or so the situation has visibly deteriorated to an unpalatable level. There is more jeering and leering by the Indian men at young women and more physical (including sexual) violence against them like never before. Women between the ages of 15 and 30 face the most hostility, but women of other age groups are hardly any safer. There have been unspeakable rapes of little girls in the schools of Bangalore; attacks on elderly women in Delhi and this goes on and on.
We live in a patriarchal society. The dominant religions viz. Hinduism and Islam have historically accorded an inferior place to women both in scripture as well as social practice. Now, as women try to liberate themselves from the traditional gender roles, educate themselves, take up jobs outside their homes, choose their own marriage partners, in other ways

assert their independence, they face a patriarchal backlash.
India, at the same time, is undergoing an inexorable and convoluted transition, where ancient hierarchies of caste and gender are reluctantly giving way to modern ideas about the equality of all individuals before the law. In recent years, there have been a series of attacks against Dalits across the country, conducted by upper-caste men enraged that their social inferiors were now becoming IAS and IPS officers, in other words, their equals. The spurt in attacks on women is similarly an angry attempt by men to sustain the social and political dominance they have enjoyed for centuries but which is now challenged by the modern concept of gender equality and justice.
Violence against women in contemporary India has other causes too. Every year, millions of young men move from the rural to the urban areas in search of jobs. Not all of them manage to get regular employment though. Moreover, their ignorance and insensitivity towards the liberated, free-spirited westernized womenfolk of the cities only fuel the exasperation and craving. Dissatisfied and disenchanted, they vent their anger on women. Careful or not, women become the target of these men who leer, jeer and do not hesitate to even attack their dignity.
Another contributory factor is the portrayal of women in films, magazines, and advertisements etc. that try to objectify them. Bollywood films, targeted

Pretenders to the title of U Tirot Sing Syiem

By HH Mohrmen

Reports in the vernacular papers which appeared the day after his supporters felicitated Pynshngain N Syiem, the CEM of KHADC compared him to Syiem Tirot Sing the great chieftain of Hima Nongkhlaw, without substantiating why they did so. It is said that comparisons are odious. In this case the comparison is preposterous. While u Tirot Sing was a well known figure in the history of the freedom movement in the country in general and the state in particular, questions may be asked as to who is P N Syiem? By comparing him to the great chieftain we are also compelled to ask as to what extraordinary contribution P N Syiem has made to the state or even to his own constituency that he can be placed on the same footing as the Syiem of Hima Nongkhlaw?

U Tirot Sing gave up his life for the freedom of his hima (chieftainship) but what has P N Syiem done to deserve that honour to be placed on the same pedestal as U Tirot Sing? Are we not belittling the only Khasi hero we have? Did PN Syiem make any sacrifice worth mentioning? He did not sacrifice anything; in fact it was the other seven MLAs who had sacrificed their respective MDCs seats to usher in a new system which prohibits public representatives holding two offices of profit. The credit goes to the seven legislators who had responded to their conscience and sacrificed their seats for the sake of a better and brighter future.

It is a known fact that PN Syiem enjoys the twin benefits of being both MLA and MDC and that he is also the CEM of the

Council, which means he also enjoys all the perks of the office of CEM. Now the question is whether he even sacrificed a small portion of the benefits from the two offices he holds, with the public. Or if he at all made any sacrifice, how much of his income did he share with the people of his constituency? Leave aside the MLA and the MDC schemes which the constituency is entitled to, we are talking about the two salaries that he enjoys. Did he even share that with his constituents? If he is giving away part of the that benefits he enjoys with the public, perhaps we can call that a small sacrifice, but when he still keeps to himself all the benefits, except the MLA and MDC local area development scheme then that is not a sacrifice. That is giving to the people what rightfully belongs to them!

One newspaper even had a screaming headline which praised PN Syiem for having the courage to challenge the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee and stating that he is one hero who can be compared to Tirot Sing. Have they forgotten that many politicians before him had challenged the MPCC? In my humble opinion the likes of RG Lyngdoh have achieved more than PN Syiem, yet no one compares him to any great personality let alone giving him the title of u Tirot Sing the second or the third. If by simply challenging the MPCC then the person is entitled to the honour of the title of u Tirot Sing then rest assured we will have a long list of such people because many more politicians will rebel against the party as the election approaches.

PN Syiem has only indulged in empty rhetoric

without achieving anything and people still worship him as hero. A section of his cronies even claimed that since he is the only one who dares to challenge Dr Mukul Sangma then he is a hero. Patricia Mukhim challenges the Chief Minister almost on a regular basis through her writings. That does not make her a hero or a heroine, does it? The two main contestations between the Chief Minister and the CEM are the issue of office of profit and the Village Administration Bill (VAB). The court has vindicated his stand and on the former and the latter is not in the hands of the state Government. Hence it is imprudent to blame the CM for it. If Syiem has succeeded in anything at all then that is making those who hate Dr Sangma hate him more. Dr Sangma was his punching bag and he blamed everything on him, but isn't it true that Syiem is only being used as a stooge by somebody who has an axe to grind? Just because he routinely makes veiled verbal attacks against Dr Sangma does not make him a hero. Every responsible editor or columnist considers it their duty to challenge the powers that be because that is how functional democracy works. They are at least objective in their approach and do not let hate or even emotions play any role in their decision making or distort their objectivity.

Yes, we agree that all politicians play with public emotions, but there should be a limit to it especially if one considers himself a contender to be the hero of the community (jaitybnriew). One would expect PN Syiem to stop or at least correct the speaker who compares him to U Syiem Tirot Sing or who called him u Tirot Sing the second in that meeting itself, but no such thing happened. This means that he not only

enjoys being called so but he legitimises the claim and by not correcting the speaker. Thereby he belittles the sacrifices made by u Tirot Sing Syiem. Syiem is basking in false glory by bringing down the stature of the Syiem of Hima Nongkhlaw who is remembered for his resistance against British rule.

The other pertinent question is also about the credentials of a person or the speaker, who in the meeting compared PN Syiem to the great chieftain. Is he any kind of a scholar who has done a study on the life of Tirot Sing that he has the authority compare the KHADC CEM with him? Is he somebody who really knows about Tirot Sing? If not, why did the media lap up his statement so unquestioningly? If such type of unfounded statements make it to the front pages of newspapers then what does this say about our media? Can the press (without any questions asked) carry a serious and unsubstantiated statement like that made by any Tom, Dick and Harry?

And by the way the honour of being u Tirot Sing is not a kind of a race or competition that people will compete and then they will subsequently be given the second, the third position and etc. This is the honour that u Tirot has earned for himself and there will be no second or third but one u Tirot Singh Syiem the one and only chieftain of Hima Nongkhlaw. As for the pretender PN Syiem, let us leave it to history to decide if he is indeed a hero of the community. My fear is that rather than being remembered as a hero, he will be recalled as the last of the politicians to enjoy two offices of benefits at the same time and that is some kind of history that no one in his/her right mind would like to leave for posterity.

Do we want live terrorists?

By Poonam I Kaushish

“Gher ke kar do pooraa kaam tamam,” ominous words uttered in the wee hours of Monday 31 October morning which resulted in death of eight Students’ Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) activists by the Madhya Pradesh police after they allegedly escaped from the Bhopal central jail. Predictably, the murder led to a par on course political spectacle with our ‘secular’ Opposition Parties accusing BJP’s Shivraj Singh Chouhan Government of staging a “fake” ruthless murder resulting in a judicial probe.

Lost in the din of moral outrage against the naqli encounter is the larger picture: How does one combat the scourge of deadly terrorism which has enveloped India in its octopus-like embrace. Think. Of the 670 districts in the country, as many as 270 are terror-prone. Of these, 70 districts have already been ravaged by terrorists, and this is discounting Jammu & Kashmir.

Terror has already cost India more than 72,000 civilians and 12,000 security personnel. Self-proclaimed Islamic terrorists alone have killed 8,617 Indians in the last three years. In fact, since 2004, India has lost more lives to terrorist attacks than the whole of North, South and Central America, Europe and Eurasia put together.

Yet we continue to wallow in the false belief that wars are games born in the minds of men which can be won peacefully by merely waving the white flag or we promptly initiate a blame game. The BJP’s fake encounters vis-à-vis the Congress going soft on terrorism. Besides, terror has become a big yawn.

Indeed, Acharya Kripalani was ever so right when, he described Indians as the world’s biggest hypocrites and humbugs. We exhaust precious national energy, time and money on individual issues a la SIMI activists. Thanks to opportunistic political expediency. With elections in five States early next year each party’s agenda is linked not so much to the SIMI activists’ murder but tom-tomming human rights violations nets them votes and helps score brownie points with the Muslims and their vote-banks.

Most sadly, so-called secular parties callously ignore the strong signal they send to the Muslims that they will not do anything which may even remotely hurt Muslim sentiments, terrorism or no terrorism. See how Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh has given a communal slant to the encounter by raising queries asking why are only Muslims killed!

Plainly, this is appeasement at its worst. All forget that no amount of appeasement will change the intentions of the terrorists who are determined to bleed India whatever it takes. Forgetting that a war can be won only by a bigger war!

The less said of our jhollowallahs and professional human rights activists who do not find anything wrong with any terrorist and will go to every extent to exonerate them in courts of law and dubbing them as “martyrs,” the better.

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval nails this by underscoring that the rule of law is a means to an end and not an end in itself. This is rooted in the principles of salus populi est suprema lex (the people’s welfare is the supreme law) and salus res publica est suprema lex (the safety of the nation is supreme law).

In fact, the Supreme Court in the case of DK Basu vs West Bengal in 1997 accepted these two principles validity by stating they were “not only important and relevant, but lying at the heart of the doctrine that welfare of an individual must yield to that of the community.”

Undeniably, police encounters are reflections of a complex phenomenon. Even as we are aghest at an extra-judicial death, we must

appreciate that the police deals with hardened criminals and become their victims as well. On an average, over 1,500 policemen get killed every year grappling with terrorists and insurgents. Is, the police more sinned against than sinning in dealing with ruthless terrorists who enjoy the advantage of choosing the target, the place and the time?

It is an open secret that the police time and again not only take recourse to third degree methods in order to extract truth from alleged criminals but also kills them with impunity. True, there are incidents of fake encounters, but to blow them out of proportion and then politicise and communalise them is playing with fire and against national interest.

In 2007, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) displayed a list of 440 fake encounters from 2002 to 2007. According to the Home Ministry during 2009-10 to 2012-13 555 cases were registered by the NHRC of alleged fake encounters by police, defence and paramilitary forces.

Uttar Pradesh topped the list with 231, Bihar 79, Maharashtra 73 and Andhra 61, followed by Rajasthan 33, Delhi 26, Uttaranchal 19, Assam 12, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka 10 each. Add to this our judicial system remains rooted in archaic 19 century enactments whereby ineffectual justice is unable to cope with the upsurge in militant violence. So what does one do in a situation where a terrorist holds the State hostage? Can a nation afford to sit back and let militancy gain an upper hand where militants call the shots? Isn't it an inescapable side-effect of the battle against militants?

Clearly, when the State’s existence is in peril, the only way to hit back is to carry the fight into the enemy camp effectively. At times State terror can be justified so long as it’s for the greater common good. Former Punjab Governor, the late Dharma Vira (ex-Cabinet Secretary), was ever so right when under a spell of President’s rule during the height of Sikh militancy in the State he directed: “I have no use for live terrorists!”

Indeed, the Kandhar fiasco or Mumbai 26/11 would never have happened if only the three terrorists Masood Azhar, Omar Sheikh and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar had been duly eliminated and not jailed.

Remember a terrorist has no caste or creed. For him terrorism is the religion. Be it a Hindu, a Muslim or a Sikh. He is an invisible enemy who uses our resources and freedom to hit us at will. An enemy that has no borders and no scruples! Adept in exploiting the latest technologies, he identifies and exploits our weaknesses. While we talk, he acts, inflicting maximum loss at minimum cost. All at our expense!

India needs to understand that when terror strikes, nations are expected to hit back with maximum force and carry the fight into the enemy camp. It is not enough to possess unrelenting, unremitting muscle power. On occasions it becomes necessary to display that power. Kudos to Prime Minister Modi for a course correction and adopting a ‘muscular’ policy!

The terrorism we face today is no longer terror in someone else’s backyard or the prerogative of spy thrillers. Terrorism poses a deadly challenge that can be met only through ruthless State power, not namby pamby platitudes. Remember, when our liberalism and freedom becomes the enemy’s Kalashnikov it is time for India to wake up and do some honest soul searching a la Mahabharat! ---- INFA,

“*To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.*”

--- Anatole France

The Shillong Times

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Much ado about India Today rankings

FOR India Today a media group the state of the states award is a brand building exercise. The latest issue of the magazine gives the annual ranking of states where Meghalaya scored the highest in Environment, among small states. It is also the most improved state in Education. This annual ranking of states is an exercise conducted by India Today with AC Nielsen, a survey agency. India Today claims that the states are ranked based on objective data gathered from recognized and highly credible government and academic sources. These are nice sounding words but one might ask, which are the academic sources from which the Meghalaya data has been culled. Or for that matter the data for other small states like Arunachal Pradesh. This state as we are aware is the one of most badly connected, highly corrupt state with hardly any infrastructure worth its salt to showcase. Yet it was ranked top for infrastructure among small states. So it depends whose study India Today has relied on. Interestingly, Meghalaya is at the bottom of the heap in over-all ranking with Goa topping the list and Tripura faring just a little better than Meghalaya.

Meghalaya fared last in Agriculture and Inclusive Development and performed only slightly better in health and economy. Chief Minister Dr Mukul Sangma is naturally proud of the achievement of the state under his leadership and at the award acceptance ceremony usually held in 5-star ambience in the national capital highlighted how the perception of Meghalaya as a troubled state has changed. Meghalaya's environment score was on the SO2 (sulphur dioxide) concentration being at 2ug/mg3. For non-scientists and the common person in Meghalaya these figures mean nothing. A better question is : Are we really breathing pure air in Shillong city? Ironically the figures can only be contradicted by a competent independent agency. For education, the only criterion used for determining Meghalaya's ranking is the increased spending by 325% in the education of those in the 6-15 population group. But increased spending is hardly the indicator for quality performance. While competitive federalism which is Modi's byline is good but the competition needs to be more realistic. The India Today ranking cannot be taken seriously at all.

LOOKING BACK

March 14, 1989

Union budget under fire in Lok Sabha

The government was accused by the opposition in the Lok Sabha today of painting a rosy picture of the economy by "brewing up" figures and underplaying its weak spots. Participating in

the debate on the general budget for 189-90, opposition members said the reality was far from what was being made out by the Finance Minister in his budget speech.

The pleasure of death and destruction

Death and destruction are inescapable phenomena which overwhelmingly haunt the human mind, and prompt various communities to identify some gods or goddesses to personalize and worship them. If death and destruction are tamed through worship, then what else should man be afraid of? However, there is an overwhelming sense of limitation that haunts human consciousness. First, there is a sense of material limitation. Man is aware that his life is physically limited. His life is bound to activities, necessary to support his physical existence. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground.' Man's desires far exceed his capacity to satisfy them. He is not the best being that he yearns to be. That is why he sings, 'If I have the wings of an eagle, over this prison wall I'd fly.' Second, there is a sense of spiritual limitation. There is consciousness in man that he is also a spiritual being bound to moral laws and religious obligations. 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.' Man yearns for spiritual realization because he feels that he is spiritually imperfect. He seeks wealth, fame and glory to strengthen his control over material resources, but he renounces them to be strengthened in spirit. He is bound to reconcile contradictions.

Human life is also physically and mentally enmeshed in binary oppositions. The greatest of them all are, 'Life and Death' to which all other binary oppositions are ultimately linked. The very fact that man exists, is the source of his happiness, but the fact that he would one day die, is the source of his pain and sorrow. The binary oppositions at the social level are, 'Individual freedom and Collective order.' Unrestrained individual freedom is anarchy, and absolute collective order is tyranny. The extreme of both cases is the shadow of death. Society is the natural organization of human beings where the interplay of individual freedom and collective order is institutionally maintained in a state of equilibrium for the interests and satisfactions of all. The balance between these

By Dr Fabian Lyngdoh

two coordinates of human existence guarantees protection of freedom and security for all. But there is also a rebellious being lurking in man's subconscious mind, ever seeking for absolute freedom from all limitations. Man's yearning is to fly over hills and vales as gracefully as an eagle, to swim as swift as the fish of the sea, to float with the clouds, to see the uppermost limits of the sky and the deepest depth of the oceans and so on and so forth; but his material existence is bound to physical laws. He would like to do anything in society; to be the most famous of men, to marry the most beautiful woman and keep as many mistresses as Solomon, to live in the best of palaces, to be the giver of the law and the director of actions. Yes, every man would like to be the greatest of men. But alas! He is bound to social laws. If man is neither bounded by physical limitations nor responsible to any moral laws or religious obligations, what would he seek for? With such unbounded freedom, he would absolutely seek continuity of existence in pleasure and contentment. Every human being subconsciously yearns to enjoy this absolute freedom which is not available in a normal social order, except in dreams. Indeed, most of our dreams are the milieu where our subconscious minds find pleasure in exercising absolute freedom not available in waking life, or where we experience torment of absolute bondage to be awakened up to a safer world of reality. The rebellious being in each one of us abhors any form of limitation encountered in real life, sometimes even to the extent of seeing death which is the ultimate source of pain as the ultimate solution. It is the sense of refuge in death that leads desperate people to suicide. There is also a mysterious pleasure of death and destruction. People can experience pleasure in the process of death under the influence of alcohol, drugs, and other habits which interfere with the sound functioning of life. Alcohol and drugs can temporarily numb the effect of psychological limitations such as shyness and fear implanted in the

subconscious mind, and moral inhibitions imposed by the society. Man experiences pleasure in such temporary freedom, without realizing that his physiological system is undergoing derangement in a process of death and destruction. When a person recovers from drunkenness, he is tormented by a hangover, which is nothing but a mild residue of the torment that his system had actually undergone, which he then calls pleasure. An addict would sell his gold to secure his drinks in pleasure, and people would only say that he is drunk. But if the intoxication were to last permanently even without further drinking, then he would experience torment instead of pleasure, and people would not say that he is drunk, but that he is mad. Then, he would sell everything he has to rectify his mind to a heaven of sobriety again. The pleasure of intoxication is in its temporariness. We call alcohol, 'wine' or 'drink', because it induces temporary alteration of consciousness; but if it induces permanent drunkenness then we would call it a 'poison' that leads to insanity. If there is a substance or a practice that can induce experience of temporary death that permits man to a brief spiritual entry into the world beyond, it would be the most pleasurable and costliest of all things, because it provides an experience of resurrection. The inventor of such a thing would be the greatest entrepreneur of all. The climax of pleasure is always towards neutralization, which is relative to death; and emotions of pleasure, if allowed to grow uncontrolled, ultimately lead to death: Smile - Laugh - Sing - Dance - Frenzy - Stupor - Death. Man also finds pleasure when his individual freedom is temporarily divorced from the collective order. That is, pleasure in the destruction of the normative order. The most common expression of defiance by a group of intoxicated youth in any locality is to sing, shout or scream at the top of their voices as if they are possessed, and speak words that are morally offensive. That is the seed of 'heavy metal' which seems like an expression of rebellion against established normative order. Whenever a religious group or social

group breaks away from the bigger group, there is always a feeling of joy, unity and affection among members. But when new institutional norms are formulated, and the hierarchy is established to regulate the activities of the increasing members of the group, the tempo of joy and attraction dies out. All the initial unity and joy arise not from any novelty in the new group, but only from a sense of freedom from an established order. In a certain course on Kama Sutra, the organizers cleverly stripped off moral inhibitions of the participants day after day, accompanied by actual stripping of clothing stage after stage. A process of de-socialization took place with the pleasure of the participants which culminated in a naked group sex sessions. This is the pleasure of freedom from the established normative order. Unrestrained freedom is what the individual is seeking for but could not find in real life within the ordinary social order. Therefore, people readily enjoy the pleasure in any artificial and transient society, where a miniature state of nature with unrestrained freedom is recreated. But freedom is always there, we only need to break the hold of bondage. The bondage is neither in the physical system nor in the social system, but lies deep inside the self. Eternal Love is overflowing, and beauty is plentiful too; we can listen and hear it, look and see it, touch and feel it, embrace and enjoy it everywhere. It pleases the heart and soothes the soul. Beauty is created on the heart's yearning for love, and a heart full of love would never be lacking of it. Love does not come from beauty, but it is beauty that comes from love, for without love there is no beauty, and the heart that is lacking in love shall cherish beauty in vain. It is advisable that we discover happiness and pleasure in the beauty of the balance between individual freedom and the collective order as established in the normative order of the society, and not in a rebellion against it. Let us enjoy singing and dancing in our day to day life and surroundings, and realise the truth as someone has wisely said, "I travelled the whole world in search of happiness and when I returned home, I found it."

Bimstec collaboration is stepping up growth Bangladesh taking prominent role

By Ashis Biswas

Generally unnoticed in India's mainstream media, there are positive signs of change in India's East and Northeast regions. Bangladesh and Nepal have proposed to India small but significant steps to improve regional power and road connectivity during the last few days. Nepal has suggested the movement of goods from Kathmandu to Kolkata Port by using the river route via Bihar and West Bengal. The movement of rice, heavy machinery and other cargo from India through Bangladesh to Tripura and Bangladesh itself using the waterways, has already begun. Bangladesh has decided to secure another 100 megawatts of power from Palatana power station, Tripura, raising to 600 MWs its daily intake from India. Top automakers are pressing the Centre to arrange for the delivery of cars and bikes using the river channel linking Varanasi to Haldia. Further, power experts in Bangladesh estimate that the region can save as much as \$9 billion annually through a better integrated grid network. The objective is to ensure that India as the largest producer can transfer power to neighbours like Bangladesh in real time. This can catalyse the process of

On the transportation side, Kolkata will be linked with Khulna in Bangladesh by rail, with passenger and cargo movements to begin from January 2017. At present, Kolkata is liked with Dhaka, with plans for extending the link to Chittagong port in the future. The importance of Kolkata as a major transit point for Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan is significant. The linkage with Bangladesh by rail and road was operational before 1947. It is being only revived. However, in the new millennium, there are other factors as well. Kolkata is crucially important because it is the nearest very large market for Dhaka, as well as a major transit point in its own right. The city is well connected with other national and international centres. In addition, among major urban centres! Bangladesh is keener than others to make the BIMSTEC, whose Secretariat is in Dhaka, work effectively. The BIMSTEC's growth and present record are encouraging for its member countries. To take only a few random figures, in 2000, the grouping secured a total FDI of \$8 billion. By 2008, it

The use of coal can be reduced in the long term by putting up a regional gas pipeline network as proposed by Thailand and Bangladesh, seeking to use the rich energy resources of the Bay of Bengal. The UNCTAD and other agencies are taking an active interest in the project. It will also help concerned governments in the BIMSTEC region to make power available to millions of households still without electricity.

faster growth within the South Asia region, by cutting down on production time and pollution. The potential for an integrated development of the power sector along with a higher regional power trade, remains largely untapped. Dhaka-based media reports claim that carbon emissions can be reduced by 8% through better connectivity and technology. The present situation regarding emissions that still remain high, is mainly because most countries in the BIMSTEC region rely on coal as the main fuel. The use of coal can be reduced in the long term by putting up a regional gas pipeline network as proposed by Thailand and Bangladesh, seeking to use the rich energy resources of the Bay of Bengal. The UNCTAD and other agencies are taking an active interest in the project. It will also help concerned governments in the BIMSTEC region to make power available to millions of households still without electricity. Being located geographically at the centre of the BIMSTEC region gives Bangladesh a major advantage. It can reach out to the biggest market in India to its West and the relatively affluent Thailand on its South-east. On the path to fast industrialisation, Bangladesh will use \$.4.5 billion in 27 power development projects in the next few years, with Chinese financial assistance. There will be upgradation of the existing network, ensuring expansion and better transmission, control and transfer systems.

rose to \$58 billion, dropping to \$46 billion in 2013 as an international economic recession began. India and Thailand generally did better than others in attracting FDI on account of their stronger economies. Analysts feel that at a time FDI has been difficult to secure, Delhi could look at its BIMSTEC options more closely. Says a Kolkata-based analyst, "There is little doubt that this(BIMSTEC) remains a pocket of growth, albeit on a small scale, but a bright spot in the backdrop of a gloomy economy. Even during the present difficult years, BIMSTEC countries have over the last decade managed to register a 6 per cent or more annual rate of growth. This alone should convince our policymakers that for the present, the Act East policy remains our best option for growth." Intra regional GDP within the region stands at \$2.8 trillion, while the overall level of business and trade is \$ 38 billion. Even the traditionally laggard West Bengal Government seems to have got the message that it has to begin' delivering.' Accordingly, it has agreed to widen part of the long highway from Siliguri to Digha/Haldia in Midnapore, as National Highway authorities propose to convert a northern stretch of two lanes to a four lane highway. In addition, the state has cleared encroachment of a few pockets that were holding up the already delayed expansion of the Metro railway project in Kolkata. Work had been held up for long in both cases. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Women respected in Meghalaya – really?

Editor, NEHU-Shillong pro-chancellor Henry Lamin speaking on the concluding day of the seminar on 'Understanding the tribes of Asia' at Synod College on Friday November, 4, 2016 pointed out that in Meghalaya women are respected so much that "sometimes we might say where the position of men is." May I ask Henry Lamin how women are respected in Meghalaya when they are debarred from holding the post of a Sordar Shnong/Village Headperson, Secretary, Treasurer or a Sangot of a traditional Khasi village dorbar (traditional Khasi village institution)? Khasi women are born 'equals' as their male species so they have every right to occupy the office of any male office bearer in our dorbar shnong. Time to accept 'change' if we really 'respect' our women. It's ironic that a scholar still makes statements that reek of

gender stereotyping. Yours etc. J Thangkhiw, Via email

Are the black sheep overtaking?

Editor, I have nothing against any religion since like all other religions, Islam too is a merciful and peaceful religion. But the "black sheep in every community" as remarked by Md Sageer in his letter "Disruption of peace" (ST, 05 Nov, 2016) is the *locus standi* here. World events, particularly in Muslim nations, show and prove that these black sheep have overtaken the peace loving Muslims of Islam. A message sent by one of my friend Faroukh says it all in this regard. He shared that today Muslims in all the Islamic nations are on the path of self-annihilation whereas those who are living in non-Islamic nations are comparatively better. What has gone wrong in this peaceful religion then that we have ISIS, ISIL committing such venomous acts against their fellow human beings? Women are

tagged and sold like products and chained people are bulldozed in countries like Syria, Libya and other Islamic nations where beasts in the form of humans are preying at their brethren. And ironically, there is none, even Md Sageer, to condemn such barbaric acts in the public platform. Faroukh said that there are not many to condemn such acts since those who do will find their geography changed. I don't know what it takes for someone to remain this aloof when something as precious as religion is on the path to self-annihilation. Regarding drinking of cow urine, research the world over has proven that it is helpful in treatment of leprosy, cancer, anaemia and other dreadful diseases. Even cow dung, which not only fertilizes our croplands, if eaten can also have the same effect on the diseased brain and head of the person. So, I don't see any reason why the head of the state should utter a word on this. I have even seen many of my Muslim friends buying cow urine and dung from Swami Ramdev's Patanjali Ayurvedic stores. After all the plague that has spread

like cancer in religion today can only be cured by them. And people like Akram Iqbal and Md Sageer feel that I am using inflammatory language! If my language is inflammatory then what would they say about the inhuman acts of their counterparts in neighbouring Bangladesh? Yours etc. PK Dwivedi Shillong – 1

What happens to Arnab Goswami now?

Editor, It is very shocking and surprising that Arnab Goswami has resigned from Times Now Channel. Arnab has carved an iconic status for himself when it comes to news broadcast space. Arnab is the best news anchor India has had. He has worked really hard all these years and deserves the best. Every professional has his own style and manner which in Arnab earned him likes and dislikes invariably among audiences. Arnab is a byproduct of a viciously competitive commercial television space. He is a

fearless fighter and will remain the same until his last. He is a Legend, a man of trust & commitment for the citizens of this country. In a democracy where journalism is considered the Fourth Estate, it is the duty of journalists to continue to be watchdogs. Debate is about engaging with each other in search for the truth and not screaming at each other to score brownie points. He spared none with his haranguing and bullying tactics. He has a lot of guts in challenging and handling some of the rogue speakers. Arnab's brand of journalism has often come under flak, especially the daily NewsHour. Times should now decide whether it is good or bad for them and for Arnab. It is his future and he has to decide his course. Vinod C. Dixit, Viaemail

Will Mawlai Nongmali be de-municipalised?

Editor, Stupendous and frightening news is going the round in Mawlai Mawdatbaki locality that the CEM will on Nov, 05, 2016 proclaim the notification that

Mawlai Nongmali Ward XI East is outside the Municipal Administration, which simultaneously means de-notification of the Municipality Act in force. It is further learnt that hectic arrangement is being made in a befitting manner to welcome and hail his arrival on that fateful day. I am not for or against such unilateral and personal venture but the question is whether he has the authority of abrogating, rescinding and nullifying the State Govt. Act without legislation? I am afraid that if his visit to the locality aims against the Municipal Administration, it may tantamount to contempt of the Govt. Act. Secondly, the question is does not the para 12 (A) of the Sixth Schedule applicable in this instant case stipulating that the State Govt. Law or Act prevail over the District Council Act or Law in case the same subject is legislated by both? Hence, I implore upon each and everyone involved including the CEM to review the ominous decision to obviate any undesirable consequences if the hearsay is correct. Yours etc., B.S. Mawlong Shillong-8

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

The Shillong Times

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Tarred with the same brush
PRIME Minister Narendra Modi was scathing about the ‘dark days’ of emergency declared by Indira Gandhi. However, the Bharatiya Janta Party should know that suppression of independent thinking, dissidence and protest in the spheres of politics, culture, academics, religion and the media is tantamount to having the same pernicious effect. Political leaders are arrested even if they join popular protest, some as prominent as Arvind Kejriwal and Rahul Gandhi. The BJP’s technique is obvious. Journalism is its major victim. Photographers at a Diwali meeting were highly criticized as they clicked selfies around the Prime Minister. The government no doubt hacked journalistic freedom by doing so. It may however be said that such action may not be healthy journalism. But the government also frowns upon questioning and heckling.

The BJP obviously believes in the principle that what is to be denounced about the opposition is all right for it. Narendra Modi warned against the evils of emergency. But a day after he said all this, the government shut down a popular Hindi TV news channel. It was argued that the channel threatened national security by giving out what was considered sensitive data during the militant attack on the Pathankot air base in January. The government action against the channel militates against democratic values. What is surprising is that the authorities took so long to take the decision. It is conceivable that the real reason is that the channel did not toe the official line. The ruling party is imposing repeated media bans in Kashmir. It has now extended it nationally. The press has to prove that it cannot be whipped.

LOOKING BACK
March 14, 1989

Powerful explosions kill 17 in Bodo areas

A string of time bombs, planted by suspected Bodo extremists, exploded today at three different points of the Bongaigaon bazaar in Assam, killing 17 people and injuring 51. Police said two bombs exploded near a temple and the third at a railway level crossing. Some of the bodies were mutilated beyond identification. The bomb exploded at about 11.15 AM when the bazaar was well crowded. This was the second major incident of extremists violence in the state since the All-Bodo Students Union (Upendra faction) launched its agitation for Bodo land in March 1987. Official reports from Bongaigaon, a major commercial hub in Goalpara district said among the 31 seriously injured 18 were shifted to the Medical College Hospital here, while 13 were admitted to hospitals in Bongaigaon and nearby towns.

Assam Home Minister Mr Bhriгу Kumar Phukan who airdashed here cutting short his engagements in Delhi condemned the killings and sent condolence to the bereaved families. Unofficial of assaults on some people followed the incident. Inspector General of Police Mr J K Sinha and a team of doctors left for the spot, Police launched an intense combing operation to apprehend the culprits. This was the second major explosion in Kokrajhar District after February 10 when fourteen people were killed in a bomb explosion in a passengers bus at Kajalgaon. Meanwhile the All Bodo Students Union (Upendra faction) has threatened to enforce its proposed fifteen day towns of the Brahmaputra Valley including Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Tezpur and Guwahati from March 27.

TO THE EDITOR

A call to all universities and colleges
Editor,
I write with the hope that this letter will impact the future role, position and quality of our higher educational institutions. Firstly, let us see what the main purpose of universities and colleges are. It’s very simple - to make the world a better place. They are to positively impact the lives of students and make them change-makers. As a state and region, we are growing and developing and this transition is important and exciting. The government of Meghalaya has indicated the need for a Department of Sustainable Development. If it does, will there be really qualified potential employees (change-makers)? Universities and colleges here are not catching up with the world.

We desperately need new innovative programmes in our educational institutions. Masters and research programmes in Sustainability, Environment Management, and development-related programmes like Development Studies, Social Development or Public Policy must be initiated. Conventional programmes will always be important but in this day and age they are not enough.

It is encouraging to see Synod College setting up the International Centre for North East Studies and Lady Keane College the Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies. What about a centre for Urban Studies or Sustainability Studies or a centre for Happiness? I implore upon the authorities of our universities and colleges to be bold and visionary for better future prospects. The future

Money, inflation and the global economy

A few months ago while on my way home from work an unusual but rather amusing thing happened. A fellow passenger took all of us by surprise when he handed over to the driver a cigarette and only part of the fare. The driver, after the initial shock told the passenger who was a little tipsy that he does not smoke and asked him to pay the full fare instead. The driver narrated another funny incident about how another passenger tried to barter his way out of paying the taxi fare by offering him a quarter bottle of liquor. The poor fellow had spent all his money on booze, so the only way out was to offer his prized possession to the driver. This little incident made me think about the difficulties people have while going about their daily business under the barter system when they had to trade something they had for something they did not need.

The invention of money solved this problem once and for all. In the eyes of many economists the invention of money is in the same league as some of the greatest inventions man has made such as the wheel and fire. Firstly, money acts as a medium of exchange and secondly it is a store of value. A case in point is the life of a vegetable vendor who sells her vegetables at lewduh. Whatever little amount she earns can be used to buy the necessary items needed to run her family. Secondly, that precious money could come in handy in times of need since money also acts as a store of value. Most economic Variables are also measured in monetary terms since they give an accurate picture of the current economic scenario. For example when the Finance Minister announced in this year’s budget that India’s foreign exchange reserves stood at around 350 billion dollars it shows the good health of the Indian economy considering the fact that at one point of time India’s foreign exchange reserves were barely sufficient to pay for two weeks of imports.

In today’s global economy where economic globalization has taken centre stage it would be impossible to move goods and people from one country to another without the use of money. For all the good things that money has brought to mankind the flipside is that it has increased the evil of greed, an ever present evil

By Gary Marbianiang

in the heart of man since time immemorial but which has grown by leaps and bounds in modern times. It has also created a phenomenon which in its mild form is simply known as inflation but it can turn into a Frankenstein called hyperinflation when it cannot be tamed. A healthy dose of inflation is vital for any economy since it is almost impossible to grow without a proportionate increase in the rate of inflation. In December last year the Federal Reserve (American Central Bank) took a decision which went unnoticed by the general public but which is significant for the global economy. It announced that it would increase the benchmark rate for the first time in nearly a decade. Generally if rates are increased by the Central Bank of any country, it will make borrowing costlier for the general public. This has increased fears in Americans that the recovery that has taken place in the economy since the financial crisis of 2007-08 might be stalled.

The year 2008 was a significant year on the personal front as well as for the global economy. I was one of the lucky few to have the opportunity of appearing for a job interview in a premier financial institution barely a few months after I graduated from college. Surprisingly the job interview went pretty well. A friend also had to appear for the same job interview on that same day and even though his interview was scheduled much later than mine, I somehow found the patience to wait for him. Sitting there in the waiting room we noticed the tension in the faces of most of the candidates much unlike the carefree attitude of me and my friend since we’re both fresh from college and this was our very first job interview. One person caught our attention. She was a girl who had gone through several job interviews without success. I instantly recognised her. She looked dejected and some of the employees of that organisation asked her how the interview went. Her blunt response was that they asked about the financial crisis and she knew nothing about it. It just dawned on me then that had they asked me the same question I would have been as clueless since my understanding of the financial crisis back then was very limited.

The financial crisis that had unfolded in the largest and strongest economy in the world, was not

experienced since the Great Depression of 1929. The financial sector of the US was on the brink of collapse. Major financial institutions in the U.S like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae had to be bailed out by the government. Lehmann Brothers which survived the stock market crash of 1929 collapsed during the height of the crisis in 2008. The collapse of Lehmann Brothers set the tone for the pessimistic economic outlook and the great recession. The U.S Government had to resort to unpopular measures since public money had to be used to bailout these banks. The crash in the financial sector of the world’s largest economy sent ripples throughout the world. Europe was going through a crisis of its own with some countries like Ireland being hit by a crash in the financial sector similar to the one in the U.S. Other countries like Spain and Portugal went through a debt crisis unlike any other, starting in late 2009.

Some prominent personalities in the entertainment world were also affected by events following the crash. It struck a chord with me as it brought to light the magnitude of the crisis .Shane Filan, of the popular Irish boy-band, WestLife was hit hard by the crash in the real estate sector in Ireland. He and his brother had invested millions in the property boom that Ireland experienced in the years prior to the crash but it all went downhill for him following the biggest bust in Europe’s property history. His financial troubles came to light when he filed for bankruptcy in 2011. Kidrock, another famous musician appeared on a popular American news network during the height of the crisis to show support for his hometown, Detroit and the automotive industry. The American automotive industry bore the brunt of the recession and America’s automobile sweethearts Ford and Chrysler had to lay off thousands of workers since demand for consumer durable goods was down. Production was at an all time low.

The U.S government not only bailed out the “Too big to fail banks” but it also did something which has rarely been done before; It bailed out major private companies. Chrysler, one of the major car producers in the world benefitted from the fiscal stimulus that President Obama announced immediately after the financial crisis. The global economy and the U.S economy in particular has gradually recovered from the crisis with job figures in the

past six months or so showing unemployment level at their lowest in a long time. The U.S economy added over 2.5 million jobs in 2015, the second best gain since 1999. The announcement by the Federal Reserve to increase rates came at a time when the recovery in the U.S economy is in full swing and inflation is one of the factors that the Federal Reserve had taken into consideration while making the announcement. Fed Officials had set a two percent inflation target and they were so sure prices would eventually rise so they raised the benchmark rate so they wouldn’t have to resort to quick fix measures once inflation rose.

Since the creation of the first central bank in Sweden in 1694, it role has become synonymous with monetary policy which is to boost the confidence in the economy by creating a stable price environment for all stakeholders which includes households, industries, savers and investors. Today most economists favours a low and steady rate of inflation. Low inflation enables an economy to bounce back more quickly from a downturn since it reduces the risk of a liquidity trap preventing monetary policy from stabilising the economy. I will conclude by mentioning a rare occurrence. Hyperinflation, a situation of extreme inflation rates that didn’t exist in earlier periods of commodity money spread like wildfire in the Weimar Republic of Germany and the economy of Zimbabwe in the late 1990’s. I remember a teacher telling us about the episode of hyperinflation in Germany. A million marks (German currency) wasn’t enough to buy a loaf of bread. A man who drank two cups of coffee at 5000 marks each was presented with a bill for 14000 because prices had shot up . in between. Then there’s a story of a couple who took a few hundred million marks to the theatre box office hoping to see a show but discovered it wasn’t enough. Tickets were now a billion marks each!

At the height of the crisis the inflation rate was in tens of thousands per month. Germany has surely left its economic woes behind and recovered from its worst ever economic crisis to become Europe’s strongest and most reliable economy. The whole of Europe seems to revolve around Germany these days and it has set a high standard for all to follow.

(The writer can be contacted at g a r y . m a r b a n i a n g @y a h o o . c o . i n)

pathology. Indeed, we ourselves furnish prescriptions and medical test reports to doctors without having assistance of others. The lawyers can become jobless for some time but they are to be recruited as judges. Recently, the Hon’ble CJI, TS Thakur had said that seventy thousand judges were needed to clear the pending cases. Given India has only about seventeen thousand judges at present, more than fifty thousand lawyers can be recruited and trained to judge lawyer - less court cases. In an unequal society like ours, it can translate the words “the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India” (Article-14) into reality.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

Is BSP the front-runner in Uttar Pradesh?

Mulayam shoots himself in the foot, again

By Amulya Ganguli

Having made a mess of the Samajwadi Party’s (SP) electoral prospects in UP by sparking off internecine squabbling, the party’s national president, Mulayam Singh Yadav, is trying to make amends by replicating Bihar’s pattern of a mahagathbandhan or a grand alliance in next year’s assembly elections in the state.

But the ironies of this attempt are obvious. For a start, when the grand alliance took shape in Bihar, the SP was a part of the group. But, then, it walked out presumably because Mulayam Singh was dissatisfied with the number of seats which were offered to it.

This was not the first time when Mulayam Singh had scuttled an attempt for setting up a non-BJP alliance. Earlier, he had ensured that the so-called Janata

Given these cross-currents, which party is the front-runner in UP?

In the immediate aftermath of the surgical strikes by the Indian army on the staging posts of the terrorists across the Line of Control in Pakistan, it appeared that the BJP might be able to repeat its stellar performance of 2014 when the party won 71 of the 80 Lok Sabha seats in the state. Its ally, the Apna Dal, won two.

Since then, however, several developments have gone against the BJP. First, it is unlikely that the support which the party received from about 10 per cent of the Muslims in UP in 2014 – the highest in the BJP’s electoral history – will be repeated in the wake of the revival by the Narendra Modi government of the idea of a uniform civil code which the Muslims regard as a

Secondly, the apparently cold-blooded killing of eight escaped prisoners of the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) in a fake encounter may antagonise the Muslims, especially with the Congress and other opposition parties targeting the BJP over the incident. In normal circumstances, a sizeable chunk of the Muslim votes would have been expected to go to the SP. But the comment of the party’s influential Muslim leader, Azam Khan, that the minorities will not support an unreliable party shows how the infighting has hurt the SP.

“parivar” on the lines of the 1977 formation would not be constituted, thereby confirming his reputation as a spoiler as when he ditched the Congress even as Sonia Gandhi was claiming in 1999 that her party had the support of 272 M.P.s, including those of the SP.

Given such a dubious track record, it is unlikely that Mulayam Singh’s initiatives to repair the damage caused to his party by the confrontation between his son, chief minister Akhilesh Yadav, and the latter’s uncle, Shivpal Singh Yadav (who is backed by Mulayam Singh), by forming a large political conglomerate will succeed.

For one, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar will be wary of aligning with Mulayam Singh just over a year after the Bihar experience. Besides, Nitish Kumar has been toying with the idea of forming an alliance in U.P. with himself as the patron. For another, even a party like the Congress, which is expected to be no more than an “also ran” in the UP elections, may favour going along with Akhilesh rather than with Mulayam because of the former’s clean image.

Only the Rashtriya Lok Dal’s Ajit Singh may be interested in view of the fact that he has been in the wilderness ever since the fall of the Manmohan Singh government in which he was a minister. However, Shivpal Singh’s attempt to bring together the so-called Lohiates in the Janata Dal (United) and the followers of former prime minister Charan Singh is unlikely to be a resounding success.

Similarly, the chances of success of the powwow between Mulayam Singh and the Congress’s poll strategist, Prashant Kishor, about putting up a united front against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are minimal because the Congress is yet to make up its mind on either a partner or on going it alone.

curtailment of their personal laws.

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It is believed, therefore, that the gainer will be the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) if only because the party is expected to recover the Dalit votes which it lost to the BJP in 2014 when the BJP received more Dalit votes at the national level than ever before – 24 per cent compared to 19 per cent secured by the Congress and 14 per cent by the BSP.

However, the lynching of Dalit young men in Una in Gujarat and Rohith Vemula’s suicide in Hyderabad are among the incidents which have alienated the community from the BJP.

If the Dalits, who comprise 21.3 per cent of U.P.’s population, and the Muslims, who make up 19.3 per cent, move in large numbers to the BSP, its leader Mayawati’s expectation of surging ahead of the SP and the BJP is likely to be fulfilled.

One of the BJP’s problems is that it doesn’t have a chief ministerial candidate while the BSP has Mayawati, the SP Akhilesh and the Congress Sheila Dikshit although she has become invisible of late. The BJP’s 2014 victory was based on Modi’s popularity. But this time, the party will have to bank on Modi’s proactive Pakistan policy to win votes. But that may not be enough. (IPA Service)

“Dreams that do come true can be as unsettling as those that don't.”
--- Brett Butler

The Shillong Times
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Two significant events
AT 8 pm of November 8, Prime Minister Modi stunned the nation with his announcement that denominations of Rs 500 and 1000 would be demonetized with immediate effect. A shell-shocked citizenry was caught by surprise even as people rushed to the nearest ATM to queue up and deposit whatever cash they had in the old denominations before the midnight deadline. This deposit is possible for people who don't have stacks of black money and who have friends and relatives to help them park the cash in their respective accounts for the time being. Those hoarding black money would, however, have lost the race against time. This is the single most significant step taken by any government in recent times to address the black economy. That even the media had no inkling of this decision taken in the corridors of the Finance Ministry shows that the move was aimed at crippling those who stubbornly refused to declare their actual incomes and those engaged in terror funding through the use of Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN). The move is a Modi masterstroke and must be appreciated as it will have far reaching effects. What worries many, however, is the introduction of the Rs 2000 currency which they feel might yet again give a fillip to hoarding of black money in larger currencies. Perhaps not all is revealed about the nature of the new currency so we have to wait and watch.

The other stunner is the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States of America after a long and protracted campaign marked by a polarization of the electorate never before seen in that country. Trump was irreverent and misogynistic and took relentless pot-shots at the institutions and long-held ideals of American democracy. That he finally managed to ride to victory must surprise Americans themselves. Noted political commentator Kanti Bajpai had recently stated that Trump represents that section of American voters who he calls the "deplorables." They are white, racist radicals who stand for an America with an exclusive racial profile and religion and sees all others as intruders. While political observers in this country believe that Trump is good for India because he is committed to rooting our terror in the American soil and elsewhere, and has not minced words in terming Pakistan as a terror sponsoring state, it remains to be seen how things actually play out in the long run.

LOOKING BACK
March 14, 1989

Bodo extremist killed in police encounter

A Bodo extremist was killed when a police party opened fire to repulse an ambush on it at Panbari Kokrajhar district of Assam yesterday, official reports today said. No policeman was injured in the attack. In another incident the extremists threw a bomb on a convoy of trucks at

Haltudaya bridge on the national highway number 31 in the same district yesterday. One of the trucks was burnt down. Another said that about one hundred miscreants armed with guns, bows and arrows attacked a police party at Salekati in the district.

TO THE EDITOR

Outsiders and their opinions

Editor,
For the last few months, we have been seeing a venomous critter creeping and crawling across the pages of this newspaper: a wannabe analyst who seeks to force his 'Two Veda' (Dwivedi) myopic knowledge into our heads. It is not hard to find him as he like most of his companions from the North of the country are loud and always need to show-off. See, I just stereotyped the entire of North India as difficult and coarse. How does that feel? How do our Muslim friends feel when they see themselves painted black by narrow words? Does the presence of several Muslims in a particular part of town qualify it to be called "mini Pakistan"? Based on a religion, this Dwivedi chooses, this Dwivedi relies to narrowly define these people and, again, what's so bad about Pakistan? At least they have lots of beef! If these Bangla immigrants/refugees are mini Pakistanis, then why did they break away from

Pakistan in the 70s? One is playing a nonsensical game by imagining Islam to be 'shi sur, shi dur'. Nothing ever is. My work in Delhi and the surrounding areas has shown this to me clearly. Dwivedi has forgotten that he is not 'of this place (Shillong)' and he continually runs his mouth off about everything as though he has grown up within the culture and/or community of Shillong. He passes judgement like someone who is "local". There is no Khasi clan with a Dwivedi surname when I checked last time, but maybe I am wrong. I know it seems narrow-minded to say such a thing but isn't it equally narrow-minded to say these things about the Muslim community when one isn't a member? Outsider perspectives are great but an outsider-insider one is best. Why should these people (Muslims in Shillong) have to answer for all the crimes committed by trigger-happy Muslims in the name of Islam? I do not say "Hey, Brahmin i.e. Dwivedi why did you destroy Babri?", "Hey, Brahmin, why did you kill Graham Staines?" I do not

look at my Hindu or Muslim friends and think such things. I know there are bad people out there and they hide behind a lot of things - religion, political affiliations etc. Ideally we should be without religion but that isn't the reality. So instead of imagining one billion people as monsters, be a little humble and look in the mirror first. If you want to see monsters, you don't need to look very far. Yours etc., Babet Sten, Via email

Of PM's swift moves

Editor,
I congratulate Prime Minister Modi for having made such a historical landmark to curb black money and corruption by demonetizing the present ₹500 and ₹1000 denominations and introducing new secured and improvised notes that shall be used henceforth. However, I am skeptical of whether this move of our PM will actually reduce black money in the

country. Several cases of demonetization were recorded in the past years. In 1946 ₹1,000 and ₹10,000 denominations were demonetized and another was in 1978 where ₹1,000, ₹5,000 and ₹10,000 denominations were demonetized as an attempt to counter forgery. My view is that we are yet to become a cashless society. Perhaps, there is still a huge population without a bank account. Also various schemes of the government (viz. Jan Dhan Yogn) enable people to open bank accounts, of which the bankers themselves put a rupee or two, to show these accounts have money in them. This is not financial inclusion in the real sense. Also, it is important to distinguish the 'flow' of black money and the 'stock' of black money and assets that have been acquired illegally and which are disproportionate to known sources of income. These add up to a significant portion of wealth, contrary to the money that is invested in real estate, gold, jewelry and such other

luxuries and properties. Hence this move would not have any great impact, although people with stocks of black money or currency stored in unknown locations are going to be affected as they will have to have a valid ID and address proof to exchange the ₹500 or ₹1000 notes in the banks. But the core matter is whether or not the move will inconvenience ordinary middle class and poor Indians when they buy their daily needs. Besides, casual labourers working in homes or fields keep their savings in cash and they may or may not have access to bank accounts. A lot of the blue collar economy works on cash and the very poor are affected. People do keep cash in their homes (viz. ₹500 note) for small regular expenses and payments. Even merchants in commercial areas or local markets who have to deal with the abruptly declared non-legal tenders will find it difficult to adjust to the present situation. How will they pay other people for their things? This is something that needs to be thought of. Things

implemented suddenly are not borne out of pragmatism, however, I hope that the exercise will be worth it in the end. Let us wait, watch and observe! Yours etc., Mewan Pariat, Bengaluru-77, **Rivers in Jaintia Hills** Editor, Come November and the waters in the rivers of Jaintia Hills turn blue. It would be wise for the people residing along the river banks to net as much fish as possible and transfer them to ponds. If ponds are not there already, then dig with the help of JCBs, cover the bottom and sides with thick plastic sheets and fill with river water while it is still clean. Next summer when the water is clean again, transfer back some of the fish. If the rivers continue to turn blue, then transfer of fish should be done before November every year. Yours etc. D Rangad Shillong -4

Multiple GST rates to hamper growth

Many loopholes remain to be plugged before April

By K R Sudhaman

the rate for luxuries and demerit goods over and above 28 per cent, is not a welcome development. The government argument is that the cess was required to earn revenue for compensating states which may have declining revenue in the initial years as a result of GST roll out. This will also have a cascading effect on inflation.

Ideally GST should have just one rate of say 18 per cent and perhaps zero per cent on essential goods like food grains and other items of mass consumption. But the proposed GST rates are 0 per cent, 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent. Apart from this, there will be cess, which may take the rate up to 40 per cent on items like tobacco, luxury cars, luxury, aerated water and other luxury items like jewellery and luxury watches and pens and so on. Currently the luxury goods attract a tax of up to 31 per cent including VAT and excise.

Having so many rates defeats the purpose of GST, which is to lower the tax incidence, widen the tax base, minimize tax avoidance and plug tax evasion. All these are expected to improve compliance and incentivize manufacturing and services, thereby pushing growth and increased revenue to centre and states. Lowering tax rates would have pushed consumer demand and that is not going to happen but GST in the present will only simplify tax administration and improve tax compliance.

There will be no tax on essential items such as food - this is likely to beat down inflation, which has afflicted food items in particular. "I hope the indirect tax outgo for the common man will be marginally lower under the GST," finance minister Arun Jaitley said in a media briefing after the first day of the GST Council's meeting in New Delhi, which firmed up the rates.

"The zero-tax rate will apply to half of the items in the CPI (consumer price index) basket, including food grain used by the common man," Jaitley said. This is true but the fact is the poor do not consume merely these items with the standard of living improving and per capita income raising as claimed by the government.

The cess, Jaitley said, will not be an additional burden on the taxpayers because the total of 28% and cess will not exceed the total of the existing levies. The collections from this cess will create a pool that will compensate states for loss of revenue as they shift from the earlier structure to GST, which will subsume levies such as excise, service tax, and VAT. That loss in revenue is expected to be Rs 50,000 crore in the first year alone. This cess will lapse after five years.

Bipin Sapra, tax head at consultancy and audit firm EY however said that the multiple rates will create issues of classification of goods and services, and throw up disputes. He is right. That apart with huge population of aspiring youth, who are not content with just buying food grains and basic essential, GST with such high tax rates in centre and states to come out with revenue neutral rates, will only push up inflation to the detriment of the economy. Any economist will argue inflation by itself is a tax on the poor and that apart high inflation will stunt growth as it will push down spending.

Another key area is cross-empowerment of GST authorities under the CGST and SGST. This has not yet been settled and there is a possibility of protracted battle between the centre and states. The Trade and Industry is already shocked with multi-rates as large part of the economy is not going the reap the benefits of the GST as there may not be fiscal relief to luxury and sin goods sector, which was expecting some stimulus to revive the economy through GST.

The recent talks over multiple rates of cess for different peak rate products, which fall in the category of luxury or sin goods, have indeed come as a shocker for the industry and trade. The fact that a large part of the economy is going to reap the benefits of the GST, the luxury and sin goods sectors had also been entertaining genuine expectations of some fiscal relief. But cess has washed off such a hope. Aslo, cess are not going to be CENVATable and hence non-availability of credit putting additional burden. This will also result in uncertainty of tax rates and thereby dissuading industries from going for additional investments. This kind of multi-rate GST along

with cess will ensure that it is no longer the best ever fiscal instrument.

There are also issues with regard to service tax on information Technology and IT enabled services. Services sector accounted for huge 59 per cent of GDP in the country and so far service tax is levied only by the central government. Now with the rollout of GST, states will also levy service tax, widening the tax base of states as well. Presently service tax is around 15 per cent including all cess. The centre gets all the amount, of which a portion is shared as it formed part of divisible pool of taxes to be shared with the states under the finance commission recommendations. The challenge in service tax under GST would be cenvat credit on service tax paid on input services, particularly on export of services on which there is virtually no tax. There are indications that these services will attract 18 per cent GST rate and it would be interesting to see how cenvat refunds would be provided. This will be substantial amount for export services. It is also to be seen how GST on services will be administered. If states too had to administer, it would lead to chaos. Presently only centre administers the service tax and one proposal is to ensure it remained that way. It is to be seen if this is agreed upon by states. As states are expected to get sizeable revenue from service tax under GST as presently they get none. This portion of revenue is important particularly to those manufacturing states, which are expected to lose some revenue on manufacturing side with the implementation of GST as it is a destination based tax benefitting more the consuming states like Bihar and West Bengal. Overall, an imperfect GST is certainly better than no GST as it will help in carrying forward tax reforms. But the economy will not be able to reap the full benefit of GST with multiplicity of rates. Until multi-rate structure is not converged into single or at the most two rates without cess, it is going to be a case of glass half full and half empty. After the rollout of GST, the central and state governments should move towards single rate structure as early as possible and certainly not more than five years. (IPA Service)

Trump's India policy not yet clear

New Delhi has to wait and watch

By Kalyani Shankar

The US election results have surprised many who were batting for the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. This is more so in India where many Indians felt Hillary would be good for India. She is known to many Indians because she was the First Lady for eight years, US Senator for another eight years, and Secretary of State for four and all the time she had been perceived as a friend of India.

However, the Republican candidate Donald Trump won the race to the White House in Presidential elections on November 8. How did he win? He had his poll strategy well planned. He proved he is a successful politician even though he is new to politics just as he has proved a good businessman. He was an outsider to Washington but it was his Washington bashing which made him popular with the

said so far about India and its neighbours suggest that he would lift the Indo US relationship out of its rut. He could well be moving towards better bilateral relations given the fact that many Indo Americans have donated for his campaign even though during the campaign he had mimicked Indian call centre workers and roared against outsourcing. There are some who believe that he might promote India against China to change the balance of power in Asia as part of his new foreign policy. He had called Pakistan as a most dangerous country and might favour cutting down the US military aid to Islamabad. He has sought the help of India and other nations to address the problem of a "semi-unstable" nuclear Pakistan. India has certain concerns which Trump may

The second is about immigration. There are about 3.2 million Indians in the US and more and more youngsters are moving to the land of opportunities. Many more are going for higher studies. The tightening of the visas and immigration rules might affect these people. Thirdly, till now Trump has been favouring a protectionist, isolationist rhetoric. He even commented that the international trade is rigged against the US. This attitude will also affect India if he does not switch to a more liberal attitude.

anti establishment voters. Secondly, he was able to connect with the whites, even those in the Mid West speaking the language they want to hear about jobs, immigration, gun control etc. Thirdly, even though the majority of the electorate were disenchanted with both Trump and Hillary, Trump proved to be more acceptable than Hillary in the end, Fourthly, he was able to get the support of the Whites, and others who were convinced that the immigrants were taking their jobs. Brexit also helped him to a certain extent.

Fifthly, his victory proves the tradition of not installing the same party for the third time in the White House. Last but not the least, Dame Luck also smiled at him as he has had the last laugh when many were laughing at him 18 months ago for aspiring to become the presidential candidate.

Now that he will be the tenant of the White House, what does it mean for India? Had Hillary been the Prime Minister it would have been the continuation of the Obama policies.

Like in the West, many in India have strongly criticised Donald Trump's outrageous remarks on women, Muslims, immigration and what not. For long no one took him seriously. He is an unknown entity whose foreign policy aspects are yet to be spelt out particularly pertaining to India. Even the Indian Foreign Ministers and government officials have had no interaction with the business tycoon. Trump of course came to India to inaugurate the Trump Tower in Mumbai but beyond that not much is known. Of course many feel that Trump is largely playing to his domestic constituency and he will be a changed man once he occupies the White House. Most of what Trump had

have to address. The first is about the H1B visas for the Indians who go to the US to work in the IT sector. If he continues to take a strong view, it will affect the Indians greatly. The second is about immigration. There are about 3.2 million Indians in the US and more and more youngsters are moving to the land of opportunities. Many more are going for higher studies. The tightening of the visas and immigration rules might affect these people. Thirdly, till now Trump has been favouring a protectionist, isolationist rhetoric. He even commented that the international trade is rigged against the US. This attitude will also affect India if he does not switch to a more liberal attitude. Moreover Trump has several times bracketed India and China, as economic competitors, Indian foreign office has to closely watch what Trump finally does..

His victory speech was conciliatory and indicated that once he moves to 1600 Pennsylvania avenue, he might forget the election rhetoric. In fact South Block had always believed that whoever becomes the President, India will have to deal with him or her. Also many Indian diplomats claim that the House and the Senate have taken a bi-partisan support pertaining to India and the Indian caucus has got members from both parties. The Indo-US relations are at a point where it has become much stronger and also the influence of the Indian Americans are growing. Trump in his victory speech said, "We will get along with all those who get along with us." India is presently closer to the US than ever before and if Trump means what he has said, New Delhi has nothing much to worry about. (IPA Service)

“*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: LIX No. 91 SHILLONG, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2016

Currency offensive

IT happened once ago, during the Prime Ministership of Indira Gandhi. The government of India has once again launched a currency offensive. Bank notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 denominations stop being legal tender by a draconian measure causing untold misery to common people. The intention is laudable as it is to combat counterfeit currency notes and black money in the form of cash. It will however destabilise the country’s rural economy as that is largely cash based. Prime Minister Narendra Modi believes that today’s pain is tomorrow’s gain. As far as the honest citizens are concerned, the government may have apparently resorted to a kind of blitzkrieg. It has to get hold of data and identify possible tax evaders as millions exchange old notes for new. Banks had tried to do it previously but in vain. Besides, a greater portion of black money is not held in cash form. It lies in assets of fictitious entities in the organised sector of our financial system.

This is of course only part of Narendra Modi’s war on black money. He should also use his political clout to bring real estate under the umbrella of GST. That will activate developers to seek tax credits and establish an audit mechanism. States which handle land related transactions can then be persuaded to lower high levels of stamp duty. That will facilitate reporting of such transactions. The government anyway has to do considerably more if the mission of launching a war on black money has to be really disruptive of the menace to the economy.

LOOKING BACK
March 14, 1989

Terang blames AGP Govt for inaction

Assam Agriculture Minister Haliram Terang, who resigned yesterday, has criticised the State Government for its performance. Addressing a press conference today, Mr Terang said that the government had now reached such a position that it was being identified as “anti-people”. The government’s inaction in the case of nepotism and

corruption had also made the people lose their faith in it, he added. Mr Terang said the administration was in a disorder with the officers not receiving proper instruction to tackle the problems. That was why even good citizens were now confused. Today in Kokrajhar and Udalguri many people had become the victims of terrorists and police repression.

TO THE EDITOR

On another surgical strike

Editor, The surgical strike led by the government on black money is a bitter move for the overwhelmingly and powerfully rich, and the fraudsters. Hence we will witness endless ifs and buts on this issue from them saying why the Modi move is bad. But for a common average layman, what this strike does is that we don’t possess any more legal hard cash in hand for daily usage but again since hospitals, pharmacies, petrol pumps are exempted. I find it’s alright to make some sacrifices now for a better future. It’s a blessing in disguise because I’m not going to spend any money for a day or two. I hardly have one thousand in my wallet daily and my bank balance account barely lasts twenty days from the date of credit thanks to the endless recovery of countless loans. We don’t make too much hue and cry over this issue but we really do feel for people possessing lakhs and crores of rupees because they’ll have so much work and thinking to do and also hope to be able to sleep peacefully. There’s a proverb which says "Suk kiba duk" (blessed are the poor) and this is most appropriate at this juncture. Enough said, I take this opportunity once more to thank the Almighty

God for providing what's basic to me and I pray that may He grant us a healthy life which is the utmost wish one would ever wish for in his/her entire life.

Yours etc.,
D. Warshong,
Viaemail

Good move by Modi

Editor, This refers to your editorial “Two significant events” (ST- Nov 10, 2016). The government's decision to declare Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 rupee notes as illegal has really evoked positive response from economists and industrialists. This is the first time in Indian politics that PM Modi has showed actual leadership qualities, which is fruitful for every non-corrupt individual. No doubt the common man would be troubled by this decision but soon everything will be alright. It is good that the PM without giving any indication for such a drastic move carried out a surgical strike and parties who thrive on black money are dumb founded. The Congress party is the worst affected and therefore crying foul and creating panic. The PM has been slowly taking action by bringing maximum people in the banking fold. Most of the real estate transactions in the country are done using unaccounted cash. When, black money and corruption are the biggest

The surgical assault on black money and Trump’s victory

By Patricia Mukhim

In terms of news there couldn't have been a better week than this. First it was Prime Minister Modi's swift surgical strikes against black money and terror funding followed by Donald Trump's win as the next POTUS. The first news was received with shock and awe. Shock because of the repercussions, especially if one has enough money to hoard. Awe because of the secrecy of the whole operation until Mr Modi announced it himself. The surprise is the strategy. Hence when Congressmen and women carp about the "poor" being the hardest hit, one wants to ask them if they would like to share some of the wealth they hold in black money with the poor? Why is it that the poor have always been used as the fall guys when people have actually lost an argument? Mr Modi's attempt at financial inclusion was implemented on mission mode, despite the lethargy demonstrated by banks in reaching out to the last mile. Perhaps Modi nursed this strategy even then. But for people who argue that those without a bank account will find it difficult to change notes the answer is "No." All of us can exchange our currencies up to Rs 4000 in cash. The rest will have to be deposited to our bank accounts where we can use plastic money to pay for goods and services.

The only problem is that banks need to recalibrate the ATMs after which we can withdraw Rs 2000 only per card up to November 18 after which the limit will be raised to Rs 4000 per day from November 19. However we can withdraw cash against cheques up to Rs 10,000 per day and a maximum limit of Rs 20,000 a week up to November 24. After this date the limits will be reviewed. This will definitely be a pain for big spenders. No wonder the cribbing comes from them. I spoke to many small business holders. Their

only comment was that if the Government thinks it's doing it for the larger good then who are they to complain? The lower income groups like everyone else will face the same problems in the next few days but they too don't have such a huge amount to change. So we would all be equal in terms of waiting up at a long queue at a bank to exchange the old notes. The other disadvantage for the illiterate would be that they would need help to fill up the forms for exchanging notes so banks would do well to appoint people at the front offices to help fill up those forms. The reaction of the Congress party to the Modi masterstroke was expected. Here is a party that had danced the tango with many tax evaders and scamsters. Now they are trying to say that the poor will be affected by this new transaction. Can they explain how only the poor will be affected by the latest Modinomics? Will money be devalued? No, it will remain the same. So what's the problem? The labourers who are paid every week will get their salaries in smaller or bigger denominations. The small businesses will start getting smaller denominations as legal tender. The bigger picture of curbing black money and terror funding by way of making fake Indian currency irrelevant does not seem to matter to those who oppose this move. It was even more ironic to hear the Meghalaya Chief Minister saying that there are better ways of curbing black money without hurting the poor. Can he list out the strategies he has in mind without of course telling us that prior information has to be given before clamping on the high denomination notes as Modi did on November 8, last. I am sure even a cretin would know that prior information is akin to insider trading information and would result in many people turning their black money

into some other colour. But being a politician and knowing the politics of our times I am sure he speaks for all politicians who are used to keeping huge amounts of cash to dole out to prospective supporters for their personal needs. In fact I am sure that several tribal politicians will now have to induce their friends and relatives to open up bank accounts and allow their money to be parked in those accounts for the time being. Why, tribals may even become fronts and open up accounts for many non-tribals who have huge amounts of demonetized cash to deposit their money in. And I am sure the smart ones will do it for a commission! Speaking about the impact of the Modi move, a Facebook post from a tax man says, "Real estate prices will crash, the haves will purchase this time with their declared sources, mostly with black money converted through the accounts of the exempted (tribals) and those below taxable income. We can only hope that the state of the majority who have meagre sources - daily wage earners, others will improve." Well, every reform will have its upside and downside and Governments have to constantly find ways to arrest the regressive trends. That it has taken the country several decades to come up with a measure to prevent the black economy from thriving shows political commonsense from a Government that is committed to financial inclusion. We have by-elections to the district councils coming up next month. I am sure a lot of cash has been stashed by those interested to prove their clout in that election. All that would have become paper for now. It will take some explaining to the banks as to how such huge amounts now need to be legitimised. It will be good to wait and watch the outcome of the December bye-election election! Meanwhile, coming back to Donald Trump's win as

POTUS, another major upheaval in world politics, a FaceBook friend has a very interesting take. He says, "We have to read Trump's win in the context that the world has seriously moved ahead to an age of massive disruption in our lifestyle and earning ability, by moving out of industrial era to the technology era. Unfortunately, this transition is also coming at a time, when we are going through one of the most serious economic downturns of our lifetime. There is a desperation in the working class and the millennials world wide. And their Darwinian instincts are guiding them to choose alpha personalities as leaders, by even ignoring serious personality flaws and negative baggage the leaders carried (bigotry, racism, misogyny, abetment to genocide). Commonly, these leaders have appealed to their constituencies by raising rhetoric of xenophobia, changes to status quo and beating liberalism. Not only Trump, this category of leaders include Turkey's Erdogan, Italy's Berlusconi (now gone), Phillippines Duterte, UK's Boris Johnson (who led Brexit) and our own Modi. However, a bit of the futurologist in me says that liberalism is not on the wane. Many of these conservative leaders are likely to fail or would be forced to take recourse to a left of centre of position, as Modi has demonstrated. Liberal issues like addressing poverty or gender equity and socio-economic-political issues like climate change are not going to go away. And a Bernie Sanders and a Michelle Obama will be equally loved by a large section of the masses. However, if there is anything such as the ultimate social standard of ethics and morality, that, unfortunately, will remain Utopian."

This is a well thought out post and that's why I thought it merited sharing, more so for many who still believe in the utopian dream that there is place for the pure, the beautiful the just and the upright and that vulgarity and brashness have their shelf life. His speech is redolent of the play of politics firstly to overcome the disenchantment with the Modi governance that is building up with all the social tensions triggered by Hindutva outfits, intolerance and any valid criticisms of NDA policies being dubbed "anti-national", even seditious in some cases. The media in general stands cautioned in our democracy, the largest in the world. Our highly gifted Prime Minister can twist history and make it appear for everything that India has entered a new dawn in 2014 after his spectacular triumph leading the BJP for a majoritarian hold over the nation. The declared aims on his development agenda, if our understanding is correct, are to bring about transformative growth through structural reforms and smart cities and a digital India run on cash-less economy. Where do the rural masses, the under-fed, under-educated and deprived of basic health-care figure in all this? But Mr Modi's accent is always on "pro-poor" policies his Government has been making, including a doubling of rural incomes in the next decade. Thankfully, he assured the people on November 8 that Re. one to Rs.100 notes will continue to be legal tender. But he conveniently ignores the fact that after years of high inflation and currency explosion and wage rises in organised sectors, the 500-rupee notes have the widest spread and use for basic goods purchases. This is what would hurt large

Modi’s desperate move to attack black money

By S Sethuraman

Having failed to fulfil a major May 2014 poll promise to end the black money menace within a month, let alone the 'achhe din' now quietly buried, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has now moved to slay that demon by demonetising Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 currency notes. While desirable and widely welcomed, it has also set off a prolonged spell of chaos for honest millions and small businesses in particular, to exchange old notes with the new ones to be issued at besieged bank or post office branches for weeks and maybe months. His Party (BJP) trumpets it as another "surgical strike", Mr Modi makes it evocative "Mahayagna" in which the people should willingly join and bear the hardship. It is another call for patriotism by a Government which has found it too challenging so far to grow the economy, revive investments and create jobs. The Prime Minister listed over a dozen schemes, which are said to help banish poverty. Many such schemes floated earlier by the cursed UPA are reshaped and announced with fanfare. sections of consumers and small entrepreneurs. Tax authorities are keeping a close watch on deposits of the demonetised notes and would begin to examine cases of large amounts re-entering the banking system, for any mismatch with income declared by the account-holder in his tax return. In such cases treated as tax evasion, officials have said that there would be tax and penalty. The Finance Minister Mr Arun Jaitley has admitted replacement with new notes could be not equivalent to sums deposited in first few weeks in banks and it may take two to three weeks for more currency notes to come into the market. Business is already at a standstill at many places in the country as no trader would accept old notes. In his view, such inconvenience has to be borne because a parallel economy with black money cannot be allowed any longer. Firstly, whatever the Finance Minister avers, time will tell us how effectively the surgical skill has worked, let alone the hardship to the people who

The Prime Minister projected his "strong and decisive step as one to fight corruption, black money, fake notes and terrorism. There is no doubt that counterfeit currency is being put in circulation from across the Pakistan border and used by terrorists. It needs to be dealt with sternly. By bearing "temporary hardship", the PM says, every person would be making a contribution to the "mahayajna", designed to rid the country of corruption and black money.

His speech is redolent of the play of politics firstly to overcome the disenchantment with the Modi governance that is building up with all the social tensions triggered by Hindutva outfits, intolerance and any valid criticisms of NDA policies being dubbed "anti-national", even seditious in some cases. The media in general stands cautioned in our democracy, the largest in the world. Our highly gifted Prime Minister can twist history and make it appear for everything that India has entered a new dawn in 2014 after his spectacular triumph leading the BJP for a majoritarian hold over the nation. The declared aims on his development agenda, if our understanding is correct, are to bring about transformative growth through structural reforms and smart cities and a digital India run on cash-less economy. Where do the rural masses, the under-fed, under-educated and deprived of basic health-care figure in all this? But Mr Modi's accent is always on "pro-poor" policies his Government has been making, including a doubling of rural incomes in the next decade. Thankfully, he assured the people on November 8 that Re. one to Rs.100 notes will continue to be legal tender. But he conveniently ignores the fact that after years of high inflation and currency explosion and wage rises in organised sectors, the 500-rupee notes have the widest spread and use for basic goods purchases. This is what would hurt large

The majority-minority conundrum

Editor, Your editorial, "Tarred with the same brush" (ST, November 9, 2016), is a reminder of the danger of majoritarianism. Sri Aurobindo once commented, "The weakness of democracy is that its rule is based on majority consent, so there will always be a minority that is not satisfied with the condition of things. And if the minority loses the hope of becoming the majority it may resort to force". We are witnessing the use of such force as the opposition parties are not allowed the space for nurturing that hope. The juggernaut of majoritarianism is trampling on the flowers of democracy. Thanking you, Yours etc., Sujit De, Kolkata

Overpriced destination

Editor, After going through a Facebook page 'Umngot River Shnongpdeng Spots', my friends and I finally decided to visit Shnongpdeng in Meghalaya. It was indeed a very beautiful village by the banks of the river Umngot near the Indo Bangla border. The village is very clean and the river is crystal clear which leaves us awestruck. Moreover the locals are

Yours etc.,
Rajiv Saikia
Basistha Nagar,
Guwahati

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.

obstacles in eradicating poverty, steps like this will indeed strengthen India's economy and democracy despite some short term dislocations that are inevitable, and more must follow for ferreting out undeclared wealth stored in other ways. People who have amassed cash illegally in large quantities will find their business terminated suddenly. Government needs to introduce laws where transactions and service payment above a certain amount must be made accountable.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad – 15

Don’t belittle if unaware

Editor, I am not sure whether Allah, Jesus, Bhagwan, Wahey Guru and plethora of other gods will ever reply to the petition of PK Dwivedi's letter "Noisy religion" that appeared in this section on Oct 26, 2016 but I am flabbergasted by the letter, "Outsiders and their opinions" of one Babet Sten, (ST Nov 10, 2016). I would not have been so surprised had Sten taken a stand against her own religion, presuming that she is a Christian, in the letter instead of her take on Islam on humanitarian grounds. I have profound respect for all religions

but I want to tell Sten not to belittle the comments on the Jhalupara issue if she isn't aware about this place. All Muslims residing there have not arrived in the 70s rather there are numerous newer ones. In fact the city's youth vendors are mostly from that area, to name a few. So don't try to show as if you know much about this place by default of being a local while working from the national capital. I can't say whether one should dub it mini Pakistan or East Pakistan but there has been undoubtedly a spurt in Muslim population there over the years, apart from the countable few, that certainly raises more than just one's eyebrows. And one can see that this rise has increased significantly in the last few years. Also, take this outsider syndrome out your head since it is putting our own community in a very bad light. Are you not an outsider in the national capital, who despite her education and rest of it, has been unable to come out of the "outside-inside" syndrome. We tribals from Meghalaya are not good at acknowledging others, as there is something that holds us back, but I must say here PK Dwivedi has the tone and tenor with guts to say it upright and that matters most. Keep writing and tell the truth, no matter how harsh it is. Yours etc. A Lyngdoh Shillong- 4

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

--- Henry Bromel

The Shillong Times

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Israel to India

ISRAELI resident Reuven Rivlin visits India next week. India has had diplomatic relations with Israeli since 1992 and its economic and military ties with that country are getting stronger year after year. The two countries will be set to beef up defence ties and take up plans for more joint ventures and technology transfer. The visit will also be reciprocated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s trip to Israel next year to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries. Israeli ambassador to India, Daniel Carmon has reiterated his country’s commitment to help India develop its weapons system and implement Modi’s Make In India initiative in the defence sector. Plans for fresh joint ventures are on the drawing board.

India is Israel’s largest buyer of military hardware. Tel Aviv has been supplying various weapons systems, missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles over the past few years. But the transactions have largely remained under wraps. President Rivlin will be accompanied by heads of top Israeli arms manufacturing companies and senior government officials dealing with defence related matters. It is also expected that a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries will be facilitated by the Israeli President’s visit. A number of pacts will also be signed in areas of education, energy, water, agriculture, and research and development. India reaching out to Israel is a new global reality. For decades, Delhi had supported the PLO against Israel. But in the last few years, it has been gradually veering towards equidistance to the two countries which are often engaged in hostilities. It cannot be denied however that India’s ties with the PLO have been traditionally stronger.

LOOKING BACK

March 14, 1989

Assam Garos want ST status

The All Assam Garo Students’ Union (AAGSU) has called upon the Assam Govt to pass a Resolution in the forthcoming budget session of the state Assembly for the inclusion of Assam Garos into the list of Scheduled Tribes.

In a press statement the AAGSU president Mr Albert Sangma said that Garos of Assam, have their own language,distinct culture, traditions, custom and usages and therefore they should be given scheduled tribe status like other tribal communities. The Union hoed that the state Chief

Minister would introduce the resolution and prove himself ‘generously towards the tribals of the State.’

Heroin worth Rs. 1 cr. Recovered in Tripura

In one of the biggest narcotic haul Tripura police seized one kg of highly refined heroin valued at about Rs one crore and arrested five people including two Bangladeshi nationals here last night. The narcotics were packed in two containers bearing the marks of hosiery product of Bangladesh nationals were arrested from a house in the suburban areas.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has issued a circular asking its 1800 schools including 210 abroad to refrain from assigning non-academic work to teachers. Whereby, any activity other than those related to teaching, professional e n h a n c e m e n t , examinations and evaluation are listed as non-academic.

Importantly, this instruction applies also to private schools affiliated to it to ensure that teachers are not saddled with non-teaching work. They have to maintain separate staff for teaching, non-teaching and administrative work. Besides, the new rules also relieved teachers from the “duty” of accompanying students in buses.

Undeniably, this circular is confirmation of Section 27 of the RTE Act which states: “No teacher shall be deployed for any non-educational purposes other than decennial population census, disaster relief duties and those relating to elections to local authority, State legislatures or Parliament as the case may be”.

Pertinently, the necessity for issuing this circular rose because of some cases of violations of guidelines of many State Governments and not the RTE Act.

The circular follows a Supreme Court judgment in a case relating to appointment of 32 teachers in Telengana and Andhra Pradesh as private secretaries to MLAs September last. The Court held that engaging school teachers and university professors for non-academic work was unconstitutional.

This comes in the backdrop of complaints that private schools were engaging teachers in various non-teaching tasks like collecting fees and maintaining accounts, keeping watch over children during lunch recess, accompanying students in buses etc lately.

True, a school teacher’s job is not attractive as the salaries are low and perks unknown. This is made positively unattractive thanks to numerous non-teaching work promises extracted from them under

School Teachers Burden

More social, less academic

By S Saraswathi

and outside the conditions of appointment.

There is also tremendous increase in parents and community expectations from teachers for education and welfare of their wards to enable them succeed in the highly competitive school world.

Unfortunately, our education policies have put many non-academic work- loads on teachers in many States. Some of these are results of expansion in education and the urgent need to create and sustain social conditions to facilitate realization of “education for all”.

Some are due to failure on the part of concerned authorities outside schools like the public transport system, traffic police et al to manage their work and the tendency to drag teaching staff where students are concerned.

Further, the circular seems to have special reference to teachers’ role in the Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDM) implemented in schools across the country. The scheme is as important as learning in schools having pupils predominantly from low-income groups.

For instance the 2013 M a h a r a s h t r a Government’s guidelines contained a provision that head-masters or senior teachers should visit central kitchens where food was prepared in urban areas to ensure hygienic preparation. Teachers were also supposed to taste the food before it was served to children every day.

The Bombay High Court rejected this guideline on the ground that the task had nothing to do with education and the academic staff could not be burdened with non-academic work. It directed the State Government to create an independent authority for the purpose.

In Bihar too, a directive from the Inspector of Schools in 2013 entrusted the task of periodical supervision of food preparation with school principals and scrapped the earlier system of engaging NGOs in the task.

This order was challenged by a PIL in the Allahabad High Court which underscored that

the head-masters and teachers duty was to teach students, not to supervise cooking meals. In fact, teachers then strongly protested to the directive by boycotting MDM duties.

In Himachal Pradesh one teacher in every school was given the duty to look after collection and consumption of food grains, management of gas, maintenance of registers etc. Surely, full-time non-teaching work for the teacher!

Haryana established the non-academic role of teachers by an order: “All teachers have to play a more proactive role in terms of supervising the meals by ensuring that children come in line, wash their hands, seated on mats, served adequately and wash up and return to class. A roster should be set up for teachers to take charge of the whole process on each day”.

In Arunachal Pradesh actual implementation of the MDM Scheme was done in the schools and the responsibility rested with the School Management Committee along with the head-master.

On the contrary, the Odisha Government distinguished teaching work as ‘academic’ and stated in its guidelines for operation of the MDM Scheme, “teachers should not be assigned the responsibility that will impede or interfere with teaching/ learning. On no account, should the head-master or teachers be involved in the procurement, cooking, or implementation of the MDM Programme”.

However, they have to monitor the programme to ensure proper quality and quantity of food, its hygienic preparation, keeping away stray animals, prominent display of entitlement and periodic health check-up of cooks and helpers. They also need to taste the food for quality before it is served to students.

Tamil Nadu, known as the pioneer of Noon-Meal Scheme in schools has a good administrative set up for implementing the scheme without dragging teachers. In fact, the HRD Ministry and Department of School Education and Literacy’s joint review conducted in 2013 remarked that active participation of head-masters and teachers in planning,

implementation, and monitoring of the programme was very poor.

The review report avowed that the Government should advise all teachers to play an active role for smooth implementation of the Noon-Meal Programme.

This advice is now irrelevant in the light of the Supreme Court verdict that wants teachers to concentrate on academic work the reason which they are appointed.

Significantly, a school lunch programme is common in almost all developed countries to enhance the nutritional standard of the school-age population, unlike India where it is a strategy to encourage schooling and counter hunger and malnutrition.

If teachers are involved in Finland or Sweden it is for combining the pedagogical role of caterers and teachers knowledge of nutrition. The Indian system has to address local social problems.

Teachers are already involved in several activities: Promoting skills, character building, cultivating good habits and moral values. They have to encourage hobbies and sports as part of learning. Additionally, academic counselling is an indispensable part of their duties.

Currently, educational institutions are big promoters of cultural activities attracting interested students and teachers in a big way. How much of it has educational content is open to question, but their usefulness in creating community spirit and providing a healthy break between serious academic work cannot be ignored.

However, the age-old practice of engaging teachers in organizing purely entertainment programmes and selling tickets come under non-academic work which cannot be allowed.

Clearly, non-teaching social responsibility placed on teachers is burdensome. Unless this is decreased as per the Supreme Court order, teachers might not find time to enhance their knowledge and skills wherein students would have to depend on private coaching to learn their lessons. ----- INFA

money is the real hindrance to the growth of our economy. November 8, is a red letter day for our country in the context of our growth and prosperity.

Yours etc.,
Anjan Kr Das,
Shillong-6

Banks must remain vigilant!

Editor,
This refers to the report, "Blow to black money" (ST, November 9, 2016). The decision to scrap Rs. 500 and Rs.1000 currency notes is welcome. It will certainly weed out a sizeable amount of black money. But black money will again start mushrooming if putting the brakes on its generation is not being taken up immediately after the introduction of new currency notes. Cash transactions of over Rs.50,000 must be proh-ibited to cut the channels of black money circulation. This compl-ementary step is needed to sustain the benefits of currency renewal.

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

Choking Politics

Delhi, a gas chamber

By Insaf

Round The States

Welcome to India’s Choke Capital, Delhi which has transformed in to a gas chamber. As part of a slew of measures to combat the emergency situation arising out of severe air pollution the Lt Governor banned construction and demolition activities, shut down schools and the Badarpur power station for a week. But this was not before our netas crossed swords accusing one another of causing this dastardly situation. While Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal blamed neighbouring Haryana and Punjab for paddy stubble burning for the hazardous levels of air pollution, his counterparts in both States Badal and Khattar asserted its farmers could not be blamed for Delhi’s smog and cited NASA images. Alas, none had paid heed to the warning signs as early as August of impending disaster. Consequently the situation got compounded because of agricultural crop and garbage burning, use of firecrackers and prevailing meteorological conditions. Will our rulers tighten their belt and stop playing dirty politics!

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has given the Centre an ultimatum to set in place a pollution policy immediately. Adding to the States woes the National Green Tribunal has asked five States - Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to constitute a Central

sweepstakes with both the Patel and Thakore communities mobilizing their members, ostensibly on social causes but with an eye on the forthcoming Assembly elections. Following the meteoric rise of Hardik Patel who rode to fame demanding reservation for his upper class Patidar community, young Alpesh Thakore has chosen issues like de-addiction, raids on illegal liquor dens and education to tighten his hold on his flock. Already his Thakore Sena has spread across 9000 villages and the pan-community OBC SC ST Ekta Manch has covered another 3000 villages. With both communities on the political ascent, the ruling BJP Government is worried. More so, after last year’s debacle in the local bodies’ elections where the Patidars showed their anger by voting against the BJP. Resulting in the Congress winning 22 of the 31 district panchayats and 126 of 230 taluka panchayats, leaving 65 district panchayats and 61 taluka panchayats for the Saffron Sangh. Chief Minister Rupani’s Party is now banking on evoking nationalist sentiment post the surgical strikes against Pakistan. Will it come out trumps?

EC Cancels Tamil Poll

An inclining of the shape of things to come post Prime Minister’s Modi’s dhamaka of corruption free India came when the Election Commission cancelled polls in two Tamil Nadu Assembly

“*The National Green Tribunal has asked five States - Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to constitute a Central Committee of Chief Secretaries and prepare an emergency action plan to combat air pollution.*”

Committee of Chief Secretaries and prepare an emergency action plan to combat air pollution. Also, it wants the States Pollution Control Board, Environment and Urban Development Departments to submit monthly report to the Committee. Adding to the Delhi, Punjab and Haryana Government’s woes it lambasted them for ineffective implementation of its orders against crop burning and air pollution. More, the States have been asked to classify different types of pollutants and how they deal with them. Will the States bite?

Defections In Manipur

It’s the beginning of the season of crossovers as elections to five State Assemblies ensues early next year. In the North East the BJP is gearing up for netting its second win in Manipur with two Congress heavyweights leaders joining its ranks. Namely, former Minister Yumkham Erabot and Vice President and spokesperson Nongthombam Biren Singh. Sworn detractors of Chief Minister Ibobi Singh who now is the Congress’s undisputed leader, the BJP has its fingers crossed that their defection will net them more Congressmen. Though the Party does not intend projecting a Chief Minister it hopes that a ‘corruption-free Manipur’ along-with an anti-incumbency mood against the Congress’s will wrest them victory, at least 40 of the 60 Assembly seats. Will this tiny North Eastern State deliver a double whammy post it gaining control of Assam by ending 15 years of Congress rule.

Gujarat Thakores Flex Muscles

Identity politics has staged a big comeback in Gujarat’s political

constituencies over voters being bribed. However, for reasons best known to arch rivals DMK and AIADMK both have decided to field the same candidates again. This is not all. A wizened electorate has made clear he is no longer willing to play ball unless the respective candidates give signed assurances that they will fulfill promises made during the election campaign prior to re-polling. With elections due early next year in five States the poll watch dog has made it clear that the old ways of electioneering will no longer hold good. Leaving our politicians running for cover.

Maharashtra’s Faulty Dams

Build first design later, underscores the Maharashtra’s Irrigation Department’s foolishness or madness vis-à-vis building dams. Worse, as engineers are finding out the dams designs are not according to the areas topography like soil quality, catchment area, average rainfall, capacity of dams etc. Consequently, this has resulted in drastic changes of plans, delays and cost escalations that too after the work started. Shockingly, the erstwhile Congress-NCP Government which constructed these reservoirs paid no heed to public safety and instead copy-pasted earlier designs for different dams and awarded contracts to their favourites depending on kickbacks. Leaving the ruling BJP-Shiv Sena Government no option but to cancel over 34 such projects. Predictably, the BJP and rivals Congress and NCP are now trading charges over cost escalations, read corruption. A classic case of money down the drain! ----- INFA

TO THE EDITOR

Reflections on tradition

Editor,
Religion is a personal experience to me and to most of us too. Each of us nurture some form of faith within us which fills one with hope and exaltation. I have often wondered if my inward faith would become less if my outward expression is reduced? By not undertaking annual yatras, pilgrimage, religious journeys or visits to Shrines, Mandirs, Mazjid, Temples or Church, would it make me less pious and by undertaking such practices, rituals, or journeys would it make me more spiritual? Does my simple act of a silent prayer at home reach the abodes of the Gods slower or do I need to rocket my prayers, pleadings and demands with all the glitz and glamour such as the ones seen in today’s times? To such colossal queries I would be bombarded with answers based on varying proportions from a cross section of believers depending on their leanings, faith, ideologies, beliefs or disbeliefs. The point is that all religious practices are increasingly becoming

market driven and demonstrate obsessive religious regimentation and participation, thus making it a norm. Come to think of it the word “religion” itself would up the antennae and antics of many! My reflection on religion has suddenly been bolstered since the aftermath of Diwali. The decibels of increasing intensity of firecrackers burst with ‘religious’ faith and gusto which goes on till almost the wee hours of dawn and the blatant flouting of regulations with the least regard to the calamitous havoc of toxic fumes emitted to the environment that cause serious health hazards to both humans, animals and plants is simply nobody’s concern at all. My question is do we really need such frenzy and competitive demonstration of wealth to reach the Gods above? The case of Kollam temple tragedy in Kerala caused by firecrackers just a few months back am sure is still fresh in our minds. Isn’t such a catastrophic incident, lessons enough for us to change and reform traditions and practices? Diwali is called the “festival of lights” but we have long forgotten this and have turned it to the “festival of pollution”. Delhi, the capital of our country is

already reeling under ominous pollution levels, but since the past few days the quantum of pollution has gone up manifold due to the Diwali frenzy coupled with the recent stubble burning of neighbouring farms posing increased health risks to millions of population there. But we simply do not care either ways. Neither for our own wellbeing nor the wellbeing of the generations of tomorrow, for we remain blissfully smug and firm in upholding traditions and practices howsoever ruinous it may be! It is well past time we bring in alteration in our religious practices which are not doing any good to both humans and the Gods. Of what use are such rigid faith and the accompanying practices if they do more harm than good? Isn’t it time to regulate age old practices and bring in the much needed change? Without hurting any religious sentiments I would request all to spare some thought and begin to think rationally and with pragmatism without being carried away by emotions

and sentiments to engage in such damaging practices all in the name of devotion and religiosity.

Yours etc.,
Moushumi Dey,
Via email

Brilliant move by Mr Modi

Editor,
Kudos to PM Modi for the ‘surgical strike’ on black money. Announcements made by PM are exactly what are needed to uproot corruption, black money, hawala and fake currency rackets. The surprise step appears to be designed to bring 'billions of dollars worth of cash in unaccounted wealth' into the mainstream economy. Since black money can’t be used for buying financial assets, the same is used for purchasing mostly real estate and gold. The cash component is still very high in real estate transactions. The currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 will now be “just worthless pieces of paper.” The move is an effort to close down the booming economy of untaxed cash transactions, which allows corruption, the funding of terrorist

groups, and keeps counterfeit notes in circulation. With these notes now going out of circulation, the government has created a solid opportunity to clean up the system. And terrorist organisations, which according to the government have made repeated use of fake currency, will suddenly find their cash piles containing these notes worth nothing.

Yours etc.,
Akash Kumar,
Jagraon, Punjab

Curb on black money!

Editor,
We believe that Modi seeks to destroy the ghost economy to allow the actual economy to thrive in this country. Yes, it is true that for a few days the common people will suffer, but ultimately black money will be traced and checked. Terror funding will also be checked. Banks should be very vigilant now as there will be heavy rush for opening of new accounts. India does not care about the outcome of the US Presidential election, as in five to ten years' time India will control the world economy. Black



Fighting for protection of rights

By Saadia Azim

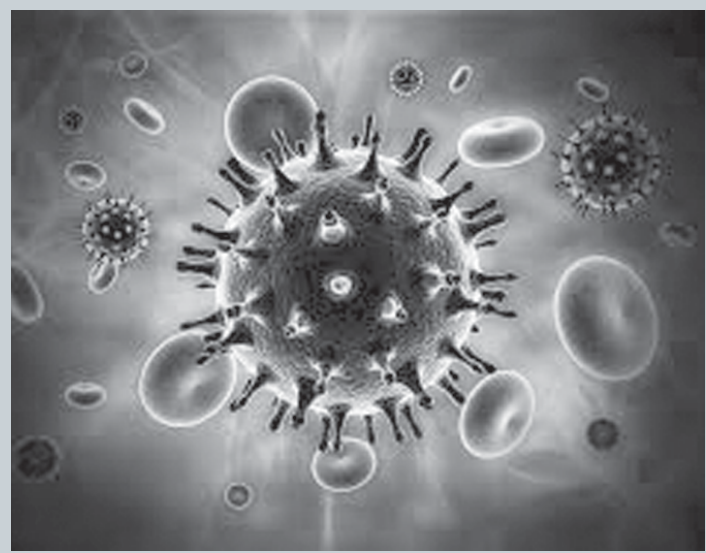
Recently, when the government cleared the amendments in the HIV/AIDS (Prevention and Control) Bill, 2014, making “discrimination and laxity in treatment” a criminal offence, HIV+ activist Daisy David finally breathed a little easy. “It has been a long struggle since 2002 when activists had first proposed strong action against discrimination. It has taken the government more than two years to prepare the Bill with the new amendments; it had been tabled in the Upper House in January 2014. Once the amended Bill is passed in the Lower House, discrimination and negligence in treatment will become a criminal offence,” says David, who has been advocating for the rights of the Most at risk Populations for many years now.

David is one among an estimated 2.4 million HIV+ people in India, the third highest number after South Africa and Nigeria. According to government data, the epidemic is presently “concentrated” among high-risk groups like female sex workers, men who have sex with men and injecting drug users, also called Most at risk Populations (MARPs).

But even though the new Bill states that it is important for these groups to be able to gain access to critical services, including availability of condoms, clean needles and syringes, as well to treatment for sexually transmitted infections and HIV testing, they haven’t been included yet.

Indeed, while concerted advocacy and awareness

Activists in India ask for a fool-proof law as discrimination, negligence in treatment are making fight against HIV+ difficult



There are around 2300 HIV+ patients, including over 100 below the age of 15, in Meghalaya right now and only 2110 among them are registered, says a recent report

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The newly amended Bill is expected to be made into a law during the upcoming winter session of Parliament

programmes have definitely brought down the number of new infections to half, containing further transmission continues to remain a major challenge. David, therefore, is vocal on the demand for equitable treatment opportunities and an anti-discrimination law. “Treatment is the primary concern. Since people have been living with a deadly virus in their body, it is the duty of the government to provide adequate availability of treatment facilities,” she asserts, adding, “it is sheer discrimination that makes our already difficult lives all the more complex.”

Like David, this new Bill has given L. Deepak Singh, 49, reasons to hope albeit with caution. When he had been tested positive and

was seeking treatment his greatest fears had not revolved around living with the disease but about being discovered. Today, he is on Anti-Retro Viral treatment (ART) and married with a daughter whose safety he wants to ensure. “The Bill to criminalise discrimination and penalise the guilty is highly warranted,” he states. “After all, it is the second generation that’s at high risk of being left out with no access to proper treatment.”

The newly amended Bill is expected to be made into a law during the upcoming winter session of Parliament, if other highly political issues do not take priority. With it, for the first time, private health service providers

will be bound to render compulsory and emergency treatment for HIV people. Additionally, no one will be tested or treated for HIV without their knowledge and consent. The status of a person, too, will remain a private matter and will not be disclosed without the person’s informed consent. A breach will be deemed a criminal offence.

For years, activists have expressed concern over persecution of family members and children of HIV+ people. They concur that it’s the worst form of discrimination and needs to be dealt with under the law. Last year a couple with two children committed suicide in West Bengal’s Howrah district after their status was made public in a government hospital and doctors

denied their children treatment. Similar incidents were reported in Goa when a reputed public school decided to throw out students suspected of HIV status.

Apprehension and anxiety brought on by such prejudiced attitudes forces many to avoid seeking treatment. Children of HIV+ parents face blatant discrimination at school, in their neighbourhoods and even within their own families. The second generation HIV+ youngsters also have their share of problems to contend with. Take Prakriti Thomgbam, 17. Born HIV+ she has lived her entire life on ART. She was in her teens when her status was made public by a pharmacist to whom she had gone for medication to treat her lung infection. Doctors usually

mentioned the status of the patient in their prescription which makes it impossible to maintain confidentiality and usually leads to gross victimisation. Thomgbam remarks, “The main reasons for seeking protection under the law are to get rid of the ill-treatment that drives people like me into living in anonymity and to ensure continued and easy availability of ART.”

Once the Bill is passed, discrimination against HIV+ people will attract a minimum of three months’ imprisonment with a maximum of two years or a fine of up to Rs 1 lakh or both. “Penalisation will be a deterrent for blatant discrimination, especially in treatment,” says Dr Anita Victor, Director-

Health, World Vision India, a humanitarian organisation working with people living with HIV/AIDS. “However, there is a glitch regarding the inclusion of the phrase ‘as far as possible’, especially considering a general sense of laxity and indifference, while providing free treatment,” she adds.

Clause 14 of the HIV/AIDS Bill 2014 states: “The measures to be taken by the Central Government or State Government shall include the measure for providing, ‘as far as possible’, Anti-Retroviral and Opportunistic Infection Management to people living with HIV or AIDS.” In light of this, activists feel that the victory that came with free treatment being a legal right has been diluted.

Though the Bill has a

rights-based approach and raises issues like “inclusion” for “protected persons” it does not specifically include MARPs”. By omitting them from the category of “Protected Persons”, the Bill has denied them the protection of their rights. MARPs are now lobbying for the addition of a sub-section to the definition of “Protected Persons”.

If MARPs are singled out and denied healthcare, education and jobs then they become all the more vulnerable to HIV as it will compel them to avoid seeking information or accessing healthcare. By protecting these groups the government can ensure that they remain mainstream and are able to use available testing and treatment services. This is one way of controlling transmission of HIV.

As such, it’s the status of children with HIV that remains the most susceptible as not only have they ‘inherited’ the disease they also have a long way to go. Currently, an estimated 1,38,456 children are living with HIV (NACO Technical report, 2015) in India.

The government plans to draw up a district-specific implementation plan with specific resource allocation for treatment and diagnosis of HIV people, including children, in every state.

An amended law, a slew of measures for protection of the rights of people living with HIV... and yet there’s a lot that will still need to be done before those suffering from one of the most life-threatening diseases are able to live with dignity. (WFS)

Garos drums beat for harvest god

It has been two years since I visited Asanang during the days of Wangala festivity and had a taste of locally brewed rice beer. Having been to the place for the past many years, to watch and explore the beauty of the dances and try unearthing the underlying meanings and significance of the rituals, ceremonies and various dance forms, I feel greatly ecstatic.

The festival, which takes place every November — the month has a speciality and charm for the jhum cultivating Garos and marks the approaching winter — concluded on Saturday. For the Garos, Wangala is the largest traditional festival.

The Garos assemble in a place and perform rituals to appease the rain god through beating their native musical instruments. Asanang, which is about 18km from Tura, is an ideal and the permanent location that hosts this annual event.

As believed by the Garos, there are certain fiendish beings and malignant spirits who work against their well-planned schemes. There are at the same time some benevolent spirits that help the human beings to progress in life. Their activities are believed to be governed by those spirits, which they collectively call *mides*. These *mides* must be pleased or their wrath will bring evil, the Garos believe. Therefore, the life of the Garos on this earth is the life being lived under the direction of and association with those powerful spirits.

Wangala is nothing but a thanksgiving ceremony for the harvest god Misi Saljong. It is a grand ceremony of a hearty send-off and ceremonial fixing up of time for the next reunion with the benign divinities. The word Wangala is a conjunction of two vital Garo words — Wanti and Gala. Wanti means leaven and gala means to throw. Hence Wanti Gala or in short Wan-Gala or Wangala.

Throwing or giving Wanti to appease the god of harvest is the literal meaning of



The Garos assemble in a place and invoke the rain god by beating their native musical instruments

Wangala. The Garos believe that Misi Saljong either blesses or curses them in their cultivation of crops in the jhum field depending on the manner he is honoured. Therefore, the Garos never fail to appease him at the end of their harvest in the most appropriate way and to do that the best part of their paddy would be reserved for Misi Saljong to give him back on the occasion of Wangala.

A rice beer is prepared from the rice meant for the god of harvest and during the inaugural session of Wangala, the juice of the first hand rice beer is offered to him by invoking his spirit. This ceremonial observation through pouring of rice beer by the Nokma or the village chief is called *Chu Rugale* (moulder, the one who moulds), *Bisikrom* (the source of inexhaustible power and energy), *Babra* (the sovereign one who gives sustenance to all), *Ge’songgipa* (the sovereign one who plants all things and make them stand), *Ja’ragipa* (the

imitation of the A’chik men and women to dance from the performing *Do’sisi Dojepjep*, a wagtail bird, who taught them how to move their hips and dance to the rhythmic beatings of the native musical instruments.

Son of Rikwa Salwa (father) and *Po’ok An’dok* (mother), Misi Saljong was highly revered by the Garos as one of the greatest gods, who had been bestowed with the power of giving good harvest to the people by his superior god, the creator of the Earth, the God Almighty or the Supreme and Sovereign God. This sovereign deity is called by various names by the 12 Garo sub-tribes. He is called *Dakgipa Rugipa* (moulder, the one who moulds), *Bisikrom* (the source of inexhaustible power and energy), *Babra* (the sovereign one who gives sustenance to all), *Ge’songgipa* (the sovereign one who plants all things and make them stand), *Ja’ragipa* (the

Sole one who fashions legs), *Ja’chitgipa* (the Sole one who furcates the legs), and so on.

After chanting out the ritual songs over burning incense at the altar in the house of the village A’king Nokma, which is usually done on the second day of Wangala, the performing Nokma grasping *milam* and *spi* in his hands dances before the assembled guests and while dancing, he shouts cryptic words of eulogies on himself, on his consanguine brothers and heroic forefathers. One such expressions is as follows: *Ka Challang, Ka Goera, Jabils ong’o, Jakari soko, Misina Cha’chat so’e, Saljongna chu rugale, Minima jamo bame, Na’nima chio roe, Cha nie, Soka chake, Ku’toreenga, Bilbatdeen-ga, Jajumangchi, Jakar-echi, Gualgija, Jajagija, Ka Chalang, Ka Goera!*

The above, which when translated runs as — “Brave one am I, Goera am I, On the right season of the year, On the arrival of the right round

of the years, having done ritual incense burnings to Misi, having poured out rice beer to Saljong, Minima serenely lying in granary, Na’nima in the homeland waters peacefully dwelling, Having due respectful considerations to my Chras, Entertaining guests, Am I shouting out eulogies, Am I yelling out words of triumphant strength, In my dreams, and in visions of the night, Never do I go erring, Never do I act with indecision, Brave One am I, Goera am I.”

On this great occasion, the Garos perform variety of their skilful indigenous dance forms to the rhythmic sounds of their native musical instruments. The most popular and common dance forms which the participating contingents showcase are the *Grong Doka* (slow march to the courtyard to dance to the rhythmic drum beats and the trumpeting sound of the bugle), *Do’kru Sua* (dove pecking) *Oping rata* (slashing off the whorled head gear), *Ajema Roa*

(dance of the Wagtail Bird) and *Ambretong Rurua* (shaking off hog plum fruits), among others.

But what pains me is the fact that for the past many years, throughout the courses of my visits, I could not see the most exciting dance forms like *Sipai Awit Roa* (parading of the sepoy), which is a war-like dance form, the *Onggal Rua* (breaking the hearth rake) and *Me’mang Mis Su’a* (ghost pounding rice), among others.

As many young and fresh A’chik performers (including my students) have been visiting the place during Wangala with great expectations to see and learn.

Sadly these young and energetic Garo performers and learners are being compelled to return home only with the dance forms which they had already learnt and most preciously garnered in their hearts. Their purpose is not only to watch and admire the beauties of the Wangala dance, but also to learn new dance forms, to act by themselves and to be identified as A’chiks.

The visit to Asanang makes me believe that the age-old tradition and dances of the Garos had never faded away, rather it has been gaining its popularity even among the Garos and the general public in the Garo Hills, its neighbouring states of Northeast India and foreign tourists. A large gathering of the people at the site of the festival during the occasion has been increasing by the year, which is indeed a living testimony of the people’s interest and attachment to this festival of the Garos.

(Contributed by Tharsush Koksi Sangma, Researcher, Don Bosco, Damra)

Hear my voice in your head ?

Sometimes one comes across a scheme so evil, so wicked, so sneaky, that the only possible response is to think: Why didn’t I think of that?

Case in point: A guy having a dispute with nasty neighbours thought of a creative form of revenge. He used the wireless system known as Bluetooth to make six-second bursts of ghostly sound come out of his neighbour’s music speakers every night at 3 am, or so he claimed in a Facebook post. In less than two weeks, the creeped-out neighbours had moved out of the apartment block.

Even before I’d even finished reading that, I’d thought of uses for the technology: 1) Make circus clown music come from the building PA system every time my boss enters the room. 2) Make heavenly choir sounds emerge at a subliminal level every time I walk past the pretty receptionists. 3) Make the sound of thousands of people weeping when I eventually get sacked and the security guards escort me from the building.

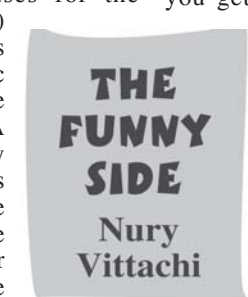
Technology in general is a wonderful tool for sneaky people. A couple of years ago, a jokey friend reprogrammed his wife’s computer spellcheck so that every time she wrote “Dear” it became “Darling”. Four weeks later, so he claimed, she was employee of the month and her boss gave her a pay raise.

But wireless technology is in a different league. For example, a serious prankster can get a good quality Bluetooth music speaker and hide it somewhere, such as in a tree, and then just make comments as children pass by. “Help! A wizard

turned me into a chestnut oak tree.”

A side bonus of Wi-Fi is that the demented people who talk to themselves on streets used to look crazy, but now just look like they have wireless earpieces. And it’s much cheaper than actually buying such a thing.

Yet even if you are not very tech-y, you can still have some fun. Try this. Simply find someone who is having an intense wireless conversation in the street, and then go stand next to them and nod a lot while your friend films you. With luck, you end up with some amusing footage and a kazillion views on YouTube and Facebook. Sometimes, you get the bonus of not



getting beaten up. But that’s not guaranteed.

Still, if you are a cutting-edge sneaky person, here’s how you can use technology, as taught to me by a reader who did not want his name

published. In recent years, most printers have become wireless. So you can actually type a message on your computer and then make it come out of a different printer elsewhere in your building or apartment block. It’s easy, since people don’t put pass-words on their printers. Suggestion: “Hello. I am a rather hi-tech printer and I have become self-aware. Your apartment is nice. But if you don’t mind me saying, I don’t think you should wear that dress with those shoes.”

Oops, gotta stop here, I have a call coming through. No, wait, that’s just one of the voices in my head. I think. Whatever.

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

Keeping supply chain in order

By Ranjan K Baruah

Many of us are fond of online shopping these days. It gives value for money as consumers get goods in discount rates. We buy or order online and then pay at the time of delivery or some buyers also make online payment.

I am not talking about payments here but we get the item that we order within a few days depending on the city we are living in. There are people who are responsible for ensuring that things reach the customer on time. I have mentioned this to make one word familiar about which I am going to write in today's edition as a career option.

Well, I am talking about logistics.

Logistics is generally the detailed organisation and implementation of a complex operation. In a general business sense, logistics is the management of the flow of things between the point of origin and the point of consumption in order to meet requirements of customers or corporations.

The resources managed in logistics can include physical items such as food, materials, animals, equipment and liquids as well as abstract items, such as time and information. The logistics of physical items usually involve the integration of information flow, material handling, production, packaging, inventory, transportation, warehousing and often security.

Logistics management is part of the supply chain management that plans, implements and controls the efficient, effective forward and reverses flow and storage of goods, services and related information between the



In a general business sense, logistics is the management of the flow of things between the point of origin and the point of consumption in order to meet requirements of customers or corporations

point of origin and the point of consumption in order to meet customer's requirements.

The complexity of logistics can be modelled, analysed, visualised and optimised by dedicated simulation software. The minimisation of the use of resources is a common motivation in all logistics fields. A professional working in the field of logistics management is called a logistician.

Logistician focuses on planning and forecasting, purchasing, assembling the product, moving, storing and keeping track of a product as it flows down to consumers. A logistic manager is responsible for collaborating with other officers of the company — like purchasing officers, transport and warehouse managers — to ensure that the goods produced by the company are received in the company's depot on time.

Logistics is one of the most important career fields in the world. Given the

services performed by logisticians, the main fields of logistics can be as follows: procurement logistics, distribution logistics, after-sales logistics, disposal logistics, reverse logistics, green logistics, global logistics, domestic logistics, concierge service, asset control logistics, POS material logistics, emergency logistics, production logistics and construction logistics, among others.

Several educational institutions in India are imparting courses in logistics. These courses are offered generally in part-time mode, at the diploma, certificate, postgraduate

degree and post graduate diploma levels. Some courses offered include Advanced Diploma in Logistics Management, Advanced Diploma in Logistics and Shipping, Advanced Certificate in Supply Chain Management, Certificate course in Supply Chain Management, Diploma in Logistics and Shipping, Diploma in Logistics and Transport, Diploma in Retail Supply Chain Management,

Post Graduate Diploma in Logistics Management (P.G.D.L.M), there are degree and postgraduate degree specialised on logistics or supply chain management.

Logistics is a huge field with tremendous opportunities for talented and energetic future managers in India as well as abroad. Some might excel without degree or diplomas related to logistics for which he or she needs skill and experiences.

Now there are opportunities in the country and also abroad. One may plan accordingly and move ahead in life. As we have seen there is a boom in the online shopping so, more expertise would be needed in the field of logistics. One may plan and choose well according to the demands of the market. Careers in logistics are expected to grow faster than normal over the next 10 years.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a social activist and career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 98640 55558 for any career related queries)

Changing images of Bollywood heroes

By Shoma A. Chatterji

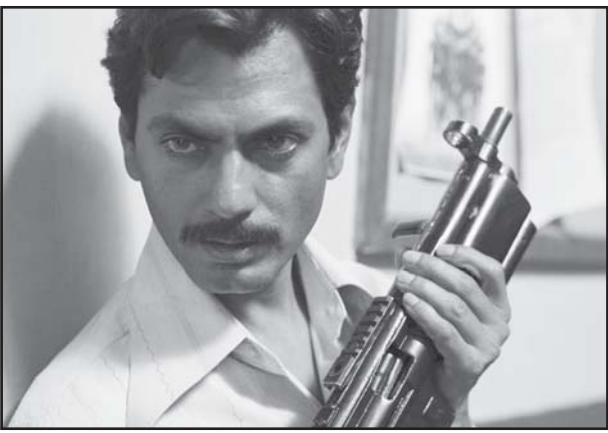
Time was when women would swoon over every crinkle of Rajesh Khanna's eyes and his lip-synching of romantic songs. Then came the angry young man, Amitabh Bachchan, to be followed by gangster protagonists.

The changing face of the Bollywood hero has happened not only because values began to change with the pressures of materialistic aspirations, the lust to make fast buck within the shortest time possible, but also because there was a time when the underworld funded films in Bollywood, directly or subtly, dictated the norms of the story and the script.

In retrospect, the metamorphosis from idyllic screen romance to the angry young crusader out to right all the wrongs in the society, and to the underworld don, a perceived victim of circumstances, seems almost in the natural order of things. Though the protagonist as gangster possessed the classic characters of the villain, the audience tended to develop an ambiguous stance towards him.

Instead of being angry with him, the audience admired the grit and the courage with which the mafia hero set out to realise his dreams of making it from rags to riches, never mind the graphic violence and bloodshed the screen was bathed in.

This is a bit of a reversal of the box office formula of the 'happily ever after' ending because one pre-supposes that the gangster hero would meet with a violent death in the end, anyway. Yet films like *Parinda*, *Vaastav*, *Sathya*, *Company*, *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai* and *Gangs of Wasseypur* (Parts I and II) have had excellent runs at the box office. While the end justifies the 'crime never pays' theory, the narrative goes against this because it does pay till the protagonist is trapped in a spidery web of his own



From depicting romance to anger and then to the raging revenge of the don, Bollywood hero has changed over time. This is also because of changing values and circumstances

making and cannot come out of it.

This ambivalence in the audience is a reflection of the basic contradiction in the Indian mindset today, caught between the horns of a dilemma of whether to go the straight way to succeed in life or to take a shortcut through crime and reach there fast.

The hero does not think he is doing any wrong because he often has a 'sad story' to rationalise his misdeeds. Does "success" translate into ethics, hard work and moral integrity? Or does it really mean financial success and the power that this brings where the means adopted to gain such riches does not matter?

Ram Gopal Verma laid the foundation of the gangster heroes with *Sathya* (1998). The film tracks a young man who comes to Mumbai in search of a job.

A series of events pulls him unwittingly into the underworld. An impressive screenplay, fine camera work, good editing, remarkable performances and a realistic portrayal of the underworld made it a stand-out film.

In the process it gave birth to a new genre of film that came to be known as the Mumbai noir.

The Bollywood gangster film might have taken Hollywood as its inspiration but veered away in treatment, style and approach in a way created the Bollywood

gangster hero. Fran Mason in his study of gangster films in America writes: "During the 1970s the iconography, narrative structures and ideological or cultural parameters of the gangster film were established as part of critical methodology, very often alongside or in contrast to the Western, because of shared concerns with individuality, masculinity, and social concerns."

In Hollywood, gangster films evolve around the sinister actions of criminals or gangsters, particularly bank robbers, underworld figures, traffickers of arms, women and drugs, or ruthless hoodlums who operate outside the law, stealing and violently murdering their way through life.

He is usually a materialistic, street-smart, immoral, megalomaniac and while destroying others, some his juniors and peers and some his foes, becomes self-destructive, sadistic and masochistic.

Bollywood has changed this theory to construct its own. The gangster-hero in films like *Sathya*, *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai* and *Vaastav* are portrayed as victims of circumstances. They became gangsters and subsequently turned leaders of their own gang, holding their fiefdom under persistent threat to life and property of innocent people only to end up being

killed by the very powers-that-be that used them to fight their own battles as front men and soldiers-in-reverse.

He is basically a kind-hearted guy who lives in a family setting, helps the poor in his neighbourhood and generally lives in a slum. The script fleshes him out in such a way that the audience begins to empathise with him, feels sorry that he dies in the end.

A brilliant example of the true-blood gangster film *Gangs of Wasseypur I* and *II*. This two-part film that uses as much graphic violence as sex and adultery set a new benchmark for gangster films. The films focussed on the coal mafia of Dhanbad and got wonderful reviews. Telling the story of war between criminal dynasties, Anurag Kashyap's gripping narrative and thrilling plot dynamics took the gangster film to a different level altogether. It was a box office hit, of course, and won many awards in the film festival circuit.

Having said this, one nagging question remains — what does it say about audience taste today? Would we cry for the young and dashing Sooraj of Aradhana or the angry Vijay of Deewar or, would we rather wince at the terrible blood and gore Raghunath splatters in *Vaastav* — The Reality or *Sathya* does in *Sathya*? (*TWF*)

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, November 13, 2016

You will present a confident and positive persona as Moon trine Venus on your solar return chart. You could be in for a promotion or a significant move up the ladder professionally. Communications and connections would be of significance so arm yourself with the information you need and apply your skills. Financially too this is a good phase as you exhibit financial acumen and make smart moves. Your health has been indifferent of late but now you will see an upswing in energy levels. Romance comes with its share of joy and elation. Nurturing personal relationships will help anchor your emotions. 'This week for you'

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

You express your social, romantic, and artistic qualities through an intellectual appreciation of art, cultural pursuits, and literature. Extra care should be exercised when it comes to writing letters, emails, making phone calls, and with communications in general. It would also be wise to double-check your work before finalizing it. You are slightly more defensive and certainly more protective than usual during this period. You might engage in arguments with someone close to you. Your attention to the logical world of reason will be a focus.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

This phase brings love, harmony and entertainment in family and personal relations. You have the chance to shine, largely because you are projecting yourself with confidence and poise. You might explore various ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one avenue of monetary gain. Your mind is always active with new ideas for an increase of income. Communication and marketing may be a source of financial or material gain. It's a good time for rethinking and revising your personal goals and plans.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

Your mind is especially inquisitive when learning or studying. Short trips, and other forms of communication and making connections, appeal strongly. You enjoy the challenge of tackling a variety of subjects. Talking, writing, and studying can be good ways to handle stress. It's a good time for rethinking and revising educational plans, paperwork, pending projects, and communications. You will be considerably more productive, healthy, and focused. You might be considering furthering your education and hobbies; it is a fabulous time to do so or to simply broaden your knowledge.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

Romance and pleasure are highlighted right now. The flowing, expressive, and spontaneous energy surrounding you attracts like-minded people. You will have many ideas and plans and you might be inclined to scatter your energies as a result. Channelled well, this is a good time to sell your ideas to others, or to present your case. You may be especially busy running errands and communicating. More articulate than usual, you may also have a more assertive, self-centered, or provocative communication style at this time. As such, discussions may become heated, or they may escalate into arguments.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

The current planetary configuration helps to increase funds and bring monetary gains. You will have the ability to build up financial reserves and resources, for this placement can bring a good deal of success in all monetary pursuits. Your partnerships and relationships are also highlighted right now, and it's a time to compromise. Concentrate on truly listening to those close to you, and on playing a supportive role. Perhaps it's not a time to make a presentation or to come on strong to the world.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

An excellent week for money, career, and romance awaits you. Insecurities in your partnerships are brought to light now, and the best way to handle this is to understand that



Libra : (September 23 - October 23)

This phase brings sincerity, cooperation and harmony in relationships. It's a great period for doing something entirely new and pioneering to go solo in some area of your life. You are in a position to make an impression on others. You have presence and you project confidence. Your personal identity, appearance, outward behaviour, and self-expression come to the fore. Spontaneity of expression is what this transit is about. Increased energy and a renewed feeling of confidence is with you now, so take advantage.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

Responsibilities, seriousness and sensitivity in relations are the focus. There may be the need to revisit old, nagging issues regarding personal finances. Take this time to re-budget instead of making premature purchases. Hold off on decision-making regarding money. Instead, take the time to re-think your sources of income and how you spend. Put off finalizing anything important for the time being. In fact, some ideas or ventures may be put on hold due to circumstances beyond your control. You are most likely to express your social, romantic, and artistic qualities through an intellectual appreciation of art, cultural pursuits, and literature.

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)

There will be financial gains and profits from business. This can be a time of achievement, career advancement, and success in business. Your focus is on material affairs and comfort issues. Security is a driving force for you right now, and you might find that you are especially interested in accumulating possessions. What you have and what you don't have come into focus—what makes you feel comfortable, your sense of security, and what you value. This is a time of the year when personal finances and possessions receive maximum attention. Friends are there for you, and have your best interests at heart.

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)

You have an increased interest in your own possessions. You are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of comfort, status and luxury. Extra care should be exercised when it comes to writing letters, emails, making phone calls, and with all communications in general. Your mind is especially inquisitive, when learning. Short trips, and other forms of communication and making connections, appeal strongly. Romance is in the air and a joyous romantic affair is in the offing.

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)

An event may occur that expands your career or professional interests, and you derive pleasure from these activities. More professional freedom is likely to be experienced. This is a time of profitable productivity. You need to keep your eyes open for opportunities in these areas of life. Your mind is especially inquisitive. Short trips and other forms of communication appeal strongly. You enjoy the challenge of tackling a variety of subjects. Talking, writing, and studying can be good ways to handle stress. It's a good time for rethinking and revising educational plans, paperwork, and ongoing projects.

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)

More loving and appreciative relationships with your children may also figure now. Your powers of attraction skyrocket. Yet, you are not aggressive in your approach to love. Instead, you attract more if you allow yourself to be pursued. Creative self-expression of any kind is favored at this time. You instinctively know how to place yourself in the best light in order to make a good impression on others. Any love affair begun now will be characterized by good cheer, having fun, and a fair share of emotions. You are patient, laborious and clever with material aspects and manage finances and business ventures with ingenuity and success.

(Continued from last week)

Why would mammals evolve to have opioids in their milk? Dr Neal Bernard, founder and president of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, explains, "It appears that the opiates from mother's milk produce a calming effect on the infant and, in fact, may be responsible for a good measure of the mother-infant bond."

Infant bonds always have a physical underpinning. Like it or not, mother's milk has a drug-like effect on the baby's brain that ensures that the baby will bond with Mom and continue to nurse and get the nutrients all babies need. Like heroin or codeine, casomorphins slow intestinal movements and have a decided anti-diarrheal effect. The opiate effect may be why adults often find that cheese can be constipating, just as opiate painkillers are."

The European Food Safety Agency, in response to a number of studies and public health concern, did a scientific literature review in 2009 to assess how addicting casomorphins are, and whether or not enough of the casomor-



phins cross the intestinal wall and get into the blood stream and ultimately cross the blood-brain barrier. Do casomorphines play a role in autism etc? They are still studying the matter, because they cannot come to a conclusion on how much is alright for the human body.

However, this much we know: with opioid drugs, different people react differently to them and different amounts affect people differently. Further, it is generally accepted that binging on drugs on a daily basis is bad for us, even in sufficiently small quantities.

Florida scientist, Dr Robert Cade, has identified casomorphin as the probable cause of attention deficit disorder. Dr Cade found Beta-casomorphin-7 in high concentrations in the blood and urine of patients with either schizophrenia or autism. Studies by Dr Karl Riechelt in Norway indicate a very strong association between autistic behaviour, celiac disease, schizophrenia and ingestion of dairy. One

research paper, from the University of Illinois, states, "Casomorphins possess opioid activity. The term opioid refers to morphine-like effects, which include signs of sedation, tolerance, sleep induction and depression."

A recent case report entitled 'Cow's Milk-Induced Infant Apnea with Increased Serum Content Of Bovine Beta Casomorphin 5', published in the Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition...

"Infant apnea refers to when a baby stops breathing."

The researchers report "a case of a breast-fed infant with recurrent apnea episodes, which have always been preceded by his mother's consumption of fresh cow's milk."

Lab tests revealed a high level of casomorphin in the child's blood, leading researchers to speculate that it was the "opioid activity that may have a depressive effect on the

respiratory centre in the central nervous system and induce a phenomenon called milk apnea."

"The aim of the present report," the paper concludes, "is to draw researchers' attention to the possibility of occurrence of a systemic reaction with an apnea seizure on the infant's exposure to the proteins in cow's milk. We are convinced that such a clinical situation occurs rarely; however, it is accompanied by a real threat to the infant's life that can be avoided when applying a simple and not costly dietetic intervention...a dairy-free diet".

As many as 1 in 10 infants, with recurrent apneic episodes, cannot be saved and die of SIDS, sudden infant death syndrome (also known as crib death). One in every two thousand babies dies this way. The researchers conclude: "Penetration of beta-casomorphins into the infant's immature central nervous system may inhibit the respiratory center in the brainstem leading to abnormal ventilatory responses, hypercapnia [too much carbon dioxide], hypoxia [not enough oxygen], apnea, and death."

Casomorphins are also accused of participating in the cause of other conditions, including type I diabetes, postpartum psychosis, circulatory disorders, food allergies, and autism.

(To be concluded)

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

The Shillong Times
Vol No: LIX No. 94 SHILLONG, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2016

Was the demonetisation news leaked?

REPORTS are rife about the West Bengal BJP depositing Rs three crore into the Party’s bank account just a couple of days before the announcement to demonetise Rs 500 and 1000 notes was made on November 9, evening. Reports say that the last deposit of Rs forty lakh was made minutes before the Prime Minister’s speech. The deposits were ostensibly made to a savings account (No 554510034) under the name of Bharatiya Janata Party, West Bengal with the Indian Bank, Central Avenue Branch, Kolkata. Questions are now being asked if the BJP was tipped off about the demonetisation process by sources in the Finance Ministry. A tweet by a BJP member of Punjab on November 6, announcing that RBI would come up with a new Rs 2000 currency note, with an image of the new note makes us wonder how this person was privy to information that no other non-BJP citizen had. The common person was caught completely unawares!

Ordinary people queuing up at ATMS spoke up on television and supported the Government’s move to demonetise Rs 500 and 1000 currency notes in the larger national interest. All right thinking citizens are one in enabling the Government to deal with black money and to plug the sources of terror funding. But this new information could badly damage the credibility of the BJP and Prime Minister Modi who made it appear that his Government was on a cleansing drive against the shadow economy that hangs around the country’s neck like the sword of Damocles. However, the bank transactions of the BJP are in no way illegal. The sources of such huge deposits must be duly disclosed to the banks and if the money came from donations then the receipts have to be produced. What is mystifying is the transaction on the eve of the much hyped surgical strike on black money. Is there a better explanation?

LOOKING BACK
March 14, 1989

Pandemonium in LS & RS over Thakkar Commission

The Thakkar Commission's report on Indira Gandhi's assassination purportedly excerpted in a lead story, in the daily "Indian Express" today threw the Lok Sabha into a turmoil causing its adjournment thrice without transacting any business. While in the Lok Sabha the opposition demanded suspension of the question hour, in the Rajya Sabha the Chairman Dr Shanker Dayal Sharma, assured the agitated opposition members during zero hour that he would give his decision on their demand for a discussion of the report after going through the Indian Express reports. The Government has so far withheld from Parliament and the Supreme Court the Thakkar Commission report in the interest of national security and had, for this purpose, secured from Parliament passage of an amendment to the Commission of Inquiry Act in 1986. The report's "leak" in the Indian Express which Home Minister Mr Buta Singh would neither deny nor confirm in response to unrelenting opposition demand has put the government and the opposition on a confrontation course. The Indian Express report bylined to its editor Arun Shourie and captioned "A glimpse of what has been withheld from all", R K Dhawan and Thakkar's 'needle of suspicion' is seen by the opposition to be authentic in the absence of a categorical denial by the

Good governance, Development and Human Rights: The impossible Triad!
By H H Mohrmen

The regional workshop on the theme of ‘Good governance’, Development and Human rights organised by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in collaboration with the Government of Meghalaya was a thought provoking idea and a well intentioned attempt by these two agencies. But the question is whether we will ever be able to complete the triad. Can we achieve the three important goals of democracy considering that there are still numerous cases where basic human rights are denied to the citizen and in some cases even blatant cases of violation of human rights? Will the government be able to ever achieve the three important milestones of providing good governance, development and human rights to its citizens and if so, how long will it take for us to reach that goal. The approach paper to the workshop introduced the theme by stating that the NHRC is responsible for the protection and the promotion of human rights as defined by the Protection of Human Rights Act as “right relating to life, liberty, equality, and dignity of individual as guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants.” Therefore this implies that protection and promotion of human rights is the primary duty of every government official be it the staff of the state or central government offices. But do the staffs see themselves as being responsible for ensuring basic human rights to all citizens? The other pertinent question is whether we have been able to even provide to the citizens of this country their basic right to food, shelter, healthcare and education? The goal of every government should be to provide its citizens basic human rights, and, the objective of development and good governance is

to come up with a system and a delivery mechanism which can act as a vehicle to and provide the citizens of this country their basic rights and give them dignity to live their lives as they deem fit. The note says that good governance should encompass three key words: transparency, accountability and participatory. But has the government been able to make the three triads meet? Or more specifically how can we make the three keys work. The evolution of human rights which began with right to free speech and right to protest peacefully, has evolved to right to health, education etc., and now human rights in its fourth generation of rights to uninterrupted digital connection. It is our basic human right to have our mobile or even internet connection without any hitches and hindrances, but do we really enjoy that comfort? It is true that technology especially mobile phones have changed the way people communicate because mobile connection has reached to a large part of the state and even penetrated the remote corners of the state, but there are still many places where connection is a one way street because mobile signal covers only few places in the village. So even in this digital age we still have places in the state where there is no network connection at all; where the villagers’ only way to communicate to the outside world is to go to a certain high elevation spot where there is network coverage. Recently people who live in along the Bangladesh border made public their plight and informed that they have to depend on Bangladesh mobile service providers to make their calls to India, and for that matter even city dwellers experience uncomfortable fluctuation of internet connection and we even have high call drops, so how can the government deliver good governance or ensure transparency and accountability in its day to day activity when the mechanism is not in place? How the Government is going to improve connectivity and ensure that we have connection without any interruption and that citizens enjoy their rights, is a million dollar question? Obviously there is still a huge digital divide in the state; many students in the villages do not have access to computers because very few schools are equipped with computers in the rural areas. Students from the rural areas have to come to the nearest urban area to even fill their scholarship forms, because that needs to be done online. We are talking about ensuring the citizens their right to clean air or even uninterrupted internet or mobile connection when we have not been able to provide them their basic human So how can we bridge the gap or narrow down the digital divide? The other pertinent question is whether we can expect the government to provide us our fourth generation sets of rights when our fellow citizens have not even received their basic rights to food, education, healthcare etc? We still have villages with no road connectivity and their only means of communication is to walk from their homes to their nearest road connection. Then we also have schools with very few or no teachers. So what happens to their basic human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also guarantees dignity of every human but have we been able to accord the same respect and dignity to every citizen of this country? What happens when a poor farmer wearing only rags visit any government office? Do we always treat them with dignity? Do we give the same respect as we treat the educated or well to do citizen? First of all if there is no respect in the way we treat the poor and the marginalized citizen of the country, can we even start talking about providing them

their rights? Good governance, development and providing citizens of this state their basic human rights is an ambitious plan but how can we bring this to the level of the common people? In his inaugural speech Dr Mukul Sangma came up with a suggestion of organising similar workshop at the block level of the state to ensure good governance, development and human rights’ to citizens. This is a good idea. This perhaps is one approach towards achieving the goals, but are the citizens of the state in the rural areas in general and the students in particular even aware of their basic human rights? The need of the hour is to provide human rights education to citizens beginning at the college and then schools students and later the community at large. The state education department should include in the school and college syllabus the teaching of the different generation of human rights so that people will be aware of their basic rights. The workshop jointly organised by NHRC and the state government is a step in the right direction but it is only the first step in a journey of a thousand miles. A beginning was made and one hopes that the workshop will not be the beginning and also the end at the same time. The state government and NHRC need to work harder to inform and teach the people about their rights and to motivate them to exert their rights because being aware of one’s right is one thing and to motivate and make the best use of those rights or to assert one’s rights is another issue altogether. Until and unless the citizens of the country are able to assert their rights then ‘Good governance, Development and human rights’ will simply be empty rhetoric. It is only when the people are aware of their rights and the government is also able to fulfil its obligation to provide to all the citizens of this country their rights, will the triad meet.

TO THE EDITOR

Harassment by banks

Editor, Through your esteemed daily I would like to relate a personal incident that I encountered at SBI Bara Bazar Branch. After standing in a queue for about 3 hrs for exchanging my old currency for new ones, I noticed that one gentleman(probably from rural area) who was a few persons ahead of me in the queue was denied the exchange of his Rs1500 by the person at the counter on account of non-availability of Rs 100 denominations. The poor tired fellow had to return empty handed even after pleading with that person saying that its all the money that he's got left. Later when my turn came (around 6.05pm when the entrance to the bank was closed and only the customers who were already inside were entertained to go about their transactions), to my surprise the person at the counter asked me for a copy of my ID proof to be submitted along with the form provided by the bank. Then I too pleaded with that person and told him that even in the form given by the bank itself it is clearly stated that we have to produce any one of our ID proofs "in original to be shown at the counter", and that there is no mention about submitting a photocopy of our ID too. Despite my efforts to reason with him, his simple reply was, “We have asked everyone else to do the same so I cannot help you.” Ultimately I too had to return home empty handed-Now as far as my information goes about

the money exchange system that has been put in place by the Government as mentioned in various newspapers, news channels, Government notifications to the public, etc., it is emphasised that the submission of photocopies is required only for withdrawals and deposits. Hence, I would like to request the concerned authorities and the Government to please clarify to the public about the right system that we should follow so that we can come prepared, in order not to waste our time and energy in the coming days. Yours etc., Name withheld on request

Who is the real outsider?

Editor, While expressing gratitude to A Lyngdoh, for the letter, “Don’t belittle if unaware” (ST, 11 Nov, 2016), I am equally flummoxed by the “pro-Pakistan”, ostensibly humanitarian and “anti-India” take of Babet Sten in her letter, “Outsiders and their opinions” (ST, 10, Nov, 2016). The Shillong Times is not the dead wood seen in the ravaged Jaintia Hills district of Meghalaya rendered so by the gluttonous black diamond seekers among tribal brethren, where insects creep and crawl now. Such creeping and crawling thoughts are a common among the north easterners in mainland India – where they are ‘outsiders.’ This daily is a vibrant media in this part of the country where opinion makers aren’t judged whether they are insiders or outsiders and are allowed to express their views like in any other

fourth estate of this country. You may have deciphered the meaning of my surname but what about yours? I wonder if you are influenced by our northern neighbour or the ISIS and I reckon the Delhi Police has a potential threat there in you. We are residing here on an invitation sent by the then British Raj to my forefathers to work in its empire, perhaps even before your forefathers set their foot here. So, I am no Martian that I cannot comment on local issues. An observant person can easily do so. And check your facts first on the uncountable Khasi clan names in Meghalaya. If the Americans have “Trumped” themselves recently by voting Donald Trump then the tribes of this place too have done incalculable harm to themselves by leaving their flanks open for influx of a different kind. Regarding Babri Masjid demolition, history only repeats itself. Since you have not pointed to the Babri masjid demolition and said, “Hey, Brahmin (Dwivedi) why did you destroy Babri?” then so will I refrain from uttering, “Hey Christian (Sten), why did you kill and chase out all genuine non-tribal residents from Shillong in the 70s, 80s & 90s?”

Yours etc. PK Dwivedi Shillong – 1

Trump's triumph!

Editor, Before the elections Donald Trump had promised to seal the USA - Mexico border; a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States, getting the hell out of Islam right inside their dens, "Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine the face of our next president?" and many more such statements were read

and heard in the media. What was earlier dismissed to be the polarized version of American politics is turning out to be true with Donald Trump emerging triumphant at the US Election. What many thought were irresponsible statements of Trump may well become reality in days to come if Trump means business. Well I personally preferred him to win the election, given that his rival Hillary Clinton was one I could never adore. Had there been anybody else, perhaps I would have a second thought on Trump. The good news is he is going to be good for India. He knows this vital market, which is dearer to him than even China. I see the Chinese growth story, which institutes like the RGIIIM in Shillong and many of our institutes elsewhere in the country, are obsessed with looks more like hollow bricks that we use here for constructing domestic walls. The other side of Trump's victory is that despite his sharp attacks, people were tuned to him which was a precursor to the victory of the man behind the mouth. The Americans have genuine fear in the face of growing radical Islam and the series of attacks on its soil. They now have in this man the choice, voice and persona to lead them. The interesting part is that the red marking of almost all states in the map of USA amidst few blues denoting the Democrats was akin to the BJP saffron show in India during the 2014 general election WHERE Congress won only a few seat. Watch out for Trump. He is going to be the most interesting persona on the globe as his reign at the White House begins. Yours etc. PK Dwivedi, Shillong-1

Demonetization: A beginning But will it rid black economy?

By Shivaji Sarkar

The Modi Government took a unique decision to demonetize Rs 500 and Rs 1000 currency notes for easing out black money, rooting out counterfeit currency notes, stopping terror funding and devastate those who have stacked huge currency notes. Importantly, this is the second demonetization, the first being by Prime Minister Morarji Desai in 1978 whereby he demonetized Rs 10,000 and Rs 1000 currency notes. However, the common man never felt any impact because for Rs 10,000 one could purchase a 150-yard plot. Moreover, the average income even of a Class I Government officer was less than Rs 10000. This doesn’t hold true today as over the last 38 years the economy’s dynamics have changed. Today, even a labourer or a small trader earns around Rs 10,000 a month and the Rs 500 note has become the basic currency. Even children in average homes gamble with this amount during Diwali season. Women too also keep part of their husband’s income in supposedly high-denomination notes in ‘piggy banks’. Consequently, Modi’s demonetization impacts almost everyone. This has led to a chaotic situation. Think. The retail market is unable to function, people cannot buy vegetables or other commodities, weekly mohalla markets are non-functional, banks are witnessing long queues and trading has come to a halt. Undeniably, these are pangs of transition to a new series of Rs 2000 currency notes and the problems faced by the public would gradually subside. Finance Minister Jaitley avows to reach a solution in a few days. However, according to the Smugglers & Foreign Exchange Manipulators Administrator PK Prusty, the world over such moves has not succeeded. Recall, the EU too demonetized the Euro 500 currency in May 2016 to eliminate black money. Whether it is successful is debatable. Thus, India might see reduced black money for some time but it might not be eliminated. Prusty also underscores that it is not black money but the country’s “black economy” that one needs to be wary of. Black economy refers to all illegal activities including smuggling, drug peddling, money laundering, ‘round tripping’ – routing illegal funds through foreign institutional or portfolio investors (FII/FPI) back into the country for investing in shares, bonds or other instruments. Even Daish (ISIS) operates international black economy. Black money on the other hand is an earning through legal means. It is called “black” because tax on the earning has not been paid. Once a tax is paid, even with penalty, it becomes white. The recent voluntary disclosure with 45 per cent penalty earned Rs 30,000 crore revenue and legitimized incomes of over Rs 65,000 crores. In 1997, Rs 33,3339 crores was declared and Rs 9584 crores were realized as taxes. Undoubtedly, there have been similar disclosures earlier as well. Yet the generation of black money or evasion of taxes did not stop. Estimates state that there is about Rs 12 lakh crores illicit money around. Notwithstanding, that some today might have burnt their wealth! In fact not a few economists suggest that if income tax rates are reduced to 15 per cent the number of taxpayers would double. True, the ramification of black money is not so grave. But a black economy has a ruinous effect as it not only impacts the nation’s social and economic fibre but also promotes illegal activities, many of which tend to be extremely dangerous. Yes, demonetization might check terror funding and eliminate counterfeit currency notes given that the black economy is presently 60 per cent of India’s GDP. This was 4 per cent in 1955. Besides, some of the trends suggest that operators know how to replace their demonetized currency. Gold sales unexpectedly sky-rocketed the very night the Prime Minister announced demonetization. Even hawala operators are hyper active. Surprisingly, some religious and other so-called social organizations have also joined “operation exchange”. Experts’ apprehension that operators are one step ahead of the Government game seems to be proving correct. Their cuts vary from 5 per cent to 20 per cent. The Government’s move has also struck hard some political Parties. There are reports that many Parties received donations from “unknown” sources in cash which were stacked in cash for the impending polls in five States. Would they be able to replace the notes? And have the time to do so? None knows. Pertinently, corporates also have huge cash but are smart enough to know how to have these replaced. Questionably, is a cash economy a bane? That is how it is being projected. Certainly, there are lobbies which want transactions to be done through banks to be clean and “prevent” generation of black money. But this is not a correct argument. As hawala is reportedly now functioning through the banking system. Remember, the US and European economy collapsed as banks like Lehman Brothers and AIG (largest US insurance company) were swindled in 2007. This resulted in a global crash and turmoil. Indeed, India has the advantage of a large cash economy. More. It has sustained through many crisis in the past, including the worst balance of payment in 1990, 2007-8 global crisis and the recent Rs 12 lakh crores scandal of bank NPAs. Hence banks are not safe havens nor in a position to insulate the economy and eliminate black money generation. In addition, many large depositors have withdrawn from banks as tax deductions at source erode their deposits. So, elimination of TDS on deposits would bring back large depositors to banks and be less of a burden on the Government for their recapitalization. Clearly, the cash economy is the country’s biggest strength. For instance, over 80 per cent of the wholesale and farm trade is done in cash. It also has the least default, there is no chasing for realization and it ensures smooth trading. Furthermore, all cash transactions are not black. And a failure in payment has limited impact. On the contrary, a failure of bank transactions can have wider economic and social impact. As it stands, the NPAs are eroding the common man’s deposits. And this tantamounts to virtual swindling of public money. Now even the NDA Government is finding it difficult to recapitalize the banks. As a result depositors are being penalized because banks are forcing them to suffer interest rate cuts on their deposits. Worse, they are not even passing on the repo rate cut benefits to lenders. In sum, the insistence for operations through banks should be given up for a larger, open and safer economy. Ways to encourage cash economy should be pondered over albeit with regulation. No matter, demonetization is a necessary move. However, the operations must be widened to counter black economy --- now a global menace. --- INFA

“A financial crisis is a great time for professional investors and a horrible time for average ones.”

--- Robert Kiyosaki

The Shillong Times

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Beating the cash woes

PAYTM is the new way of beating the money woes caused by the latest demonetization of Rs 500 and 100o notes. In metros auto rickshaw drivers and radio taxis accept Paytm as a mode of receiving money. It's high time people in Meghalaya learn to adopt cashless transactions and not moan and groan by bringing in the, "poor cannot use card," argument. Those who advance these clichéd arguments always believe and make others believe that the "poor and the illiterate" have no intellectual resources. That's a wrong perception! In many villages of this country the poor are being serviced by business correspondents (BCs) who are linked to banks through micro-finance companies. They deposit cash and withdraw it without having to enter a bank. Why are these services still so alien to Meghalaya? Who is responsible for introducing the benefits of such transactions to people in the rural outback? This is what financial inclusion is all about! It's time to hold the banking sector accountable for failing to reach the last mile and not stretching themselves enough to service the rural population.

As in any Government initiative, the recent demonetization process has also generated a lot of rumours about old currency not being accepted by petrol pumps, hospitals etc., and that some people have died after hospitals refused to admit them since they had no new currency to pay for. These are the current posts on social media that quickly go viral. The Union Government should have anticipated that such rumour mills would be hyperactive and tried to quell them using its machinery. Meanwhile, shopkeepers in Police Bazaar, Shillong are still accepting the old notes for purchases made. The merchants are saying they have ample time to deposit the old currency and are not overly worried. However, there are some private hospitals that refuse to accept the old currency. Government should deal stringently with such hospitals. Again there are rumours floating around that the 10 Re coins that banks have been giving out are fake and people refuse to accept these coins at pharmacies etc as change. Such rumours do no good to anyone. The State Government here has to deal with this quickly and effectively.

LOOKING BACK

March 14, 1989

District Exhibition at Nongstoin

A district level exhibition was held in Nongstoin last Thursday Ten government departments- district Handloom & Weaving, Sericulture, Soil Conservation, District Health & Family Welfare, Social Forestry, Agriculture,

Fishery, Industries, Public Health Engineering and Information & Public Relations Department participated in the exhibition which was inaugurated by the West Khasi Hills Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mr C. D Kynjling.

The drum-and-flute sentiment

By Fabian lyngdoh

The Khasi society today is undergoing a cultural transformation. The traditional matrilineal Kur system has broken down and exists only in name; the traditional land tenure system based on community ownership of land and natural resources has also broken down, leading to absolute private ownership by individuals or by a few founding clans of the Raid or Hima supported by the modern law, not by tradition. All members of a Kur no longer have equal right in the so called Ri-kur, which is now owned only by a few families of a certain kpoh (lineage). Individuals no longer have equal economic rights and freedom on the utilisation of land, and hence, there is a general sense of alienation and feeling of insecurity among the Khasis in their own beloved land. There is also a malady of governance in the society today due to territorial authority vacuum, as the concept of 'land belongs to the people' no longer has a legal embodiment.

Overall, the Khasi society today rests no longer on a functional structural balance between individual freedom and the collective order, but only on a cultural sentiment, which we may call as a 'drum-and-flute' sentiment, because a strong sentiment for the tribe is awakened in the heart of every Khasi by the sound of the drums and the flute. There is a belief among the Khasis that when the sound of the drums and flute attain perfect resonance (ka tangmuri ka la ih), then connection with the gods and spirits of ancestors is achieved. But today, connection with the spirits of ancestors is no longer feasible; the sentiment alone remains to keep the tribe somehow alive amidst this cultural chaos. There is a general sense of predicament among the people because of this internal cultural chaos. But the cause of this predicament is generally attributed to external agencies. Every socio-economic and political problem is believed to have been caused by some foreign elements; otherwise the society would still have been in the golden-age. The State Government itself with its democratic administrative system is perceived as

one of the foreign elements which pollute the purity of the tribe. But the irony is that, everybody desperately wants to be an MLA, and a Chief Minister in that State Government.

The society is facing a leadership crisis. There is scarcity of thought leaders and statesmen, while it is flooded with party politicians. Hence, every time that a certain critical social issue arises, everybody jumps into the platform as 'u khlawait' (warrior) because some foreign invasion is thought to have taken place somewhere in the land, but the whereabouts of the battlefield where that battle if to be fought is unidentified. Even representatives of constitutional bodies like the District Council, feel the urge of popular attraction to enter into the fray beyond constitutional mandate.

Shrewd politicians take advantage of this feeling of insecurity and identity crisis, by strumming on the chords of cultural traditions which have lost their rhythm, to stimulate and arouse the support of the crowd for whatever cause which they might not even know. Issues like the ILP, Tenancy Bill, Village Administration Bill, MUDA, etc., though may be genuine issues that warrant serious thought and consideration, but for Meghalaya politics they only provide a situational forum for raising dust, and nothing else but dust. The real issue is an eternal grudge for some unseen enemy that is supposed to have caused all the troubles. During the movement for the ILP, I had predicted in the article 'Facts about Problematic NGOs' (ST. November 13, 2013) that there is no mechanism to end the issue until it goes into hibernation after the shares of the spoil are settled, or the elections are over. That was what had actually happened after the elections in February, 2014 were over.

As Dr Mukul Sangma, the present Chief Minister of Meghalaya is a Garo, he is also perceived as an external factor undermining the security of the Khasis; hence he should be removed. But there is a certain peculiarity in the Khasi political tradition. Even if a Khasi were to be the Chief

Minister, the Pnars would demand that he should be from Jaintia Hills, the Khynriam would demand that he should be from East Khasi Hills. Likewise, the Bhois and the Marams would demand that the Chief Minister should be from their regions. There would be no end to the grudge, because ultimately every Kur would demand that the Chief Minister should be its own 'kñi rangbah' (chief maternal uncle).

This traditional lack of consensus on who should be the head of the State is one of the reasons why the Syiems in every Raid and Hima of the Khasis were appointed from outsider clans, and mostly from non-Khasi families who could be Bengalis, Assamias, Karbis, Lalungs, Garos, etc. So, why Dr Mukul Sangma is the Chief Minister today is not because he had assumed the office by force, or that the Garos had conspired to rule over the Khasis, but because it is in the tradition of the Khasis, not to permit another Khasi to be above the rest. The Khasis have no reason to grumble against Dr Mukul Sangma, but they have to reform their traditional mindset, and elect a legislator as intelligent, as active, and as capable as Dr Mukul Sangma, then they will have a Khasi Chief Minister. Simply wishing without the capability is fairy tale. A little nursery rhyme says, "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride them."

The fact is that the society as a whole has no goals and objectives. Everyone in politics sees only power in the corridors of the Secretariat, and money in the State Budget. The crores of Rupees of Central funding appearing in the State Budget are not seen as means of investment for infrastructural and human development, but only as sources of private income for the current year. The motive behind our State Politics is well described in the little poem:

"If I were the King of Tartary, / Myself and Me alone; / My bed would be of Ivory, / Of beaten gold My throne." As politics in Meghalaya starts and ends with the manipulation of the 'cultural identity' trump card, heroes of various hues who have no substantial leadership resources other than the means to arouse the drum-and-flute sentiment come into the fray. A great hero is one who stands in the

midst of a crowd at Motphran and announces on the loudspeakers that all the 'dkhar' (non-Khasis) should be driven out of Iewduh, but having no slightest idea how to do that. The greatest hero would be one who boasts that he would lead the tribe to complete independence from India, but draws every paisa of his income from the Government of India. But that is the general level of mentality we have to live with, and we have to be content with it.

Attributing all causes of cultural chaos to external factors without rational evidence leads nowhere, because it is the internal factors which pull and push the society this way and that way, thus creating a situation of dilemma. 'Going back to the roots', is meaningless when the so called 'roots' are all amiss interpreted and become hazy. It would only mean 'going back to square one', a situation compelled on those who have been swallowed by the biggest snake in the ladder-and-snake game of life. 'Banking upon the roots' is a better watchword for a society that is still striving to be self dependent; and 'going back to the roots' could only be a cultural luxury for a society that has fully achieved self dependence.

Human development is what the people urgently need. Human development alone would be able to sustain the Khasis as honourable human beings. Human development, laced with drum-and-flute sentiment would sustain the Khasis as human beings, and also a tribe. But the drum-and-flute sentiment alone sustains nothing but lamentations and sense of insecurity. If we are constantly in a state of mourning and lamentation for the lost of something we never had, we would not be able to see where to go. If we constantly see others as the cause of our sufferings then we would not be able to realise that the faults lie deep within us, and deny ourselves of the possible help that others around us may be able, and willing to provide in plenty. As a sensible tribe, let us keep in mind that in today's world, the drum-and-flute sentiment alone, without human development is a regressive force that would keep the tribe in eternal limbo, whilst all other peoples would have proceeded to paradise.

Analysing the Income Disclosure Scheme IDS-2016

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

'Kosh Mulo Dand" loosely translated into "Treasury is the backbone of administration" is the motto of the Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax), which they proudly display in their logo. This quote attributed to Chankaya, the great Indian Machiavelli speaks volumes about the important role taxation plays in the governance of a nation. Simply put, taxation is that hand that enables the government to embark on its developmental and growth path.

The recently concluded "Income Disclosure Scheme" has put much focus on Income Tax Department in the country. The scheme has been touted a massive success with total declarations under the scheme crossing more than Rs. 65,000 crores bringing almost 29,000 crore to the government's kitty. Critics have argued that the response to the scheme has been lacklustre compared to the VIDS (Voluntary Disclosure of Income Scheme) floated in 1997. Also they argue that with each declaration less than 1 crore the scheme has not achieved the desired results. Others argue that while the latest study by the NIPFP (National Institute of Public Finance and Policy) pegs black money at 75% of the GDP, the taxes collected under 2016 pales in comparison.

Yet it would be wrong to discount the efforts of the department as well as the government in this scheme. The oft repeated comparison with the VIDS makes for some interesting analysis. The VIDS scheme was essentially an amnesty scheme where the taxation rates were pegged at 30% while IDS was merely a voluntary scheme where the rates stood at 45%. While critics would argue that 45% is a high rate, yet one must not forget that this is the income that had previously been not declared by the taxpayer. An honest taxpayer eventually pays taxes at the rate of 32-33% and for someone who has not entirely been honest a slightly higher tax rate only seems logical. Also the value of the assets in VIDS floated in 1997 was taken not at 1997 but in 1987 bringing down the effective rate of taxation to almost single digit. On the other hand in IDS the value of assets was to be calculated as on 01 June 2016.

Secondly much has been made of the fact that the value of each declaration stood at almost one crore each, given the fact that there were almost 64000 declarants in the scheme. However one

must remember that this scheme is voluntary in nature. Black money is not a phenomenon that is limited to big fish alone. A small trader can hide sales and make a profit of something like 50 lakhs which he would have hidden in the books for the past five years. Many such mid level traders and businessmen would have come clean in this scheme. Hence harsh criticism based on the fact that the value of each disclosure is valued at only a crore each is unfound.

The third criticism relates to the total declarations obtained being much less compared to the total size of black money is. This has less to do with failure of the department and more with the character of taxation itself. Taxation is essentially a negative function of the state; some of the best tax administered states of the world have some of the strongest laws. Thus in India while laws are often called complex little is made of the need to nudge population to pay taxes. Managing perceptions of how taxation affects our lives and plays a role in nation building, plays an important role in compliance. And IDS left no stone unturned to nudge people towards the same.

The greatest success of the scheme however is not limited to the taxes collected alone. While the exact figures of black money are subject to speculation yet it is indeed laudable that the government has launched a number of reforms in recent times to curb the same. Over the past few years measures like curbing cash transactions, furnishing PAN numbers, informing income tax authorities for certain transactions have controlled the flow of black money in the economy. The direct taxes department now makes extensive use of ICT to scan for possible tax offenders. Today the department can track even those tax offenders who do not have PAN. An archaic system of scrutiny assessment has been replaced by the algorithmic Computer Aided Selection System. While the precision of the algorithm is subject to discussion there is no doubt that each of this measure has boosted the direct tax administration in the country. The fight against black money continues and it is in this realm that IDS 2016 would serve as an important milestone forward.

(The views expressed by the author are personal)

TO THE EDITOR

Relocation of hawkers!

Editor, The jolt and shock from the demonetization of the Indian 1000 & 500 rupee notes has started a financial logjam of sorts. One may have money but the ability to spend is restricted. A trapped and baffled citizenry's hope lies only in the mercy of its banks. Outside on the streets and the pavements the same citizenry is again trapped between the pavement and the road. On the roads ply fast moving vehicles. The pavements meant for pedestrians has been encroached upon by hawkers. Thankfully salvation for the common man, has once again, come from the courts.

It is a great relief for the common man to learn of the High Court order of Justice S R Sen for the eviction of hawkers from the streets of Shillong. Public space in Shillong has been shrinking at a very fast rate and nowhere has it shrunk more rapidly than on its

pavements. Vendor encroachment of public space on Shillong's pavements has literally forced hapless citizens, most of them school children, women and the aged, to compete with vehicles on the narrow Shillong roads. Actually it was a situation just waiting for a gruesome accident to happen. That it has not happened is due to God's grace. If there ever was a failure in civic governance it is in denying common citizens their civic rights to commute and move around the streets of Shillong, with any sense of security and safety.

It is in this sense that the HC order on the eviction of Shillong hawkers is a relieve. One has no issues with livelihood options of the poor but poverty cannot be used as an excuse to inconvenience others, to circumvent all sense of decent living or to pose a threat to the safety and security of the larger urban population. Pavement hawking also poses a health threat to everyone. The hawking of uncovered foodstuff especially fish,

meat and vegetables on the open pavement is a health hazard, the likely victims once again the ignorant, the poor and those who should be provided better options. Here too protective intervention for the most vulnerable in society is called for. One therefore wonders where is the Health Department and what is its take on the selling of food over open sewers.

In conclusion one would like to thank the Meghalaya High Court for restoring the civic rights of the common man of Shillong , but while doing so it has also not neglected the livelihood interest of the hawkers. It is understood that alternate hawker sites have been identified and that the relocation of hawkers is expected to start immediately. This is important and is needed. Equitable justice for all concerned, within the severe limitations of space and circumstance, has thus been attempted. The district administration and

the Shillong Municipality are therefore urged, in public interest, to start implementing the HC order in right earnest. The general public is requested, in its own interest, to support this initiative. Let's all make Shillong, your city and my city, a liveable and habitable city for all.

Yours etc., Toki Blah President ICARE

Briefcase culture attacked

Editor, The 'Briefcase culture where money used to be exchanged for services is under attack after the demonetization of Rs 500 and 1000 currency notes by our Prime Minister. Cash in briefcases in Bollywood Films and its practical applications in our society to get favours , postings, jobs , work orders etc in the last 70 years had completely ruined our economy , Can

we imagine that India is still struggling to establish its position globally ! Countries like Japan , Germany , Russia after the WW2 disasters rose to power and gained economic stability while India is lagging behind. What are the impacts of ban on big currency notes ? Black money will be curbed , tax evasion will be checked , artificial inflation will not thrive, pseudo-rich will be caught and ultimately a healthy economy will surface in our country . Indian products will be valued in the global markets and NRIs will invest in India while FDI will spurt and all these will contribute a healthy growth for the country's economy. Our experts with RBI have thought of the pros and cons before the announcement . Some have asked why ATM dispensers were not calibrated to accommodate the new 2000 currency notes before the announcement ? I would only say this: Should I inform the mouse that I have a trap for it so it should take care?

Yours etc., Anjan Kumar Das, Shillong-6

Better strategy would have helped!

Editor, It is indeed a bold initiative by our hon'ble PM Narendra Modi to strike at black money. Of course it is a bolt from the blue for some section of people in our society and some anti social elements too. The question is how to tackle the present crises. There should have some proper mechanism in place. As per directives of government 'two denomination' of currencies still have face value since banks are accepting the same up to 31st of Dec 2016,so in such circumstances what steps are taken against the person who refuses to accept the same currency? If all the major business stockholder refuse to accept currencies of Rs 500 & 1000 on the pretext of no change and if this is the

trend is going this way what will be the financial position of the state? As per government mandate the medical stores & hospitals should accept these two denomination of currencies but it is all in vain. Who will question these defaulters? Why should common people suffer for this? Why is there insufficient small tender of currencies? What about the daily wage labourer who is moving from one shop to another with a Rs 500 note in hand for some groceries but has to return home empty handed? Who will fulfill his family's hunger? I was myself witness to this. What about the people living in remote villages where there are no banks or ATMs? Are there appropriate mechanisms for them to transact? This surgical strike seems to have hit the weaker section very hard since a proper mechanism was not put in place. However, overall the decision of the government is a commendable one.

Yours etc., Biswajit ghosh Shillong-2

Kudos to Meghalaya High Court!

Editor, While appreciating the move of the Meghalaya High Court in ordering the eviction of hawkers from the roadside and footpaths, now the onus rests on the district administration to keep proper vigil on the hawkers so that they don't occupy the road. The very first day after the order was implemented, the place looked clean and more spacious and the pedestrians had an easy walk on the road which was not at all possible earlier due to the hawkers occupying both sides of the road. Once again I would like to express my thanks to the Hon'ble High Court.

Yours etc., Shankarlal Singhania, 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.

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

--- Kirby Larson

The Shillong Times

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Judicial appointments

CHIEF Justice of India T. S. Thakur regretted early this year that the backlog of cases in the country cannot be cleared by 18,000 judges. High courts have 40% vacancies. The backlog piles up year after year. The crisis has arisen because of the conflict between the executive and the Judiciary undermining democracy. Now the Centre has returned 43 out of 77 names of High court Judge Candidates. So many names had never been returned in recent years. This attitude can only hurt India’s judicial system.

The Judiciary has primacy in appointing judges on the recommendations sent by a Collegium of judges headed by T.S Thakur. The setting up of a National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) had been struck down by the Apex Court last year. But the Court allowed the Centre to draw up an Memorandum Of Procedure (MOP) in consultation with the Chief Justice of India. The NJAC is to have judges and non-judges as members. It is because the executive wants a bigger role in the appointment of judges so that judicial activism is contained. The Judiciary is against it. The Centre is pushing for the HIAC but the collegium is yet to okay it. The sooner the conflict is resolved the better.

LOOKING BACK
March 14, 1989

Conference on Nehru and Tribals on Thursday

More than two hundred delegates are to participate in a two day national conference on "Nehru and Tribal Wealth" which begins in Shillong on Thursday. The Conference will be inaugurated by Union Minister of State for Welfare Dr Rajendra Kumari Bajpayee, while Meghalaya Chief Minister Mr Purno A Sangma will preside over the inaugural function. Chief Minister of Gujarat Mr Amar Singh Chaudhary will delivers the keynote address. The Conference, which forms a part of the year long Nehru Birth Centenary Celebrations, will discuss various facets of Nehru's wider involvement in the programmers for the development of tribals in the context of tribal development in the North East.

TO THE EDITOR

Registration of Marriage Act 2015

Editor,

I was aghast to read your news report that some of the Pastors have filed a writ petition in the High Court against the implementation of Meghalaya Compulsory Registration of Marriage Act 2015. I thought we are back to the good old days seeing the other day in the vernacular press that normalcy is returning to H Gordon Roberts Hospital, but now we are back to square one with the writ petition by our so called Church leaders (pastors).Good Lord, what is going on here? Are our Pastors now at liberty to fight in the Court when their domain is in the Church? There are so many lost sheep in the wilderness. Please go and find them. We demand a clarification from the KJP Synod or KJP Assembly whether these Pastors have got the approval of the Synod or Assembly. Have they taken the consent of their Pastorate or the District they are in charge of?. Who bears the expenses? As church members we have the right to be clarified, or else we will be compelled to adopt some other means. Instead of going direct to the

Assam Garo wants ST Status

The All Assam Garo Students' Union (AAGSU), has called upon the Assam Govt to pass a Resolution in the forthcoming budget session of the state Assembly for the inclusion of Assam Garos into the list of Scheduled Tribes. In a press statement the AAGSU president Mr Albert Sangma said that the Garos of Assam, have their own language, distinct culture, traditions, customs and usages and therefore they should be given scheduled tribe status like other tribal communities. The Union hoped that the state Chief Minister would introduce the resolution and prove himself 'generous towards the tribals of the state'.

Court why not urge the Government to bring amendments. That would have been a noble idea for our pastors. Have our so called church leaders ever thought, what if the Court makes the Church, the Pastorate, the District, the Presbytery, the Synod or Assembly party to the case? Who will bear the expenses for lawyers fees? What if the case goes to the higher court (Supreme Court).Will our offerings also be used for legal expenses? God please help us!

Yours etc.,
Osmond J.
Kharmawphlang &
Dephishisha K.Syntiew.
Shillong-1.

Rooting out black money

Editor,

This refers to the through-provoking article “But will it rid black economy?” by Shivaji Sarkar (ST, Nov 14, 2016). After demonetising high-value notes to curb black money, PM Modi has rightly said that he has "more projects" in mind to rid the country of corruption and was ready to face the consequences as forces are "up against me" with 70 years of loot being in trouble. The evil of

2018: Leaders or Dalals?

By Toki Blah

men, crooks, and opportunists have successfully projected themselves as saviours of the community (jaitbynriew). In the excitement we overlook the fact that the need of the hour, of the Jaitbynriew and of the state is not third rate saviours but for intelligent, farsighted leaders. We just don't have them!

What are these perceived threats that confront Meghalaya and its people? We have pinpointed influx, border disputes and domination by outsiders as some of the threats faced by Meghalaya’s indigenous communities. A question arises, how did these problems crop up in the first place? No serious research has been conducted to find out the real cause of the problem nor any viable longterm relief measure /strategy been identified. The above threats are however directly related to the fear of being exploited by larger more economically and culturally stronger entities. The response to this fear has so far been kneejerk and emotional. The saviours have failed to articulate that the domination of Meghalaya by outsiders can only be challenged by an educated, literate and technologically developed society; through a society that is populated by healthy energetic citizens; through a community based on a sound economic and social infrastructure. Our elected saviours have failed to understand that we continue to be vulnerable to exploitation as long as we are governed by fear.

Loss of tradition, loss of culture and loss of identity have also been cited as prominent threats we face. Actually if the truth be said, as a state, 70% of our time and energy is spent on these non-existent problems. Non-existent, because, we already have Constitutional provisions laws and acts of both the State and the Autonomous District Councils, to provide more than adequate safeguards. Trouble is not the lack of safeguards but the ignorance; apathy and the total absence of a will to implement and enforce what we already have. The time therefore has come for an expose. There is a reason why people of the state have been continuously fed a menu of fear. Pressure groups do it to screen their own extortion drives. Political

parties do it to divert attention from the fact that they are intellectually and ideologically bankrupt. The Govt and the ADCs do it to hide their sins of mal-governance. The collective strategy of the saviours is - “don't allow people to think. Don't allow the employment of logic. Keep everyone off balance by appealing to the emotion of fear”. Regrettably it has always succeeded.

The aim of this write-up is not to simply highlight the use of fear as a means to sustain a corrupt system of representative governance. The objective of this essay is to focus primarily on the forthcoming 2018 Assembly Elections and if possible to bring in a new paradigm on how we choose and elect those who represent us. A frightened and scared electorate has no other choice but to look backwards at the comforts and security of the past. Fear forces us to look for saviours. To nullify fear; to enable us to come up with leaders and statesmen instead of saviours, can we for a change start talking about ‘Hope’? Hope always brings in the possibilities of the future. Hope is always built on the pillars of a vision for the best. Fear destroys all endeavour; Hope always stimulates energy and enterprise. In 2018 the people of Meghalaya will have to choose between the two.

If Hope is based on a vision, then we have to ask what is the vision we have for ourselves? The first spontaneous reply to the above would be ‘We want to see ourselves, especially our children – educated, knowledgeable, and at par with the rest of the world’. It is our identity for tomorrow. Tragically Meghalaya has throughout been saddled with Education Ministers who were totally oblivious of the potency of their department. In their defence it must be admitted that no politician or political party has ever shown any interest on the real purpose of education. Everyone swears by whatsoever God they believe in, in the future of our youth, yet education continues to be seen simply as an activity to provide employment through teaching. Politicians miss out on what quality education can do for our youth! In 2018, why shouldn't we ask candidates to spell out their vision on education and what they intend to do about it? If viable education is the vision for the state then elected representatives should naturally articulate the vision.

Health and the happiness it brings is another priority issue for any society. The ability of any Govt to provide good health care for its citizens is increasingly being associated with good governance because Govt is mandated to provide good and affordable health care. Regrettably no one speaks about health and health care in the election campaigns. People and parties bent on forming the next Govt shun speaking about it. Probably because they just don't care. Yet it happens to be one of the most critical areas of concern for all of us; for the poor, especially the rural poor. It is an issue that impacts on the general wellbeing of all citizens. It should therefore form the core area of concern for every potential leader seeking votes from the electorate. Candidates for the 2018 elections, as leaders, must speak about their vision and plans for improving health care. We must insist they do so in their campaigns.

In conclusion the focus of this write-up is on improving the governance of Meghalaya through the election of leaders who will lead by providing better service to the people. In addition to education and health care, there is need for better service in transport, water supply, urban management, employment generation and a host of other essential public services. We need people who can think beyond utilisation of the MLA fund. There is a vast difference between those who want to serve and those who simply want to plunder the public exchequer. All departments of the Govt offer ample opportunities for public service. We must therefore seriously question any minister's demand for a “Plum Portfolio” with huge contract budgets. Such a demand is bound to have a hidden agenda. For the last 44 years we have simply been governed by those who want to exercise power without any desire to serve. It has resulted in the accumulation of wealth for a few at the cost of us all. It has resulted in the deterioration of the state; its values; its vision and its hope. Our future and our identity depend on our ability to reverse this trend. This trend has to change. It can only change if we start electing leaders instead of dalals. This is the goal for each one of us as we approach the 2018 Assembly polls. Let's hope we don't squander the opportunity given us.

Demonetization of Indian currency – change for good

By KC Reddy

Common sense and anecdotal evidence suggest that the no progress of a society ,race or country is possible without appropriate “Change “ but at the same time it is inherent in human nature to resist any “Change,” as people are more concerned about what they lose in such change than what they gain out of such change . “Change is hard at first, messy in the middle and gorgeous in the end “.

Even in the Indian context, any change in existing way of doing things, was vehemently resisted initially - simple things like changing the measurements from traditional system to metric system onto bank nationalization and economic reforms. Though people initially resisted the change into metric system but over the years, they have realized how the change helped in streamlining economic activity and made life more comfortable and meaningful. Same is the case with bank nationalization - the bank nationalization in 1971 by the then Congress Government was bitterly opposed by the bankers and other vested interested groups .Even a legal expert (V.G.Ramachandran) criticized the twenty fifth amendment of the Constitution of India which permitted the acquisition of private property by the government for public use on the payment of compensation which would be determined by the Parliament and not by courts, as smacking of totalitarianism and hurry to achieve socialism instantly overnight .But nobody can deny the enormous benefits that the Indian masses, particularly the people working in unorganized sectors and the rural areas reaped over years due to bank nationalization, in terms of easy access to credit , financial empowerment etc ,which in turn contributed to the overall well being in human development .

Irrrespective of race, religion and intellectual capacity, every Indian admits either openly or in their heart of hearts that black money is the long festering menace and needs to be dealt firmly to build a strong economy. This is obvious from the fact that out of the 2 billion population, hardly 3 million people file their income tax returns and around 2 million people actually pay income tax. A number of people like self employed workers , small businessmen ,persons working in unorganized sectors ,farmers etc should have come in the tax net but somehow they do not pay income tax .

The Prime Minister’s announcement of demonetization of Rs 500 and 1000 notes last Tuesday evening, aimed at further tightening of tough measures against black money, in fact, created more discontentment than it should have created good will among the Indian masses. Unable to express their anguish publicly over the decision, the real black money dealers/hoarders were busy in converting their black money into gold or into white money by paying hefty commissions. Taking advantage of public inconvenience arising out of lack of adequate infrastructure to ensure smooth flow of money during the exchange period of old notes by new notes ,they highlighted sporadic cases of attempted suicides , marriage postponements and disruption in the business activities and termed the whole process as “ financial emergency.” It may not surprise anybody if they indulge in rumors aimed at disrupting the supplies of essential commodities like salt , onions, cereals etc .

The intended benefits of demonetization move, are long term in nature and

would contribute to the economy in future, Unfortunately , in the short term it created serious panic and chaos due to cash limits in exchange of old notes by the new ones, inadequate cash in the banks resulting in long queues before the banks , cashless ATMs ,total absence of 500 and 1000 rupee notes . All these developments also created a brand of money racketeers and middle men who collected the old notes at a premium and distributed through ordinary citizens accounts to evade income tax. During the last three days in Agra alone , the 5.5 lakhs of “Jan Dhan” accounts which were hitherto lying either idle or dead, suddenly got fattened with 170 crores as the middle men transacted significant amounts into these accounts at the agreed rate of commission to the account holders.

The present chaos is probably the outcome of the prime minister taking substantial political risk without proper risk assessment of the black money curbing issue. The risk assessment would have taken into account the existing strengths and vulnerabilities of the government in respect of demonetization move and its likely impact on various sections of society and enabled government to devise appropriate mitigating measures in advance to deal with the situations arising out of the decision . Such risk assessment would have also discerned the behavior of people, such as buyers ,sellers ,investors ,producers, entrepreneurs ,politicians and businessmen ,more importantly their behavior in their individual capacities as voters .Obviously in the present context , it seems no such professional risk assessment was conducted prior to the implementation of the decision . Seeing all these developments, one wonders whether the govt demonetization decision of 500 and 1000 rupee notes would be able to succeed in their fight against black money .Yes ,it will succeed in case the common man is made to realize that it is a temporary inconvenience and the long term benefits will certainly outweigh the short term inconveniences and there is no gain without pain . But if they fail to do so , the black money will come back into circulation though in a slightly modified form .

Some immediate steps are necessary to ease the current situation:

The supply and replenishment of 500,100, 50,10 rupee denominations to various banks in all corners of India, need to be taken on a top priority basis –replacing the normal channels of transportation of currency notes by special air planes and helicopters so that delays in the supply of currency notes can be minimized.

In order to cope with the additional work in the banks, retired bank employees may be engaged on contract basis to work in the banks during this period. Some arrangements like supply of water etc to pacify the tempers of the waiting population in long queues before the banks, would be necessary. The positive aspects and the long term benefits arising out of the demonetization move should be highlighted both in print and visual media.

Till normalcy in the banking activities is restored, proper vigil should be maintained to counter any rumours on the availability and supply of essential commodities and monitor the availability and supply of essential commodities.

(Mr K C Reddy ,IPS (retd) is former Chief Security Advisor ,United Nations)

“*The charity that hastens to proclaim its good deeds, ceases to be charity, and is only pride and ostentation.*”

--- William Hutton

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 97 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2016

Trump and the UN

US President elect Donald Trump has had his first major confrontation globally. It concerns the Paris Climate Deal which the US signed on October 5 and became international law on November 5. with Trump calling climate change and global warming a "hoax" and threatening to withdraw from the Paris deal during his campaign, there has been a great deal of concern about the faith of the deal during the UN Climate Change Confluence at Marrakech in Morocco. UN Secretary General Ba Ki- Moon hoped Trump would evaluate his "campaign remarks" which did not signify a policy change especially as John Kerry is still Secretary of state. The UN chief has already talked to Donald Trump and feels the President elect would act in the interest of market forces. Trump was a successful business man and can be expected to be responsive to market forces. Such market forces should be harnessed for the good of the planet.

Ban Ki-Moon referred to the global unity around climate change which was achieved in Paris. Every member of the UN including the US signed The Agreement. Not just Governments but Business CEOs and civil societies have shown their strong commitment to address the challenges of Climate change. The global business community is moving towards de-carbonizing and lessening the carbon foot print. American companies and local governments have understood the severity of the Climate crisis. They are doing it to make consumers happy said Ban- Ki- Moon. Besides, a low carbon economy is conducive to their business feature. Whatever Trump may have said in his campaign trail, he may not now overlook these factors. And his reaching out to Russia and China may persuade him to fall in line with a climate deal, however, prolonged the implementation might take.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Plea for central intervention in Assam

The Bodo People's Action Committee has called for immediate central intervention in starting a dialogue on the movement launched by the tribal community in Assam for a separate homeland. A committee delegation met President R Venkataraman here yesterday and submitted a memorandum

stressing the need for an autonomous state for the tribal community on the North Bank of the Bramaputra and Autonomous District Council on the South Bank of the river. The Bodos, living in Karbi Anglong should be recognized as scheduled tribes, the memorandum added.

TO THE EDITOR

Benami stalls in MUDA

Editor,

Your Op-ed article, "Is clean business possible in Meghalaya?" (ST Nov.4th.2016) speaks volumes of the depths tribals have descended into to accumulate wealth. I am glad that a few letters from concerned people have triggered this timely and relevant article from your powerful pen. From my childhood days I have been hearing of the devil called 'dkhars' exploiting and milking us of fortunes that rightfully belonged to us. Since my formative years I have been brainwashed by my elders into understanding that 'dkhars' enter into unholy alliances with our damsels with the nefarious plot of making money and enjoying amorous pleasures as a side dish. All the damsel has to do is to sell her 'kur' (clan) title. This may be true to an extent but the malaise has struck a deeper root than that. Currently our community is afflicted by the let-us-make-a-fast-buck syndrome...and to hell with 'jait, kur, and our so called tribal pride. Our engineers steal so see the resultant condition of our roads that lead to their palatial houses. The powers that supply electricity have no power to

light up the darkness. For 45 years they slumbered so that we may blunder during power cuts. Legislative members don't see eye-to-eye but don't bat an eyelid to raise their own salaries and pensions even though they may be living in opulence and grandeur. The gluttonous greed of the powers that be that govern Meghalaya have not spared schemes having the potential of uplifting and benefiting the resident tribal populace.

One such scheme, envisaged, financed and constructed by the central government for our unemployed youth is the Parking and Shopping Complex at Khyndailad having more than 120 stalls. It is common knowledge that after allocating stalls to existing stall holders the rest have been usurped by the 'men' in power at that time and distributed to their relatives and cronies and who, barring a few, have in turn, sublet/sold the stalls to the non-tribals. And now why should we blame only our fair damsels of selling their names? Presently, even our men folk have got into the business of prostituting their names to non-tribals.

Spilling the beans is, sometimes, akin to tattling but someone has to start the ball rolling since MUDA has been dragging its feet for 12 years in this contentious yet glaring issue. To highlight

The Trump Tremor: The President of the “Forgotten people”

It was unexpected, at least going by the Twitter trolls, FB posts, TV channels, print media, opinion polls, long panel discussions, academic discourses and the hectic corporate activism in her favour, Hillary Clinton was on the verge making history to restore everything that the rational society believed as right. But on the result day there was hardly a moment that gave a pause to indicate any possibility for Hillary's win, it was Trump all the way, fiercely unstoppable. A very significant section of the world lamented with horror, "The worst has happened". What actually went wrong?

Despite being one of America's richest, he seemed to have lacked the finesse and polish one expects from a prospective POTUS, some kind of suavity and appeal that Pierce Brosnan and George Clooney exude. Obama had it. As for Hillary she reflected the subtle nuances of her class, a Yale returned former First Lady occupying a significant political post to have enough exposure to world politics. She truly belonged to her class. For many, being a woman added to her qualification, she gave America the great opportunity to choose their first woman president. She personified almost a heady mix of perfect and ideal discursive proprieties, a sophisticated blend of everything correct. Against such circumstances Trump's win has turned out to be d u m b f o u n d i n g , generating astonishment and at the same time desperate anger. The supporters of Hillary, the Twitterati, social media enthusiasts and the powerful mainstream media including television and print, are up in arms against Trump with the intention to create a possible blockade on the road to the White House forcing Trump to be stranded on the road despite the absolute verdict in his pocket. Desperation is so acute, leading to a campaign to sabotage the process, quite in Indian style, by trying to convince the Republican Electorate College vote for Hillary instead of Trump on December 19 in blatant

disregard to the faith with which the common people voted them to the Congress. Trump, actually, is seen to have risen from the ashes of an apocalypse. His victory is widely interpreted as the assertion of White supremacy as well as a vicious manifestation of anti immigration anxieties. Trump has legitimately won the election through a constitutionally valid electoral process of the land. But the amount of hatred and indignation inflicted on Trump after his victory, quite curiously, is symptomatic of what is generally attributed to Trump- deep seated hatred towards the 'other'. Trump has quite clearly been rejected by the elites, the university and college educated sophisticated lot, the economically affluent well earning metropolitan section, by the powerful group that arguably control and regulate opinions and views, by the mainstream media barons, the corporate powerhouses that operate at the global scale and, of course, the majority of the non White and immigrant Americans. Then how come has he won?

Instead of taking a grand stand to define what the US election this time meant, it can also be seen from simpler vantages. It was an election between the Democrats and the Republicans; between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. When Hillary got 232 of the electorates, Trump got a whopping 306. The Democrats were in power for the last sixteen years with Bill Clinton and Obama's consecutive two terms each (with four years in between of Republican George W. Bush). The Democratic rule, however, has not been all about great glories, nor was the Republican interlude. But this time the election was largely determined by the poor, unemployed, less educated, vulnerable and insecure citizens though mostly comprising the Whites as against the White elites. It is evident that the rule of the Democrats and their jealous campaign for globalisation brought wider gaps to make clear division among people as beneficiaries and victims. It is the victims who had voted Trump to victory this

election. 64 percent of the White Americans who form 45 % of the electorate do not have college level education. They are deluded with the great capitalist dream of globalisation. Most of them live in abject poverty and cannot afford even Obamacare health facilities nor can they meet the very basics of human needs when retrenchment has become for them a family fate.

Ashtosh Varshney has revealed the curious pattern of votes cast in this election. 67 percent of non college educated voters voted for Trump and 28 percent for Hillary. This was expected. Which is perplexing is that when 49 percent of college educated voted for Trump, Hillary got only 45 percent of their votes. Besides, the minorities, the Hispanics, the Asians, the Blacks did not go for Hillary gung ho. In fact, she polled much less votes from these constituencies than what Obama had got. Trump even polled 8 percent Black votes and 29 percent Hispanics. Apparently Hillary was not an overwhelming favourite even for the traditional voters of the Democrats. More importantly, when Hillary has been projected as the natural choice of the feminists, the women vote she got was far from impressive. Though she has got more overall women votes, 54 percent women votes as against 43 percent for Trump, but among White women 53 percent voted for Trump when 43 percent voted for Hillary. Evidently Hillary Clinton was not the universal choice even among women. After all, Hillary Clinton is not the epitome of all those ideals, a personification of those great values what Trump is not. As a politician, holding powerful positions, she cannot boast of an impeccable career that was beyond any trace of visceral allegations. Her stint as the Secretary of State was mired with some of the nastiest of controversies. Besides, after a long and largely disappointing Democratic rule in terms of economic and social security, the people of America deserved a change, more so, the people whom Trump addressed as the "forgotten men and women. The people who work hard but no longer have a voice." Trump wanted to be their "voice". America's 'voiceless', America's subaltern, as it were, deserved to elect a President

of their own as they believed, writes Katty Kay of the BBC, "he gets me, he understands my struggle".

This election has opened up a new territory for the rest of the world- the odious underbelly of the opulent America, beyond California and New York, the two of the major states where Hillary swept the election. The world is hardly aware of the rural angst, the perennial existential anxieties of the working class in the urban conurbations of America, who were the ones seemed to have made a point. This is the group of people nobody bothered to take into account while framing their strategies to ensure Hillary's win. This election has also made this imperative to reconfigure the perspectives and discourses on the issues of globalisation, demographic anxiety, sense of economic and social insecurity, question of mass influx, lack of employment even in the first world and so on. Instead of enforcing ruptures and be constantly accusative of the host entities, there is a need to address the issue with mutually appreciative and respectful idioms in order to create a congenial climate of mutual trust and confidence. So far the liberal discourses on the issues have been mono-directional, resulting in the extreme consequences like Trump victory.

Despite the despicable record of his utterly politically incorrect campaign trail, Trump's victory speech on November 9 was laudably inclusive for he proclaimed to be the President for "everyone" and pledged to work for America by reaching out to all, even to his opponents. However, his prospective presidency is not devoid of any uncanny premonitions either. It was George W. Bush, a Republican, who had changed the world forever through his contemptible craze for devastation; similar predilection in Trump, if cultivated, might well spell another regime of irrevocable doom. Trump now has to prove what he meant in his victory speech, after all the cards are now in his hands to lay it right.

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'Gas Chamber' Delhi Urgent redressal critical

By Proloy Bagchi

The national capital of India, Delhi, has been choking ever since the Diwali fireworks fouled up the air. That looked like a trigger, which in fact it was not, for the continuing spell of intense air pollution. With a blanket of smog settling down, schools were shut, construction and demolition works banned, power plants like the one at Badarpur closed for ten days.

"The city has turned into a gas chamber", that is how Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal described the situation. An 87-year-old very old friend reported that he and his 80-year-old wife had sealed themselves in their second storey flat with doors and windows shut. One could not move out even to buy necessities. Even the warmth of the mellow winter sun that they used to enjoy in the approaching cold weather sitting out in an ill-kempt park, too, had been denied to them.

It is a horrid situation - an abominable turn of events during the season of festivities, flowers and revelry. Children suffer the most. For them there was no school, no fun and games and, what's more, they couldn't go out in the open and play. If they got out they had to wear a mask - a necessary encumbrance.

In such a circumstance, no wonder people would look for means to ameliorate their condition. In the process people are increasingly turning to technological assistance. Science has handed over to humans a very potent appliance in the shape of technology that can be used for satisfying various kinds of needs - from basic to the most sophisticated. Most being aware of them it is not necessary to go through all the developments in the matter.

What is something new in India, however, is the air purifier that not all that well known. If one looks for it in the internet one would come across numerous brands with various specifications and several claims for the machines' versatility. This is the machine age and one cannot really live comfortably without their help. With economic progress, even the middle classes in their tiered differentiations have acquired air-conditioners that control the hot or cold weathers within the confines of one's living or bed rooms. With cut-throat competition and proliferation of manufacturers to meet the rising demands the prices have fallen making them affordable for those who never could entertain a thought of acquiring one a few years ago.

It seems it is now the turn of air purifiers. Now, with frightfully toxic ambient air people are getting more and more inclined to buy air purifiers. One of the first of them was perhaps installed by the US Embassy in the capital. Progressively, as the air quality deteriorates even during the seasons when it is expected to be normal or slightly worse air purifiers provide an alternative to treat the pollution in the air.

These do filter out the harmful particulate matters (PM 2.5 and PM 10), protect people from taking in foul air which has all the potential to seriously damage their health. But installing it at home will protect one only for a period of 12 hours or so. When one is out and away from it one remains exposed to the pollution.

Apart from dealing with very harmful PM 2.5 and PM 10 these contraptions also help in keeping out the allergens helping to make those comfortable who suffer from allergy or those who are asthmatic. Besides, they extend protection from dust, pollen, pet dander, mites and their faeces, etc. Regardless of their benefits, Indian households never perhaps ever contemplated to buy such a machine that rendered

only limited assistance. But with heavily toxic air that has settled down over Delhi people are turning to these machines that are, unfortunately, of limited use.

Besides, the other disadvantage is that these machines run on dirty energy rising consumption of which exacerbates the pollution caused by coal-fired thermal power plants. It is a great irony; it is we who create polluted air and then have to have machines to filter it.

The whole sordid thing started with Diwali. With the pollution base already high the fireworks made it worse. Delhi air is not free of pollutants even at the best of times. Diwali made it worse, as it does virtually every year. And, yet people do not draw a lesson. But the fillip to the deteriorating quality of air was given by the farmers of Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh. For want of cheap labour that they used to get from Bihar they switched over to harvesters for reaping their paddy crop that, unfortunately, do not harvest as the humans do; they leave a fairly tall stubble. That stubble reportedly is of no use and hence it is set fire to. The burning of the remnants of the paddy crop in the three States has raised the smoke that engulfs the entire region, the urban concentrations including the megapolis of Delhi. That and the usual sources like smoke from thermal power plants and incoming dust from the desert region in the west compound the problem.

People are having a terrible time. United Nations has come out with a warning that the record pollution levels of 999 micrograms of particulate matter per cubic metre is more than 15 to 16 times more than what is considered safe. PM 2.5 and PM 10 particulate matters, both clocked 16 times more than what is safe.

The air has become toxic and with every breath adults and children are inhaling poison which can eventually cause the dreaded disease of cancer. Air purifiers or wearing masks when out in the open are short term preventive measures - like medicinal doses. A more fundamental approach to cut down on the source of pollution is necessary.

It cannot be that the paddy stubble is absolutely useless. After all, it is an organic matter and has to have carbon as one of its components. No wonder, Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Road Transport and Shipping has suggested production of bio-fuel from it. This will eliminate the smoke and also be profitable to the farmers. Such plants need to be commissioned as soon as possible all over Punjab, Haryana and Western UP.

Fireworks in Delhi need to be banned regardless of the fact that it is a demand of spring festivities or weddings or whatever. Public transport need to be strengthened to reduce the dependence on personal vehicles. Delhi reportedly has 6,000,000 vehicles of all kinds - commercial, private, four wheelers, three wheelers and two wheelers of varied ages emitting into the Delhi atmosphere gases that are poisonous. Promotion of electric battery operated vehicles seems to be the need of the hour.

And, Delhi should go for an all out campaign for solar energy. All government establishments, their extensive terraces, the stadiums and their covered spaces, the parking lots etc. can be used for installation of solar panels. All this needs to be done on war-footing; there is not a day to lose as numerous lives are being damaged and lost to this Frankensteinian monster.-INFA

Khasi society in a flux

Editor,

In the article "Drum and Flute," (ST Nov 15, 2016) the concerns highlighted by Fabian Lyngdoh are a realistic appraisal of the prevailing flux in Khasi society. I venture to comment, being born and bred in an environment of close affinity with the Khasi society and having closely observed the metamorphosis of the society over the last 40 years. I may be wrong but to me it is clear that Khasi society is at the cross roads. It happens in all evolving society or civilization alike, wherein an intrinsic churning is a natural phenomenon symptomatic of progress. This is evident at different stages of development. In my opinion, Khasis by virtue of their tradition, advancement in education, social mobility, way of life, approach to modernism and thought process can no longer be categorized as tribals - in the true sense.

Herein lies the predicament. Where, how and what next? Khasis have progressed ahead of other tribes and have moved on with all the accompanying good and bad. Materialism and self-centric approach is gaining momentum. The schism between the haves and have-nots is widening, with trust deficit growing due to exploitation of resources by a handful of privileged Khasi elite. The Khasi patriotic anthem Khyntiam U

Pnar U Bhoi U War..... may slowly be losing the rhythm of harmony on the ground. Homogeneity among different sections of Khasi society, which the anthem articulates is being eroded. I believe it is not a question of dearth of leaders but of being spoilt for choice. With education and knowledge, every third person whether in rural or urban locale is a leader - not necessarily political but of the Kur, Dong, Shnong, Raid, Hima or of the numerous religious denominations. Individual views opinions, concepts, and understanding on different issues are many. Hence, unanimity is not always a natural corollary, as in most tribal societies.

Khasi society while being highly emotional, swayed by sentiments, yet also includes some who are highly discerning in evaluating a philosophy, fresh ideas or theories of radical change. Convergence on common good is rare. Hence, it will be difficult for ordinary, self-oriented leaders to find acceptability to lead the entire Khasi society, as encapsulated in the anthem. The individual has to be someone much beyond and above the ordinary. As the Khasi society waits for the perfect messiah to lead, the mediocre shall continue to hold sway over a small "constituency".

Yours etc
Naba Bhattacharjee
Shillong - 4.

Yours Etc.
Jonathan Lyngdoh
Shillong-3

“One of the serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity.”
--- Andrew Carnegie

The Shillong Times

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Conflicting voices from Govt

THE demonetisation of high currency notes of Rs 500 and 1000 on November 8, last has sent the rumour mills working overtime. But even voices from the Government corridors have been conflicting. Prime Minister Modi is heard to have said that Rs 500 and 1000 currency notes would appear in a new avatar. Now the Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has ruled out the possibility of reintroduction of Rs 1,000 note in the immediate future. The new Rs 2000 currency released in the ATMs on Tuesday created major problems for people having less than that amount in their bank accounts. Many wanting to withdraw Rs 500 or 1000 were seen walking away dejected since the 100 Rupee notes too were not being dispensed. Meanwhile Government has lifted the withdrawal limits for farmers and families that have a wedding at hand and said they could withdraw up to Rs 2.50 lakh from their bank accounts after providing their PAN details and a self declaration. This is a great relief for people in North and Central India The concession given to farmers who have taken crop loan or have kisan credit card can to withdraw Rs 25,000 per week is a also a welcome move taken after farmers presented their cases before the Finance Ministry officials. Also those who have got payments through RTGS or cheque deposit in KYC compliant bank account can withdraw an additional Rs 25,000 a week. This takes the total cash withdrawal limit for farmers from KYC compliant bank accounts to Rs 50,000 per week. Such concessions are fine for those who have bank accounts. But that is not the case in India.

There are many who support the demonetisation scheme and the cashless transactions propounded by the Government but such people are not aware that many millions of Indians do not yet have bank accounts. In Meghalaya, for instance, until a few years ago people hid their money in trunks and almirahs because they could not trust the banks. When the Modi Government announced the Jan Dhan Yojna in 2014 people tried to open accounts but many were turned away as they had no documents for KYC compliance which is compulsory. It will take a while to bring people under the ambit of banking. Until then the Government must try and understand the plight of those who do not have plastic cards to pay for goods and services. The assault on black money is welcome; the manner in which it is executed had left a bad taste in the mouth for thousands.

LOOKING BACK
March 16, 1989

Death rate of babies falls

The infant mortality rate has been showing a declining trend as a result of the immunization programmes. The Health Minister Ram Niwas Mirdha told Lok Sabha today. Replying to Syed Shabuddin, the minister said the infant (0-1 year) mortality rate, which was 110 per thousand in 1981, had been progressively coming down.

After the launching of the Universal Immunisation Programme in 30 districts in 1985, it was expanded to cover 304 districts in the intensive phase of implementation. The programme sought to give immunization cover to at least 85 per cent of infants in the districts covered under the programme.

TO THE EDITOR

Timely justice delivery

Editor,

This refers to your editorial “Judicial appointments” (ST- Nov 16). The emotional appeal made by Chief Justice T.S. Thakur in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has added a sense of poignancy and urgency to the issue. It is comprehensible that the respected Chief Justice of India has been waiting for speedy appointment of judges required for thwarting setbacks in justice delivery. Shortage of judges may be one reason for pending of cases. Increase in the number of judges is long overdue. Successive governments have failed in this regard. The sense of frustration palpable in the appeal by the Chief Justice is entirely understandable. No doubt, a large number of

pending cases is not only because of lack of judicial strength alone. There are number of other reasons including deliberate delay tactics adopted by a section of lawyers that hindered speedy trial process, especially in lower courts. It is not a one man's show to put the judiciary on the right track. The executive and judiciary the two important pillars of the nation have to work collectively to address the problem of timely delivery of justice to the citizens.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad – 15

Lessons from US elections

Editor,

One of the greatest lessons that the global communities learnt from the recent US Presidential election is not the surprise

20th century thinking in a blazing 21st century

The demonetisation of higher currency notes did not elicit any opinion from any of our elected representatives barring the only mouthpiece of the Government - the Chief Minister. Don't our legislators have views on what some have termed a "financial emergency?" Are they with Modi in this assault on black money or do they see only a looming catastrophe? I met two legislators at a popular grocery store in town. Both were shopping there because they could pay by card, but what about their constituents? Silence on critical issues is hardly golden!

Two articles which appeared this week from seasoned political thinkers have created quite a buzz and exposed the uneasy disjuncture between the elected and the voters and we suffer a visceral sense of that sad knowledge. Fabian Lyngdoh analysed the fatal flaw in the Khasi DNA - an imperfection that we have perfected, which is fragmented thinking; the selfish triumphing over the collective good. Lyngdoh also reminded us Khasis that because we were so divisive and petty, we needed someone outside of our tribe to govern us and craft out our political destinies. This is a very sobering reminder that unlike reptiles which constantly shed their old skins and give themselves a new look and a new attitude in their reptilian lives, we haven't been able to shed our larger than life ego (read PN Syiem, CEM, KHADC, who stated at a public function that not a day passes without him being mentioned in the media). I am not hinting here that we should be self effacing. Ego, as long as it is within the realm of self esteem, is a motivating factor. Leaders must and should have personality in order to lead. But leading is no cakewalk because it means walking the talk. We see too many gaps between the talk and the walk in our leaders. Hence the credibility gap! Young people are therefore confused about leadership roles!

Toki Blah ruminated over the leadership vacuum in Meghalaya and the complete lack of vision in politicians who have held the reins of governance, so much so, we cannot recall a single landmark legislation in 45 years, other than the one moved by late MN Majaw, namely the Land Transfer Act which arrested the sale of land to non-tribals. This brings us to the point of leadership. Most politicians are self-styled

By Patricia Mukhim

leaders. Leadership is not bossiness or one-upmanship. Leaders consult and confer because they know that wisdom is not a proprietary asset. Much before Donald Trump emerged, we have seen self - styled leaders of his ilk here who physically assault the powerless and bully their way through. That even urban elites accept that kind of boorish leadership in the heart of Shillong should not make us cringe when a sexist, motor-mouth like Trump now rules the over the most powerful nation. There are, of course, enough people who make concessions for such bullies by saying that they deliver and dole out patronage. If an educated electorate in the heart of Shillong city can make such vacuous arguments then why should we blame the rural voters for electing contractors and wheeler-dealers? And then we expect those to come up with enlightened policies when they cannot even spell the word? But then, even those with doctorates don't seem to bring to bear their educational attainments when it comes to articulating enlightened policies in education, urban governance, health, the economic roadmap of the state or in envisioning an industrial policy that is transparent, progressive and affirmative and has enough venture funding for budding entrepreneurs as opposed to the one where government is quick to write off the loans of the wealthy.

That large scale corruption built by a nexus of politicians, bureaucrats, engineers and big business continues to thrive is mainly because our education system does not encourage questioning and analytical thinking. The education system we continue to follow and perpetuate is non-liberating and like Noam Chomsky says, helps in manufacturing consent. Whose consent we might ask? Well, while in school, teachers expect compliance. Any student that asks too many questions is censured. In college students don't bother to question anymore. By the time they reach universities, students simply mimic the thoughts and language of their professors, never questioning the curriculum, the research topics they are asked to take up and the quality of education they are peddled. You realise when you talk to these young people just how shallow their worldview is. There

are of course noble exceptions who would, anyway, stand out from the crowd! Those are essentially products of an encouraging home environment. That some youth manage to find their voices after passing through this crushingly obnoxious sieve of a system is a miracle. This system manufactures thousands of robots year after year whose minds are easily manipulated by rabble rousers. These young people believe it is sacrilege to question government spending on events designed to keep them lulled into a sleep-walk. Meghalaya has thus specialised in what Ravish Kumar of NDTV India fame mocks as 'Eventocracy.'

Event management is fairly new to our vocabulary. Many young and not so young entrepreneurs are managing events quite well in our city. But when Government gets into event management and contracts event managers only after it has worked out its non-creative action plan then the real event managers are left with little freedom to innovate. So Government imagines that young people here are only interested in fashion, music and film festivals where films are curated by nondescript directors and the Soso Tham auditorium is hardy full. It's a complete waste of public money that could have gone into activities that nurture creative thinking, debates, discussions and thereby producing thought leaders for this challenging century. That's what the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs and the Directorate of Information and Public Relations is meant to promote. But you would need equally vibrant minds to lead these Departments, not pedantic file pushers.

Some of these youths whose only forte is rabble rousing and riding on the popular sentiment of saving the great Khasi Jaitbynriew will jump into the political fray come 2018. What can we expect from them? What is their expertise? Have they proven their worth in any other field before joining politics? Have they sharpened their skills in the crucible of grass-roots service to understand that politics is not about feathering private nests? Is politics so commonplace that you need no experience except inciting young, mindless people to quickly flex their muscles over non-issues? And yet these are the kind of people we have elected to occupy the August House and to represent us. What a sacrilege! Such people therefore don't understand the nuances of good governance, pro-policies,

accountability, efficiency etc. Neither do they have the political acumen to balance their populist stances with the larger good of the state.

In this grim scenario it is only natural that the likes of Mukul Sangma have emerged as the TINA (there is no alternative) factor. The only guy who had enough spunk and financial wizardry to give Mukul Sangma a run for his money has decided to jump out of the murky pond into the bigger sea where his skills will be put to better use. Conrad Sangma is the only guy we know who can crunch numbers and bite and chew at the budget and completely demystify it. A senior member of the national executive of the BJP astutely commented that the Garo people are much more politically vibrant and progressive. He has already summed up the politics of this state. The Garos know their leaders and despite the occasional squabbles they are, by and large, united for the larger cause. Is it any wonder that we have had many more Chief Ministers from Garo Hills lasting their term than we have in the Khasi Hills?

In Khasi there is a term "hati-saw-kuna" meant to appropriately define a rogue elephant. There are leaders amongst us who are not amenable to becoming followers in the larger cause. Hence repeated attempts to bring regional party unity in order to defeat the Congress, has become a non-starter and a political joke. It started with HS Lyngdoh not wanting his Lion Party to merge with the APHLC and later the UDP. The curse continues and now we might even have one more party started by PN Syiem and his cronies. So while we fight and have our petty bickering others are consolidating their positions. Mark my words, this part of the state will deteriorate even further and its roads will turn into junk yards post 2018 if we have the same set of legislators and the same Congress-led Government. If the voters here vote for a 2000 Re note they are going to have to spend 20 lakhs or more in the next five years as they pay for health services which will degenerate due to the bad roads. And they will have to pay also for the decrepit education and other services. What then is the solution? Those who care would have to sit together overcome differences and push for change.

We need to inject fresh blood into politics and allow more capable and experienced people to lead us. I am sure we can find 60 of such youth from a population of 3 million.

always observed how nasty elections could be just by reflecting into election speeches of promising contestants in several developing and under developed nations; now the same ugly trend is being noted across the so called, democratic Western nations across Europe and most prominently the US. Giving speeches is one thing and facing the real challenges of running a nation is a completely different ball game. Huge challenges await the US President Elect and only time will tell what turns out of this historic US Presidential election that rocked the globe.

Yours etc.,
Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge,
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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.

Demonetising Currency Will it check black money?

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

The Congress' allegation that the demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 currency notes is just a ploy by Modi to cover his failure to deliver on his election promise of cracking down on black money, doesn't really hold good. Notwithstanding that the Prime Minister hasn't kept his promise of bringing back Rs 80 lakh crores within 100 days of coming to power and to deposit Rs 15 lakh in every account, most economists believe that the step is in right direction and much-needed.

The decision has so far been rightly called a surgical strike to curb the menace of corruption, black money and terror funding. Modi stated this was a decisive war as despite several steps taken by his Government over the last two-and-a-half-years, India's global ranking on corruption had moved only to 76th position from 100th earlier. Even Vinod Rai, former CAG and presently Chairman, Banks Board Bureau (BBB), has opined that this was a master stroke to prove that there is “zero tolerance for lack of probity”.

The World Bank, a few years back (in July 2010), estimated the size of shadow economy of the country as high as 20.7 per cent of GDP in 1999, which rose to 23.2 per cent in 2007 and may presently be around 27 to 28 per cent, if not more. The demonetisation of high currency notes may help curb the rise. Moreover, this is not the first time that such currency notes have been demonetised. In January 1978, the Morarji Desai-led Janata Party government had demonetised Rs 1000, Rs 5000 and Rs 10,000 notes to curb black money.

However, there is a difference in the present decision. At that time, currency notes were used by the rich and super rich but presently most people, even the economically weaker sections, including daily labourers and very small traders (of kirana shops etc.) use Rs 500 currency notes quite shops frequently. Though there may be temporary difficulty for some sections, adjustment in the greater interest has to be undertaken.

Some economists have questioned the justification of the move in unearthing black money. According to Left economist, Prasenjit Bose, real estate, land, gold and investments in shares are the favoured options where the rich and the super rich park their unaccounted money. These sectors have not been affected and it is believed that the rich may also not come to exchange their higher denomination notes. Moreover, reports point out that these notes are selling in the market at a discount of 20 per cent.

However, it has to be admitted that the move to curb high currency notes in circulation, will make a dent in black money market. As per official sources, during 2004-14, the circulation of notes of Rs 1000 and Rs 500 denomination increased at an annual rate of about 30 per cent and 20 per cent in contrast to the circulation of notes of Rs 100 denomination, which remained unchanged while those of Rs 50 declined.

Thus one can expect that the measure would affect those involved in printing fake notes, illegal terror funding, storing money for dubious purposes or evading taxes etc. as these have been gravely affecting the economy, both in the short and long term. Moreover, inflation is expected to come down as demand slows in the short term as it is estimated disclosure of 1.2 per cent of GDP. Already the reality index has fallen by around 12 to 13 per cent as this sector is notorious for the use of black money.

India is still one of the most cash-intensive economies in the world with a cash to GDP ratio of 12 per cent about four times as much as other economies such as Brazil (3.93 per cent), Mexico (5.3 per cent) and South

Africa (3.73 per cent), according to a report 'Cost of Cash in India', commissioned by Master Card. A boost to electronic payments would curb black money but India still being largely unbanked, the switch to plastic cards may take some time.

One has to admit the fight against black money has to be a continuous process and cannot end only by discontinuing high denomination notes. Earlier the Supreme Court appointed special investigation team had proposed a ban on cash transactions above Rs 3 lakhs and to declare such transactions illegal.

As is well known, black money gets generated due to detection issues and structural problems in the economy. Stamp duty and registration fees are more than 6 to 7 per cent of the property value in our country and thus needs to be reduced to anything around 2 to 3 per cent to ensure that most transactions are carried out in white.

On the other hand, some savings accounts in banks have several lakhs and even crores of rupees which are never monitored. The source of these funds needs to be checked as well as whether these are shown in the returns of the individual and/or the company.

While political parties have criticised Modi's move, it is a well-known that black money plays a significant role during elections. The practice of political parties mopping up large amount of election funds through unaccounted contribution pushes businesses to generate black money. This may probably be the reason why some political leaders have raised a hue and cry against this demonetisation.

It is common knowledge that a parallel shadow economy corrodes and eats into the vitals of the country's economy. This had been continuing for a long time, affecting the lower income and the economically weaker sections in particular due to inflation etc. Moreover, the government being deprived of legitimate revenue faces a resource crunch and cannot spend to the required extent for social and physical development activities that need focal attention.

The sincerity in the Prime Minister's move cannot but be appreciated. It needs to be mentioned here that the spread of black money clearly proves the dishonesty of the business class though we talk of ideals and refer to our great heritage. Unless basic honesty is inculcated among the business class and concerted efforts made by all sections of society, unearthing black money and rooting out corruption will not become a reality.

The government has already swung into action and the Enforcement Directorate and the Director General of Central Excise Intelligence (DGCEE) are conducting raids of unaccounted gold stocks, hawala operators etc. The present measure is just the start of more stringent action being contemplated by the NDA government to tackle the menace of black money.

Modi has already warned that after December-end stringent measures would be taken, adding that those faking to be clean should realise that he would “pore through documents dating back to independence” to certify their claims. According to him, the special focus would to go after those holding benami properties. Apart from all this, if around 25-to 30 per cent of money hidden in overseas banks can be brought to the country, the Government would have accomplished wonders.

“A bone to the dog is not charity. Charity is the bone shared with the dog, when you are just as hungry as the dog.”

--- Jack London

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LEX No. 99SHILLONG, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2016

Scientific education

THE Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has its own way of looking at scientific education. Right wingers had claimed that astrology was the higher science and that the aircraft was invented in India. That caused a sharp controversy. Booklets have now been distributed by the RSS at over 2000 government and private schools. The Vijnana Bharati, the RSS's scientific and technological innovation has done it along with Central government bodies. The Vijnana Bharati plans to hold an examination all over India on November 20. Students will have to cover such areas as the invention of zero, atomic physics in Vedic times and how to stitch up intestines by using ant heads. Such knowledge is not to be derided. But it betrays an obscurantist ideology now permeating the national ethos. It will confine students' knowledge to the RSS brand. The Vijnana Bharati will be backed by the National Council of Educational Research.

What is a pity is that a large number of renowned schools will hold the examination. The authorities of these schools evidently wish to display loyalty to the RSS, not caring if their autonomy is in that way compromised. If the other schools follow suit, nothing will remain of academic freedom. The Vijnana Bharati has accomplished its work with remarkable speed. The Centre on the other hand is extremely slow in introducing necessary changes in the field of education. The extra examination will put additional burden on students who are already overburdened. It would seem that the RSS is doing little service to the cause of scientific enquiry.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Another Oil Refinery in Assam in the offing

Another oil refinery in the public sector with the participation of the Assam Government will be set up in Assam. This was decided at a meeting between Home Minister Mr Buta Singh and Chief Minister Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta here last night. The two leaders also reviewed implementation of the Assam Accord.

According to an official release, the Centre has decided to set up a two million tonns per annum oil refinery with provision to increased the capacity to three million tonns in case additional crude is available in the State. The proposed refinery will be a subsidiary of an existing public sector

oil company with some capital participation of the State Government, the release added.

The Chief Minister has assured "full co-operations" in ensuring normal operations of all the installations of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission and to take all steps to avoid interruptions in their functioning. For the construction of the proposed integrated gas grid upto Amguri it has been agreed that while trunk pipelines would be constructed by the GAIL, the subsidiary distribution lines could be taken up by AGC on mutually agreed terms, the release added.

TO THE EDITOR

Chess a cerebral game

Editor,

Our children should be advised to play chess instead of cruel, silly, bang-bang virtual games. Chess will increase their IQ, power of imagination and concentration. It will also rescue them from sadistic games that can turn innocent, impressionable minds into trigger-manias and insensitive brutes. A study shows how four months of chess instructions has, significantly, raised the IQ scores of both boys and girls of 4000 Venezuelan students. Indeed, studies have revealed that the game of chess helps both young and old to have a sound cerebral health. According to a study, people of over 75 years of age who engage in brain-games like chess are less likely to develop dementia than their non-board-game-playing contemporaries. A German study says that when chess players are asked to identify chess positions and geometric shapes, both the left and right hemispheres of the brain become highly active.

Chess gives us the taste

of infinity. The 64 square game unfolds never ending possibilities. When we play chess, we find ourselves composed. It is a game that magnets all our being to a particular point of finding which of the moves will be a better one. Indeed, chess players say, "This is a good move" or "This is a better move". But they never say, "This is the best move," because that cannot be said in this game of infinite possibilities which is still unfolding. This was the reason why Siegbert Tarrasch said, "Many have become Chess Masters, no one has become the Master of Chess". We can play this game rain or shine, day or night with a friend near or far, or with a chess programme; staying put at home or outdoor or even while travelling. The players can, also, be as heterogeneous as it gets. A game of chess can be played between two persons or two machines or one person versus a machine or one person versus many persons or machines in as many different games at one go. There is also infinite possibilities of the space and time of the game. Now, you can try to unravel the beauty of a Fischer's game that was played at Reykjavik

The Government of India seems to be seriously considering the possibility of introducing an all-India system of evaluating the performance of judges of the High Courts and the Supreme Court. Another report informs that it has revived the proposal to constitute an All-India Judicial Service for appointment of district judges through a rigorous examination such as the All-India Civil Service.

One cannot protest against these measures in line with the Supreme Court dictum in 2015 that no person, however high, is above law, and no institution is exempt from accountability. Coming in the midst of heated debates over several issues concerning the judiciary and its place vis-à-vis the executive, the news is especially significant.

Judiciary is the guardian of law and its proper application. Judges are not elected in India, but they represent and safeguard the Constitution and law and all the principles enshrined in the Constitution such as liberty, equality and justice. As custodians of administration of justice, judges must be addicted to truth and impartiality without fear or malice. Knowledge of law has to be combined with moral rectitude. The job of the judges is such that a very careful selection process and periodical assessment of the incumbents are required.

Recently, 18 additional district judges of lower courts at various levels in Gujarat were compulsorily retired before the end of their terms by the Gujarat High Court for unsatisfactory performance after a review by a panel of senior judges. More recently, the Supreme Court summoned the Registrar-General of the Delhi High Court to explain how a lower court judge had been graded as a person of "doubtful integrity" without material evidence.

The judiciary in India commands respect and compliance despite occasional outburst by the discontented, and criticism by the politically affected as committed

Fine Tuning Judiciary

Step towards accountability

By S Saraswathi

judiciary. A judgment of a court normally silences arguments, but this traditional respect is frequently broken in these days by advocates of rights and liberties who maintain that court judgments in particular cases can be criticised without disrespect to the institution of the judiciary. The plea of a matter being sub judice no longer restrains public discussion of cases under investigation or trial in India perhaps because we have given up the jury system and believe that judiciary obeys law and law alone.

Nevertheless, the tradition of quiet acceptance of the judgement by the disputants is broken in some instances in recent years particularly when the litigants are governments. A famous instance is the public declaration of the Government of Karnataka to ignore the judgement of the Supreme Court and its refusal to provide river water to Tamil Nadu in the Cauveri water dispute.

Quality of judgments and efficiency in conducting court proceedings determine the quality of judges and courts. Hence, a method of performance assessment seems necessary in the judiciary as much as in other services. The Ministry of Law and Justice commissioned a study to devise a suitable performance evaluation system as in some western countries.

The practice of writing Confidential Reports about the performance of junior officers and staff by seniors was well established in the Indian bureaucracy despite criticism of the system as open to misuse. This method is followed in lower courts in India with the same possibility of abuse of power.

There are several methods of evaluating the performance of judges including the right of appeal and legal accountability mechanisms. Ministries of justice and judicial councils in European countries have opened a system of registering complaints - a procedure for assessment of quality of judges and

courts.

Appeal to a higher court – a right of litigants in most cases – opens an opportunity for review of lower court judgments. Unless caused by fresh facts and evidence, reversal of lower court judgments amounts to a stigma on its performance. Appeal courts are in all cases judging the performance of the lower courts though that is not their primary concern. In the history of the judiciary, there have been several instances where higher courts have admonished the performance of lower courts including punishments awarded by them.

High Courts do pass strictures against subordinate judges in appeal cases. The trend seems to have grown so common that the Supreme Court had to take cognizance of it. It deprecated frequent use of this practice and said that it not only affected the image of judicial officers, but also eroded public confidence with the administration of justice.

A case directly on the practice of passing strictures against judges came up before the Supreme Court in 2013. The verdict asked High Courts to avoid passing strictures, harsh or disparaging remarks against subordinate judicial officers or authorities unless it was necessary for deciding the case before them.

However, the fact that there have been grounds for passing strictures brings into focus the need for a mechanism for independent evaluation of judges. Use of the provision for adjournments – a crucial reason for judicial delay --has also come under scrutiny and linked with judicial performance. Government even suggested at one point that fines may be imposed on the judiciary for allowing frequent and too many adjournments and suggested fixing a time frame of two months for completion of enquiry as well as trial in heinous cases like rape.

Recently, in July last, the Supreme Court advised that judges must remain within their limits of the law and not peddle individual perceptions and notions of justice. A fine line was drawn between judicial functions and judicial activism and judges were reminded of their

solemn pledge to remain embedded to the Constitution and laws.

No doubt, competence and quality of judges are critical for integrity and credibility of the entire judicial system. There seems to be support for creation of an All-India Judicial Service like the IAS and IPS - an idea considered several times in the past. State governments have a separate judicial service for recruiting civil judges and magistrates for lower courts.

The legitimacy of the courts intimately rests on “respect accorded to its judgments” and that respect flows from crating a perception that the judges are trustees of law and justice. Increased awareness of people to quality has led to closer scrutiny of the attitude and behaviour of judges and prosecutors in India as elsewhere. Professional quality, impartiality and integrity, political neutrality, expertise in law (which of course is a basic qualification), speedy conduct of cases and clarity in judgments and communication skills in conducting the proceedings are expected from every judge.

The Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill 2010 sought to establish a credible and expedient mechanism for investigating into individual complaints of misbehaviour or incapacity of members of the higher judiciary. The Bill lapsed and was reintroduced in 2012 when it was passed in the Lok Sabha. The Rajya Sabha attempted to introduce some amendments but did not succeed and the Bill lapsed again.

In a number of countries, there are different types of complaints mechanism and quality assessment procedures. Evaluation of judges has been developed in many States in the US since 1970s. State Commissions have been established to judge the performance of judges. We are, therefore, on the right path of fine tuning the judiciary to ensure efficiency and accountability in the judicial system. --INFA

(Dr S Saraswathi is former Director, ICSSR, New Delhi)

the Human Rights Organisations which stand to protect the rights of citizens? Is India a dictatorship or a democracy?

Such irresponsible acts of the United Naga Council and failure of the Government to handle law and order may lead to hatred and unnecessary communal tension between different communities. We believe in the co-existence of all mankind irrespective of caste or religion or colour. So before the situation worsens, it is high time to take a hard look at the situation. I appeal to the United Naga Council to kindly review and withdraw its stand against such retrograde decisions. I also demand that the Government of Manipur take measures for a permanent solution to this persistent problem without affecting the sentiments of any community, instead of just being a mute spectator.

Yours etc.,
Chongtham Thangamba Meetei, 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.

Big focus on Prashant Bhushan’s petition in supreme court

“Gujarat and other CMs got payments in 2012 and 2013”

By Nitya Chakraborty

At a time when the Narendra Modi Government has actually turned the rural India and the urban poor destitute through his demonetization measures, the recent petition in Supreme Court filed by the noted activist jurist Prashant Bhushan, has added a new political dimension to the extent of corruption at the level of the politicians including the Chief Ministers and the nexus between the industry people and the political parties.

Mr. Bhushan's petition was followed up by an application submitted early this week which contains details of pay out to a large number of political leaders by Sahara group and the Birlas during 2012 and 2013. The Supreme Court is yet to act on this application but the facts mentioned are so much related to the issue of fight against political corruption and black money that the Supreme Court in its present mood of acting as the conscience of society due to the failure of the ruling leadership, has to give a close look at the allegations which are related to the wider issues of corruption and black money in the economy against whom the Prime Minister Narendra Modi claims to be fighting.

According to the set of documents filed by Mr. Bhushan with his application, the Sahara Group and an Aditya Birla

which says” Gujarat CM-25 cr (12 done-rest).The income tax department at that time in its report called for further investigations in view of” highly incriminating nature of transactions” but this was not pursued due to pressure from the top . It is quite likely since many of the Congress leaders names were there, the Manmohan Singh government dumped the investigations.

But now, the Supreme Court can go into the entire issue and assess the reports of the income tax officers which are included in the application. The apex court earlier intervened on Sharda Chit fund issue since political corruption was involved. The Court committee monitored the investigations.

The allegations made by Mr. Bhushan have wider national dimension and this involves the core issue of political corruption of which the Supreme Court has always been warning. This can be the right occasion to go into the roots of corruption and take action against the politicians and industry people who have been polluting the electoral politics of the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been constantly talking of his honesty in dealing with black money and he has posed the demonetization as a sort of

The apex court earlier intervened on Sharda Chit fund issue since political corruption was involved. The Court committee monitored the investigations. The allegations made by Mr. Bhushan have wider national dimension and this involves the core issue of political corruption of which the Supreme Court has always been warning.

group company allegedly made massive payments to prominent BJP and Congress politicians in 2013-14 and 2012 respectively and these payments recipients included many CMs including Gujarat CM. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the chief minister of Gujarat during the mentioned period. Bhushan has alleged that both the CBI and the income tax department, after pursuing for some time, stopped the investigations as very big names were involved and they covered different political parties. The documents recovered during the CBI raids on Sahara group in 2014 and Birlas in 2013 show that the corporates may have paid bribes running into crores to politicians in exchange for various favours which have been a common feature in Indian politics.

The documents submitted by Mr. Bhushan show an entry signed by an income tax officer Ankita Pandey that on September 23, 2013, a sum of Rs. 1crore is shown against Delhi CM and Rs. 5 crore against CM, MP. Similarly, the documents show that on October 30, 2013, a sum of Rs. 25 crore was paid to “ CM Gujarat” Further, Ram Jethmalani, senior Supreme Court lawyer got the signature of Ankita Pandey examined by the Delhi Government experts and it was said in the laboratory report submitted on July 1, 2016 that the signature was genuine.

As regards the payments made by the Aditya Birla group, the documents show that there was an email exchange through the laptop of Subhendu Amitabh, the then executive president dated November 15, 2012

his personal decision to cleanse the economy and the society of black money. He has resorted to it without adequate preparations and this has landed the nation in a total chaos with the rural economy in tatters due to the cash crunch. He even has the audacity to say that as a result of his decision to demonetize, the poor are sleeping peacefully and the rich are having sleepless night and are using sleeping pills. This sort of dramatization and talking in ad language might have satisfied his ego, but the millions in the country side and the urban poor and lower middle class without credit and debit cards, are feeling hopeless. Thirty people have died already as a result of the after effects of demonetization and this figure will go up further as the woes are continuing.

Leading civil society workers, prominent individuals and the left must support this move of Prashant Bhushan and campaign that the Supreme Court should hear the petition as early as possible as the leading CMs names are involved and this issue is linked with the present central issue of driving black money from the country's economy.BJP and the Congress MPs are not expected to take interest as their names might be involved. Important regional leaders also are shaky as the habit has grown in the last few decades to take money from the industry people to give them some favours. This has to stop for all time and for that, the Supreme Court has to give priority consideration to hear this petition. (IPA Service)

No break from violence for J&K women

By Baseera Rafiqi

In Kashmir, there is on-going strife on two fronts today. The first one is highly visible — and all over the local and national news — as communities struggle to fend off terror elements and learn to live with crippling ‘hartaals’ (curfews). The second one is completely hidden, although it’s no less problematic or painful.

It is the violence that has been unleashed on Kashmiri women and girls by their own men, who are supported unconditionally by patriarchal structures that allow them to uninhibitedly exercise their power and authority. Like elsewhere in India, here too boys grow up thinking harassment and teasing are ‘cool’ and sure-shot signs of being ‘manly’ and ‘in control’.

But whereas in the rest of the country increasingly women are coming out to voice their angst against these blatant attitudes, there is still a rather deafening silence on this issue in the Valley.

Whether it’s dealing with a stalker, fending off the unwanted advances of a teacher or a work colleague, or living with the trauma to being molested by a family member there are many troubling experiences that women have been unable to go public with.

Take Sehar, 24, a Kashmir University student from Noor Bagh, Sopore. For her, even recalling the three “dreadful years” of college when she was being stalked by an unknown man, fills her with fear.

“I used to walk to college. It was a lonely stretch and after a few days, I noticed a policeman tailing me every day. He would whisper my name and follow me. I asked a friend to accompany me but that too didn’t deter him. He would watch my family’s movements and when I was home alone, he would call on the landline,” she narrates.

A year passed before



Sehar could gather the courage to tell her family. She continues, “They could not do anything other than ask me to wear a burqa. For a while my father accompanied me to college. The man disappeared and everyone thought that wearing the burqa had worked. Then, as I was returning home from college one afternoon he appeared out of nowhere and said: ‘No matter how much you try to hide from me, I’ll still recognise you’.

“Six years have passed but I still remember his voice and those dark black eyes. For a while, I had contemplated giving up my studies. It was only after I finished college that he vanished. I shifted to Srinagar and the matter ended there, but who knows what could have happened if I had stayed on. This has had a deep impact on my life. I still get nightmares.”

Like Sehar, Misbah, 21, had a terrible experience

while pursuing higher education.

When this resident of Darasar Tral enrolled for Masters in Mathematics at Islamic University she was looking forward to “interacting with people and making new friends”. Things were okay for a while and then “one day, a teacher called me to his room and said, ‘Misbah, don’t take it otherwise, but I kind of like you’. I took it very casually, and left the room. But he would stare at me in class and later call and text and email me,” she says.

It was unnerving but she didn’t know what to do and kept wishing it would all go away. This went on for about a year, when, by chance, “one of my elder sisters read a text from him. She was furious. When I told her all about it she decided to register a formal complaint”.

However, anxious at being censured Misbah

“begged her not to make the matter public”.

Crimes against women have been steadily rising in Kashmir. According to the police’s Crime Branch, 315 cases of rape, 1,342 of molestation and 215 cases of teasing were registered in 2015. Activists, however, emphasise that actual numbers would be much higher. Sociologist Farah Qayoom, who teaches at Kashmir University, is convinced that patriarchy perpetuates such violence. “Men here have always enjoyed a dominant position. The home is where male egos are actually nurtured. A boy is always told he can do anything while a girl is kept subdued, suppressed. Such attitudes deeply impact young minds. The male child begins to feel he is superior and that he commands authority.”

When this need to dominate spills over into a public sphere it leads to heinous crimes like teasing,

sexual harassment and molestation. “A boy thinks if he teases a girl or passes comments at her, he will be considered cool among his friends. Peer pressure only exacerbates such behaviour,” she elaborates.

Adding to Qayoom’s analysis, Dr Aadil Bashir, Assistant Professor, Social Welfare, Kashmir University, says, “Most times, it’s the societal response that prevents women from openly speaking out. Instead of the culprit getting punished, it’s the woman who ends up suffering.”

To handle incidents of harassment, lately policewomen have been posted outside select schools and colleges in Srinagar and other towns though students like Sehar and Misbah say it has made no difference.

Nayeema Mehjoor, Chairperson, J&K State Commission for Women, observes that in Kashmir there is still not enough



TORTURED BY THEIR OWN: Crime against women in public spaces is steadily rising in Kashmir as more women and girls step outside home. Women students are especially vulnerable to stalking, teasing and harassment

“acceptance” for women who step outside the home. “Men aren’t willing to accept women in the field which leads to discord. There’s marked increase in harassment and violence as a result.”

Ateeqa Bano, a government employee from Kangan, can relate to this. “I am a divorcee and a working woman. One of my seniors has been passing indecent remarks and making inappropriate advances. I do not want to make it a talking point, so I ignore him. But this only encourages him since he knows I am never going to tell anyone.”

Ateeqa’s helplessness is just another reminder of the work that still has to be done to make workplaces safe for women. Interestingly, the state government had informed the Assembly in June 2016 that in government departments alone, 27 cases of sexual

harassment have been registered since 2010.

“As a working woman, I feel we are at war on every front, be it the home, office or public spaces. A woman can’t decide whether to speak up or remain silent because she knows that she is going to suffer either way. The lack of faith in the judicial system also pushes her to accept silence as the best solution,” says Prof Lily Want of Kashmir University. Mohammad Yousuf Bhat, senior advocate at the J&K High Court, concurs. “A minimal number of harassment cases go to the court. And if a girl does pull the courage to file a case, it usually falls through for the lack of evidence.”

One thing is certain though — gender violence shatters a woman. One look at Nimrah, 16, and it’s clear that the teenager is miserable. She seldom talks to anyone, and spends most of her time sitting alone in her grandmother’s room in

Habba Kadal. “She wasn’t always like this,” says her grandmother, “she was a fun-loving child, very sharp and intelligent”. What happened? “She was living with her parents in Khaniyar, Srinagar, in a joint family. One day, her elder cousin sexually molested her. She was only 14 and terrified when she spoke to her mother about it. The elders decided she should live with me. She has been mostly silent ever since,” she reveals.

Mental health expert Dr Arif Maghribi Khan says, “Sexual violence, if left unaddressed, can develop into major depression or Post Stress Traumatic Disorder. This happens especially if she has no way to help herself. Living in a conflict zone for such a long time has already lowered the threshold of suffering for the Kashmiri women. Social and familial support is crucial if they have to heal and move forward.” (WFS)

Caring for the elderly

By Ranjan K Baruah

We have been talking more about young India and the youths of the country. There are some other areas which need focus and attention. We talk about child rights or woman rights and at the same time it’s time to think about elders of our society. A report released by the UN Population Fund and HelpAge India suggests that India had 90 million elderly persons in 2011, with the number expected to grow to 173 million by 2026.

The State of Elderly in India Report 2014 is a first-of-its-kind attempt at documenting the current status of our elderly. This is a monumental task, considering that the elder population now stands at 100 million and is projected to grow to 324 million, constituting 20% of the total population, by 2050.

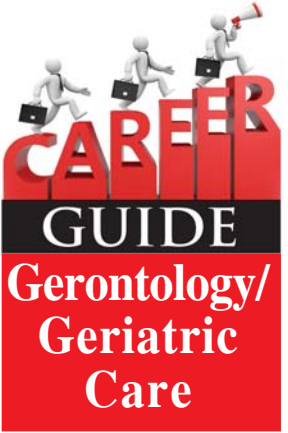
India is in a phase of demographic transition. As per the 1991 census, the population of the elderly in India was 57 million as compared to 20 million in 1951. There has been a sharp increase in the number of elderly persons between 1991 and 2001 and it has been projected that by 2050, the number of elderly people will rise to about 324 million.

Now, our readers must be wondering why we are talking about elders in our career section. Well, today we shall publish an option that is related to elders or care of the elderly. Gerontology or Geriatric Care may be a new term for many individuals.

Gerontology is the study of the social, psychological, cognitive and biological aspects of ageing. It is distinguished from geriatrics, which is the branch of

medicine that specialises in the treatment of existing disease in older adults. Gerontologists include researchers and practitioners in the fields of biology, nursing, medicine, criminology, dentistry, social work, physical and occupational therapy, psychology, psychiatry, sociology, economics, political science, architecture, geography, pharmacy, public health, housing and anthropology.

Gerontology encompasses studying physical, mental and social changes in people as they age investigating the biological ageing process, effects and mechanisms



investigating the social and psycho-social impacts of ageing investigating the psychological effects on ageing, investigating the interface of biological ageing with ageing-related diseases, investigating the effects of an ageing population on society applying this knowledge to policies and programmes, including the macroscopic (for example, government planning) and microscopic (for example, running a nursing home) perspectives.

The multidisciplinary

nature of gerontology means that there are a number of sub-fields, as well as associated fields such as physiology, psychology and sociology that overlap with gerontology. Gerontologists view ageing in terms of four distinct processes — chronological ageing, biological ageing, psychological ageing and social ageing.

Chronological ageing is the definition of ageing based on a person’s years lived from birth. Biological ageing refers to the physical changes that reduce the efficiency of organ systems. Psychological ageing includes the changes that occur in sensory and perceptual processes, cognitive abilities, adaptive capacity and personality.

Social ageing refers to an individual’s changing roles and relationships with family, friends and other informal supports, productive roles and within organisations.

We are aware that the Constitution of India recognises the duty of the State towards the aged. Article 41 of the Constitution enjoins the State to make effective provision, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, for public assistance in the case of unemployment, old age and sickness. We shall publish more options related to this subject in our next edition.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 9864055558 for any career related queries)

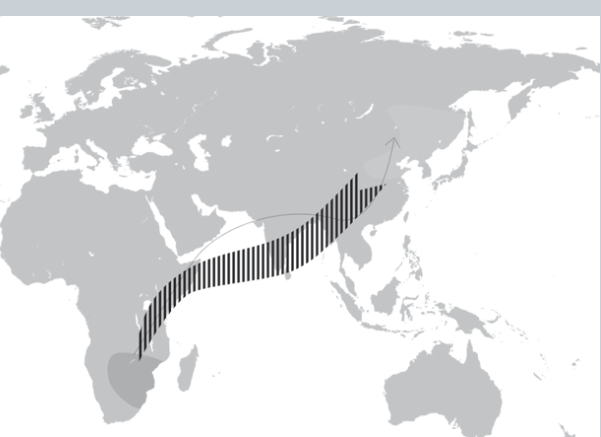
North East’s autumn visitors

On November 11, we arrived in Doyang in Nagaland after a year of planning. According to newspaper reports, the Amur falcons had arrived there on October 7, the very same day that they had touched down the previous year. We knew no one who had been to the place and our internet search had disclosed many pictures but few definitive details.

The falcon is the size of a slim pigeon. The adult birds are mostly grey with shades of rufous-buff on the underside and thighs, the male being darker. The birds weigh around 120 gm, the females slightly larger. They nest in their home grounds in Mongolia, China and Russia during the summer. The birds have a life span of 15 years and they take wing on an intercontinental journey every year.

Every autumn, they fly the first lap, a 3,000 km from their home grounds riding on easterly winds on their five-day journey to the North East. The largest passage colonies are in northeast India with perhaps upwards of a million birds in Doyang, where the falcons began roosting after the construction of the Doyang reservoir in the early 2000s. Much smaller passage groups have been observed in Arunachal, Assam and Meghalaya. They fly in flocks leading the young birds, only a few months old, on their first flight path.

In the next 4-6 weeks,



John Christo

Nowhere in the world is such a large gathering of raptors seen in one place. The largest roosting site in Africa is estimated to hold 30,000 birds, but the Doyang (Nagaland) assemblage is thought to consist of a million birds, considered one of the greatest shows in nature

fattening themselves on termites and other insects, they double their weight. These nutritional reserves sustain them on the next leg of the journey, flying southwards over Bangladesh to the Bay of Bengal and then turning westwards over the Indian peninsula to eastern Africa.

This journey of 6,000 km takes 6-7 days, flying continuously at a speed of about 40km/hour. After a few stops for feeding they arrive at their migratory destination in several countries of southern Africa, another 2,000km away. In the spring they fly back, a round trip journey of 22,000 km. The return route over India is somewhat northwards of the outward route, they do not stop in the Northeast. These routes have been satellite tracked after ringing three birds named Pangti, Wokha and Naga.

Highway of hellholes

We had intended to drive to Doyang from Dimapur, as the GPS map indicated a drive of four hours. But when we checked into the hotel in Dimapur, we were advised that the road was bad and that the journey would take at least 10 hours. A bit sceptical at first I checked at the petrol station and with a person in the lobby who travels to Kohima and Wokha and they said the same thing.

The next morning we set out at 6pm, retracing our journey of the previous day back to Golaghat and then south-east to Merapani covering the 110 km in a good time of three hours. Driving mostly in first gear, our intrepid driver, Janai, attempted to dodge his way through and around the many obstacles.

In Doyang we stopped at a tea shop, thinking the hellish journey was finally over, only to be told that our final destination was even further. This meant another discouraging stretch of road torture. We drove further on towards the village of Pangti. On the other side was a lookout point that had a poster welcoming visitors to see the Amur Falcons. Thinking this was the place we stopped and ate our snacks.

After resting a while, we observed a few of the falcons flying overhead and some perched on the overhead wires. As we watched, more of them settled on to the wires and a couple of flocks flew high overhead.

Around 4pm, the birds took off one by one, flew over a hill and out of sight. Doubts set in and we wondered whether we should move on. The light was fading and so

we jumped back into the car. A few minutes later a car overtook us. We stopped them. A lady in the car said, “We are also going to see the falcons, follow us!”

It took another hour of treacherous road conditions. We reached the reception counter, where the guy at the counter spoke politely, asked for a donation and said we would have to wait there till the ‘guide’ arrived. Apprehensive that we would miss the falcons, we argued briefly, paid Rs 300 and set off on the muddy makeshift road. Another 20 minutes of rally conditions and it was late dusk by the time we reached a clearing in the thick brush.

The falcons at last. Within minutes the sky was thickening with dark shapes, their triangular tapered wings outlined against the sky. Many flew directly overhead above our heads and we could hear the crackling chirps of kee-kee and chee-wit.

Nowhere in the world is such a large gathering of raptors seen in one place. The largest roosting site in Africa is estimated to hold 30,000 birds, but the Doyang assemblage is thought to consist of a million birds, considered one of the greatest shows in nature.

Newspaper reports indicate that the falcons are now welcomed and protected by local community groups in Nagaland and Meghalaya.

Local conservation efforts are commendable and a cautious approach may promote ecotourism. Scientists and environmentalists have ample scope for studying these unusual winged visitors.

(Contributed by Glenn C Kharkongor)

‘India is moving in right direction, I’m optimistic’

The author of the best-selling ‘Shiva Trilogy’, Amish (Tripathi) is an optimistic man! In a chat with Sudipto Maity, the banker-turned-author discusses his source of optimism, Bob Dylan, Tata Lit Live fest, India’s perennial problem and why he loves Dal Khichdi. Excerpts:

Tell us a bit about your connection with the Tata Lit Live fest that is going to start in Mumbai.

Well, I had attended the first Tata Lit Live fest, in fact I have attended most of them, so I have seen it grow from a very small beginning to the festival it is today. It is one of the biggest lit festivals in India today, but frankly only eight or nine of them can be called big, where you have a large audience participation, large author participation and Tata Lit Live is certainly one among them.

The last time we spoke, you said you have enough material to last 20-25 years but there was no mention about any non-fictional. By announcing your next book as a non-fiction, did you just increase that storage by a couple of years more? (Laughs) No, no, my non-fiction book will run simultaneously, it does not end up taking as much time, whereas writing a fiction takes time. I also say that all my books begin with a pure philosophy and I communicate many of my philosophies and thoughts through articles and speeches as well, so there is a plan to write various non-fiction books. It will not extend my time at all.

What’s the non-fiction book about? This will essentially be on all my articles and speeches.

What compelled ‘India’s first literary pop star’ to venture into the non-fiction genre? Is it a move to avoid typecast? See, there are various thoughts that I develop and even my fiction books are driven around philosophies and concepts that are at the heart of it. So, *Shiva Trilogy* for example had various concepts that we discussed, like women rights, the caste system and various such issues, which has a relevance to the modern world. You can say my fiction books are stories that are wrapped around philosophies that I want to communicate, my non-fiction books are the philosophies. My non-fiction book also emerged naturally from the way my fiction books are.



If approached, would you write screenplays for soaps/movies? What happened to the IOM (Meluha) movie? I’m not so sure, because at times I am busy with the books I’m writing. That’s where more of my credential is. I don’t know honestly if I’ll have the time to take up script writing for a television series. Discussions are on... let’s see. I guess it’ll happen when it’s meant to happen.

Is Karan Johar’s offer still on? No, I guess that is on hold for now.

Do you miss your banking job at times? (Laughs) Not at all. I get to do what I love to do and I actually get paid more money for it then I did as a banker.

You speak about ‘Ram Rajya’, which is quite contrasting to what’s happening in the country right now. What according to you is ailing the nation today? I think India passed through many crises over the last few centuries but primarily among them were the lack of confidence and internal divisions... which is what led us to this state. Having said that, I’m actually an optimist today. I believe that post 1991, post economic reforms, India is rediscovering its ancient self-confidence, we are rediscovering success once again. This is like the ‘churning of the ocean’, *samudra manthan*’. When that happens, a bit of poison is bound to come out, but you’ll get the *amrit* (elixir) as the end result. Any change will have some negative consequences, but I believe India is moving in the right direction.(IBNS-TWF)

Tales from distant land

Storytelling is a dying art in the age of graphic novels, television shows and computer games. But a group of storytellers from around the globe mesmerised the young audience at a three-day event held recently at the Kathakar- International Storytellers Festival organised by Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and NGO Nivesh in New Delhi.

The storytellers brought with them a collection of stories of varied hues and involved the audience too in the process. Delhi-based Jaishree Sethi narrated the tale of a water carrier from Rajasthan. As her story unfolded, she involved children in answering a string of brain teasers before plunging into another folk tale from Rajasthan.

“This is my first time at Kathakar, but I have heard from other UK storytellers how the audience is much more enthusiastic participants in the story, so I have chosen stories where there is an element of this,” said Sethi.

Katy Cawkwell and Giles Abbott from the UK were among the other storytellers.

Abbott, who lost his eyesight partially in 1994 and found that he could not read books and stories, said, “I used to listen to stories told by somebody else and remember them and try and tell it my way. I like to tell stories for adults more than children,” said the narrator who specialises in Viking and Celtic tales. This was the second time that Abbott is participating in the Kathakar Festival of the IGNA. The professional storyteller’s repertoire included narratives based on historical characters like A.O Hume and British poet Alexander Pope.

For Cawkwell, who first heard a professional storyteller at the age of 13, story-



Jaishree Sethi’s tales from Rajasthan mesmerised the young audience who also participated in the storytelling

telling is a fascinating experience as it is a unique art and is flexible.

“It is a challenge for me to tell stories in English for some children who are not very fluent in the language but they are very responsive to the actions. I believe stories bring joy, they bring people close,” said Cawkwell, who had a session devoted to birds.

There were stories from faraway lands like Japan, China and Mongolia and Kamishibai group from Japan-Spice Arthur, which specialises in traditional Japanese storytelling, participated in the festival.

Dressed in their native costumes — Yukata, a traditional Japanese summer dress; kimonos; and Hakama, a kimono in a trouser style — the Spice Arthur 702 troupe regaled the audience with oral storytelling accompanied with hundreds of picture book images and music.

Three performers took to the stage to enact the 12th century theatre style from

Japan, with the narrator recreating stories of Issun Samurai — an old Japanese fairy tale.

The Japanese performance also had a sci-fi twist in a narration of a Star Wars saga, using Japanese music and singing. They signed off with the story of Hikkyaku Hana-chan, featuring a Japanese Maharajah. Flying pictures, loud and realistic sounds, and music and singing accompanied the Japanese performance.

Misako Futsuki, Director of Arts and Cultural Exchange, The Japan Foundation, said, “We are very happy to invite Spice Arthur since we hardly have a chance to invite a storytelling group from Japan. We have traditional storytelling in Japan, although it’s disappearing in this fast changing world. Spice Arthur is trying to make it more lively and exciting with their original interesting way of storytelling. It’s rapid, rhythmical and entertaining with interesting stories. I’m sure people in India will love them!”

Histamines cause dairy product allergy

(Continued from last week)

In fact, gluten and dairy do act as drugs for many people,” says immunologist and researcher Aristo Vojdani, PhD, MSc, MT, the CEO of Immunosciences Lab Inc. in Beverly Hills, California.



“Just as with the heroin or pain-pill addict, going off gluten or casein immediately can produce withdrawal symptoms.” Withdrawal symptoms include anger and depression.

By the way, as casein breaks down in the stomach it also releases histamines. Histamine is a substance that plays a major role in many allergic reactions, dilating blood vessels and making their walls abnormally permeable.

Histamines are released when foreign allergens are present (cold medicines, for instance, have antihistamines), which is also why 70% of the world’s population is allergic to dairy products.

Nature’s way is to make nursing pleasurable. That same mechanism is what also makes weaning so difficult. So many adults have never been weaned from the addictive effects of milk. Are you a drug addict?

(Concluded)
To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, November 20, 2016

Communications will bring in opportunities and open up horizons as Moon trine Mercury on your solar return chart. Fundamental changes in your domestic situation and career orientation are likely. You would have the capacity to recognize your strengths and use them in the best possible light. You will enjoy your interactions both social and professional. There are strong indications of some material gains. A joint venture or profitable contract is waiting for you. You may also become quite passionate about a humanitarian or community endeavor. This would be a favourable time for overseas travel. Familial bonds and family plans will benefit from your focus. ‘This week for you’

Aries : (March 21 - April 20)

Your endeavors, confidence and courage bring success in monetary gains and your energy increases for work projects and your job environment is lively. This is a time for self-expression when you have lots of energy, but not necessarily the self-discipline to match. You express yourself creatively, through activities with children, romantic hobbies, or sports, short trips, and other forms of communication and making connections, appeal strongly. It is easier than usual to be sensible about your diet, health, hygiene, and fitness needs.

Taurus : (April 21 - May 21)

This phase brings love, harmony and entertainment in professional and personal relations. Your mind is often distracted, particularly when required to stick to a routine. You might spend a lot of time in traveling and visiting friends and relatives. You are slightly more defensive and certainly more protective than usual. You might engage in arguments with, or on behalf of, those closest to you. Focus and a centering of thoughts is called for to achieve a balance. Your attention to the logical world of reason is a focus.

Gemini : (May 22 - June 21)

You are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy for higher studies, travel, or brand new subjects. This enables you to make headway on the professional front. You will be considerably more productive, healthy, and focused. Extra care should be exercised when it comes to writing letters, emails, making phone calls i.e. with communications in general. It would also be wise to double-check your communications before sending them off. Your mind is especially inquisitive, when learning, short trips, and other forms of communication and making connections, appeal strongly.

Cancer : (June 22 - July 22)

This is favorable week for hobbies, sports and competitive exams. You display great skills that win you appreciation and bring about an opportunity to travel. Beware of a covetous and suspicious person around you who could cause misunderstanding in your personal relationships. You would be able to maintain peace and harmony at home. Artistic self-expression is important, possibly through music, fashion and writing. People notice and admire you for your pleasant and cheerful personality.

Leo : (July 23 - August 23)

There will be an increase in confidence, courage and efforts at the work place. It’s a great time to do something entirely new and pioneering. Discussions and ideas about finances and material security figure strongly. You may spend extra money on things that will make your life more comfortable and pleasant. Work that needs to be done in and around the home becomes a priority. You may seek opportunities to boost your feeling of security and comfort. You will have the ability to build up financial reserves and resources, for this placement can bring a good deal of success in all monetary pursuits.

Virgo : (August 24 - September 22)

There will be cordial relations among family and relatives. Friends and loved ones take priority. People at work might be surprised by your ability to assert yourself and your needs. You don’t find yourself lacking in opportunities to socialize. You are likely to enjoy a strong feeling of happiness and solidarity in friendship, or with groups of like-minded individuals. You are more peace loving than usual and slightly detached on a personal level and feeling towards

religion is enhanced. This is a good time for research and meditation; but do avoid being dragged down by issues that have outgrown their worth and purpose. Examining the past in order to improve the future is certainly worthwhile, as long as you don’t expend energy without results.

Libra : (September 23 - October 23)

This period brings success, responsibility and maturity. Loyalty and sensitivity in your relationships are more important to you. You are especially fond of domestic life and look to the home and family. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental or nostalgic now. You may particularly value the aesthetics in and around your home during this period. If things are chaotic on the home front, you will do whatever you can to create a peaceful and stable atmosphere. You might explore various ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one avenue for monetary gain this week.

Scorpio : (October 24 - November 22)

This phase is good for money, family, status and happiness. More loving relationships with your children may also figure now. Your magnetism skyrockets. Yet, you are not aggressive in your approach to love. Instead, you attract more if you allow yourself to be pursued. Creative self-expression of any kind is favored. At this time, you instinctively know how to place yourself in the best light in order to make a good impression on others. Any love affair begun now will be characterized by good cheer, having fun, and a fair share of emotions.

Sagittarius : (November 23 - December 21)

Public relations work, promotion and other such endeavors are highlighted. You are looking to expand your activities, and you may find that you have a lot of energy for travel, or brand new subjects to broaden your mind. Diplomacy, correctness in manner, finesse, and charm will be a big plus in aiding financial gains, especially in areas requiring public contact. You feel attracted to intelligent people with whom you can communicate well and exchange ideas during the week. You know how to relate to others and you do it in a natural and warm manner. Your mind is especially inquisitive, when learning or establishing communications. You use information and data, add the weight of knowledge and experience and utilize it judiciously.

Capricorn : (December 22 - January 20)

This is an excellent time to create a budget or financial plan, or to rid yourself of old habits that undermine your sense of personal power and self-mastery. Spending time with someone special is a focus. Smoothing out your close personal relationships and creating stronger bonds is what makes you happy now. You pour more energy into self-promotion or business activities. It’s a good time to work out money problems or other issues of sharing with a partner. You receive pleasure from anything that expands your horizons, both physically and mentally. Foreign places may particularly appeal now. You tend to be expansive and generous when it comes to love. Dealing with one situation at a time releases some tension and anxiety.

Aquarius : (January 21 - February 18)

Conflicts with a partner over values or personal possessions are likely to occur. There may be the need to revisit old, pending issues regarding personal finances. Take this time to re-budget instead of making premature purchases. Hold off on decision-making regarding money; instead, take the time to re-think your sources of income and how you spend your cash during this period. Put off finalizing anything important for the time being. In fact, some money-making ideas or ventures may be put on hold due to circumstances beyond your control.

Pisces : (February 19 - March 20)

It’s a generous, pleasantly emotional and creative time. You will enjoy artistic, musical, or cultural events and activities. This is a good time to promote harmony and good will on the job. You have good team spirit right now, and you are more tactful and obliging with your co-workers. You need the energies, companionship, and support of other people, and they may also seek out your support and companionship. You have an increased interest in your own possessions. You are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of comfort, status and luxury.

Remembering 1st Indian woman barrister

The 150th birth anniversary of Cornelia Sorabji, the very first woman of any nationality to study law at Oxford, and also the first female Indian barrister, was celebrated by the High Commission of India in the UK.

The event was organised in collaboration with Somerville College, Oxford, where Sorabji did her law studies. It was well attended with participation of senior judges, legal practitioners, faculty and students from law schools, representatives from some of the most eminent legal firms in the UK, entrepreneurs, historians, writers, editors and media



personnel.

Some of the key attendees and speakers included British Indian entrepreneur and life peer Lord Bilimoria (who is also the nominated representative of the Government of

India for the Indira Gandhi Scholarships at Somerville College), Dr Alice Prochaska (Principal, Somerville College), Prof. Anne Davies and Prof. Timothy Endicott Deans of Oxford Law Faculty, Lady Hazel Fox, QC, and Judge Rabinder Singh (the first full-time high court judge from Asia).

The Acting High Commissioner, Dinesh K. Patnaik and other speakers spoke in detail about the exemplary life of Sorabji who overcame all odds to become the first woman to study at Bombay University, where she won first-class honours. She came to Oxford with the

help of a subscription raised by members of the British liberal establishment and later became the first woman of any nationality to study Law at Oxford. Cornelia Sorabji went on to serve as legal advisor to the Bengal Court of Wards, serving sequestered women, and their families, fighting for their education and legal rights.

The event also highlighted the postgraduate law scholarships for Indian students launched this year at Oxford India Centre for Sustainable Development Somerville College, in memory of Cornelia Sorabji.

(The Indian Diaspora)

Of robbers & their getaways

I saw cops chasing a guy down the street the other day. My first thought was, “Man, those guys are going to get great scores on their fitness band.”

Police and robbers should agree to a 30-second window between any actual bank robbery and the ensuing chase to give time for both sides to turn their step-counters on. Robber: “Ready, chap?” Cops: “Wait. Just need to click this. Okay, let’s do this thing.”

Two days later, a reader sent me a news item from Florida on a related subject. A young female bank robber had no getaway car — so persuaded her dad to drive her to and from the bank “for a job interview”. She robbed the bank and leapt back into the car, telling him that the cash she was holding was her salary in advance.

The conversation must have been interesting: “Hi sweetheart, how’d the interview go?”

“Fine thanks, Dad, now

DRIVE G O G O G O G O.” (Bullets fly.)

This writer canvassed sources for other offbeat getaways and a colleague shared an odd one from Ecuador. A professional footballer was in the middle of a game last month when police arrived to arrest him for non-payment of alimony.

He pretended to become injured (footballers spend most of their training hours practising this) and was transferred by stretcher to an ambulance while police watched helplessly from the other side of the field.

But perhaps the most cost-effective getaway of recent times was a curious theft in India this summer. Bank security guards put a large cash payment in a tightly secured train carriage. Robbers sitting on the roof of the moving train cut a hole into the carriage,

snatched the money and then jumped off. They were a huge distance away when the robbery was discovered — and they hadn’t spent a cent on a getaway car.

Someone reading over my shoulder (GO AWAY) has just referred me to a case from Kent in 2008. The

robbers had a regular getaway car, but used a driver who just didn’t have the right mindset for car chases. They were only about 250m from the place they’d raided when a traffic light turned red. The driver stopped the car and politely signalled right to show pursuers which way they were going. Police caught them within minutes.

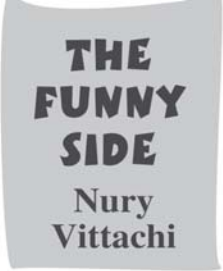
Also in 2008 was a case in Malaysia where robbers used a getaway car that was too small for all the

money they had stolen. And there was a 2012 case in Texas where a bank customer got so scared during an armed robbery that she ran outside and drove away in the first car she could find — which turned out to be the robbers’ getaway car.

But going back to escaping on foot, a long-run through the centre of any city will boost your score on Pokemon Go and provide good opportunities to distract police officers chasing you. Robber (glancing at smart phone screen): “Oh my goodness, there’s a legen-dary Articuno, a Pokemon which has never been caught.” Cop: “Where? I mean, stop, there!” (Cops slow down and pull out phones.)

Now if you’ll excuse me, I need to take a taxi to work, waving my fitness band out of the window all the way.

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



“*Too many have dispensed with generosity in order to practice charity.*”
--- Albert Camus

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 101 SHILLONG, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2016

Centre – SC clash

TENSION continues about who should have the final say in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and High courts – the government or the Judiciary. The Supreme court collegium aided by Chief Justice of India T S Thakur has reiterated 43 names for appointment as High Court judges. The Centre has asked the collegium to re-consider the names on the ground that no uniform criteria were followed in the selection of the 43 names. The SC bench refused to budge. There is a now a 43% vacancy in the High Courts of India and the shortage of judges has led pending cases to pile up over the years. Justice is not merely delayed but also denied. The rot percolates down to the lower courts where a similar shortage of judges causes a huge number of cases to remain pending. This somewhat thorny relationship between the executive and the Judiciary got further embittered as the Supreme Court struck down the setting up of the national judicial appointments commission. Parliament had enacted legislation to put it in place. A memorandum of procedure (MOP) to streamline the collegiums functioning is yet to be finalized.

The NDA government can now sit on the 43 reiterated names till January as Chief Justice of India T.S Thakur retires on January 3. The other members of the collegium for appointment of judges are Justices A.R. Dave and J.S. Khehar. They are also retired or retiring. The Centre can wait for a major change in the composition of the three member collegium and can explain to it the grounds on which it had questioned the selection of 43 persons as High Court Judges. A top law ministry official has said that his Ministry will examine the 43 names. The SC has got the power to select persons for appointment of HC judges since the 1990s. a clash has occurred for the first time. It should end forthwith to foster democracy.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

‘Dhawan totally innocent’

Home Minister Buta Singh informed the Lok Sabha today that Mr R K Dhawan “was not in any way involved in any crime and conspiracy connected with the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi.

The “detailed” investigation carried out by a “special team” as per the terms of reference of the Thakkar Commissions, “has confirmed that Mr Dhawan is totally innocent, Mr Buta Singh said.

Mr Buta Singh was responding to zero hour submissions made by Mr

Modi: From a chaiwalla to a seller of dreams

The BJP led government has only completed two years of its five- year term and if we are to judge the reaction of people particularly to the demonetization of the one thousand and five hundred currency notes, then it seems that citizens of this country have some faith in this government and are willing to bear the short term pain, in the belief that it has a long term benefit. I am no economist but with the little economics I learnt in college I can see that Modi has introduced a whole slew of measures to improve and revitalise the country's economy. So if we are to judge his performance we have to look at the bigger picture and not single out one issue.

Modi has only ushered in some policies and schemes to revitalize the economy and the first of the economic measures that he had introduced was the Jhan Dhan Yojna which encourages every Indian to open a no frills bank account without the common man having to deposit any money.

It is true that for villages which implement the MNREGA, the scheme had an inbuilt mechanism requiring every job card holder to open at least one bank account per household, but that's about it. The accounts opened under MNREGA are used for withdrawing of wages only and nothing else. In some villages the job card holders thinks that the account can be used only for the single transaction of withdrawing wages. The faith-based organisation (FBO) with which I am involved has conducted more than fifty financial literacy campaigns (FLCs) throughout the length and breadth of West Jaintia hills district. The FLCs Supported by NABARD and RBI were conducted in collaboration with banks like Canara, Punjab National, Indian Overseas, Meghalaya Rural bank and MCAB and it has helped us understand a wee bit about the economic situation in the villages. One thing that we immediately learned is that saving habits are still dismally low in many villages. In some places we were even asked, how we

By H H Mohrmen

can expect people to save when they are unsure of having two square meals a day? We also came across stories of elderly people keeping their money in a jar and burying it in the ground. I can't say how much Jan Dhan has helped but I know many people would not have opened any account at all if it was not for this scheme. And whether the account holders operate the accounts on a regular basis or deposits any money in the account or not is another question.

The opening of bank branches in many towns and big villages has also introduced the banking habit among the citizens of the country. The introduction of bank mitra or banking correspondents in big villages has helped the banks to provide financial services at the door step of the common man. One hopes that banks would engage more bank correspondents (BC) in many more villages with population of more than two thousand (as mandated by RBI) to ensure that common people have access to the banking system. I am not sure if there are many takers of Pension schemes for the common people introduced by the this government (especially in Meghalaya), and both life and accidental insurance introduced by this government is not popular in the state because the tribals, especially the Khasi-Pnar despise the idea of insuring one's life. They still consider it bad luck to insure one's life because it is like a self- imposed misfortune on oneself.

Then the government introduced Mudra loan to encourage entrepreneurs who wish to start small business. As far as I can gather many young and first generation entrepreneurs have availed the opportunity. One such case is that a young man from Padu who was sent for training by the District Basin Development Unit of West Jaintia hills and on completing the training started a small food processing unit in his own village. Later on Neta Pohthmi availed loan from Mudra Bank to increase production. Then the central government has

also introduced Start up India which is yet to be made popular in the state.

Then demonetising of one thousand and five hundred notes happened and caught everyone by surprise. I am not saying that the move did not cause any hardship to the common people. There are problems and people have to queue for hours together. Shops even those as big as Legacy bakery in Shillong refused to take the demonetised notes in spite of the RBI guidelines. I argued with them and reminded them to read the RBI instruction which allow fifty days window period for anybody to exchange the notes but to no avail. The other question is what is the percentage of common people hold ATM cards and how many villages which are far from the nearest banks have a BC near the village to exchange their currency notes which are no longer legal tender?

I am not going to repeat on how people had to endure hardships, standing in a queue for hours together to deposit or withdraw money, but I am going to share a story which happened in a small town where I live. The day after Prime Minister Modi made his announcement to demonetise the currency also happened to be a market day in Jowai and like anywhere else farmers from the villages came to sell the products in the market. On that day both the seller and the buyers were in a fix. It was a situation where the seller wants to sell and the buyer also wants to buy, but could not do any trading, not for dearth of money but because the common currency notes ceased to become legal tender. It was for the first time that no transaction happened despite both money and commodities are available in plenty.

Much has been said about the poor having to bear the brunt, but is that true? My friends in the village told me that the villagers can at least survive for some days without money because they still have rice in their granary, vegetables in their gardens and their domesticated animals; it is not like they are going to starve the next day if there is no money. Perhaps the demonetisation has immense impact on the poor in the town and cities and the middle class people.

There were also

complaints that in some banks there were double standards in the way they treated people who visited the banks. But banks are business entities too and they have their preferential list of customers. Initially, all banks offered the exchange facility to their account holders and only later attended to non-account holders.

The demonetisation also had little or no impact on the people who have multiple banks accounts.

Since the goal of the entire exercise is to do away with black money, the other question that begs an answer is how we can get rid of black money? I asked a banker how would we be able to distinguish black money from white since people like us are also surrendering the demonetised notes to the banks? He thinks that only when people deposit huge amounts of money will the money be considered black. But at the end of the day it is irrelevant if black money is recovered or not but at least the government will be able to estimate the amount of money in circulation. The measure begs us to look at the big picture. It also begs us to look at the slew of measure the government had introduced in its totality and not to single out one issue.

The goal of the government is financial inclusion and revitalising the sluggish economy. To achieve that it has introduced many economic measures. If the demonetisation of the two currencies would have any impact on the economy is to revitalise the economy. But Modi's major achievement in the entire process is 'modivation.' How the Prime Minister is able to motivate almost the entire nation to support him in his move is something that we all need to ponder hard. So the question is: how is a man who was once a mere tea seller able to sell his dream to the majority of Indians who supported him in the demonetizing of the two currency notes. Ultimately irrespective of whether the country will benefit from the measure or not, if the government or whether Government is able to unearth black money or not, what is important is the immense faith that people have on the government and the hardship that they are willing to endure to support its activity. That is important.

Modi's New Poser Halt India's poll merry-go-round

By Poonam I Kaushish

The war on black money and corruption continues to dominate the political stratosphere. As things stand, notwithstanding the accolades the Prime Minister is seemingly receiving from the aam janata the kala dhan campaign seems to be going phut with bank tillers and ATMs running dry, leaving the public angry, frustrated and begging for his own money.

Amidst the war on black money lost in the din is Prime Minister Modi's bold pitch for simultaneous elections to elected bodies at various levels a few days back as it would not only save the Exchequer and Parties' money but enable Governments at the Centre and States to concentrate on delivering good governance besides giving ample time to netas and workers to take people-oriented schemes to the aam aadmi.

In the backdrop that money makes the clogged, polluted and corrupt electoral mare go around in the Great Indian Political Circus and how, wherein politicians of every colour, caste-creed have progressively allowed this malady to become chronic, Modi's suggestion is sensible.

This raises a moot point if it is an idea whose time has come. If so, would it be advisable in the best national interest? Against the backdrop that over the last few decades the country has been afflicted by PES --- Perpetual Election Syndrome week after week, month after month in a year-long merry-go-round thereby wreaking havoc on our body politic --

- right, left and centre? Think. In 2006 five States Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry went to polls, in 2007 seven UP, Punjab, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur and Uttarakhand and the following year four Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Mizoram and Rajasthan. In 2009 besides the Lok Sabha, three States Andhra, Assam and Arunachal, Bihar the subsequent year.

In 2011 Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Puducherry and Bengal, 2012 UP, Goa, Punjab, Manipur and Uttarakhand, the following year Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Mizoram followed by the Lok Sabha polls in 2014 and four States Maharashtra, Haryana, Telengana and Andhra, last year Delhi, Bihar, Jharkhand, J&K and this year Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bengal and Assam.

Recall, the first four elections in 1952, 1957, 1962, 1967 were a joint affair whereby simultaneous elections were held for the Centre and State legislatures. It was only in 1971 when Indira Gandhi dissolved the Lok Sabha and advanced elections by a year that the synchronization fell apart. This saw the onset of many unstable Governments at the Centre and States resulting in early dissolution of the Lok Sabha or Assemblies.

True, poll issues at the Centre and in States are different; consequently it is not advisable to mix them. Two, it could create confusion for voters as a Party could be deserving of support at the Centre but not in a State. Further, having a fixed term of the Lok Sabha and the State Legislature goes against the basic tenets of Parliamentary democracy

However, simultaneous elections could be held for State Assemblies and they be given a fixed term. In the event an elected State Government was to fall, the Centre would have the option of imposing President's rule till it was time for a fresh poll. But the Lok Sabha cannot have a fixed term as there is no provision for President's rule at the Centre. This could create more problems than solving them.

Pertinently, the Law Commission's 170th report submitted to the then NDA Government in 1999 on electoral reform had said, "this cycle of elections every year, and in the out of

season, should be put an end to" and recommended a gradual move towards simultaneous elections once in five years.

Importantly, a major benefit of holding simultaneous polls is that it would result in huge financial saving. The statistics say it all: In 1952, when the first national election for the Lok Sabha and Assemblies were held just over Rs 10 crores were spent. In the subsequent two elections 1957 and 1962 the expenditure came down to almost Rs 6 and Rs 7.5 crores respectively.

Since 1977, the expenditure saw an upward spiral. It doubled to over Rs 23 crores, in 1980, it further doubled to Rs 54 crores and 1989 to Rs 154 crores. Just two years later, the expenses shot up to Rs 359 crore and by 1999 it was Rs 880 crores. By 2004, it had shot up to Rs 1300 crores and 2014 Lok Sabha elections entailed an expenditure of Rs 4500 crores.

Assembly elections expenses too are rising. The Bihar Government spent over Rs 400 crores for Assembly polls, the less said the better about expenses incurred by the Election Commission and Central Government. Just see the amount of the taxpayer's hard money being spent over and over again mindlessly.

Where do we go from here? Elections, after all are the bedrock of our democracy but we should avoid duplication of polls. Today, with State after State going for elections every year, running the Central Government has become a challenge especially when the country is in a perpetual election mode. Happily, the Election Commission is on board, has the ability to conduct simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and Assemblies as it would save resources and effort, spare officials like school teachers from great inconvenience.

Undoubtedly, it is one way to get rid of incompetence, malfeasance and casual governance. But it is an idea that needs to be debated extensively at all levels. Its pros and cons must be weighted before arriving at a final solution. Remember, the change advocated would entail changing the basic structure of the Constitution.

As also, facilitate the Government in taking hard decisions in public interest without having to worry about its impact on its vote banks. Experience shows that Government's per se have avoided implementing policies in national interest, lest it upset a caste, community, religion or region. With governance becoming the first casualty of frequent elections, a fixed term for the Legislatures would stem the spreading rot.

Interestingly, Parliament's Standing Committee too deliberated on its feasibility December last and held it would reduce massive expenditure in conducting polls, check policy paralysis due to imposition of the Model Code of Conduct during election time, ease burden on manpower deployed during polls, and result in better deliverables.

The President chooses his own team and so do the Governors. True, the President is answerable to the House of Representatives and the Senate, but he is not required to seek their confidence vote. This ensures good governance, stability and continuity enabling him to take hard decisions without fear of losing power.

In sum simultaneous polls is not enough it needs to be nationally debated both within Parliament and outside. India's democracy should not be reduced to a tu-tu mein-mein between Parties all the time. Enough of the destructive PES! ---- INFA

TO THE EDITOR

MPSC rejoinder

Editor,
This refers to your news items (1) ST 17th June,2016, (2) ST 10th September 2016, (3) ST 7th October,2016, (4) ST 25thOctober,2016, (5) ST 16th November,2016 (6) ST 18th November,2016. The MPSC is of the view that it is indeed the duty of the news agency to report an order passed by the Hon'ble Courts but it is unprofessional and irresponsible on the part of the news agency to add vicious comments in its news item and headlines which have not been reflected on the actual orders passed by such courts. It is also the duty of a responsible news agency to report news on any subject by taking into account the views of both parties without being biased especially when the news item involves a case that is being heard in a court of law.

It is extremely unfortunate that your esteemed daily which has been in the business of providing news and enlightening the public not only in Meghalaya but the entire North Eastern Region for the past 71 years has

regretfully not included in its news item the views of both the parties resulting in the MPSC being portrayed in poor light.

With the greatest respect for the freedom of the press in a great democracy like India, I request not only this newspaper but other news agencies as well to refrain from playing judge and defaming the MPSC without prima facie evidence but to leave the passing of judgments to the courts. If any clarification is needed on any news item relating to the MPSC the undersigned will be most willing to answer all the queries and clearing
Yours etc.,
L. M. Sangma),
Chairman,
Meghalaya Public Service Commission,
Shillong.

Our Reporter replies:
The reports were based on the Court's orders. Newspapers have their way of captioning stories hence the MPSC appears to be unduly perturbed without understanding the journalistic liberty in handling news reports. No report is a verbatim re-production of either the Court's orders or other documents and news conferences. We in the

media analyse the news and contextualize it. MPSC should instead introspect and revamp its functioning to avoid bad press. You will admit that the MPSC has not clothed itself in glory all these years; hence the court cases.

Whither patriotism?

Editor,
During World War – II it was said that Winston Churchill appealed to the public of Britain not to buy eggs as these are required to be sent to soldiers fighting a war for the country. Shortage of eggs was the reason for this appeal. Immediately there were long queues outside the shops of Britain , not for buying eggs , but to return the eggs already purchased and lying in their homes. What was the main trigger here? Unalloyed love for the country ! I am not comparing this with the recent demonetization of currency notes by the Government of India . Surrender of old currency notes cannot be compared with returning

eggs , but the real question to be asked in this context is whether we really love our country. Forget the issue of black money, fake currency etc., but did we all react positively when anti-India slogans were shouted in JNU? Do we really condemn Dr Zakir Naik , who is anti Indian ? Patriotism is now a critical issue in India. The liberal elite seem to think that it's not fashionable to be patriotic. Anti Indian activities are supported openly by our pseudo – intellectuals. On the contrary these intellectuals are live on Television channels to pass judgment on the depths of patriotism of others. What a mockery ! This is the evil of democracy. But whatever democracy really means, no one should keep silent when the country is being insulted.

Yours etc.,
Anjan Kr Das
Shillong- 6

Demonetization a dire need!

Editor,
This refers to your editorial, “Will it check black money” (ST, Nov 18,

2016). The media is full of reports about serpentine queues outside banks. Demonetization of 500 and 1000 rupee notes has some benefits, but it cannot stem the flow of unaccounted income to be generated in the future. The markets for gold and property are highly concentrated, with relatively few sellers exerting considerable control over supply. Nonetheless, demonetization of the two currencies by the Government of the day will help to tackle the triple menace of black money, fake currency and terror financing. Black money and corruption are the biggest obstacles in eradicating poverty. When the quantum of black money was so enormous that it had created a parallel economy, making monetary policy ineffective, the Government's effort is commendable.

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad- 15

IDS: A successful scheme

Editor,
Thanks to FM Arun Jaitley and his team at the Finance Ministry for the "hard work"

resulting in the successful outcome of IDS-2016 as it managed to mop up Rs 65,250 crore. Undoubtedly, The Income Tax Department carried out massive campaigns in the past four months to convince 'tax payers' to come forward and declare undisclosed incomes under the Income Declaration Scheme (IDS). The 'success' of the IDS would lead to greater tax compliance and provide much needed revenue for the government to spend on infrastructure and social and rural economy. This is a major step towards reigning in the 'parallel economy' of the country and merging it with the mainstream. With the deadline over now, it is time for 'final crackdown' on persistent tax evaders, which is necessary to send a signal to the honest taxpayer that the government will 'walk the talk' on tough action on the guilty. Ferreting out black money is not an insuperable task. The revisiting of bilateral investment treaties, as part of a global crackdown on tax havens, will help.

Yours etc.,
Akash Kumar,
Jagraon, Punjab

The last time anybody made a list of the top hundred character attributes of New Yorkers, common sense snuck in at number 79.

--- Douglas Adams

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 102 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2016

A population positive

ACCORDING to the Sample Registration Survey, fertility rates in the populous states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have been falling in the age group 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 for the last fifteen years. What is surprising is that the fall has been greater in the rural areas. Marriage age has been delayed and more women are getting educated. That accounts for the fall. Bihar's record is the most impressive. Fertility rate in the state went down from 56.8 in 2001 to 19.6 in 2014. In Madhya Pradesh it has halved to 45.2. In Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh it has been down to 25.7 from 60.3 and 25.7 from 40.8 respectively. It also means a fall in maternal and infant mortality. One reason is that women with higher education choose greater medical help in childbirth.

However, more effort is needed to reduce dropouts from schools amongst girls. Panchayats should see that under-age marriages do not take place. Lack of sanitation has to be overcome. Access to schools should be easier. All this will push up the marriage rate. Education also ensures that family size is limited. Children survive in larger numbers as a result. What is necessary is a sustained family planning programme. The Centre has a progressive national population policy. But its implementation is far from satisfactory. The choice before women in contraception is not made clear to them. The focus of family planning is disproportionately too much on women. Men should be equally involved. These measures should lead to greater improvement in the population scene.

LOOKING BACK
March 16, 1989

Kharbuli urged people to fight for consumer rights

Meghalaya Supplies Minister, Mr Upstar Kharbuli has called upon the people of Shillong to take up the challenge of fighting against unscrupulous market forces inaugurating the "Consumer's Day" observance in Shillong on Wednesday, he said that the Government can only instigate" a sense of urgency among the people but is for them to protect their own consumer rights. He regretted that in spite of having a high sense of consumer awareness, the people of Shillong provided the least consumer resistance.

Mr Kharbuli, while promising all possible assistance by the State Government to the consumer protection groups, said that mere enactment of laws and

acts cannot bring about any impact on the unscrupulous market forces and it is for the people to organize themselves in this regard.

In his presidential address, the Special Secretary, Food & Civil Supplies, Mr J M Phira highlighted the State Govt's efforts to bring about greater consumer awareness and dwelt on the consumer's statutory rights to complain before the Consumer Protection Forums, Mr Phira, while noting that organizing the function was step in the right direction said that arbitrary price increases in Shillong do not always relate to the market forces of supply & demand but to some "unscrupulous forces" bent upon "exploiting the people."

Balance of Justice in Khasi Tradition

By Fabian lyngdoh

The Khasi cultural traditions were based on the balance of justice but misinterpretations have rendered the Khasi traditions practised today, inequitable. This article is intended to show how Khasi traditions had provided a functional structural balance between individual freedom and the collective order in the past, so as to dispel wrong perceptions and misinterpretations of the Khasi traditions, as well as to provide clues for understanding up to what extent these traditions can be relevant today, and to what extent the present misinterpretations have digressed from the ideals of the past.

At the primary stage, individuals had their identities only under the identity of the Kur to which they belonged. Individuals were born into the Kur; lived within the norms of the Kur; worked for the Kur; and after death, passed to the spiritual abode through the Kur. There was security, freedom and equality within the Kur. The gender statuses in the Kur were defined in terms of a woman's role as mother, the resource of the perpetual succession of the clan, and the proprietor of the family establishment; and man's role as 'u kni' (maternal uncle) who was the leader and guide of the clan, but not the proprietor of the establishment. The statuses of men and women were in harmony and complementary to each other; a rise in the status of one gave rise to the status of the other. Only men had the right to attend and participate in public dorbars; but they had that right not for their own interests, but only as advocates of the Kur; that is, on behalf of the female clan members, who were the foundations of clan establishment. Hence, gender justice was ideally balanced.

There was also balance of justice between the lineages of the Kur. The custodian and centre of 'ka sad ka sunon' for political affairs, the Kur was instituted in the house of the eldest lineage, called 'ka fingsad'. The religious house and centre of social, religious and economic aspects of the Kur was in the natal household of the youngest lineage. The intermediate lineages shared the benefits of both.

flourish in clear violation of the law. The DC is correct since illicit liquor trade could not have survived without the patronage oof the Dorbar Shnong.

The "civil disobedience movement" by the hawkers at the footpath of the Civil Hospital junction in town is now a thing of the past in the aftermath of the Meghalaya High Court order but a similar disobedience is seen in Mawblei now. Perhaps the people of Mawblei are correct in demanding the removal of the OC of Madantring PS since he is found wanting in the discharge of his duty. But the big fish is the local Rangbah Shnong under whose patronage everything illegal is flourishing. The local Dorbar Shnong perhaps found no better business than this after they were robbed of their power to issue NOC by the Meghalaya High Court. Now the question is if the High Court has to intervene into everything then are we not heading towards a totalitarian regime here?

of all, regardless of being 'binong-bishon' or 'shongthap-shongbiang'.

At the third stage of socio-political formation, the Hima was formed by the federation of adjacent Raids. The representatives of the Raids were known as 'Bakhraws' or 'Basans'. As the Bakhraws were all equal in honour and status, they needed a neutral centre as a point of agreement among them. Hence, a Syiem was appointed to function as a nominal state functionary, while real authority rested with the council of the Bakhraws who were the representatives of the federating Raids. It was not the Syiem who appointed the Bakhraws, but it was the Bakhraws who appointed the Syiem. Moreover, the Raids did not become mere subdivisions of a Hima by virtue of the federation. The Bakhraws belonged primarily to their respective Raids, and had their own territories over which they exercised independent control. The Syiem on the other hand, was not representing any territory other than the institution of syiemship.

R. B. Pemberton, the colonial officer, had observed this peculiarity in the form of society and government among the Khasis when he reported that there is absence of any recognised organ of supreme power in a Hima. In his perception, the nation or horde presents the appearance of a congregation of little oligarchical republics, subject to no common superior, yet of which each member is amenable, in some degree, to the control of his confederates. The little oligarchical republics observed by Pemberton were the 'Raids' which had a common neutral and nominal head, but not a common superior. Supreme power in a Hima did not reside with any individual ruler, but with the council of the Bakhraws who were the representatives of the federating Raids.

The Khasi tribe in the past survived and multiplied also through intermarriages with people of other tribes. It seems that majority of the present Khasi clans today originated from non-Khasi women married to Khasi men. Children from such marriages became full-fledged Khasis through the process of 'ka Tang-Kur'. But today, there is a misinterpretation of the concept of 'Tang-Jait' with that of 'Tang-Kur'. 'Ka Tang-Kur' was a religious process through which a new Khasi Kur was established from the womb of a non-Khasi mother.

understood as aiming towards solving the problems that come with frequent elections. Elections in India are a big-budget exercise. Expenditure can be reduced by conducting simultaneous elections. Political parties that are stuck in a 'constant campaign mode' for various state elections can concentrate on governance and administration instead of political campaigns throughout the year. The idea of simultaneous elections comes with many challenges especially in a large country like India. The issue of logistics and requirement of security personnel, election and administrative officials needs to be considered. There is a dearth of security and administrative officials to conduct 'simultaneous free and fair elections' throughout the country at one go. It can be implemented with a few modifications that are suitable to our democratic environment. Let us unitedly, with the consent of all political parties and the citizens fight for "One

Demonetisation of Currency - The Fight against Black Money

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

The sudden move to derecognise the legal status of currency notes of 500 and 1000 denominations has thrown the nation into a tizzy. However, this is not the first time currency notes have been demonetised. Government generally resort to demonetisation of currency as a step towards combating forgery. The recent demonetisation must be seen more in the background of the continued campaign against black money.

In the last few years, the issue of black money has caught public imagination. Although no concrete figures on the same are available, yet numerous studies in the past few years have shown interesting numbers. Schneider estimates the size of the Indian black money to be anywhere between 23 and 26 per cent of GDP. Other reports peg the figure at three fourths of the total size of the Indian economy. Today 500 and 1000 rupees notes (which means high denomination notes) dominate four-fifths of the currency notes in circulation. International organisations like OECD have repeatedly advocated for a gradual shifting away from the high value notes. While none of these numbers can be corroborated by secondary evidences, there is no doubt that the issue of black money is a major thorn in the Indian economy.

And it is in the light of the above that this move must be evaluated and discussed on a few major points. Contrary to popular imagination and pulp fiction, a large part of unaccounted is not stashed in the form of cash. Those who have black money at their disposal would rather transfer their money to foreign shores or route it within the hawala channel. Others deposit it in the form of jewellery or real estate. A study conducted by the National Institute of Public Finance put cash as the least preferred mode of routing unaccounted cash.

A second issue that must be considered is the fact that the higher denominations of 500 and 1000 have been replaced by another higher note of 2000 which many feel would dilute the purpose of controlling transactions via high value denomination notes. Yet all hues of higher denomination currencies cannot be replaced in one stroke in a transitory economy like India. And thus the necessity of newly minted 500 or 2000 cannot be wished away.

The third issue is the challenge of India's transition towards a cashless economy. Although the use of plastic money and online payments has increased in the past decade, yet India remains grossly under banked. Some of the hilly areas in North East and other border states have very low bank and ATM penetration. However a recent report released by Bank for International Settlements (BIS) throws up some interesting numbers. While India still has much catching up to do in terms of percentage of cashless transaction vis-a-vis advanced economies, yet India clocked the fastest growth both in terms of numbers and the value of e-money transactions in 2015 among the twenty-three major economies studied by BIS. The launch of payment services like PayTm and Freecharge only increases the penetration of mobile money not only in cities but also towns and bigger villages. The challenge towards the last mile connectivity for the unbanked areas remains but India has undeniably been making slow and steady progress. The move to demonetise higher currency notes would give further impetus to cashless transactions.

Fourthly, government has since announced a number of guidelines towards exchanging as well depositing the erstwhile cash

including limits to which one can do so. There is much hope that this will result into fresh flow of funds into banking accounts which in turn would translate into investment in infrastructure sector, thus kick-starting the engine of high growth rate in turn. It would perhaps not be unwise to assume that the accounts opened under Jan Dhan Yojana would see much activity in the coming months. This step can also act as a nudge for citizens to accept banking channels as more preferred norm of conducting financial transactions.

Critics have pointed out that this move has created a lot of hindrance for the general population. Also, parallel business of money conversion has blossomed in the last few days. Others point to the spike in gold prices and argue that the black money has converted itself into jewellery.

It is truly difficult to gauge the impact of this step alone towards curbing black money. It must be seen in the backdrop of the larger ideas that have gained acceptance in the past years. This announcement was preceded by a successful Income Declaration Scheme which earned the government almost twenty eight thousand crores in taxes. Over the past few years measures, like curbing cash transactions, furnishing PAN Nos, informing income tax authorities for certain transactions, have controlled the flow of black money in the economy. The direct taxes department now makes extensive use of ICT to scan for possible tax offenders. Today the department can track even those tax offenders who do not have PAN Nos. An archaic system of scrutiny assessment has been replaced by the algorithmic Computer Aided Selection System. While the precision of the algorithm is subject to discussion, there is no doubt that each of this measure has boosted the direct tax administration in the country. The fight against black money continues and it is in this realm that this move to demonetise high value currency would place itself. It is not the action of curbing black money itself but also the firm stance taken by the government which would send a stern message.

We have to bear in mind, however, that this decision should not be seen through the prism of black money alone. Today a large number of Indians are unable to buy a house because of the astronomical rates prevalent in the primary and the secondary real estate market. The real estate market is one the major sectors which is completely propelled by cash transactions. The present decision would hopefully force a price correction.

Counterfeit currency is a major problem in the Indian currency. This step would undoubtedly curb the counterfeit currency market. Also increased features of the newly minted 500 and 2000 rupees notes would make it almost impossible to be forged. Tackling counterfeit currency is an important tool in fighting against terrorism and India has taken a strong step in this regard. Similarly terror financing would receive a major jolt. Both these steps comprise important milestones towards safeguard of national security. Thus the step towards demonetisation of currency, which, by itself may not end black money entirely, is still a major step towards achieving certain national objectives. At the same time it has other consequences as well that is equally important for the nation. And this is what makes this step a welcome reform, while we continue to remain vigilant.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

TO THE EDITOR

Civil disobedience in Mawblei

Editor,

Apropos the news, "Illegal sale of liquor rampant in Mawblei" (ST, 03 Nov, 2016) read with the photo titled "Illicit liquor seized" (ST, 04 Nov, 2016), police should swing into real action and stop this illegal practice once and for all. The photograph that appeared on Page 10 (Nov.4 2016) where it is mentioned that police has seized and stopped all illegal sellers is balderdash since there are numerous bootleggers selling illicit liquor in Polo and Nongmynsong areas and police are in the know of this. If there was a real crackdown how are these bootleggers still selling liquor under the very nose of the law? The number of drunken people and straying into vehicles in the Madantring - Mawblei area is perhaps not even seen in Lewduh now. This sight, which was earlier ubiquitous in Lewduh, has now been

replaced by Mawblei. It is said that after the crackdown on liquor outlets in the city, open sale has increased manifold and Mawblei is a prime example in this regard. That there is a tacit support of the police, dorbar and perhaps the district administration can be easily gauged by their joint inaction in addressing this menace that is rocking the society. According to sources one can get liquor there till midnight. It is indeed ironic that liquor is so easily available whereas one struggles to get their quota of cylinders from the city's gas agencies, sugar, kerosene from the fair price shops. It is time for the authorities to pull up their socks and go all out after these bootleggers.

It is learnt that the East Khasi Hills DC enquired from the affected residents when they went complaining to him as to what is the Dorbar Shnong, Rangbah Shnong, Rangbah Dong of that area doing. He even hinted that if there is no support of the Dorbar Shnong such a trade cannot

Yours etc.
PK Dwivedi
Shillong - 1

Bank refuses to accept old notes

Editor,

On the November 19, 2016, I was depositing money to pay my college fees for Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU) at Federal bank, Police Bazar branch. To my surprise the bank refused to accept the old 500 rupee notes. I was compelled to go to other banks to get them exchanged in order to pay my fees. I want to get clarification from the said bank as to why these old notes cannot be accepted when the deadline is up to December 2016

Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

One Nation, One Election

Editor,

One Nation, One Election" can be

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.

“Everybody gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense.”

--- Gertrude Stein

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 103SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2016

Banks and last mile access

THE demonetization of Rs 500 and 1000 currency notes brings to the fore several key issues. Those with plastic money and smart phones with various payment apps like PayTm etc., tended to suffer lesser than the person with no bank account and no debit/credit card. It is not just the poor who are facing the brunt of the demonetization process but also many in the rural areas who earn decent amounts but consider it safer to keep money in their homes than in banks. The Modi Government had set into action many plans to curb cash transactions. Money transfer by Government to the accounts of individuals who are to receive payment are now done electronically. The payee has to provide his/her bank account details and IFSC code for the money to be transferred. All these transfers and transactions are recorded. Big businesses no longer make cash transactions. Everything happens by cheque or electronic transfers. Now it took a long time for Government to start paying salaries by cheque. In Meghalaya it was only after militant outfits were regularly involved in bank heists that cash transactions were reduced and salaries to Government employees were paid in cash. Before that state and central government offices would draw huge amounts of cash on the first day of the month for salary payment, thereby posing great security risks. It is unbelievable that the value of crediting salaries to bank accounts of employees was not recognized until about twenty years ago. India, therefore, is way behind many other countries in terms of access to banking facilities.

The recent demonetization process might create a new revolution to push the banking sector to the last village and for people to realize the importance of banking. The Jan Dhan Yojan accounts opened for Indian citizens across the length and breadth of the county at the behest of the Modi Government, were mostly lying idle because not enough awareness was created on the virtues of banking and saving. Many others have, however, realised the utility of having a bank account when they started receiving their subsidies from LPG cylinders straight into their accounts. A country with such heavy cash transaction as India cannot hope to make economic progress because money is hoarded instead of being circulated by way of credit to the needy or for creating strategic public infrastructure.

TO THE EDITOR

Privatize road construction

Editor,

In Meghalaya, it is bad enough that we don't have good roads; maintenance of the roads we have also leaves much to be desired. How long does it take, for example, for a pothole or cracks on a road to get fixed? How long does it take for the problem to even get noticed by the PWD or other government entities concerned? Back in 1993 when I was still a Class VII student, I recall two specific instances when I was delayed in my trip to the examination hall due to bad traffic congestion at certain points on my route. The congestion was, in one instance, simply due to a large pothole in the road, and in the other, due to an uneven break across the road where a pipe had apparently been laid. In both instances, all passing vehicles had to slow down to a near halt to avoid jolting their passengers and damaging their suspension systems, thereby holding up all approaching traffic up to a kilometer long and beyond. After enduring

such delays for some time, I stepped down from the bus but to my surprise I saw our headmaster walking on foot en route to the school. I followed him but reached 30 minutes late for my examination. There has been no change between then and now.

Often we hear the lament that tribals don't have a culture of maintenance. We like to build new things, but hardly pay attention-and allocate appropriate budgets-for maintaining them. This appears to hold true for both public and private structures; whether roads, bridges, buildings, toilets parking lots or other facilities. Preventive maintenance seems almost an alien concept to us, and reactive maintenance-doing repairs when the problem is already there-is, more often than not, very late in coming. There are too many examples to be quoted. It is enough to step out of your own house to notice many unrepaired roads, shattered buildings, unusable toilets etc..... One wonders why it didn't happen much sooner, and had to wait until we had attained notoriety for having the reputedly worst roads in the world, before someone

finally acted.

Traffic congestion is now a fact of life in Shillong and other major cities in the country. In not a few instances, congestion and traffic slowdowns are simply due to a pothole or break in the road needing repair or in some cases a local taxi simply stopping for passengers. Is there a way we can ensure that repairs and proper remedial measures are done promptly before they impose much larger costs on everyone? Will we have to perennially curse the PWD or the local governments for failure to maintain our roads properly and promptly?

I believe, there is a way, and to my knowledge, Canada, among others, has demonstrated how this can be done. The Canadian province of British Columbia pioneered the outsourcing of long-term road maintenance to the private sector, and entered the first round of performance-based contracts in road maintenance nearly three decades ago. The underlying principle behind the move was that the government's role is to

manage-that is, to plan, facilitate and catalyze the economy-while the private sector should deliver government programs when it can do so effectively, subject to protection of the public interest. To minimize dislocation of road maintenance, government employees were assisted in setting up contractor companies that could bid for the maintenance contracts, while others simply transferred to existing contractor firms. The provinces of Alberta and Ontario later followed this example and were proven to be very effective.

Experience tells us that public-private partnerships can work well in infrastructure construction. The experience of Canada and elsewhere shows, public-private partnerships for road maintenance works well, too. Maybe it's time our governments tapped public-private partnerships for long-term maintenance of our roads as well. This may be yet another answer to alleviating our bad traffic conditions and road

conditions.

Yours etc.,
Michael Makri,
Vie email

Unsung heroes

Editor, ,

Kudos to all bank employees of India who are working hard and leading the "Fight Against Corruption" from front. All sacrifices are being made by thousands of bank employees just to keep our economy running and dispense currency notes for the people who have been waiting. They have been facing a tough time in handling the sea of people standing in queues at the bank branches. Bank officials and staff are reaching their respective branches as early as 8am and working till late hours to clear the day's work. They are even working at weekends with an intention to bring back the situation to normal. They are trying their best, handling myriad teething problems and frayed tempers of people standing in long queues for hours. The staff seating at the counter have to deal with "boiling" situations

with, if not worship the corrupt. As one prepares to wrap up this piece, the "surgical strike" on corruption, black money and terrorism is in the news. The surprising thing is, it not a young slick Harvard educated person but a sixty six year old home grown visionary who has had the wisdom and the courage to knock down decades old rotten political and social tradition. Ample proof that attitude rather than age determines outlook. Closer home, can't any of our champions of traditional knowledge, also initiate, much needed social correction even if it veers away from tradition? If all that are on offer are NH7, and other festivals and celebrations around town, leading our young back to the square one of music, alcohol and numbness, these "new" and much hyped activities lack 'dynamic quality' and can only be termed traditional. Almost everything dished out to our youth, from farcical trade fares to skill development programmes is old wine in cheap new plastic bottles. Somewhere we have a very deep disconnect from the reality of the world.

In this connection, one would like to quote from a book interestingly titled, "The Wisdom of Insecurity", written by Alan Watts. The following paragraph puts things in context: "The more we accustom ourselves to understanding the present in terms of memory, the unknown by the known, the living by the dead, the more desiccated and embalmed, the more joyless and frustrated life becomes. So protected from life, man becomes a sort of mollusc encrusted in the hard shell of 'tradition', so that at last when reality breaks through, as it must , the tide of pent up fear runs wild."

The reality of the tragedy of our youth is not hidden from anyone. The burning question is whether we want the irresistible force of youth to prosper or do we want it to be sacrificed on the altar of static tradition. The choice is ours. Let us choose a path that gives our young, besides exciting soul mates and lyrical songs-a real dream to pursue. And we shall have writers, songwriters, inventors and visionaries and yes-some real progress.

The writer can be contacted at bakhshi03 @rediffmail.com

whenever cash on their desk runs dry. Despite, long work hours, no leave and high stress levels, bank officials draw the ire of the milling crowd outside. Add to this the systemic problems and fatigue - the life of bank employees has become a nightmare in the last two weeks. With millions of currency notes being counted every day, the work hours at the banks are tightly strung. There is no time for breaks except a brief lunch hour and the pressure is grueling. It is the cashiers who are bearing the brunt of this. While the manpower at banks is ready to deliver, the technology and other logistics fail at times, putting the bankers in a nightmare situation vis-a-vis the public. Banks must chalk out a 'compensation plan' for their employees, who have been working long hours to cope with the unprecedented rise in customer visits, after the govt's surprise demonetisation move.

Yours etc.,
Akash Kumar,
Jagraon, Punjab

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.

Musings on Demonetisation

By Eugene D. Thomas

Since the hon'ble Prime Minister of India made the shocking announcement on 8th November 2016 withdrawing the Rs.500 and Rs.1000 notes as legal tender, all hell broke loose! A moment instantaneously, people had money, but no liquidity. Merchants had goods, but made no sales. People queued up before ATMs but got no money. Banks stayed opened even on holidays, but failed to satisfy the demands of the customers. Almost 50 elders lost their lives in the country while standing in the queues. All political partiesupped their ante, either opposing or defending the step taken by the central government. And individual politicians saw agolden opportunity to project themselves in the media, and they made full use of it. Nobody talked about anything else but demonetisation. Social media was used overtime to spread money and Modi jokes and unknowingly (or knowingly) even forward rumours.

The stated intention of the central government and the party in power is that this bold step is to fight black money, fake money, and the insurgent outfits' kitty. I will not go into a debate on this, but simply accept it as a fact; this being the taken position, I say that this intension is laudable and bold.

However, I have some musings on this issue that is affecting all - the rich and the poor. The first thing that

are in scarcity, people will hoard them. If smaller denomination notes like the Rs.100 are in scarcity, as is the case now and acknowledged even by the banks, people will hoard them! A simple arithmetic - I go and make a purchase of Rs100, and pay with a Rs500 or Rs1000 note. The vendor will have no problem in returning me four Rs100 notes in the former case or one Rs 500 note plus four Rs100 note in the latter scenario; in both cases, he will part with only four such notes. Today, for the same purchase, I present a Rs 2000 note - which vendor in his right mind will give me nineteen Rs 100 rupee notes! That is why hoarding of Rs100 notes is being resorted to by consumers and vendors alike.

Further, I have three outside tours scheduled within the country in the coming two months. I will need 'change' for taxi fares, sumptuous street food, tips etc. So, will you blame me for starting to hoard the Rs100 notes? If the market was initially flushed with the Rs.500 notes, this problem of liquidity would have disappeared in no time!

Against this backdrop, these questions still haunt me: (a) why introduce a Rs 2000 denomination note as a first step? And don't put forward the argument of the mechanism of rolling black money by converting the old Rs1000 note to a new Rs1000 note (if it had been reintroduced) or the new

The vendor will have no problem in returning me four Rs100 notes in the former case or one Rs 500 note plus four Rs100 note in the latter scenario; in both cases, he will part with only four such notes. Today, for the same purchase, I present a Rs 2000 note - which vendor in his right mind will give me nineteen Rs 100 rupee notes! That is why hoarding of Rs100 notes is being resorted to by consumers and vendors alike.

struck me is that 86% of the national currency in circulation had been declared as no longer legal tender! One official of the RBI had stated that it would take 4 years' time to print this amount of stock of money, utilizing all the printing presses of the Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited (a GOI undertaking)working at optimum! How do people trade, businessmen operate, and commerce run in the meantime when 90% of transaction in India are in cash? The last time demonetisation of such high-denomination notes took place was in 1978 when the Rs.1000 note was withdrawn. At that time, these notes constituted only less than 1% of the national currency in circulation!

Secondly, as many others have also questioned, why introduce the circulation of Rs.2000 notes first? It doesn't need a financial wizard to figure out that withdrawing 86% of the national currency in circulation will lead to an immediate liquidity crunch and monetary exchange impediments. If the new Rs.500 notes were circulated first, I don't think that there would have been such difficulty in obtaining 'change' in the market as is the case now.

Thirdly, this faulty implementation of demonetisation has led to the hoarding of Rs100 notes. The local SBI has made a plea for people to part with their Rs100 notes and not hoard them. My question is this - why shouldn't the consumers and vendors hoard these notes? If goods

Rs,500 (if it had been circulated now) - limits on withdrawal have been imposed and all deposits/exchange are now known to the government! (b) why start the attack on black money by demonetising when it is estimated that only 6% of black money is kept in cash? (c) who gives whom the right to restrict me from withdrawing my own hard earned money. In fact, this just reminds me of those bygone years, of the communist era in other countries, of queues for everything, trading through barter, artificial shortage (like lower denomination currency now and the spillover effect on consumer goods which I can't buy but can afford).

However, one of the many unseen benefits that all this has brought back to the fore are three very important institutions (if I may call them that) - non-banking credit, hope and trust. The consumer has no change so asks for credit in hope, the businessman has no change so gives credit on trust!

In all this, and all said and done, there can be no argument on one issue - that the officers and assistants and supporting staff of the banks deserve our appreciation and salutation for the mental and physical stress that they have endured in these last two weeks. I hope the central government thinks of some form of showing its gratefulness to these bank staff, and not just the customary compensatory leave.

(The author teaches Economics in NEHU)

“Nowadays most people die of a sort of creeping common sense, and discover when it is too late that the only things one never regrets are one's mistakes.”
--- Oscar Wilde

The Shillong Times
Vol No: LIX No. 104 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2016

Trump strikes
PRESIDENT elect Donald Trump declared on Monday that he wished to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal. He called it a potential disaster for the US. President Barack Obama had also failed to get the 12-nation deal ratified by the US Congress a week ago. Hillary Clinton, Trump’s rival, also wished to veto the deal. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had done his best to convince Donald Trump of the importance of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. But he got nowhere. The US President’s attitude affects the global order. India is very much involved. China’s President Xi Jinping has shown an intention to step in where Trump had decided to step out. Xi Jinping said that openness was vital for the partnership of the Asia-Paific. China has been pressing for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership which leaves out the US.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership excluded China. New Zealand Prime Minister John Key said at the Lima Summit that he wanted the US to be in the region but that if the US opted out, China should fill the vaccum. China is the largest source of growth in the global economy and the main trading partner of 120-126 nations. Trump makes US claims to shape global norms particularly tenuous. China may or may not be able to design the new norms and enforce them. Trump’s emphasis on bilateral trade deals to bring jobs and industry back to the US portends ill for India. India has a great many people employed in US BPOs and other concerns and Trump’s protectionism may be ruinous to the Indian economy which is already tossed about by demonetisation.

LOOKING BACK
March 16, 1989

Aspirations of tribal’s in Assam
The Garo community in Assam has renewed the demand for its inclusion in the State’s scheduled tribes list. The All Assam Garo Students’ Union has urged the State Government to pass the required resolution in the State Assembly’s budget session scheduled to begin from March 16. The Garos have been residing mainly in Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam for generations together. Before the creation of Meghalaya, they were in the Scheduled Tribes list of the composite Assam. After Meghalaya came into being, the Garos did not figure in

the State’s revised ST list. Since then, the Garos have been periodically demanding restoration of their due status as enjoyed by their kith and kin in the neighbouring Meghalaya. All these years the Assam Government did not appear to be inclined to uphold the Garo demand. However, with the growing alienation of the tribal communities in Assam it could reasonably be expected that the ruling AGP Ministry will have a fresh look at it to pave the way for restoring the rightful place of the Garos which was snatched away from them for whatever consideration.

TO THE EDITOR

Hats off to bank employees!
Editor,
Kudos to all bank employees of India who are working hard and leading the "Fight Against Corruption" from the front. All sacrifices are being made by thousands of bank employees just to keep our economy running and dispense currency notes for the people who have been waiting. They have been facing a tough time in handling the sea of people standing in queues at the bank branches. Bank officials and staff are reaching their respective branches as early as 8am and working till late hours to clear the day's work. They are even working at weekends with an intention to bring back the situation to normal. They are trying their best, handling myriad teething problems and frayed tempers of people standing in long queues for hours. The staff seated at the counter have to deal with "boiling" situations whenever cash on their desk runs dry. Despite, long working hours, no leave and high stress levels, bank officials draw the ire of the milling crowd outside. Add to this the systemic problems and fatigue — the

Better trains, not bullet trains needed

Editor,
With reference to the report, "Death toll mounts to 146 in Indore - Patna Express train accident" (ST, November 22, 2016). It is a matter of grave concern that railway tracks are not being properly maintained. A track fracture is suspected to be the cause of the derailment

Notwithstanding the never ending long queues of the common man for that elusive cash in hand and the Opposition MPs raising the pitch of their protests, Modi’s demonetisation of high value currency notes also exposes the rather large and bloated underbelly of our society. The shenanigans of this section of Indians has put us to shame in front of the world, which has been watching the developments with interest. Every country, as indeed every Indian, is aware of how our economy has had to contend with a parallel economy of formidable proportions. But its ramifications as they unfold make most wonder whether we are crooks and have no patriotic feelings.

As Modi’s surprise announcement about demonetisation came late evening, people thought they would take it easy and look for ways out to get most of their unaccounted cash, if any, disposed of some way or the other next day but mostly in a regular manner. The demonetisation would not yield much as an opportunity had already been given to all the cash hoarders to declare their holdings on payment of minimal tax, penalty and surcharge amounting to a total of 45% under the Income Disclosure Scheme 2016 (IDS) that was run for as many as three months from 1st June to 30th September 2016.

The Scheme yielded more than Rs. 65000 crore (Rs. 650 billion, around \$95 billion), by itself an astronomical sum. But for the size of the unaccounted wealth that was estimated to be a mindboggling sum of around 9 lakh crore (Rs. 90000 billion, approximately \$1500 billion) this was considered chicken feed. And as the Prime Minister had warned earlier that further action would follow if the outcome of the IDS was not satisfactory action to further squeeze out unaccounted cash was expected.

As the high value currency notes were to scrapped by the 8th midnight, the hoarders tried most of the tricks that

Demonetisation & Jugaad
Society’s bloated underbelly
By Proloy Bagchi

they could possibly use. They made a beeline for the jewellers and unloaded the cash there and were prepared to get in return whatever was offered. The shopping hours, at least for jewellers, got extended and the business during those hours was reported to be of Rs. 100 crores in Bhopal alone. Many of the jewellers are going to have to answer for their

that the same set of men were exchanging cash at different times in the same bank or at different banks they introduced the marking of the fingers with indelible ink that is generally used during elections. As even then some misuse of the facility was noticed the authorities reduced the amount dispensed for exchange to only Rs. 2000/-. Ingenious as all crooks are, even this they

“As somebody remarked, the nation was seemingly waiting in long, serpentine queues to exchange their defunct cash in order to run their households, businesses or whatever.”

indiscretions in course of time.

Apart from buying jewellery, the hoarders tried to buy railway tickets to be cancelled later. Enormous number of these for all air-conditioned classes were bought with the intention of cancelling them eventually. The government had to block that route of changing the colour of the ill-gotten money. That Indian attribute of “jugaad” was in full play.

A day later the black money barons put all their human resources for exchanging their stack of cash at the bank counters. That the exchanged amount would only be of a paltry Rs. 4000/- (later raised to 4500/- and eventually reduced to Rs. 2000/-) did not really matter. Initially only the same representative was asked to join the queue in a bank repeatedly with different IDs. When the authorities intervened to check this ploy multiple representatives were mobilised to exchange the cash at different locations. For all their labours the representatives got a petty commission but they were clogging the banks to the detriment of genuine exchangers whose wait at the banks was avoidably lengthened.

The authorities were apparently watching the proceedings with a keen eye. When it was realised

tried to circumvent. Then the practice of exchanging only in the branch where the depositor had his account was introduced to further bar the hoarders from attempts to whiten their money.

It has been a very difficult and strenuous time for people all over the country. As somebody remarked, the nation was seemingly waiting in long, serpentine queues to exchange their defunct cash in order to run their households, businesses or whatever. Here too the hoarders, who are nothing but anti-socials increased the pain of the general public by sending their hired hands.

Likewise, it has been a tough time for the bankers. A few deaths took place in banks too due to over-strain. Nonetheless, they did a tremendous job. Not only did they have to contend with long line of money exchangers, they had to deal with enormous amounts of cash which in many cases were mixed with fake Indian currency. The fake ones, especially those printed in Pakistan, are difficult to detect as it had made special efforts to set up a press that was capable of introducing almost the same security features. The Bank had, therefore, to be careful, keeping a sharp eye while receiving cash that was tendered over the counter. It was kind of a game of matching of wits virtually at every step and checkmating the fraudsters and frustrating their pernicious efforts to

Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad- 15

Hawkers must be given their space

Editor,
I have no personal vendetta against my fellow human beings who are working hard to earn two square meals a day though I have often felt the discomfort and the inconvenienced caused by the hawkers as they spread their wares just about anywhere. Hence the recent verdict of the Hon'ble High Court's limiting hawkers from using public footpath etc., is much appreciated. Having said that, however, I wish to state that whereas it is essential to ease the movement of pedestrians and commuters on footpaths and sidewalks, it is equally imperative to provide the hawkers with an assigned space. This must be done with immediate effect. Interestingly, the roads, footpaths, nooks and corners and every open space were steered clear of hawkers as soon the verdict was given by the High Court with only stray cases of violations. In spite of that, it must be reminded that the Government can no longer adopt a nonchalant attitude here. Much like everyone

cheat the government.

Not only did they try to recover whatever was possible from their piles of cash that had become trash, they even tried to save themselves from the arms of the law. They not only burned them, but also dumped in rivers and drains huge numbers of currency notes of high denominations that they were left holding in their offices, business sites or residences. A whole truck-load of currency was reported to have been set fire to. The rot has seeped in so deep that a large number of seizures were made in small towns from Gujarat to Bihar and from Punjab to Tamil Nadu. Many seizures were effected while the cash was being transported by these crooks to places that they thought were convenient for their illicit purposes.

No reports of our “netas” (political leaders), the repositories of substantial amounts of black money, have, however, surfaced so far except one from Bhopal where it was reported that they were browbeating cooperative banks to provide them with back-dated FDRs. Cooperative banks still operate manually and the records can be easily fudged

But the unscrupulous man in business or industry is, kind of, never-say-die person. Hence, only a small proportion of dirty cash is likely to be exposed, brought over ground and a lot will remain underground as liquid cash. A far greater proportion has been invested in fixed assets like land, real estate, etc. But Modi is not relenting; he is going for broke after the cheats and the unscrupulous. Already, raids have been conducted on jewellers – their shops and residences – and he has announced a drive against “benami” property, i.e. property held against the name of a fictitious person where most of the black money has been invested.

If not anything else, the proceedings show how rich the country is, only the riches have been cornered by a few crooks. The Mughal raiders, the Europeans, the British and now the crooked politician and businessmen have looted it. Modi has taken a step, which might electorally backfire on him.—INFA

else the hawkers have the right to work for their bread and butter in a place that they can stake claim to and do business without any disturbance from any sphere, while at the same time not disturbing others as well.

With regards to the sites and zones identified by the Committee formed to look into the hawkers' concerns, it must be taken into consideration that people are facing a lot of hardships and hassles in finding a place to park their vehicles. As of now, the MUDA parking lot and the parking space opposite State Bank of India are places that are accommodating a number of vehicles yet many more such parking places are required considering the number of vehicles that are plying on the road daily. I wonder if it would be wise to convert these parking zones into hawkers' zones. Perhaps other places within the area that have not used for decades now could be explored. Like I said, to ease the convenience of one, the other must not be inconvenienced.

Yours etc.,
Jenniefer Dkhar,
Via email

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Has demonetisation dented congress’ fortunes?
Fielding priyanka in up may betray desperation
By Amulya Ganguli

Priyanka Gandhi is taking her time to decide on the Congress' latest decision to ask her to play a major role in the UP elections and not confine herself to Amethi and Rae Bareli as before.

But the fact that the party has finally approached her points to a certain nervousness in the Congress camp. Till now, it had shied away from involving her in the UP campaign in a big way presumably because such a move might put Rahul Gandhi in the shade.

It is possible, however, that demonetisation has played a part in making the Congress change its mind. With the queues shortening before the banks and ATMs, it is clear that the situation will become normal even before Narendra Modi's promise of ending the present inconvenience in 50 days are over.

In that case, the BJP may well claim to have carried out yet another surgical strike - this time against black money. Even now, not a few in the long queues have been saying that they do not mind the difficulties as long as the “country benefits”.

“Modi, on his part, shows signs of going from strength to strength with bold initiatives like surgical strikes on the staging posts of terrorists across the Line of Control in Pakistan and a frontal assault on black money.”

If the banking system resumes functioning as before and the current disruption of trade and agricultural activity comes to an end before New Year's day, then the BJP's chances of being the front-runner in UP will be brighter than ever.

The Congress, on the other hand, will continue to lag behind the two other major contenders in the state – the BSP, which is likely to come second, and the Samajwadi Party, which has possibly irreversibly damaged its prospects because of the fratricidal infighting in the Yadav clan.

Notwithstanding the realisation that the Congress will not be able to rise above its No. 4 position in a state where it has been out of power for over three decades, the party's poll strategist, Prashant Kishor, had come out with several ideas to boost its expectations.

One of them was to encourage Priyanka to play a more active role. But his suggestion was ignored till now by the powers-that-be possibly because Rahul might have resented being sidelined by his more charismatic sister if she drew larger crowds.

As of now, Rahul's outreach has been underwhelming with his khatpecharcha or meeting people sitting on cots causing more amusement than interest in the Congress vice-president's speeches because the audience was more intent on running away with the charpoyas at the end of the show.

Besides, the Congress's decision to project the 78-year-old former Delhi chief minister, Sheila Dikshit, hasn't set the Yamuna on fire. The only person who did draw enthusiastic crowds was Sonia Gandhi during her solitary appearance in Varanasi but, then,

unfortunately for the Congress, she fell ill and the party's electioneering petered out.

Since then, the Congress working committee has asked Rahul take over the party presidency. But neither there is any certainty about when he will do so, nor about whether it will lead to a dramatic turnaround in the party's fortunes.

It is also known that even if Sonia Gandhi formally steps down, she will still remain the only person to whom the party members will look up for guidance. Rahul, therefore, will be no more than a figurehead.

In this context, Priyanka's induction as a major campaigner will create yet another focal point in the party. Prone as the Congress is to factionalism, the existence of three centres of authority – Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka - may not be conducive to smooth functioning.

The internal rumbles will be exacerbated if the Congress loses in U.P., Gujarat and Goa. It has a better chance of success in Punjab because of the anti-

incumbency factor afflicting the Akali Dal. But the credit for it will go more to Amrinder Singh than to anyone in the high command.

It appears, therefore, that irrespective of whether Priyanka plays a bigger role than in the past, the Congress will remain mired in crisis with no immediate hope of redemption.

Modi, on his part, shows signs of going from strength to strength with bold initiatives like surgical strikes on the staging posts of terrorists across the Line of Control in Pakistan and a frontal assault on black money.

Even if the impact of demonetization on the so-called parallel economy may not be substantial since only an estimated six per cent of black money is kept in cash, the hoarders will nevertheless be unnerved by the realization that Modi will not hesitate from taking the bull by the horn, especially if he carries out other measure like targeting benami property.

Even if Priyanka takes to the field, it is not known if she has the requisite intellectual prowess to be a credible critic of the latest economic measures or will only be a shrill nay-sayer like Mamata Banerjee and Arvind Kejriwal.

Modi's success is based on avoiding the kind of populism which the Congress favours – doles for the rural poor, cheap food for all, free school education, et al. Instead, he focuses on economic growth and nailing the black money hoarders.

While the Congress's welfare-based policies did not help it in 2014, Modi has succeeded in being well ahead in the race at least where public perception is concerned. (IPA Service)

“*Nothing astonishes men so much as common sense and plain dealing.*”
--- Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 106SHILLONG, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2016

Pakistan’s New Chief
PAKISTAN’S Army Chief General Raheel Sharif retires on November 29. It is remarkable that the night of the General is so smoothly over. Sharif’s predecessor, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani got an extension and General Pervez Musharraf became a military dictator. Sharif asking for an extension would have surprised no one. But he did not. He was a popular General and had been depicted on publicity material for local bodies’ elections and on posters put up by banned groups. He was also hot on social media. But if he continued, he may have faced the same kind of personal decline as did Kayani and Musharraf in the last years of their wielding the baton. Now that General Sharif is going, the focus in Pakistan is naturally on who is next. There are four names on the list. Prime Minister will make the final choice. Sharif is quite an expert in doing the job. It is the sixth time that he will select someone to head the Pakistan army. One hopes Nawaz Sharif will make the right choice. Pakistan’s future rests on it. Democracy is still in a nascent state in Pakistan, only three years old. The army calls the shots. An over assertive General will further maul the fledgling democracy.

However, the military chief is created by the officers under him- corps commanders and senior military staff. They will have to ensure that the chief does not overstep the mark hurting the army’s interests. New Delhi can only keep its fingers crossed. No real change can be expected in Rawalpindi’s policy. The army and the ISI will continue to cast a shadow. It is Nawaz Sharif who will make the decision; India will have to face it.

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Bodo extremists kill 4 in ambush

Bodo extremists killed four people including a CRPF jawan injured eight policemen in Assam’s Kokrajhar district during the past 24 hours, official reports said today. The militants ambushed two police patrol parties killing the CRPF jawan and blew up a vehicle injuring eight members of the Assam police task force. The extremists also killed three people including a woman in Mafur Gundang village last night and shot Mr Akhil Rai, secretary of the ruling AGP local unit at Sapkata Dharabari under Gossaigaon police station. Mr Rai who was attacked in his residence was removed to hospital. The extremists who lay in wait at the Champa bridge on the

national highway number 31 under Sidli police station opened fire at the patrol party. The CRPF jawan died on the spot. Eight jawans of the Assam police task force were injured when a powerful bomb, planted by the extremists, on the PWD road at Basugaon exploded blowing up their vehicle. The injured were given first aid at Basugaon and removed to Bongaigaon refinery and petrochemical hospital. The extremists, armed with guns and other sharp weapons, gheraoed a house at Mafur Gurdang village and shot dead Mr Dayal Goyart and hacked to death his wife and another person named Mantu Gayari. Dayal and his wife had come to the residence of Mantu Gayari for dinner.

TO THE EDITOR

Regulate monetary transactions
Editor,
This refers to the thought-provoking article “Musings on Demonetisation” (ST- Nov 23, 2016). The government's decision to declare Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 rupee notes illegal has really evoked positive response from economists and industrialists. This is the first time in Indian politics that PM Modi has showed actual leadership qualities, which is fruitful for every non-corrupt individuals. No doubt the common man would be troubled by this decision but soon everything will be alright. It is good that PM without giving any indication for such a drastic move, carried out a surgical strike and parties who thrive on black money are dumbfounded. The Congress is the worst affected and crying foul and creating panic. The PM has been slowly taking action by bringing maximum people in the banking ambit. Most of the real estate transactions in the country are done using unaccounted cash. When, black money and

corruption are the biggest obstacles in eradicating poverty, steps like this will indeed strengthen India's economy and democracy despite some short term dislocations that are inevitable, and more must follow for ferreting out undeclared wealth stored in other ways. People who have amassed cash illegally in large quantities will find their business terminated suddenly. Government needs to introduce laws where transactions and service payments above a certain amount has to be via crossed-cheque, bank cheque, bank-cards or direct bank transfer.
Yours etc.,
Vinod C. Dixit
Ahmedabad- 15
Make demonetisation meaningful
Editor,
Your editorial, "Banks and last mile access" (ST, November 23, 2016), has, rightly, pointed out that those who have plastic money and smart phones with payment apps tended to suffer lesser than the person who is not blessed with such

States On Social Indices

Towards competitive federalism

NITI Aayog has announced a plan of ranking States on social indices on the basis of their performance in social sectors. Initially, the sectors included are health, water, and education – the three most crucial areas that determine the level of social development of an area or people. This is in accordance with the Government’s commitment to social sector already manifested in including health and education among the nine pillars set to transform India. While water is a basic necessity, health and education are mutually dependant sectors – one helping the development of the other. Indices are being finalised to measure the achievements of States on parameters pertaining to these sectors. The purpose seems to be to link the disbursal of Central funds with State’s performance on these indices. The question whether the better performers should be rewarded with more funds or low rank holders should be helped with more aid is likely to emerge in view of varied causes accounting for a State’s achievements and failures comprising both human, administrative, and environmental factors. The utility of social indicators to assess the quality of life, monitor the social system and to identify required changes and guide policy interventions is recognised by scholars as well as administrators. It led almost to an academic movement in the 1970s and resulted in improvements in methods of measurement and reporting in course of time. Social indices are created to reflect the conditions of life at grassroots – a responsible task in planning. It is clarified that ranking of States will not be done on the basis of the current position of the States, but on the basis of their performance in one year after the introduction of the scheme. It is good news for those at the bottom and an incentive to intensify their efforts. The erstwhile BIMARU States (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and

Uttar Pradesh) can improve their rank provided they register a good record in the year ahead. It is also reported that ranking will be done by a third party like the World Bank (WB) obviously to maintain neutrality. One can hope that this will eliminate petty party politics and fight over ranking between States. Two equally significant effects on the nation’s march towards progress and development may result from this exercise – one to drive all States to focus on the three most important social sectors mentioned, and the other to promote a healthy competition among States to improve their performance. The former is necessary as social development and economic progress are two sides of the same coin. These are inseparables. The latter will promote competitive federalism, which is complementary to cooperative federalism by which Indian federalism is generally described in textbooks. The NDA Government has all along been stressing the significance of cooperative federalism for integrated growth of the nation. For faster progress and to ensure that no one lags behind, there is need to consciously infuse a spirit of competition between States which is presently attempted. Competitive federalism is already at work in economic policies since liberalisation. States vie with one another to hold investors’ meet; Chief Ministers go abroad to promote trade relations; State governments enter into agreements with foreign countries for social-economic projects. Regional meetings are also held to promote common economic interests. In these endeavours, some are going fast and some lag behind – a situation that ranking may help to change. Mint Asia and the Institute of Competitiveness has released The State Competitiveness Report which measures and ranks 28 major States on parameters that are vital for Indian economy. The

report categorises States on economic basis. Similar ranking on social indices is now launched by the Government with a view to bridging social disparities between States without which economic progress will halt. There may be several genuine problems in making comparisons between States. Even in the case of Scheduled Castes and Tribes considered on the whole to have low indices, their disadvantage varies substantially depending on the State where they live. Data from the Socio-Economic Survey conducted by the Census and the UNICEF’s Rapid Survey on Children, for instance, have found that SC and ST children in Tamil Nadu and Kerala are less likely to be underweight than OBC and forward caste children in Jharkhand, Odhisha or Bihar. National averages hide State-level disparities. Such inequities are common in the level of education also in terms of literacy, number of schools and colleges, years of schooling, rate of drop-outs, teacher-pupil ratio, basic facilities in institutions etc. Ranking of States will doubtless introduce a semblance of competitive federalism over the established notion of cooperative federalism of India. Bill Gates is reported to have remarked that the positive competition between States in India is one of the most positive dynamics that the country has. Competitive federalism, a concept associated with the writings of Albert Briton (1990s), applies market-type competition to government arena. In this, the Centre competes with the States/ provinces and vice-versa and the States compete with one another while all of them are contributing to a nation’s development. The competition is widening day by day due to increasing awareness of people and institutions and the need to win races and be equipped to face fresh challenges. To succeed in competitions in trade, investments, and commerce, level playing is required that is, a certain amount of parity in social development meaning health and education. It will help all-

round and inclusive development of the nation. Fierce competition between States is considered a healthy atmosphere for realising our aim of “Make in India”. At the same time, NITI Aayog is set to provide for constitution of Regional Councils to promote cooperation between States for joint progress. Without the present stress on ranking, State-wise presentation of data is a known practice. It is adopted by the Census, the National Sample Survey Organisation, the Planning Commission, the National Rural Health Mission, the National Crime Research Bureau, and all Government departments. The Social Progress Index published on the basis of writings of Amartya Sen et al., measures the extent to which countries provide for social and environmental needs of their citizens by 54 indicators in three areas. These include Basic Human Needs covering nutrition and basic medical care, water and sanitation, shelter, and personal safety; Foundations of Well-being indicated by access to basic knowledge, information and communication, health and wellness, and environmental quality; and Opportunity measured by personal rights, personal freedom and choice, tolerance and exclusion, and access to advanced education. The index defines social progress as the capacity of a society to meet the basic human needs of its citizens, establish building blocks that allow citizens and communities to enhance and sustain the quality of their lives and create the conditions for all individuals to reach their full potential. Competitive federalism is supported by the Centre’s fiscal policy of transferring funds to State governments and giving them freedom to fix their priorities in spending within national objectives. In the context of this freedom of States to make their plans, ranking on social indices in a way becomes necessary to promote the responsibility and accountability of the governments at the Centre and the States. --JNFA
(The writer is former Director, ICSSR, New Delhi)

percent of total minted coins as on March 2015 should be gradually increased for total discontinuance of ten-rupee notes to save high cost of printing currency. At least with size-reduction of currency-notes after demonetisation, wrong decision of re-issue of one-rupee notes on 06.03.2015 should be reversed with existing stock sold officially as collector’s item on premium in plastic-pack like coin-sets are sold at much higher price than the face-value, to effectively check heavy price in black market for these notes issued despite stiff opposition of RBI perhaps because of bureaucratic craze to have their signature on it. Significantly one-rupee note bears signature of Union Finance Secretary while notes of other denominations bear signature of RBI governor.
Yours etc.,
Subhash Chandra Agrawal
(Guinness Record Holder & Crusader for Transparency)
Delhi - 6
Black money is peoples' money
Editor,
The sudden demonetization of big currency notes by the NDA

government is a welcome step. Though it has created short term inconvenience to the people, overall it has been a choice between changing now or allowing the deficiency to carry on. Black money, or in other words, ill-gotten money earned through dubious means has been source of discrimination in society, rise in inflation, low taxes, lack of financial strength in re-modeling the economy etc. These are now gradually tackled by an able and determined Prime Minister. Just like Mr. Piyush Goyal, Union Minister had simply put it, those who are criticising, shouting slogans against such measures are themselves afraid due to their corrupt practices and illegally hoarded money which is giving them sleepless nights. Such moneybags have been a boon for political parties like the Congress which has been surviving and buying votes during elections like in our state Meghalaya. This step is a positive one and hope that more such measures would be forthcoming under the NDA government.
Yours etc...
Dominic S. Wankhar
Shillong-3

charts better be ready, before macabre death converts us. The other day a new perspective has been developed on the black money theory. I had switched on one of the television news channels (to fall asleep, as the sedative was not working) when I heard a booming voice say that there is very little black money. If you hoard it doesn't mean that this is black money. In other words the colour can't change, and anyone can hoard- the rich, the poor, the good, the bad, the ugly. Very interesting I thought. The discussion went on in its inimitable manner. The sufferers are in the villages, someone thundered. I looked at those five hundred and thousand rupee notes in my wallet. They looked unblinkingly at me. Now we have one question at the centre stage. Who owns black money, and how much of it has been deposited in banks? And the next question, a corollary; where does it now go to? Will there be a vigorous cleaning up from black to white? And now the lines. they been mostly well behaved, although some people have died out of irritation, exhaustion and compulsion. Compulsion, because they have been compelled to wait. Now if all money is black, certainly we have to wait for the inquisitor to examine whether it is still white or not. A few deaths do not matter, where only about one hundred and forty died the other day, but that was in a train accident, and not because of black money. The few instances of black money deaths can of course be pooh- poohed in larger national interest. While good money is driving out bad money let us embark on a massive national campaign to vote out bad people as well.

AGENTS OF CHANGE

By Zafri Mudasser Nofil

Literary agents are emerging as the new kingmakers in publishing, acting as commissioning editors and helping writers realise their dream, besides taking care of packaging, sales potential and marketing.

According to Kanishka Gupta, who heads Writer’s Side, an agent that scours the market to find the best possible deal and an editor for an author.

“An individual author, howsoever well-connected he may be, doesn’t have this luxury. At Writer’s Side, we handhold our authors right from the proposal development stage to contract signing, editing, publishing and even post-publishing activities,” he said.

Mita Kapur of Siyahi feels the scope for literary agents is on a steep incline with both authors and publishers preferring an organised and professionally nurtured relationship.

“An agent has the vision for an author’s writing career and where-how-what-why of the industry that makes it a perfect combination,” she says.

Publishers like Harper-Collins India say they don’t have any one preference — seeking new talent themselves or engaging literary agents.

“Agents regularly pitch books to us and we find new voices and commission fresh work too,” says its CEO Ananth Padmanabhan.

He also feels that new writers can get a fair deal if they approach a literary agent.

Denmark-based Tabish Khair, author of books like ‘The Thing About Thugs’, ‘How to Fight Islamist Terror from the Missionary Position’ and the recent ‘Jihadi Jane’, was already an established writer in India and with two novels published internationally by a major house, before he got agents.

“I cannot say to what extent agents help you break into print. But agents help me avoid the troubling business-side of writing, which they take care of, and for that I am most grateful. They also give good advice about where to publish, etc, because they know the market better than an isolated writer like me,” he says.

The author feels it is always good to get another

Literary agents are present-day kingmakers in publishing



An agent has the vision for an author’s writing career and where-how-what-why of the industry that makes it a perfect combination

Mita Kapur | Siyahi

Agents regularly pitch books to us and we find new voices and commission fresh work too

Ananth Padmanabhan | CEO, Harper-Collins India

perspective but finally any serious writer writes what he or she wants to write.

For Shruti Debi, agent to authors like Yuvraj Singh, the late Vinod Mehta and Aatish Taseer, agenting is a “wonderful profession for someone committed to the culture of reading and writing, very rewarding in an everyday sense, enriching” but for which “you have to have certain fine skills and a big heart”.

She says while there is a great demand for content, there is a slide in the habit of buying content and perhaps the hardest hit “content generator” is the author of books whose income flows from royalties per sold copy.

“How do we sell more copies? This is the challenge, fundamentally, and it is shared up and down the chain: author (and agent: I mean the brackets literally, to indicate that the agent is parenthetical), publisher, distributor, bookshop. We all worry about it and try to find inventive or innovative ways to meet this challenge,” she says.

On whether we are seeing more of new writers because of agents helping them structure stories, she says, “Probably not. In my experience publishing is an inclusive industry and publishers have always needed new writing. Books editors are very smart, generous people. A lot is

owed to their hunger and commitment.”

Renuka Chatterjee, who stopped being a literary agent in 2014 when she joined Speaking Tiger publishing house, says the past five-seven years, however, have not as such seen a growth in the number of agents — there are still only a handful, not more than 5 or 6 — whom you can regard as professional agents.

“The real change that has happened is that more and more authors are now seeking representation from agents, rather than try and find a publisher on their own as publishers tend to sit on slushpiles or unsolicited manuscripts, especially from first-time authors — whereas an agent will push for a response within a certain period of time. Also, they find it easier to let the agent negotiate the money, contract, chase up advances and royalties and so on.

“This being the case, publishers have to deal with agents much more frequently than earlier, and because agents usually go in for a bidding process and offer the manuscript to several publishers simultaneously, we also quite often have to pay a higher advance for a manuscript than we would have, if we really want it,” she says.

For Palimpsest

Publishers, which is relatively new on the Indian publishing horizon, submissions inbox remains its primary catchment area.

“But as our choices get more specific we are increasingly turning to agents to put on our counter what exactly we are looking for. Agents from London and New York are always in conversation with us. They do their research well and send you something keeping your market in mind. We have already picked up a couple of books from their tray,” says Palimpsest CEO Bhaskar Roy.

“Regrettably I have not yet been able to say yes to anything offered by an Indian agent who has always been very supportive. I hope to do that soon,” he adds.

Pan Macmillan says it seeks new talent themselves as well as engages literary agents. “It’s not a choice or a matter of preference; it depends on the idea, the manuscript, the writer in question,” says Pan Macmillan India publisher Diya Kar Hazra.

According to her, a good agent keeps the author’s interest in mind and finds the right home for the book.

“While it is about getting the best possible deal in terms of the advance offered, it is also about the publisher’s vision and ambition for the book,” she

says. Asked about challenges for literary agents, Kapur says, “If it weren’t for challenges the joy of surmounting them won’t be experienced. We at Siyahi are constantly on the move.

The challenges are a part of the publishing industry. It’s becoming an increasingly genre driven market and we need to be savvy about it.”

According to Gupta, Writer’s Side has crossed 170 book deals in 2016 alone with most of these books sold to multinational or mainstream publishers.

“Even publishing houses with small lists have acquired anywhere between 6-15 books from my agency this year,” he says.

Established and celebrity writers are increasingly opting to go through agents, says Gupta. “This was not the case earlier. Barring one or two local publishers, most handle agented submissions with a lot of care and attention.”

At present, around 50 per cent of business in publishing is controlled by agents, he says, and adds that 5-10 years ago, it wasn’t even 10 per cent.

Gupta says many a time, he approaches authors with an idea he has developed.

“It could be something urgent, topical or one that addresses a huge gap in the market.”

As a publisher, Chatterjee prefers to look for new talent

herself and deal directly with an author in developing a manuscript.

“It is in the long run, more satisfying. Also, some agents are not realistic about advances, they expect much more than the book is going to earn back in terms of sales, so the author ends up with a publisher who is able to pay more, but will not nurture the book as much as another publisher who may have offered less, but would give the work much more attention.

“I also think agents need to be more discerning in the work they take on, so that a publisher knows that a work that has come from a particular agent will be worth the time spent on reading it,” she says.

The process of agenting is similar to the process of submitting a book to publisher.

“We usually sign fiction on the basis of a full manuscript and non-fiction on full manuscript or a partial one. Agents usually send manuscripts to all the publishing houses simultaneously. An auction is conducted if there are multiple offers for a single book.

“These days the deciding factor for an agent and his author is not just the signing advance but also the marketing commitments and matching editorial sensibilities,” Gupta says. (PTI)

An autumn evening to remember

Assam, a state where different tribes and races co-exist amid racial and political conflicts, is a culture cauldron and the term ‘Assamese’ has been the subject of various debates. A proper definition has not been found till date.

The Shillong Socio-Cultural Students’ Association (SSASA) attempted to bring together this diverse culture of Assam on one platform. On November 20, SSASA organised a cultural meet at Deba Kumar Das Hall in Bishnupur. The event, ‘Xorotor Abeli’, which literally means ‘an autumn’s evening’, was indeed filled with enthralling performances.

The programme was inaugurated with the lighting of the lamp by Anuranjita Kalita, a senior member of the community who has contributed to the field of music. A chorus performance by the SSASA members on Bhupen Hazarika’s famous number ‘Manuhe Manuhor Babe’ marked the beginning of the programme.

This was followed by a ‘Diha Naam’ by the ladies of The Sankardev Cultural Centre. Not only the ‘naam’ performed in the Namghars, but also a Zikir dedicated to the Almighty Allah was sung on the same stage, imbuing a sense of spiritual unity in an age of widespread religious intolerance. The music was subtle and purely traditional and unlike other youth-oriented programmes, lacked the noise of heavy deafening instruments.

The members performed duets and solos on old folk songs, bihu geets and modern songs. The spirit of these young hearts of SSASA awakened a sense of nostalgia in the minds of the singers of yesteryears. Anjana Baruah, a former radio artiste, and singers like Dhrubajyoti Chakravorty, Kalpana Das, Bhanu Bhattacharjee and Debajit Kumar Dutta made a comeback on SASSA’s stage after a long break.

Besides, Indrani Bhuyan, a former SSASA member, made her comeback that evening with a foot-tapping performance.

The highlight of the programme was the fashion show. Students walked the ramp clad in traditional attires of various tribes of Assam, including Karbi, Mising and Boro, along with the traditional ‘Muga Mekhala’.

The attempt in itself was commendable. Not only music, but mesmerising dance performances completed the cultural soirée. From Shashtriya and Bharatnatyam to modern Assamese dances, everything was served on a platter. The series of performances came to an end with an instrumental performance, where the traditional ‘khol’ was played. The programme ended with the singing of the Jatiya Sangeet ‘O Mur Apunar Dekh’.

The attempt of these young members of SSASA, consisting only of students from different colleges of Shillong, is worth appreciating. For many years, SSASA’s cultural activities would come to a halt after the end of its Freshers’ Social, but this year they did not want to stop there.

The event was an attempt to not only keep the association alive but also to revisit the roots of the Assamese folklore. It was a kick-start to an endeavour that has left a benchmark for posterity.

(Contributed by Aadrita Chakravorty)



An artiste performs at the SSASA musical event

Silver lining for varakh industry in India

By Maneka Sanjay Gandhi

For years and years the government put off the decision to make varakh, silver leaf, by machine on the grounds that no machines were available. Finally, this year a historic

decision has been taken and the FSSAI notification has come that no varakh can be made except by machine.

The person responsible for this change (apart from me!) is Surendra Karnavat, a diamond jeweller in America. He and his wife were members of the Rajasthan Association of America and came to India during Vasundhara Raje’s first term as Chief Minister, lured by the promise that they would get all help to start a machine-based varakh industry. He was given none of the promised assistance and could only start in a very small way.

However, he did not give up hope and started by supplying only a few shops in his own area. I heard of him, and met him, while campaigning to have varakh made in a vegetarian way. Then, when the FSSAI started to take the matter



India uses over 300 tonnes of silver leaves on paan, chawanprash, tobacco products, mithais and temples

seriously, he came in to show them how it could be done properly.

The varakh industry is a huge one. India uses over 300 tonnes of silver leaves on paan, chawanprash, tobacco products, ayurvedic medicines, mithais and temples. It is used in Germany on food (the food number is E-175),

France on photo frames. In Japan it is everywhere — interiors, tea, instruments, frescos, temples. In fact, Kanazawa has a Gold Leaf Museum.

The whole of Southeast Asia uses varakh, to pay homage to Lord Buddha. It is used on chocolates, cocktails and liquors — German

Goldwasser and the Swiss Goldschlager are examples — soups, salads, ice creams, coffees. Now, gold leaf has become a part of anti-ageing creams, face packs and foundations. The use of the gilded leaf is endless.

Gold leaf has been used for jewellery, for art decorations, picture frames

and gilded art. We have used it in our glass paintings. But we don’t export it, because we make it in a dirty, and now illegal, manner. ABP News has done a piece on it, which is doing the WhatsApp rounds so you can see it.

300 tonnes translates like this: one kilo of silver has 225 gaddis (bundles). One gaddi is 150 sheets of silver varakh.

That means, 6.75 crore gaddis every year. The world market asks for 300 kg of gold varakh every day. Till now, the varakh makers are in slaughterhouses. They are all a sect of Muslims called Pannigars.

They select cattle by feeling their intestines while they are alive and then having them cut and extracting the intestines while they are hot. These intestines are made into pouches and silver is beaten in between them till it is thin enough to be sold. The method is filthy and certainly not pure silver. When you eat it, you place yourself at risk.

The second method that is used by most mithai sellers — who will pretend that they are getting the varakh from vegetarian sources (which is what the president of the mithai association claimed) — is to beat the silver between plastic sheets. However, this is also a filthy meat-based method as the plastic is coated with animal fat for lubrication and is also then covered with leather. The varakh that emerges is also not hygienic or fit for eating.

Karnavat has replaced leather/animal fat with a specially engineered

paper, which is translucent and smooth. This paper is fed into a machine and the process of making varakh is completely mechanised, without coming into contact with the sweaty human hand. The leaf has a thickness of 0.18 microns in silver and 0.1 microns in gold, making it of international standards even for gold fillings and ayurvedic medicines. The machine has taken 15 years to develop and meets the guidelines of the US FDA.

He is one of the very few people in the world who has the knowledge of producing varakh paper (also known as interleaf paper or carbon-coated paper).

He wants to help low-cost machines to be produced and installed, and train unskilled labour — perhaps even the same people who have been sitting for years at slaughterhouses and taking out the intestines of freshly killed buffaloes and cows.

He believes there is scope for at least 2 lakh people to be employed and that this is the only way for the varakh industry to become a clean, hygienic, well-managed organised sector, instead of being a filthy unorganised secretive sector that operates in the shadows of butcheries.

This could also be a major employment area for women as gold and silver leaves have to be transferred from interleaf paper to tissue paper, and this delicate exchange can be best handled by a woman. Gold and silver leaf can be major exports from India and earn foreign exchange. Karnavat was invited by the Chinese government to establish a unit and train the Chinese. He refused because he wants to make India the silver/gold leaf hub of the world.

This seems to me to be an excellent potential industry and now that Mudra loans are available to small businessmen, this should be taken advantage of. In fact, if you are a large mithai maker, you should establish your own ancillary varakh leaf factory.

If you want to get in touch with him to start it in your own area, and to make sure that no mithai or paan is being made from cattle intestines in slaughterhouses, this is his contact: Surendra Karnavat: Phone: 0141-2574888 / 0 9 9 5 0 5 5 5 5 5 ; diastuds@hotmail.com

Pl. Add: To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org

Studying effects of ageing

By Ranjan K Baruah

Gerontology encompasses studying physical, mental and social changes in people as they age investigating the biological ageing process, effects and mechanisms investigating the social and psycho-social impacts of ageing and investigating the psychological effects on ageing , investigating the interface of biological ageing with age-related diseases, investigating the effects of an ageing population on society applying this knowledge to policies and programmes, including the macroscopic (for example, government planning) and microscopic (for example, running a nursing home) perspectives.

The multidisciplinary nature of gerontology means that there are a number of sub-fields, as well as associated fields such as physiology, psychology and sociology that overlap with gerontology. Gerontologists view ageing in terms of four distinct processes — chronological ageing, biological ageing, psychological ageing and social ageing.

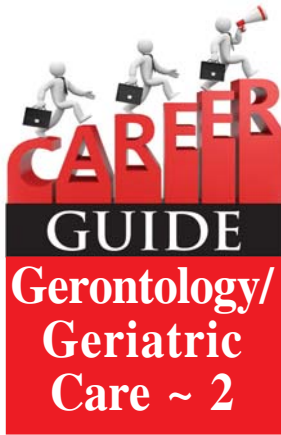
Chronological ageing is the definition of ageing based on a person's years lived from birth. Biological ageing refers to the physical changes that reduce the efficiency of organ systems. Psychological ageing includes the changes that occur in sensory and perceptual processes, cognitive abilities, adaptive capacity and personality.

Social ageing refers to an individual's changing roles and relationships with family, friends and other informal supports, productive roles and within organisations.

Simply put it is multi-



disciplinary and is concerned with physical, mental and social aspects and implications of ageing. Geriatrics is a medical specialty focused on care and treatment of older persons. Though gerontology and geriatrics have differing emphases, they both have the goal of understanding ageing so that people can maximise their functioning and achieve a high quality of life.



Considering the rising elderly population in India, there is acute need for the individuals who can provide quality care to such individuals. Now when most of the families going nuclear, the elders are left alone to take care of themselves. This also brings opportunity for individuals to build their

careers. Career related to this may be purely medical or social and other support.

There are diploma courses like Diploma in Geriatric Care, which will produce quality individuals who will provide appropriate service to the elderly population. There are courses related to vocational courses even by leading institute like Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

The National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) was set up originally as Central Bureau of Correctional Services in 1961, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, in pursuance of the recommendations emerging at various national forums. It provides one-year PG Diploma in Integrated Geriatric Care and one-month course on basic issues in Geriatric Care. NISD is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Almost 700 million people are now over the age of 60. By 2050, 2 billion people, over 20 percent of the world's population, will be 60 or older. The increase in the number of older people will be the greatest and the most rapid in the developing world with Asia as the region with the largest number of older persons, and Africa facing the largest proportionate growth.

With this in mind, enhanced attention to the particular needs and challenges faced

by many older people is clearly required. Just as important, however, is the essential contribution the majority of older men and women can continue to make to the functioning of society if adequate guarantees are in place. Human rights lie at the core of all efforts in this regard.

When we look at all the data, we could see that there is demand for trained people related to geriatric care. Individuals may start home care and provide services to the elderly. Apart from that there are organisations that are caring for the elderly and those organisations need trained people. With training, commitment is also needed because this is a service to the elderly population and one must think it as a noble profession. One must have patience and dedication to this work. One should have listening skills, commitment to excel in their respective field, self-confidence and problem-solving ability.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 9864055558 for any career related queries)

Men in uniforms are cool

Military silhouettes are the trends this winter, say fashion stylists at Macy's. Sujoy Dhar reports after checking the arrivals at the iconic department store in Chicago

A visit to the Macy's on State Street in Chicago reveals that the flavour of the season for men is military silhouettes. And if that sounds like the usual machismo associated with the well toned army men, there is no denying that men in uniform do trigger a lot of fantasy.

Decoding men's fashion is no less difficult than the ones of the women, but stylists say military shades are trending. Definitely the military style marked by camouflage print is back in the fashion circuit this season.

According to fashion experts, the military style is no flash in the pan and they are back in vogue in the autumn/winter collections.

"This season the fashion formula for men is military inspired silhouettes in olive green, gray, black and blue," says Patty Manglano, fashion stylist at Macy's on Chicago State Street.

So while the eight floors of retail space here in this iconic Chicago address is also about unparalleled merchandise selection, unique restaurants and architectural wonders like the Great Clocks and Tiffany Ceiling, for the studs who want to strut their stuff, the trends of the fall season is visible here in the collections.

While military silhouettes are ruling the season, copper tones are also the colours that are trending. According to Macy's in Chicago, a blend of copper, rust and sun-kissed orange

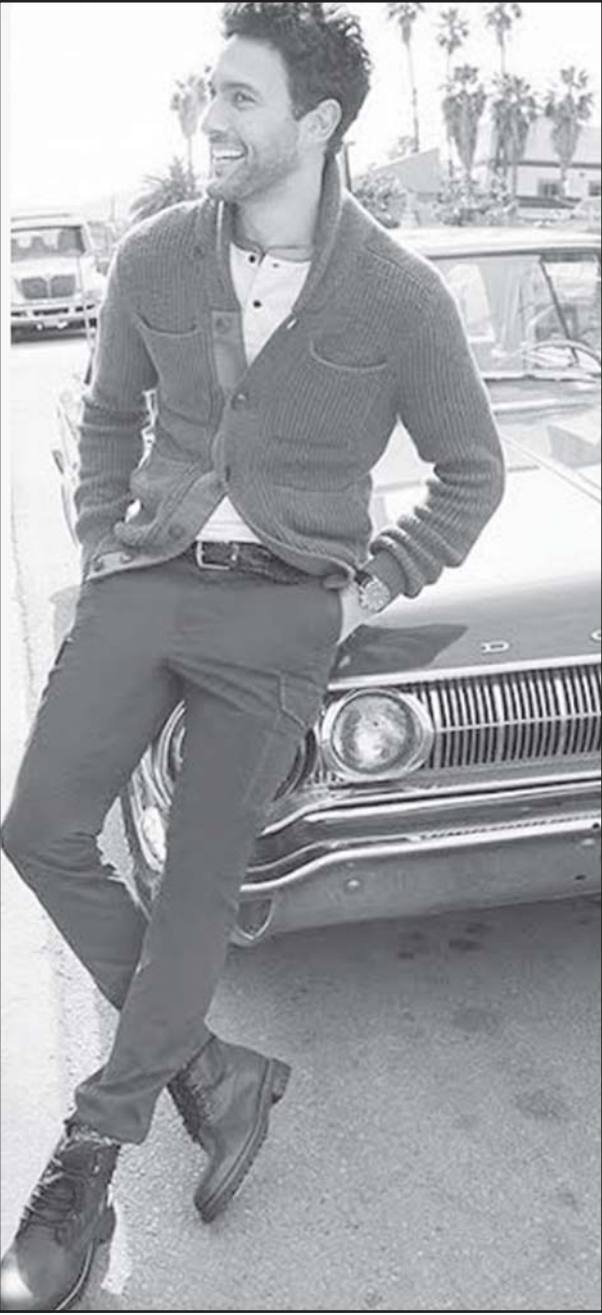
intrinsically feel like fall and make everyone eagerly wait for the changing colours of leaves and the cooler climes.

Associate Style Editor of British GQ Nick Carvell in his article on the men's shows at London Collections Men, and in Milan and Paris writes: "While there was a strong representation of your traditionally autumnal navies, blacks, grays and dark greens, the colour that really stood out at the shows was copper. Replenish your stocks of the rich, orangey-brown shade now."

In outlets like State Street Macy's you will find a lot of copper tones in the micro-suede bomber jackets that have arrived. You can wear those jackets with long-sleeve woven shirt. So is the suede puffer vest over Chevron sweater. Or you can go for puffer vest over flannel shirt in cotton. Or may be a thermal top under a flannel shirt and over it a vest in copper tone. Cargo khakis are popular too this season.

Besides military and copper, gray continues to inspire fashion designers for men's sartorial statement.

According to Macy's stylists, it is timeless and a bit understated. Macy's trend report says the newest shades of this versatile palette possess an unexpected amount of nuance and life thanks to undertones of green, brown and blue. So a gray suit is



KILLER LOOKS: (Clockwise from top) A model sports slim cargo pants; Macy's fashion stylist Patty Manglano in front of the fall-winter collection for men; and displays at Macy's in Chicago

also considered a must have.

But autumnal navies are not out of fashion either. "The classic go-to hue is stepping up and out this season. Shades of blue are certain to look sharp and feel fresh — whether in head to toe tonal suits or as an electrifying accent,"

says the trend report of Macy's.

According to Patty Manglano, there are lots of brands to choose from. "You can get the latest from brands like Tommy Hilfiger, G.H Bass & Co, American Rag, Perry Ellis, Calvin Klein, Dockers, among others," she says. (IBNS-TWF)

‘Star - Gazing’

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, November 27, 2016

You exhibit individualism in handling business ventures and collaborations as Moon trine Neptune on your solar return chart. You will be carefully focused as you aim towards your goals; if you keep that aim going you will hit bulls-eye. There would also be a strengthening of your financial sector as gains come in. There could be some emotional swings but you need to draw on your inner resources and remain focused. You plan some personal travel which opens up avenues that you thought were closed. You would see expansion of your social circle. Sharing ideas, conversing, writing, and studying can be good ways to showcase your creativity. This week for you'

Aries: (March 21 - April 20)

Positive new relationships are formed and you can look forward to good results. It is a friendly time, when it is easy to enjoy life and other people as you instinctively start a new phase in your life. It's time to give your life a makeover, a time of new beginnings and fresh energy. Focus is on personal freedom, reaching out to others, making new plans, and exploration. You are more enthusiastic and ready for adventure. A sudden job opportunity or money and property matters could be part of the financial gains. Your physical activities tend to be more intense, passionate, and focused.

Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)

This phase highlights friendship, love, romance and children in your life. You are inspired and could even inspire others. You are thinking more creatively, and express yourself with more sensitivity, compassion, and warmth. You want your objectives to reflect what you are really about, and you are likely to rid yourself of unsatisfying goals. You benefit from being more decisive than usual, and your ability to concentrate and focus helps you achieve what you set out to do. It is the time to coordinate with your creations, love affair, children, and hobbies.

Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)

You are in a position to inspire others through what you create highlighting communication, creativity and authority. Your attitude towards life would be changing; you are no longer willing to make compromises in the important areas of your life, particularly with regards to career and your life path. You would be able to find a way to strike a balance between self-gratification and the obligations of daily life. You are more determined, and it is an excellent time for getting rid of bad habits. Your mind often wanders to domestic concerns, and issues surrounding your home, family, and personal life.

Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)

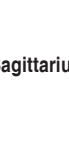
You give a new approach to communications projects, learning, or self-expression. Your most natural talents would meet with reward and acceptance. A new project or goal begun now has a good chance of being successful and long lasting. This is a good time for reflection, prayer, and meditation. A higher purpose to your life is what you seek, and you rely more heavily upon your intuition in order to achieve it. Your self-confidence and positive attitude will reward you. Positive connections with others can be made fairly easily. A comfortable level of personal popularity helps to keep conflict to a minimum.

Leo: (July 23 - August 23)

This phase brings an exciting job offer, reward, recognition or a possible promotion. An opportunity to expand on a worldly level arrives now. A balanced approach to life, in terms of realistic expectations, is the best approach for maximizing success. People are bound to recognize your leadership skills and talents. You want your life path and your objectives to reflect what you're really about. You benefit from being more decisive than usual, and your ability to concentrate and focus help you to achieve what you set out to do in the coming weeks. You are more enthusiastic and ready for adventure. It's also a good time for expressing your creativity.

Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)

This is a period of work and development. It's a time to deal with practical matters, and it's not a time to be lazy or especially gregarious. It can be a time that feels hard,



monotonous and lonely. Try to get yourself organized, work to build your resources. You might find that you are very often encouraging and supportive of others. Certainly, you are more accepting and understanding of your friends and loved ones. Being content in love will figure and will attract positive circumstances into your life. It is likely to be a rather lighthearted time, when opportunities are greater than usual.

Libra: (September 23 - October 23)

There will be a wave good-luck in love and romance. You spend great time in long conversations, phone calls, short trips and enjoy the feeling of togetherness. You are more receptive and gentle on a romantic level, and tend to be sentimental about work commitments. Business expansion and new professional opportunities are worth considering. Financial success is stronger than earlier. You may explore new technology and improve office infrastructure. Positive new relationships are formed.

Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)

You might have a more materialistic view of life and are more attracted to objects and possessions that give you a sense of comfort and status. There are greater monetary gains too. You probably should be aware of a tendency to create your own financial stress due to extravagant spending habits. Your main focus is on personal freedom, reaching out to others, making new friends, and exploration. You are enthusiastic and ready for adventure. This is a time to do what you can to build trust in your family life and a strong foundation within yourself. You might spend a lot of time in short frequent trips, communicating and visiting religious places.

Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)

You might play attention to various ways to increase personal funds, resulting in more than one avenue for monetary gain. You are more friendly, optimistic, and big-hearted than usual. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation from others. This is a sociable, and perhaps self-indulgent, time when the pursuit of pleasure is one of your high priorities. Financial benefits may come your way. You may find that you have the right information at the right time. You could also have big ideas and plans. Work, especially in communications, goes well. If you are patient and open yourself up in a gentle manner, you will attract both things and people. Be patient, be receptive and enjoy the peace

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)

You enjoy decisions in your favour when it comes to legal affairs, education, and travel. Financial benefits may come your way. You may find that you have the right information at the right time. You could also have big ideas and plans. Work, especially in communications, goes well. Love matters, finances, and social relationships are especially pleasing and satisfying. You are generally more cooperative, although occasional willfulness could be a downfall, if you succumb to it. New friendships, or new spins on established connections, are in your forecast.

Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)

Your efforts would be rewarded and praised by people in authority as you resolve issues related to finances and budgets. You are bound to enjoy increased social opportunities as well as a boost in your personal popularity and magnetism. Others look on you favorably. You are more friendly, optimistic, and big-hearted than usual. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation from others. This is a sociable, and perhaps self-indulgent, time when the pursuit of pleasure is one of your high priorities. Security in love is likely to figure and to attract positive circumstances into your life.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

The planetary combination boosts your professional prospects as you communicate cleverly and interact in a more positive way with people. You express true feelings, ideas and plans without being afraid of the consequences and try to please your loved one. You enjoy every moment, whatever it brings and follow your truth and intuition to feel more integrated with your loved one. Married people should take care of family members as the health of a family member may suffer. You tend to get mentally stressed and anxious causing health problems, detach yourself from problems and view them from a different perspective. Meditation and daily prayers would help to overcome the recently generated problems.



Jobs with deceptive titles

My son is applying for jobs. I told him that "we have no suitable vacancy at this time" really means: "Dude you are too cool for us."

I noticed many jobs are in sneaky disguises. About half of them, with titles ranging from Marketing Executive to Account Manager to Chick Sexer to Cheese Sprayer, actually mean "salesperson".

There are lots of euphemisms, or do I mean euphoniums? Hospitality specialist means "dishwasher". Beverage disseminator means "bartender". Communications executive means "telesales pest".

A colleague showed me a recent news item about a US man arrested for faking a job by ordering copied secret service badges from China. Christopher Diorio, 53, needed a cool-sounding job because he had signed up with a dating website, and his real job was too awful to

admit to. He was a dog poop picker-upper. I felt sorry for him. While I hate to generalise — wait, no I don't, I'm a journalist — women never put dog poop picker-uppers on top of their lists of desirable marriage partners.

He should have just made himself a post: Senior Chief Vice President for Canine Sanitation Deposit Collection, for example. When I was single I would have dated someone with that title. But then, I would have dated anyone.

In the newspaper was a tale about a man in Germany who designed his own job, and that was awful too. He decided to cheat an automatic bottle recycling machine. He found a way of putting a bottle in, collecting a tiny sum of money, and then getting it

out again.

He turned this into a full-time job, netting 44,000 euros by inserting and extracting a single bottle 177,451 times. The judge expressed astonishment at what a horribly dull way he'd found to spend his days. The man agreed: "It was really boring," and skipped to a relatively fun future of sitting in a jail cell.

You see, jobs should never be just a bout making money, as proved by a UK toilet-fixer who recently won £14 million in a lottery. John Doherty, 52, celebrated — and then went straight back to fixing toilets. Just because the numbers in your bank account change, that doesn't mean that your purpose in life changes. He even signed up for a full-time course to improve his toilet-fixing skills.

These news stories reminded me of the time I sat in on a friend's school reunion where everyone was deliberately vague about what they did. "I'm in the restaurant business" probably meant "I'm a waiter". And the guy who said "I'm a writer" I knew for a fact was a blogger. And we all know that "independent new media consultants" are people who try to trick you into paying them to show you how to use Facebook.

There are cool job titles out there. The neon light industry employs "Light Benders" and the guy who sells tickets on Virgin Galactic has "Space Travel Agent" on his card.

Worth applying for? Maybe. And anyway, I've met Richard Branson and he's a fun guy who probably would send a rejection letter saying: "Dude you are too cool for us."

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

THE FUNNY SIDE
Nury Vittachi

“*The freethinking of one age is the common sense of the next.*”
--- Matthew Arnold

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 108 SHILLONG, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2016

Renting bank accounts

PEOPLE have extraordinary capacity to evade the law. Recently a person from Gurgaon was apprehended at Dimapur airport with Rs 3 crore demonetized notes which he was carrying to hand over to the son-in-law of a former chief minister of Nagaland. Such transactions must have taken place in Meghalaya as well, more so in the city of Shillong, known for its notorious benami transactions. It is reported that there has been a sudden spurt in transactions of Jan Dhan Yojna accounts amounting to Rs 64,000 crore. Obviously, there is more than meets the eye here since the Jan Dhan Yojna is a zero balance account opened for the weaker sections so the subsidies from LPG etc., can be directly transferred to the account. Taking cognizance of this the Reserve Bank of India has warned people of "strict punitive action" for exchanging or dealing in specified bank notes in an unauthorised manner.

The Income Tax Department has asked banks to report all cash deposits exceeding Rs. 2.5 lakh during the 50-day window provided to tender the now defunct Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 notes. Previously, banks were required to report to the I-T department only when cash deposits in an account exceeded Rs 10 lakh a year. The Modi Government’s attempt to clamp down on black money has many detractors. Opposition political parties led by West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamta Banerjee have been most vehement in their opposition of the demonetization process started on November 8, last. They have called a united protest across the country today and hope to get public support for it. Their contention is that demonetization has hit the poor and daily wage earners the hardest. But the poor who could have also spoken up for themselves have not made an issue of the banned notes. They hope that there is merit in Modi’s action in the long run. Prime Minister Modi, had during his election campaign in 2014, promised to construct homes for the poor in the next five years. Much of the black money that has not been declared but is today demonetized, is the property of the Reserve Bank of India The money can subsequently be used by the NDA Government for building those homes for the poor. Those who doubt Modi’s intentions need to wait and watch out for the long term results.

LOOKING BACK
March 16, 1989

Additional central forces soon

The centre will dispatch additional central forces to assist the Assam government in maintain movement of essential goods in the northeast during the threatened two-weeks bandh called by the All Bodo Students Union later this month. According to official spokesman, Union Home Secretary Mr J A Kalyana Krishnan gave this assurance to senior officials

of the state government and representatives of several central ministries at a meeting here today. The centre has already dispatched eight companies of central forces on February 16 last. The Home Secretary said determined steps should be taken to maintain the flow of essential commodities in the entire region and vital installations protected.

TO THE EDITOR

Agonies of St. Rose School students

Editor,
The main objective of St. Rose Secondary school as spelt out the school calendar is to cater to the under-privileged sections of Umpling and its surrounding villages. However, the reality is totally the opposite as its teachers take full advantage of the helplessness and distress of the poor students coming from such backgrounds. Our wards at the secondary school level often inform us that there has is never a day when all classes are taken and not a week passes when on some days the students are left unattended. Most often even if classes are held the students are only provided with a notebook from where they copy their notes on their own without teachers entering the class to explain the lessons properly. Except for the mathematics and science teacher, no other teacher shows any kind of concern for students’ progress despite teaching class IX and X. These

teachers frequently ask students to go outside the school premises and to order tea, buy kwai or even recharge their mobile phones from the nearby shops. This year the selection exams for class X were held between 13-26 October. The school reopened on 15th November but only half days classes were taken by the Mathematics teacher while the rest of the teachers have not entered the classrooms even once. While parents feel that such a long gap is not required as a half yearly break of 10 days had already been given. But to the utter dismay and desperation of the students and parents after so many days of rest the list of selected candidates were put up on the notice board without any marks being assigned till date for parents and students to take note of their weaknesses and strengths before they appear for the SSLC exams early next year. Out of 45 students, the teachers have also arbitrarily detained 15 students and disallowed them from appearing in the upcoming SSLC exams. For taking such drastic steps no

parents’ meeting was called, no warning and no counseling was given to the concerned students which is absolutely a case of callousness, insensitivity and cruelty. Till date, none of the courses have been completed as most of the times, teachers spend time playing mobile games in the staff room or gossiping. St Rose School is also probably the only school under MBOSE where separate school sports meet, school week, fete and many other activities are conducted round the year to avoid taking classes and without any progress report to show. In short, the attitude and arbitrariness of the teachers in St. Rose School is nothing less than a crime against children. Most of them even in class X struggle with basic grammar, simple vocabulary and their command over other subjects is extremely dismal and terribly weak because teachers do not perform their minimum responsibility and are least bothered about the

students’ progress. Few who may do well are doing so with the help of tuitions and guardians. With such appalling state of affairs in the School, it is necessary for the authorities to take immediate corrective measures, lest the afflicted students and their parents contemplate legal action to get the basic services that is due to them by law. One must also remind the teachers that just because the students and guardians are from under-privileged sections and may not be necessarily empowered with knowledge and resources it does not mean that such unseen atrocities can continue for long. Yours etc.,
Name withheld on request

Game-changing deal

Editor,
India’s decision to ink a Rs 39,000 crore deal for five new-generation Russian S-400 'Triumf' air defence missile systems is exceedingly good news for

the strategic planners of the nation. Needless to say that with such a big range and speed, the S-400 'Triumf' would be a very formidable deterrent against any incoming threats from Pakistan. It's designed to knock down flying targets including those equipped with stealth technologies, at a distance of about 400 Kms. Undoubtedly, it's a significant strategic upgrade in India's military hardware in its pursuit of becoming a global power. The S-400 is the most advanced anti-aircraft defense system in Russia, and is unparalleled in the world. It is capable of countering all air attack weapons, including tactical and strategic aircraft, ballistic missiles and hypersonic targets. The most important capability of the S-400 is of being an anti-missile system, which will greatly complement and enhance the indigenous air defence capability. Acquiring 'Triumf' will “drastically” boost India’s war potential, capacity and capability. Thus, the procurement of the S-400 'Triumf' Air Defence System is the right decision and will truly be a "game changer" for

national air defence requirements. Yours etc.,
Akash Kumar, Jagraon, Punjab

First earning youth in Shillong

Editor,
Chimmon Pakma a young YouTuber from Shillong earns about \$45 (Rs.3083.43) per week owning his own personal YouTube channel, two self made websites, one personal radio station, one affiliate programme, one custom email ID, one toll free personal helpline number and is also the web editor of WCC (World Copyright Corporation). A young kid of 13 years owning so many things and earning a living! With some help from his parents, he managed to start working on building a company. Who would expect such great talents from such a small boy, Its surprising but it’s true. Such talent is born in Shillong. Yours etc.,
Lawrence Ghosh, Via email

Demonetisation’s political impact yet to be assessed
BJP and opposition will slug it out in Assembly Polls

By Harihar Swarup

Contrary to propaganda by the BJP, the party has not gained in recent bye-elections; neither is it an endorsement of demonetisation. Bye-elections constitute a very limited test of the popular mood post demonization. In any case, the BJP is not a major player in West Bengal, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and results in these parts of the country cannot be construed to be a vote against the Prime Minister. On the other hand, the BJP has failed to dislodge the incumbent parties from any of the state. The solace for the BJP is that it has retained the Lakhimpur seat (in Assam), though with a steep fall in margin. Similarly, it has

exclusively on tainted money, which now has become “raddi”. Whether the BJP’s self-serving calculation works to its advantage or not, the citizen would like to believe that demonetisation drive has cleaned, at least, temporarily, the electoral system. The integrity of the electoral process needs to be restored. With just a few months to go for assembly elections in Punjab, the ruling Akali Dal-BJP alliance confronts a double whammy. Not only does it face grave anti-incumbency due to poor governance record and perception of heavy corruption, it now has to deal with effects of demonetisation particularly

Congress hopes to take advantage of that and turn the page after a disappointing performance in the 2014 Lok Sabha election, and the AAP is looking to shed its tag of a Delhi-centric party. After losing momentum due to infighting, AAP is trying to seize the initiative by playing up its image as a crusader against corruption. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has announced that MP and comedian Bhagwant Mann will contest against Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Badal. AAP also received a shot in the arm when two independent MLAs who earlier supported cricketer-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu - have now signed a pact with them.

won the Shahdol (Madhya Pradesh) seat, but again, with a markedly reduced margin. The party can take comfort from the fact that it has retained the two Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh. The Opposition may be entitled to feel that it has made inroads into the ruling party’s strongholds. Ruling parties enjoy an inherent advantage in bye-elections. Voters see little point in antagonizing their rulers when there is no immediate prospect of a change in government. West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry had gone to polls in April-May, this year and the recent bye elections were not expected to deviate from the general election trend. It is, obviously, too early to suggest that the BJP has scored spectacularly well with the voters with the “surgical strike” on black money. The real referendum will come in a few months time in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, by which time the RBI-induced dislocation would have sorted itself out—one way or the other. By that time also the Prime Minister would have finessed his “pro-poor, pro-rich” argument, and, it should be an interesting contest between a pan-Indian political posturing and regional articulation of sub-nationalist aspirations. It would be curious to watch how the demonetisation experiment impacts other political parties’ capacity to spend huge amounts of money in these two crucial states. The ruling party at the Centre believes that it is in the safe zone because it only uses “clean” money while the rivals would be sunk without a prayer because they rely

on farmers. The latter have been greatly hampered by lack of access to new currency as they mostly deal in cash to meet the costs of such as seeds, fertilizers and diesel during the sowing time. Reports suggest that only three-fourths of wheat sowing has taken place in the state this year due to cash crunch. Congress hopes to take advantage of that and turn the page after a disappointing performance in the 2014 Lok Sabha election, and the AAP is looking to shed its tag of a Delhi-centric party. After losing momentum due to infighting, AAP is trying to seize the initiative by playing up its image as a crusader against corruption. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has announced that MP and comedian Bhagwant Mann will contest against Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Badal. AAP also received a shot in the arm when two independent MLAs who earlier supported cricketer-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu - have now signed a pact with them. This development has put a question mark on Sidhu’s new political forum—Awaaz-e-Punjab--now left with just his MLA wife Navjot Kaur Sidhu and former India’s hockey Captain Pargat Singh. Congress may have made former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh the chief of their campaign committee but shied away from declaring him to be its CM candidate. If Congress now seals the deal with Sidhu, that will enhance its prospects in face of AAP’s disruption of bipolar politics in the state. (IPA Service)

“If an idea's worth having once, it's worth having twice.”

--- Tom Stoppard

The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 109 SHILLONG, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2016

Taxation and banking reforms imperative

The adoption of the Goods and Services Tax, or GST to replace the plethora of state and local taxes with a single unified value added tax system is seen as potentially transformative for India's economy. However, despite widespread consensus on its desirability, the GST has been stalled for years by the BJP itself while in the opposition. The implementation of the GST required the amendment of the Constitution that empowers the Central Government and also the states to collect retail sales taxes. The Constitutional amendment was finally approved in July this year. India's business community has been pushing for simplification of India's taxation system for almost a decade, terming it archaic and tedious. Having different indirect taxation rates in different states makes the movement of goods across internal boundaries very cumbersome and open to corruption and nepotism. India's business honchos believe the GST will have a positive impact on businesses. The GST is expected to improve ease of doing business, encourage more investment in manufacturing and boost GDP by as much as 1-2 per cent. Most states have also passed the GST making it easier to start implementation. What requires massive overhaul today is the Income Tax system and its outdated laws, especially in the wake of the recent demonetization process. It is well known that the Income Tax Department operates in a very hazy climate of collusion.

The banking sector too requires massive shake-up to be able to deal with the current demands for more banking branches to serve the last mile. Also banks have failed to secure their loans leading to the accumulation of non-performing assets (NPAs) amounting to thousands of crore of rupees. This chokes the banking sector even as most of the assets provided as collateral have depreciated in value over the years and cannot be easily capitalized. The flight of noted businessman Vijay Mallya by cocking a snook at the banking system reveals how weak the Indian laws are. The Modi Government which came to power on the promise of good governance needs to plug all loopholes not only to prevent hoarding of black money but also administrative corruption.

LOOKING BACK
March 16, 1989

Assam Ex-Minister accuses AGP govt of cold blooded killing

Mr Holiram Terang, Minister of State for Agriculture and Irrigations who resigned from the council of ministers last Monday in response to the call given by the Autonomous State Demand Committee of Karbi Anglong said that he ceased to be a minister since the delivery of the resignation letter not withstanding its acceptance by the Governor.

He was replying to a question regarding the Chief Minister's alleged indifferent attitude to his resignation. The Chief Minister had neither sent the resignation letter to the Governor nor requested him to withdraw it.

Mr Terang, in his resignation letter since released to the press has raised certain basic question.

TO THE EDITOR

Demonetizing or antagonizing

Editor,

A gunshot that kills a frightening tiger in the forest can also kill a harmless deer or duck if the shooter is unskilled. Exactly the same thing is happening now. Just imagine the catastrophe faced by our poverty-stricken folks vis-a-vis the rich, after the sudden demonetization. While the rich are finding it tough to reconcile themselves with the bombshell announced by PM Modi, the poor have not been less persecuted. No doubt our Prime Minister's embodiment of sacrifice and patriotism, has seen the pain of the poor first hand but this time he has failed to feel the agonies of the downtrodden. There are various kind of hardships experienced by our villagers. Many from the remote areas are having a tough time to acquaint themselves with the nitty-gritty of the bank. They never imagined that their hard-earned money would

one day become redundant. It's often reported that illiterate farmers have to walk hours to reach a bank and most of them have returned home in the evening empty handed. Some unlucky ones have witnessed the wrath of fussy bankers who dish out hard terms and conditions before handing over a Rs 2000 note.

Unlike European countries, India is underdeveloped and the majority of citizens do not know the basic utilities of bank. They feel that money kept at home is far safer than at the bank.

Again, how useful are Rs 2,000 banknotes when smaller notes like Rs 100 and Rs 500 are not available? Show me a foolish shop owner now who will return 13 nos of Rs 100 by accepting a Rs 2000 note for groceries amounting Rs 700. No one is willing to accept this big note.

While we don't disagree that the Government's demonetization plan is praiseworthy but the preparation to meet the anticipated challenges is

dismal. Phew! The scissors of demonetization have cut the wallets of the rich but they also have pierced deeply into the hearts of the poor. Now we badly wish that demonetization does not become a bitter pill of antagonism tomorrow.

Yours etc.,
Salil Gewali
Shillong-2

Between tradition and modernity

Editor,

Paramjit Bakhshi has raised a very pertinent question in his article, "Unzipping tradition" (ST, November 23, 2016), ~ "whether we want the irresistible force of youth to prosper or do we want it to be sacrificed at the altar of static tradition". The answer to the question can be found in the chemistry of synthesis. Neither the thesis of our prejudiced past nor the hedonistic

present have "dynamic quality" to speed up our evolution. But the quest for finding a synthesis should be on and there is no question of walking backwards. In this context, we can recall the words of the Mother (Mirra Alfassa) to get the vision of Sri Aurobindo, "There is an ascending evolution in nature which goes from the stone to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from animal to man. Because man is, for the moment, the last rung at the summit of the ascending evolution, he considers himself as the final stage in this ascension and believes there can be nothing on earth superior to him. In that he is mistaken.

In his physical nature he is yet almost wholly an animal, a thinking and speaking animal, but still an animal in his material habits and instincts. Undoubtedly, nature cannot be satisfied with such an imperfect result; she endeavours to bring out a being who will be to man what man is to the

animal, a being who will remain a man in its external form, and yet whose consciousness will rise far above the mind and its slavery to ignorance." Indeed, we can easily see that the evolution is dynamic and ascending. Unfortunately, many people of our country believe that India was a land of justice and fair play in the epic age and was a far better place to live in than the present Republic India. They strongly recommend Mahabharata as a better guide than the Constitution of India.

We cannot progress so long as we have such a backward pull in our mindset. Our Consti0tution is a result of thousands of years of evolutionary progress of humankind since the days of Mahabharata. So, it is quite natural that the spirit of Mahabharata will come into conflict with the Constitution of India which is based on the ideals of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice. For example, Dronacharya, a great figure of Mahabharata, should have been arrested in

question - am I educated? The higher the academic qualification the better educated, we tell ourselves. Hate to do this, but some of the greatest morons amongst us are gold medalists and doctorates in the subject they specialised in. The answer to the question is the paradox of our times. The moment you acknowledge that you know nothing - that is when you can say you are educated. Education stimulates, rouses and encourages curiosity; of the need to learn and know; to search and explore. The moment you say there is nothing more to learn then you are either dead, intellectually comatose or a complete fool and neither fits in with the profile of being educated. The uneducated are those, literate or otherwise, who believe they know all that needs to be known. Education comes with the humility and the willingness to admit that what we know is nothing when compared to the enormity of what we don't know. The benefit from such a belief is the willingness to listen and to learn. It brings in Hope, Anticipation and Optimism for the future.

An education system for the 21st century should seek ways and means on how to stimulate the student's intellect. A major flaw in the present education system is that it discourages a child's curiosity and his tendency to ask questions. In a class of 40 or more, a child who asks too many questions is dubbed a trouble maker. He makes the teacher uncomfortable. He/she is then consigned to the back benches. We forget that the aim of education is to facilitate learning through questions; to stimulate curiosity; to kindle the thirst to know what lies beyond the next hill. It definitely is not about cramming and the ability to reproduce verbatim whatever the teacher taught. Unfortunately that is exactly what our education system encourages. An educated mind is an analytic mind; prejudice, superstition and unfounded bias are always replaced by logic and reason. It will always seek to replace bigotry with rationality; unfairness with justice; chauvinism with tolerance; inequality with the inclusiveness of liberal democracy. The educated will always challenge mediocrity, boredom and convention. When this happens in Meghalaya we can then truly say "education has finally taken root in the Abode of the Clouds".

Republic India for cutting the right thumb of Eklavya as tuition fees. Will the code of Mahabharata promote women to the status of Devis? When women of elite families could have been pawned in a game of chance in those days, it can, easily, be understood what was the status of common women especially the Dalit ones. We still nurture prejudices against Dalits and women because of our soft corner for barbaric ancient days. The brightest and the humblest student, Eklavya, was, devilishly, crippled so that he could never use his education in archery. Our pining for such an unequal society made a bright student of modern India, Vemula, write in his suicide note, "My birth is my fatal accident".

Yours etc.,
Sujit De,
Kolkata

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

India's new health challenges

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

BEATING THE RHETORIC

The day after Diwali, Delhi woke up to a rude shock. Smog had enveloped the whole city making it difficult to breathe. The PM 2.5 particles were almost three to four times more than the accepted levels. Experts envisage that if Delhi does not get its act together soon it could see a situation akin to the Great London Smog that took the lives of thousands. The presence of the PM 2.5 particles is particularly harmful for children and the elderly. These particles enter the lungs and can result in a number of respiratory problems which increases the mortality factor quite considerably. While environmental concerns are being discussed in a broad manner, an issue that remains out of the limelight is India's new emerging health challenges.

A globalised world has also become a more connected world where events affect a large number of human beings. While boundaries are transcended there is also cross border exchange of diseases and emergence of new forms of disease. And it is this threat that India is facing that challenges the traditional paradigm of health and disease. While Indian health infrastructure grapples with the basic issue of access and facilities, new challenges are emerging that policymakers have to face.

Today the Indian health profile is changing rapidly. As a large part of India moves to the urban areas, new challenges have emerged. Slowly, two different paradigms of health concerns are manifesting themselves. The rural populace of the country still grapples with the issue of malnutrition, arsenic mixed in water, anaemia among others. Nutritional issues concerning health are a major problem in the rural areas. In the urban areas the profile is slightly different. Urban India is beginning to see a rise in cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, respiratory problems among others. A large part of health problems in urban India can be attributed to the 'lifestyle choices' that are made and hence are non communicable in nature. Thus the health sector in India has to effectively combat this rising "Health Divide".

Today the global boundaries have disappeared and so have boundaries that contained disease. Bird Flu, for example, was a disease that was hitherto unknown to India but has become a much focussed area in the past few years. During the past three decades more than 30 new organisms have been identified worldwide including HIV, Vibrio cholera O139, SARS, corona virus, highly pathogenic avian influenza virus A, and novel H1N1 influenza virus. Many of these organisms emerged in the developing countries of Asia. Every global outbreak of Bird Flu or Bovine Flu poses new challenges for the Indian health sector. While they have been effective in this fight till recent times, there is no guarantee that this resilience will sustain in the future. Hence there is urgent need to keep an eye on each emerging global health concern and prepare a roadmap to combat each disease effectively. India, which boasts of a phenomenal pharmaceutical industry, must also offer its expertise to global drug makers in times of need, even before a particular disease hits the Indian shores. This would ensure that should a disease or a health concern hit the boundary our drug makers are prepared to the extent possible to handle any eventuality.

While India has been able to effectively curb malaria, new forms of vector borne diseases have emerged that have posed new challenges to the health sector. Dengue and Chikungunya which were previously unknown in the Indian medical history have become major headache in the past few years. Dengue, for example, is witnessing a rapid increase in its profile. While a decade back dengue was restricted only to parts of Northern India, in recent times it has spread to the Eastern part of the country as well. In 2015, according to the WHO website, India reported close to 15,000 cases of dengue, the highest in a

decade. On September 6, 2016 this figure stood at 19,704. This undoubtedly proves that newer diseases are posing newer challenges to the policymakers that they must address effectively.

As argued above, non communicable diseases pose a special challenge to the health of urban India. Today obesity and diabetes has become a regular occurrence in almost every major urban Indian household. If a person steps outside in order to break the monotony of a sedentary lifestyle, the polluted air increases the chance of respiratory diseases. Lifestyle habits have also increased the chances of cardiovascular diseases. Non communicable diseases account for 56% of deaths in urban areas. If we were to factor in other factors like road accidents, for example, this number would climb still higher. To counter threat of non communicable diseases however, infrastructure and doctors wouldn't be able to provide the solution again. Awareness is one of the most vital weapons in the fight against urban non communicable diseases. Mental health for example is still an unexplored area. The people have to be made aware that mental health is of equal importance as physical health in the life of an individual. Sanitisation campaigns should be unveiled about food habits and the need for physical activities in a person's life while setting up measures that would dissuade people especially children from certain kind of food should be encouraged. These steps would go a long way in improving the results of the fight against non communicable diseases.

Antimicrobial resistance demands a special mention in the fight to better India's health profile. India's global reputation took a major beating when in 2008 India's name was attached to a super bug, the NDM-1. The New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase-1 was an enzyme that rendered bacteria resistant to a broad spectrum of antibiotics. A strain of the NDM-1 had crossed the shores and spread resistance to other countries as well. And slowly India woke up to this new challenge. In 2010 India was the largest consumer of antibiotics in the world. Years of over the counter prescription and medication without proper consultation had resulted in disastrous consequences rendering many drugs useless. Attempts are however being made to control this aspect, new bills have been introduced which have made procurements of certain kinds of drugs harder. New regulations have come in place which make the availability of Schedule -H drugs over the counter almost impossible. Further steps have to be taken in this regard while consistently evolving newer strategies to counter over the counter sell of antibiotics.

Despite the obvious challenges there is however no doubt that India has performed remarkably in the health sector. Diseases like polio have been wiped clean from the country through sustained efforts and people's participation. Diseases like Smallpox and guinea worm have been eradicated; their last cases occurred in the country in May 1975 and July 1996 respectively. Yaws, which mainly occurs in remote tribal areas, has been eliminated. The average life expectancy in India has risen from 36.5 years in 1951 to 63.5 in 2011. Maternal Mortality Rates and Infant mortality rates have improved considerably as well. Today India boasts or world class medical education. Indian doctors and India's medical facilities are recognised amongst the best in the world in affordable prices on a global level. In the past sixty years, India has demonstrated remarkable will in responding to the challenges of the health sector. In a similar spirit, it must focus itself towards combating the new forms of health concerns grappling its people.

(Views expressed by the author are entirely personal)

“*Be charitable before wealth makes thee covetous.*”
--- Sir Thomas Browne

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Embargo on cash withdrawals

AS the first of December approaches, heads of different institutions such as hotels, restaurants and other informal sector are wracking their brains on how to pay their staff. Withdrawal limits of Rs 50,000 per week from current accounts and Rs 24,000 per week from savings accounts have created unprecedented hardships for people who are used to making cash transactions which was a hitherto legitimate activity until cash use was demonized on November 8 last. The Government and Reserve Bank of India, has since then, been at pains to encourage people to use plastic money (debit, credit cards, Paytm and wallet). But this is to assume that behavioural change is an overnight process. Even for the educated, it has taken a while to switch over to the use of debit/credit cards. Many still believe in good old cash. Tribals, in particular feel a sense of security in having ready cash at home. The savings habit is yet to penetrate the last mile. Hence this transition has hit those without bank accounts the hardest. They would first need to open accounts and then apply for a debit card and then learn how to operate it.

Despite the NDA Government's drive to push citizens to open a Jan Dhan Yojna account for financial inclusion, not all are included as yet. This drive was not preceded by a mass awareness campaign and citizens are yet to fathom the benefits of banking. The argument from millions who earn salaries that hardly see them through the month is, "What's the point in having an account when we hardly have enough to eat?" Perhaps it is difficult for those who don't understand poverty to think of the predicament of this category of citizens. Meanwhile even those who have to pay salaries to this constituency are grappling with the cash withdrawal embargo. Even paying by cheque is no solution because of the withdrawal limit. Where do we go from here?

LOOKING BACK

March 16, 1989

Tripura coalition averts a political crisis

A political crisis in Tripura was averted today on the Assembly budget session when the Tribal Students Federation (TSF) agreed to reconsider its demand for resignation of three Ministers of TUJS, a partner in the ruling alliance.

The federation, a frontal wing of the Tripura Upajati Juva Samity announced its decision to reconsider the demand following a high level meeting with Chief Minister Mr Sudhir Ranjan Majumder.

The TSF central committee at a meeting here yesterday issued an ultimatum to three TUJS Ministers asking them to resign within 24 hours in protest against what it called "deliberate attack and planned atrocities" on TSF supporters at the state secretariat on Tuesday. It may be mentioned here that the TSF central committee at a meeting here yesterday decided to press for the resignations to protest against what it called "deliberate attack and planned police atrocities" on TSF supporters in the state secretariat on Tuesday.

A lesson from the virtual political-economy

By Fabian Lyngdoh

The concept of the 'rule of the people' led to the emergence of a democratic political system as an ideal condition where individual freedom and the collective order can interplay in a perfect balance. Real democracy is direct democracy where every member of the community has the right to directly participate in it. But for the sake of convenience, representatives are elected from various constituencies to represent the people. So we have a representative democracy instead of real democracy. The committee of elected representatives is institutionalised and acquired an identity and independent existence of its own with powers and authority beyond the reach of ordinary people who constituted it. This is the predicament of representative democracy which was instituted purportedly to enhance individual freedom in balance with the collective order, but actually led to the rule of an institution that is manifested not in the exercise of ordinary human will but in the grip of a system. So, the concept of 'rule of the people' was converted into the 'rule of a system'.

New little kingdoms (constituencies) were created as foundations of representative democracy. The leadership in a political community, like the State of Meghalaya, is recruited from these little kingdoms, and hence, the fate of the State depends on the capacities and characters of representatives elected by these little kingdoms. Therefore, the nature of politics in the State does not depend on the wisdom of the enlightened section of the society living in the State Capital, but depends largely on the status of human development in these little kingdoms which are mostly in the rural areas. It is said that 'in the country of the blind, the one-eyed is king.' If the electorates in some of these little kingdoms have no idea what democracy is all about, and keep on electing the same incapable representatives again and again for whatever motives, then these so called senior politicians are the rulers in

the State in spite of their incapability, and the representatives from other enlightened little kingdoms would only be followers. That is how we have a virtual democracy at the mercy of a system.

On the economic front, real economic goods are natural resources and products of labour and services; and real economic transactions are carried out in trading of real goods and services conducted through the barter system. But for the sake of convenience, money is invented on the basis of a legal tender guaranteed by the political authority to facilitate economic transactions. What we call 'money' today is only a representative value of real goods and services as long as the political authority upholds the guarantee to pay the bearer the value written on the legal tender. The demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes by the Modi Government has brought out the reality of this truth to the fore, when suddenly by the government's withdrawal of guarantee the beloved notes were rendered into useless pieces of paper.

The general concept of economy today is based not on real transactions of goods and services to acquire real wealth, but on the hot chase for that paper tender floating in the air which is the measure of all wealth. It is wealth in the form of a number that we are all after. A great business man is one who has the ability to fatten his bank account by deduction from the bank accounts of others. The only thing important is to acquire a cheque by hook or by crook, and once the amount on the cheque is added to the bank account it becomes legitimate wealth regardless of the nature or the method how the cheque was acquired.

So it is good to be aware that we live today in a virtual economy as well as a virtual democracy. The elected representative from any of the little kingdoms can accumulate crores and crores of rupees in his bank account by trading neither in real commodity nor in services other than signing files for allotting supply orders or construction orders to some persons or companies. This is possible

only because of the fact that he is a certified elected representative of real people, and a number on a piece of paper is a guaranteed representative of real wealth; and both are legal agencies of a virtual political-economy.

It is hard for any person to give ten acres of his ancestral land to another person as a gift because it is real wealth, but it is easy for someone who is expecting some favour in return to give away money double the price of the land to another person because it is virtual wealth. It is hard for people who are trading in real wealth to become rich because real wealth is firmly established on the ground, but those who are trading in virtual wealth can become crore-patis overnight because virtual wealth is floating in the air. Knowledge on earning and management of real wealth is taught in schools and colleges, but knowledge on earning and management of virtual wealth is learnt in the streets and highways. That is why and how, some people with no formal education at all could purchase not only real wealth belonging to the educated, but also their votes to be their political representatives because they mastered the art of acquiring virtual wealth in a virtual economy. Hence, the people who are in control of this virtual democracy are not those who are concerned with the enlightenment of the people on the principle of real democracy and justice, but those have the means and the conscience to buy the will of the ignorant.

A time has also come when we will be living in a virtual society. The traditional human society is a milieu where bountiful gifts of nature exist; where happiness and joy, love and affection, peace and companionship, justice and harmony reign. It is a milieu where each one derives joy and satisfaction by giving the best to the community; where dances and songs are performed for the joy of dancing and singing, not for the money collected at the counter. But in this virtual society we have to pay for every means of living. There are monthly bills we have to pay for living our lives: bills for house rent, food and drinks, medical care, drinking water, for electricity, cooking gas, education, sanitary services, mobile

connections, entertainment, house cleaning, clothes washing, etc. There would also be bills which people have to pay for psychological and spiritual counselling for maintaining their peace of mind.

Each one's life would be hung in the wide web of the virtual global society which emerged with the development of information technology and the establishment of the world market, together with the digitisation of every aspect of human life. Globalization, liberalization, and privatization are initiated by multinational corporations to convert human society into a corporate economy. The intention is not the welfare of particular societies but the conversion of the whole world into a market place where every aspect of human life including spiritual life of the soul and love of the heart would be commercialized in economic transactions.

A time would come when some agencies may declare that the air in the environment where we live needs artificial oxygenation and that they have obtained authority from the government to do that through their patented technology. So there would also be monthly bills to be paid for the oxygen that we breathe. Some agencies with government's authority may organise special security groups for overseeing the safety of people in the community, and monthly bills would have to be paid to them for that virtual service. Some other agencies may obtain government's authority to impose that every person should pay for life insurance otherwise no benefit from the government and other agencies would be applicable to them. All kinds of services shall be provided for one's living, but bills have to be paid, or else one has to die. I believe that a smart city is something of that nature.

There would be bills and bills all around for having been born to live, and even bills to be paid in advance for one's funeral after death. May God intervene, so that all these things may not happen and people are not bound by the bills all around, but can still drink water from the springs, use their own fuel and eat their own food in the bounty of Terra Madre, and work to earn their living and pay the bills for the real things they need, but not for virtual commodities and services devised by the cunning minds.

Demonetisation cripples bilateral border trade

Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar see reduced exchange

By Ashis Biswas

For the first time, the Bangladeshi taka has surpassed the Indian rupee in informal exchange value in border trade at the Petropole-Benapole checkpoint, in the wake of demonetisation.

The weakening of the rupee has been a standard feature in the post-demonetisation phase in whatever remains of the regular bilateral trade in areas close to the Indo-Bhutan, Indo-Nepal and Indo-Myanmar borders as well. While traders in all countries have been hard hit, Nepal and Bhutan have special problems. Large reserves of old Indian currency exist in both as the Indian currency was being freely used as legal tender along with local currencies.

The Centre has already constituted an expert committee to sort out these and related problems as soon as possible. Officials are in touch with local border exchange associations. However, with few new currency notes in circulation and not many banks functioning in most areas, the level of daily trade has gone down like a cliff. The situation remains grim in the medium term since Nov 8, when demonetisation was announced in India.

To give only one example of the decline that has occurred, out of nearly 60,000 traders active on both sides of the Indo-Myanmar border in the Moreh-Tamu region, only about 7000 are still carrying on their work at a much reduced level. The revenue losses have been very high at the Petrapole-Benapole checkpoint on the Indo-Bangladesh border. At this largest 'dry land port' of Asia, almost 70 per cent of the annual bilateral trade turnover of \$4 billion is handled. Nearly 1000 trucks carrying various cargo use this terminal daily, with over 1,200 people from both countries involved in cross border financial dealings.

Now hundreds of trucks are stranded along the national highways on both sides as business has dropped to a trickle of its former volume. Unlike the currency of other countries, the Bangladesh taka was running fairly close to the Indian rupee even before the demonetization was announced, with 100 BD takas equalling Rs 80 rupees. With a nearly 20 per cent fall in the rupee's value, the tables have now been turned.

In Nepal, traders and businessmen owning over Rs 50 crore in old Indian currency approached their Prime Minister Prachanda for help. The Nepalese Prime Minister (PM) in turn phoned Indian PM Narendra Modi according to media reports and received an assurance that the problems would be sorted out officially.

In contrast, local businessmen have resorted to more practical and ready-made solutions at the Indo-Bhutan border areas whether in Assam or West Bengal. The Bhutanese Ngultrum is normally much the weaker currency in comparison with the Rupee. Since Nov 8 and a virtual breakdown in trade and business, people on both sides have decided to use both currencies at par. This, as elsewhere, means Indian businessmen as well as revenue collections will register a loss.

Interestingly, the lack of a coordinated approach in India, whether at the State or Central levels, is also a major factor in the present logjam. In Assam for instance, state government authorities have been alert to the losses of the Indian traders operating out of remote areas of Kokrajhar district near the Bhutan border. They have informed the Centre and have tried to ensure that a fairer parity rate is maintained between the Indian and Bhutanese currencies.

This is not the case in West Bengal. North Bengal-based media have been reporting for days the losses incurred by the Indian side as Bhutan gets an unfair advantage in terms of present informal exchange rates, with reports received from Alipurduar and parts of Jalpaiguri. Yet, police authorities and the district administrations at Jaigaon deny any knowledge of the thriving 'informal' trade that hurts the local economy. Nor have they bothered to alert central government agencies! It has been no different at the Indo-Myanmar border. In the Moreh-Tamu region, the Burmese Kyat has risen against a weaker Rupee, with Rs 100 rupees now accounting for only Kyat 800 instead of 1900 in the past.

Quite apart from substantial losses and major drops in their turnover, Indian traders in most areas are no less worried about the slow response from the Central government and its long reaction time. Despite frantic appeals and reminders for help, the supply of new notes has not increased. In the Northeast, there are areas where there are no banks within 50 kilometres of small towns and villages, which are involved in bilateral trade! At Mizoram, there are reports of people resorting to using IOUs(I owe you) to help them carry out their daily trade, whether among themselves or at the bilateral level. But such steps do help people in medical emergencies, in making costly but essential purchases or to people going on immediate journeys out of the state to other areas. In Manipur, in addition to the post-demonetisation confusion, occasional economic blockades organised by militant Nagas or other tribal groups, have exacerbated the travails faced by common people.

Nepal's problems could have been avoided, if only Kathmandu had not agreed to an Indian request, made during Mr. Modi's visit to the country in 2014. Nepalese authorities were not accepting Indian notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 denomination, but were persuaded to do so after this visit, as relations improved.

Now that India has scrapped these notes at short notice, Nepal naturally expects India to stand by it and help regularise all transactions so that traders and businessmen in the country do not suffer. All in all, several weeks after November 8, complaints continue to pour in from a thousand sectors of India's economy, from the big metros down to the remotest villages. It is far from clear whether matters will improve 'within 50 days', by December 30 or thereabouts, as Prime Minister Modi had announced. Not only has the economy slowed down in almost all sectors, but the decision to demonetize, however laudable and necessary, has implications for India's neighbouring countries and bilateral relations as well.

These are very hard times for Central policy-makers and officials, not to mention the common people. It seems everyone from the top down to the grassroots, will have to remain very, very patient indeed over the next few weeks, maybe months, even. (IPA Service)

TO THE EDITOR

Modi-fied India

Editor,

For almost a month now since 8th November, all news items are on demonetization drive of the BJP Government championed by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. He has called it a surgical strike against black money. Indeed it is a preemptive strike that might have taken many black money hoarders by surprise. However, as the situation has unfolded now, it seems like the culprits had their way out but it is the simple, honest citizen who is suffering. As of now over 70 innocent persons have become victims of this drastic measure. More deaths will occur either due to long hours in the queue or because of hunger due to unavailability of money. What is more mysterious is the government's quick suppression of the 1000 and 500 currencies and the issuing of a higher denomination of 2000 notes which has created more transactional problems for the public. No shopkeeper accepts a 2000 note because he does not have change for that. By suppressing the lower denomination of 500 rupees, more inconvenience has been created since the

new 500 notes have not even arrived in many parts of India. What is delaying the issuance of the 500 notes is another mystery. It looks like the government is playing games with the lives of millions of innocent people. Calling it a strike at the heart of the terrorists has become a joke, because as the news report shows, terrorists have already acquired the new currencies in their collection. Claiming it to be a war on black money also seems like a cruel joke because many black money hoarders have already had a preemptive solution. If reports are true, many of the big-moneyed persons have already been informed about the move and so they have already converted their black money into white.

The government is guilty of two crimes: first, the death of so many innocent persons who even though had their legitimate and hard earned money, have been robbed of their earnings and even their lives; secondly, the crime of wasting thousands of working hours daily which a poor country like ours cannot afford to do. People in the west are laughing at us to see long queues of people lining up daily in front of banks and ATMs as if we do not have any work to do. Mr. Modi's statement

that demonetization is causing sleepless nights to culprits, is the most insensitive statement ever made, because it is the poor people who are really losing their sleep since they have to think about what to eat the next day, how to buy medicines and how to pay their children's school fees. As I write this, I can imagine how many poor people especially in rural India, are silent and voiceless victims of this Tughlaq-like law. One Chinese paper has remarked that if such demonetization were enacted in China there would be a revolution. But thank God, Indians are peaceful and tolerant by nature. But it is not morally justified for someone to take advantage of the goodness of people. I am really surprised to see how most media channels seem to be on the side of the oppressor than of the oppressed. The arrogance with which Mr Modi and the BJP government are going about by not caring a hoot for the criticism just shows how India is gradually slipping away from democracy into an unofficial autocracy.

Yours etc.,
B. Mawrie
Viaemail

Unfair criticism of St Rose School

Editor,

St. Rose School is my alma mater and I am proud of its progress over the years. Hence I am deeply offended by the way the School has been painted through letters to the editor time and again. As someone whose ward is also a student in the School I do not hesitate to say that our human wants are unlimited. We always seek for more than what can be provided to us but as someone who is seriously determined to see their children prosper I don't subscribe to this method of exposing and disgracing the very school that nurtures your kids without actually negotiating or even learning the full truth before making such serious allegations. Not everything is always the best in St. Rose School but as important stakeholders it is our responsibility to positively contribute to making this very old school of ours shine like any good school in Meghalaya. Belittling the great efforts put in by every teacher in this

school despite the desperately scarce resources and infrastructure that is common to all non-urban, non-profit making school is nothing but an effort to destroy the hard, surviving education network that actually sustains the underprivileged.

I contest the idea of dismal progress as indicated in the letter because I have the conviction today to stress that my ward studying there since class IX is doing wonderfully well in every aspect as compared to the stress she could barely sustain while she was in another city-based school. Student's progress is therefore a matter of perspective. Not everyone who is very good in Grammar or let's say very fluent in English will necessarily always excel or have the kind of confidence that is otherwise specially endowed to others along with separate talents that can make them prosper. Being a teacher myself I believe the best way to impart education at this historical juncture is to appreciate and nurture the best that students have in them rather than consistently mainstreaming them to numbers and marks. Particularly while dealing with weaker students, I believe acknowledging and

exposing their talents is the best way to boost their confidence in other spheres as well.

Since not all parents of St. Rose School students have the commitment as the writer of the letter and which is reflected by their attendance in the PTA meetings and result day, I would like to stress that I have full faith in the teachers for the selection of candidates for SSLC exams which is also the resolution of the last PTA meeting.

While endorsing the idea of enhancing the space for interaction with parents to air their complaints, I also wish parents become more responsible in ensuring that such destructive methods are avoided in the future and try instead to resort to more constructive contributions towards the school's development. Finally, St. Rose is a wonderful institution which has a long history of producing great personalities and alumni who are away from the limelight. I am sure the corrective measures suggested by the writer is an effort to collaborate in the progress of the School.

Yours etc.,
M. Kharbithai
Alumnus, St. Rose School