

# Editorial

Imphal, Tuesday, October 6, 2015

## Bridge of woe

In the state of Manipur where anything but the mundane happens, nothing holds the collective attention and concern of the public for so long and so hard as the progress- or otherwise- of the much discussed and criticized construction and progress of the state-of-the-art Sanjenthong Bridge. With the construction process beginning on April 30, 2014, the original proposed span of 61metres long and of 15 metres wide project with a cost of Rs 26,84,28,000 was later revised to a span of 55.8 meters in length and 22.7 meters in breadth with a new revised cost of Rs 32 crores. The project was scheduled to complete before the Sangai Festival which is being held in the month of November (21-30) every year. In fact, the need to replace the old bridge was felt more prominently after the chocking traffic became a permanent feature during the festival days. Now that two editions of the festivals have flown past in quick succession even before any semblance of the new bridge can be ascertained, the pertinent question everyone is asking, with just about a month to go before another edition of the festival rolls in is: will this year's festival prove to be another disappointment for the vast public who have had to take long detours and suffer endless traffic jams in order to take part in the festivities? To take things into perspective, the Bandra-Worli Sea Link - variously described as one of the most challenging infrastructure projects undertaken in recent times in India is a cable-stayed 5.6 km bridge over the Mahim Bay that links Bandra in the Western Suburbs of Mumbai with Worli in South Mumbai which was completed in 10 years with almost half the period delayed by Public Interest Litigations. Compare the scenario with what is being turning out to be in Manipur. It might be argued that the transportation of "Hangars" from foreign countries took time and all that usual crap, but the fact is, those who envisaged such a project should have thought of the inevitable hurdles during the initial period. The evident failure on this front proved either that the planning and concept was flawed, or that there has been a colossal deficiency in execution and management. Was there no easier method of construction that could have ensured speedy completion? Or, what could be the significant advantage of the Hangars and other "foreign made" contraptions over more conventional methods? If 56 metres of space cannot be connected in over one and half years right in the middle of the state capital, what can the public expect from the present government regarding the construction and repairing of hundreds of kilometers of roads which runs through some very rough terrain? The only one thing we can be certain of is the renewed assurance and public display of intent from the leaders. Again.

## Transporters' strike affects freight traffic movement across India

**ANI**  
**New Delhi, Oct 6:** ASSOCHAM urged the All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) to call off their nationwide indefinite strike, which affected about 20 billion tonnes-km of freight traffic movement. In total of one crore trucks and tempos went on strike that further led to shortage of essential commodities like milk, fruits and vegetables. The costs are likely to increase by about 10-15 percent per day if the strike continues, states ASSOCHAM. Besides this, strike by truckers has also impacted government revenues worth over Rs 3,600 lakh. ASSOCHAM in a release appealed to the union government for its intervention to end the stalemate to promote road transport as the share of high value low volume traffic is bound to increase.

## 3 TDP leaders held captive by Naxals in AP

**PTI**  
**Hyderabad, Oct 6:** Three local Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leaders have been held captive allegedly by Naxals in Visakhapatnam district, police said today. Naxals through their network had asked the three TDP leaders to meet them at Dharkonda in the district yesterday afternoon and accordingly they went. Visakhapatnam district Superintendent of Police K Praveen told PTI over phone

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## Impact of ad blockers on the media

*The technology battle over ad blocking will hurt the web: Readers have the right to use ad blockers, and publishers will be pushed to block users who use ad blockers.*

One impact that Apple announcing ad blocking in iOS9 has had is that the discussions about the death of online banner advertising and the reportage on ad blocking has probably made more people aware of Ad Blockers, and the likelihood of them using them has increased. I've been debating ad blockers off and on for a year now with friends on Twitter, and this is essentially how I view ad blockers now:  
1. The readers are right: Intrusive, in-your-face, advertising is what has led readers to this place. Reading is an increasingly uncomfortable experience on publisher websites, and there's a difference between advertising that attracts readers away from the reading experience, and advertising that prevents. At the time that the ad was running, the Ant Farm banner on MediaNama had the highest outgoing traffic to a single destination. Yesterday, I watched the entire 3 minutes of a video ad by Quirk on YouTube (even though it had the option to skip), because the ad was engaging and kept me hooked. There is something to be said for good design and creative. There can be good design in intrusive advertising, but if it's intrusive, it pisses readers off.  
2. The publishers are right: In general, advertising is commoditised to a level where it attaches little value to the quality of the content or the publishers brand. The rates have been ridiculously low, the payment cycles are too long, which means that in order to sustain, publishers end up trying to: 1. sell as much

advertising as possible, 2. Increase the number of impressions served or clicks on links, and 3. Offer intrusive upgrades (some of them call them 'innovations') as a means of getting higher rates. There are other revenue models, but very few that scale the way advertising scales, and subscriptions are tricky in a market where supply of content is infinite. Publisher brands are increasingly becoming less important, and not many advertisers are looking at a positive rub-off that brand affinity might bring.  
3. The Advertisers are right (kinda): They're spending the money, and their focus on the return on investment is justified. The situation that existed with traditional advertising - "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half", is a little better online: in the sense that they have more data to figure out what is not working. The problem is with how online advertising gets measured: the emphasis on performance driven advertising has had a negative effect on publishers, and as a result, on readers because it pushes publishers to get more clicks and engagement with ads. All in all, this is essentially the impact of the enormous scaling of content and audience that has taken place across platforms (not just publishers) which has led to an enormous scaling of supply of advertising inventory, which has brought prices down and commoditised the audience (i.e. you're just a number). The second key development is that,

as the Verge rightly pointed out, we're in the midst of a battle between Apple, Google, Facebook and Amazon over world domination. Ad blocking hurts Google the most. Everyone else is just collateral damage. It's a similar situation with Internet.org, in my opinion: Google and Apple won at the operating system level, so the battle has shifted to the network level, with Facebook wooing telecom operators and governments. What next?  
1. The technology battle over ad blocking will hurt the web: Readers have the right to use ad blockers. Their browser, their prerogative. This means that publishers will be pushed to do two things: firstly, block users who use ad blockers. Their website, their prerogative. Ad blockers will try and beat this. Secondly, they'll push users towards apps because publishers can control the advertising in apps, not the browser. The push towards apps is already accelerating, and this has negative implications for the open web and impacts diversity and choice of content: you can have millions of websites on the web, but you can't have millions of apps on your handset.  
2. Banner advertising won't die: But it will hurt. There will always be users who don't use ad blockers, unless the operating systems integrates ad blocking, and keeps it on as default. Given that India is Android country and Google depends almost entirely on advertising for its revenues, it's unlikely that they'll integrate

ad blocking into Android. The increase in usage of apps means that more inventory will be available within apps.  
3. The switch to native advertising will be unsustainable: Native advertising (as in custom content) is not scalable both for the advertiser and the publisher: the cost of creating content specifically for an audience or a publisher is much too high, and even if the ad can be replicated across publications and platforms, automated distribution is likely to be impacted by ad blockers. That brings manual processes in play, which add to the cost of delivering advertising, whether at an agency, network or will only work for large platforms that aggregate audiences.  
4. Other business models for media will have to emerge: Advertising has been the easiest model, and especially frictionless when through networks such as Google's AdSense. It has meant that, a certain scale, you can run an ad supported media business without having to do sales. The alternative to advertiser-pay is reader-pay, and two alternatives exist: subscriptions and paywalls, and value added content (which we're trying). But all of this depends on the machinations that are also taking place at a discovery level: with the switch to mobile, social media discovery is becoming more and more important, which means even having an audience will eventually depend on how you play (or get played) by the likes of Facebook and Twitter. (Courtesy: **The Hood**)

## National & International News

### Wrong to blame India for blockade on the border: NPS

**ANI**  
**Kathmandu, Oct. 6:** The Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NPS) on Tuesday criticised the local media reports and other people who blamed the Indian counterpart for its involvement in the blockade of several freight trucks on the border. "The Blockade has been done by Madhesi people. The people of Madhes have sat on the border. This is being done to malign India by anti-India people in Nepal and

it won't affect our relationship with India, there is nothing to worry about," President NPS, Rajendra Mahto told ANI. Mahto also said there was a wrong propaganda being spread against India in Nepal and that Nepal media was projecting wrong news deliberately, adding that India had nothing to do with the blockade. "This has been done earlier also that a section of people in Nepal have accused India of its

involvement in the internal issues," he added. When asked whether India was helping Madhesi in their protest on border, Mahto said "India is only providing security to their freight carriers as there is no security from the Nepal side but there was no help by the other side in the blockade." However, Nepal's Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahant refused the reports that Nepal was to redirect trade with China after

undeclared blockade by India, saying "We can't fully redirect our trade with India to China due to geographical difficulties." "It is not possible to redirect trade to China immediately," Mahto told to the local media. Several freight trucks, including some fuel tankers, which were stranded on the Indian side for over 11 days, entered the Nepali side through different border check-points on October 4.

### Student Arrested Over Social Media Posts in Australia

**PTI**  
**Melbourne, Oct. 6:** A 17-year-old Australian boy who allegedly threatened the police on Facebook was arrested today in Sydney. The teen was of the same school as the 15-year-old Parramatta shooter who killed a police official last week. "During the interaction, police allege the teenager threatened and

intimidated police," New South Wales Police said in a statement. The student was handcuffed and had his belongings emptied on the footpath, ABC news reported. He was questioned at the state crime command in Australian suburb of Parramatta. The boy had posted a news video of the shooting on Facebook that read, "Serves you right I hope

them lil piggies get shot." He also posted a video of Commissioner Andrew Scipione addressing the media which said, "Yallah merryland (sic) police station is next hope they all burn in hell (sic)." The boy, said to be 17-year-old, last posted a message on Sunday that read "No justice, no peace, f---k the police."

Last week a 58-year-old NSW Police finance department accountant Curtis Cheng was shot dead by teenager Farhad Khalil Mohammad Jabar as he was leaving. Farhad Khalil Mohammad Jabar, of Iraqi-Kurdish background and born in Iran, attended Parramatta's Arthur Phillip High School.

### Death toll of Indians in haj stampede rises to 74: Swaraj

**PTI**  
**New Delhi, Oct. 5:** The death toll of Indians in the Haj stampede rose to 74 on Tuesday with Saudi authorities announcing more casualties, even as scores of people were still missing after the worst tragedy in 25 years to hit the annual pilgrimage. "Haj stampede - Saudi Arabia has released a further list. The Indian toll is now 74," External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj tweeted. Scores of Indians and people from other nationalities are missing since the stampede at the annual haj near the holy city of Mecca on September 24. Swaraj had earlier

said 78 Indians are missing and the government is doing everything to locate them. According to reports, tallies of the dead from foreign officials and media put the toll at 1,036. Minister of State for External Affairs VK Singh has been rushed to Saudi Arabia to coordinate with the authorities there to trace the missing Indians. Singh was asked by Swaraj to leave for Mecca on Monday after the Saudi Arabian government informed India that it will be interacting with individual countries regarding their nationals - both those dead or missing. The Minister of State will

coordinate with the local authorities and strengthen the efforts of Consul General there. The haj stampede broke out after two massive lines of pilgrims converged on each other from different directions at an intersection close to the five-

storey Jamarat Bridge in Mina for symbolic stoning of the devil. It was the second major accident this year for pilgrims, after a construction crane collapsed on September 11 at Mecca's Grand Mosque, killing over 100 people, including 11 Indians.

### Mahatma Gandhi's statue damaged by anti-social elements

**IANS**  
**Patna, Oct. 6:** A statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Bihar's capital was damaged by some "anti-social elements", triggering a protest by locals who demanded the administration take stern action, police

said on Tuesday. "A white marble statue of Gandhiji was damaged... it appears to be an act of anti-social elements. Police have begun an investigation into the incident," police official Ashok Pandey said in Patna.