

Editorial

Imphal, Friday, April 15, 2016

Stretching the good times

The state of Manipur is indeed volatile to the point that the merest hint of an aberration in the society never fails to draw huge crowd, and having thus gathered, without the slightest idea of the actual going-on, will then proceed to participate and pass judgments. It is perhaps the manifestation of the constant need to escape from the grim reality that is incessantly threatening to tumble the fragile social balance. Or, it may also be the inherent urge to celebrate life, no matter what the circumstances be that challenges our daily lives. Leaving the reasoning for such social phenomena aside, it must be said that the people of the state surely do take celebrations or any expressions of personal or social emotions for that matter, to an altogether different level. Almost everyone of us is on the lookout for a good time, and there is invariably some form of continuation of the myriad festivals being celebrated in the state by different communities and groups throughout the year. Such a tradition which has had social sanctions more often than not tends to be a source of nuisance and disturbance to the society ultimately. If we consider any festival or celebration, we will invariably find that there almost always is a residual celebration to wind up the principal or major event, and as if that is not enough, people will find a way to associate another event with the one which has been done and over with. There had been many undesirable consequences in the past as such, and going by the present social arrangements, things are set to remain unchanged for the foreseeable future. While celebrations are social necessities and should be observed as such, there is a visible deviation from the actual purpose which slowly yet surely takes away from the experience and the importance of it all. The extra toll regarding the social, financial and safety aspects such prolonging of celebrations takes need to be ascertained so that the society as a whole can appreciate the need for its people to come to terms with reality and try to make collective efforts to lift the presently pitiable social and economic condition of the state instead of overindulging in trivial pursuits of momentary delights. It is time we take stock of the situation of the various ills restraining the state from making rapid strides towards progress. We need to earn our celebrations and breaks from our routine physical and mental sapping tasks. Every organisation, group as well as the government have a stake in curbing the excess before things get out of hand and becomes an accepted social evil. We need to enjoy and entertain without letting go of our responsibilities.

Japan earthquake: Nine killed, more aftershocks expected

ANI Washington D.C., April 15: The deadly earthquake which struck Japan yesterday has left at least nine people dead and strict caution is being maintained as more aftershocks are expected. According to CNN, search crews are still looking for people trapped under collapsed buildings. The magnitude-6.2 quake struck near Ueki, the U.S. Geological Survey said. Dozens of smaller aftershocks followed. Two deaths occurred in Mashiki, the Kumamoto Prefecture office said. One person died in a collapsed house, and the other died in a fire caused by the quake. Nearly 800 people were injured, 50 severely. The prefecture office said 44,449 people had evacuated. Gen Aoki, director of the Japan Meteorological Agency's earthquake division, warned more aftershocks could occur over the next week. The quake was centered mostly under land, not an ocean, meaning it did not spawn a major tsunami.

North Korea missile launch failed

ANI Washington D.C., April 15: South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff has announced that North Korea's attempt to fire a missile from its eastern coast ended in failure. According to CNN, the statement from South Korea's military the attempt involved an intermediate-range Musudan missile. "We call again on North Korea to refrain from actions and rhetoric that further raise tensions in the region and focus instead on taking concrete steps toward fulfilling its international commitments and obligations," a U.S. State Department official said. Earlier this week, U.S. intelligence satellites spotted signs that North Korea may have been preparing to launch a mobile ballistic missile. Pyongyang carried out its fourth nuclear test in January, and had said it succeeded in miniaturizing nuclear warheads to fit on medium-range ballistic missiles.

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NIT Kashmir: local and national versions differ

The national media whipped up emotions by carrying provocative stories. The Kashmir papers stuck to the facts. MOAZUM MOHAMMAD writes from Srinagar

A survey of the press coverage of the events at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) in Kashmir shows that the local media did not take a stand against outstation students and based their reporting on facts. Instead, it was the national media that blocked or ignored some facts, which escalated the row. Two prominent local dailies, *Rising Kashmir* and *Kashmir Reader*, reported the incident on April 2 when the clashes erupted between local and non-local students after the latter thrashed the delivery boy of a courier company and attempted to assault a faculty member. The version of events, according to the *Times of India* however, was different. Its report said that the two groups of students clashed with one another after Kashmiri students celebrated India's defeat by the West Indies in the T20 World Cup semifinal after which the non-Kashmiri students took out a march which triggered clashes - without any mention of the assault on the courier person or the faculty member. "Some of the reports filed from New Delhi were provocative." Some of the reports filed from New Delhi were provocative. A *Mail Today* story filed by Siddhartha Rai had the headline "Non-Kashmiri girl students of Srinagar NIT narrate horror, say they are getting threats of rape". Similarly, Zee News carried a story along the same lines. What's striking is not a single local media organization nor a single Kashmir-based reporter working for a national organization - and don't forget these were the people on the ground - reported anything about rape threats. Nor did any student report the threat to the police or the

Ministry of Human Resource Development when they listed their demands. Here's the link to the students' demands given to the Ministry's fact-finding team. In the Jammu-based *State Times*, the non-Kashmiri students' demand for NIT to be moved out of Kashmir and for action to be taken against the policemen involved in the lathi-charge were both reported. But here too, there was no mention of any female student complaining of a rape threat. In an interview with *Kashmir Reader*, the chairman of the Board of Governors, Dr M.J. Zarabi, said the allegation was false. What the female students had complained about, rather, was restrictions on their movement which they wanted relaxed. In fact, *Mail Today*, when it carried a story by their local correspondent, Naseer Ganai, contradicted its own earlier report because Ganai wrote: "Outstation girl students said that they have no complaints against local students and people. Keeping their faces covered, the girls said that they have issues with the NIT administration and the Jammu and Kashmir Police and said that their protests should not be given a religious colour." Another story in the *Times of India* can also be deemed to be inflammatory. It appeared on the front page on April 8 with a New Delhi dateline and claimed that NIT was India's most militarised campus. It failed to mention the fact that the central paramilitary forces were brought into the campus to prevent the situation deteriorating any further. In fact, the students listed the deployment of central

forces, rather than the Jammu & Kashmir police, as one of their demands to the Ministry of Human Resource Development. This was explained by IBNLive: "As Jammu and Kashmir Police has not been able to provide security and safe passage to leave the campus and rather has lathi-charged the students and shot tear gas shells on them. Therefore central forces should be engaged for the security of students of NIT Srinagar." In any case, if the national media were agitated at the presence of security forces on a campus, it is odd that they have never noticed that this is not at all an abnormal occurrence at Kashmiri educational institutions. If it is something unusual and unwarranted, then why have they not reported on how some of Kashmir's educational institutes are occupied by the security forces? An education department official has expressed helplessness at getting a school building vacated by the army but this has not been a story for the national media. A case of double standards? "To get the nuances of these stories right perhaps editors in New Delhi should trust their local reporters on the ground more." After the police lathi charge on protesting students, some news channels such as Zee News were even more provocative and raised questions about the integrity of the Jammu & Kashmir police "for stopping students raising the Indian tricolor and shouting Bharat Mata Ki Jai". This prompted police official to come up openly and defend themselves. The national media

forgets JK Police has been on the forefront of fighting the armed militancy in the State. Meanwhile, the Jammu-based Daily Excelsior reported in one its reports on April 7, said "unfazed by the hostile atmosphere, the 'courageous' non-local students, all girls, also hoisted tricolour on the campus amidst shouting of patriotic slogans like 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', 'VandeMatram' and 'Jab Tak Suraj Chand Rahega, Bharat Tera Naam Rahega'." To get the nuances of these stories right, perhaps editors in New Delhi should trust their local reporters on the ground more. Instead, Times Now, NDTV, ABP News, and India TV flew in reporters from outside the Valley to cover the NIT controversy, despite having fully-fledged bureaus here. This is rather insensitive given that local reporters sometimes risk their lives and also have to bear the brunt of people's wrath. Journalists working with the national media have to hide their identity on occasion because local people accuse them of taking sides and being unfair in their reporting. On the other hand, they are not trusted by their organizations to do stories themselves, without New Delhi journalists being flown in to supersede them. One reporter who works for a national news channel and who did not wish to be named, deserves the last word. He lamented that reporters from Delhi either had a "preconceived mindset or they didn't have any understanding about local issues, which results in such provocations". Indeed. (Courtesy The Hoot)

National & International News

Wreath laying ceremony of Major Amit Deswal underway

ANI New Delhi, April 15: The wreath-laying ceremony of Major Amit Deswal who was killed during a gunbattle with Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) militants in Manipur is underway. Major Amit Deswal was killed during a combing operation conducted by the Rashtriya Rifles and the Special Forces in Tamenglong district of Manipur.

The soldiers had engaged in encounter with ZUF militants in the Nungba area. Deswal, of 21 Para SF, received a gunshot wound to his stomach during the operation. Unfortunately, his body could not be recovered immediately as the area was densely forested. Manipur Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh also extended his condolences to the bereaved father.



Pistol, threat letter against Kanhaiya Kumar found on bus

PTI New Delhi, April 15: A country-made pistol and a threat letter against JNUSU president Kanhaiya Kumar, purportedly written by a man who had earlier threatened the student leader over Facebook, were recovered from a bus operating between an ISBT and JNU campus following which Delhi Police is mulling enhancing his security.

The weapon was recovered in a bus operating between Kashmere Gate ISBT and the JNU campus, after the driver spotted an unclaimed bag and raised an alarm. Police is trying to ascertain identity of the bag's owner and several persons have been questioned, a senior official said on Friday. With the gun, there was also a letter which said that Kanhaiya

and Umar Khalid, who were arrested under sedition charge over a controversial event in JNU campus, will be decapitated. The letter was purportedly written by the person who had threatened Kumar over Facebook earlier saying that men with weapons are already present inside the campus, ready to kill him any moment, the official said. Kumar doesn't get security cover

inside the campus but the university authorities have clearly been instructed to inform Vasant Kunj (North) police station everytime he leaves the campus and security is provided accordingly. After the alert, the police are likely to increase his security cover and also enhance vigil around the JNU area, the official added.

Military operation expected against Rajanpur gangsters

ANI Lahore, April 15: A full-fledged military operation against the notorious Chottu gang of Dera Ghazi Khan is expected today after hundreds of army troops arrived in Rahimyar Khan and Rajanpur last night. Around 500 soldiers, including two groups of Zarrar Commandos, flew into Rahimyar Khan's Farid Airbase from Okara while two companies of 33, Punjab Regiment from Multan arrived in Rajanpur with four helicopters. The latest development came after the federal interior ministry accorded approval for launching a military operation against the hardened criminals of Rajanpur's Rohjan teshil. A strike force with paratroops from Rangers would also take part in the joint operation along with regular

policemen and commands of the force, reports Dawn. The crackdown against the gangsters of Rajanpur continued for the 18th day on Thursday, a day after the outlaws killed seven and abducted 22 policemen in fierce clashes in Kacha Jamal area in South Punjab. Punjab IGP Mushqat Sukhera met the Multan Corps Commander in Rahim Yar Khan and asked for the army's help in eliminating criminals from the area. The gang of Ghulam Rasool Chottu, who carries a huge bounty on his head, has more than 100 gangsters against whom at least 54 cases of murders, robberies and kidnappings are registered in police stations across South Punjab. Chottu has demanded the release of his comrades, withdrawal of police and Rangers and dismantling of

security check-posts in his territory, and the return of the gang's firearms for ending the crisis. The police have ruled out accepting any demands and are instead

planning for a large-scale operation. For the rescue of the 22 kidnapped policemen, locals have been contacted through influential tribal leaders. **Peace talks with India to go ahead** **Islamabad, April 15:** The Pakistani foreign office has rejected a notion that the peace process between Islamabad and India was suspended, saying it remained engaged with New Delhi. "We need to look ahead and not think in terms of foreclosing any options. Both sides are in contact with each other," foreign office spokesman Nafees Zakaria said on Thursday during a weekly media briefing. The spokesman was referring to media reports quoting Pakistan's High Commissioner in India, Abdul Basit as having said that the peace process was "suspended", Dawn online reported on Friday. "Dialogue is the best option. Diplomacy is for interaction and engagement between countries," Zakaria said. Last December, the two countries had agreed to restart the peace dialogue, which was named Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue. It was agreed during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's surprise stopover in Lahore on Christmas Day that the foreign secretaries would meet to decide the schedule and other details of the first round of talks.