

Editorial

Imphal, Tuesday, March 22, 2016

Celebrating in the right spirit

The changing seasons have an unmistakable way of making their presence felt, and so it is once again the time for the state to celebrate what could be arguably described as the most intensely participated festival of all, Yaoshang/ Yaosang- a local take on the Holi festival which marks the end of the winter gloom and the rejoicing of the bloom of the approaching spring. Almost all print media in the state will cease publication for five days as Manipur celebrates the festival from the 23rd to the 27th of this month. It is not that the media houses intentionally want to stay off the newsstand thereby depriving the right of the citizens to information but are rather compelled as newspaper hawkers faces the most terrible time in distributing the papers from door to door. As a convention, during the festival period people raised no objection, but rather expected of little girls coming out on the streets and lanes and beg for money (nakatheng). Young boys have fun distributing coins at their capacity. Elders or parents of the girls enjoy seeing their tiny tots rubbing colours on their face by boys of their ages. Yaosang perhaps is the biggest festival for Manipuri Hindus. Just as with any festival of recurring occasion changing and evolving with the times, the actual manner of celebration of the biggest festival was replaced by organizing sports meet at each locality by the local clubs making the festival more meaningful and turning it into a festival not only for the Manipuri Hindus but also for all the people residing in the state. However the beauty of the festival is marred by the excessively aggressive character of some of the girls. While it would evidently be misleading and risk generalization of the actions of the girls to say that the morals of Manipuri girls seem to have declined during the last few years and this year witnessed the worst, there certainly is a perceptible shift in the outlook and social behavior of a growing number of girls in the state. Girls were seen stopping passersby asking them donation to celebrate the festival when the festival has not yet begin. In effect, the very spirit of Yaosang is sabotaged by the aggressive nature of these few girls if not all.

This is an earnest appeal to all the people particularly the young as well as the not-so- young girls of the state to celebrate the festival with dignity and positive restraint. Reckless driving, stopping of speeding vehicles on the roads and lanes for donations etc also entails physical injury. Celebration of the festival by organizing sports is a healthy sign of the progress our state towards a better and inclusive future. It shows how the state is marching towards a more tolerant, practical and sporting direction. Meanwhile the state government should take extra efforts to ensure that people of the state celebrate the festival of colour in the right spirit as the most popular festival has a unifying and uplifting role in the socio-economic, cultural and political life of every community, big or small, primitive or modern, backward or developing or even developed ones in the state.

Kanhaya Kumar Meets Rahul Gandhi At His Home

New Delhi, March 22: Ahead of his visit to the Hyderabad University, JNU student leader Kanhaya Kumar has gone to visit Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi.

Kanhaya Kumar, who was arrested on sedition charges last month, is scheduled to meet with Mr Veumla's friends at the Hyderabad University tomorrow.

The meeting will take place at a part of the campus where a makeshift memorial has been set up for the 26-year-old, who committed suicide in January, triggering a nationwide controversy.

Mr Gandhi was meeting Kanhaya for the first time. He had earlier come out in full support for the student leader following his arrest on sedition charges.

While he was in jail, Mr Gandhi had visited JNU, where he criticised the Central government for the crackdown on students following

an event at the university in support of executed Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru, during which, anti-national slogans were raised.

Maoist killed in explosion

Koraput, Mar 22 (PTI) A wanted Maoist was killed after an explosive device he was planting to target security forces in a forest area went off near Kuralipadu village in the district, police said today.

Jayaram (27), while planting the explosive on the route used by the securitymen, was killed as the device went off on Sunday, SP (Koraput) Charan Singh Meena said quoting a report.

According to police, he was a resident of Chhattisgarh and serving in the armed squad of 'Andhra-Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee' of the rebels.

National and International News

Budget session of Delhi Assembly begins

PTI, New Delhi, March 22: The Budget session of Delhi Assembly began today with Lt Governor Najeeb Jung enunciating achievements of the AAP government in education, health and transport sectors and anti-corruption initiatives in its first year.

In his address to the legislators, Jung listed the steps taken in the field of education, including the proposal to build 25 school buildings and nearly 8,000 classrooms and reforms brought about by amending the Delhi School Education Amendment Bill. Mohalla clinics figured in the list of steps taken to bring about improvement in the health sector while the proposal to induct 1,000 new low-floor buses was mentioned by Jung with regard to measures being taken to augment public transport.

Jung said that the Delhi government is committed to making the city corruption free and a move towards this was the passage of the Lokpal Bill which has now been sent to the Centre for approval.

Later, Transport Minister Gopal Rai moved a motion thanking Jung. In his speech, Rai emphasised that the

AAP government's mantra is "honesty", the prime factor behind its "unprecedented success" and the upcoming Budget will "only take this forward".

Talking to reporters, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the government was "sad" about the fact that the Centre was "sitting" on the Bills passed by the Assembly including the Lokpal Bill and the proposed legislation recommending hike in salaries of legislators.

Sisodia will present the Budget on March 28. The five-day session, that will not see any new Bill being introduced, will conclude on March 31.

The House also condoned the death of army jawans in an avalanche in Siachen Glacier last month and observed silence in the memory of Mehtab Chand Jain, former member of Delhi Metropolitan Council and former MLA Krishan Tyagi.

11 killed, several injured as two explosions rock Brussels airport: Report

Brussels, March 22: Two explosions have been reported at Zaventem airport in Brussels. Agencies report said that 11 people have been killed and several injured in the blasts. The cause of the explosions is unknown.

Some reports from the scene speak of casualties but this has not been confirmed. The blasts come four days after the capture in Brussels of Salah Abdeslam, the main suspect in the Paris attacks in November.

Belgian media say the airport is being evacuated. It has been closed to flights. Rail transport to the facility has been halted. Social media reports from the scene speak of panic as people fled the airport buildings.

The Belgian broadcaster RTBF quoted a witness as saying there were people injured or unconscious in the departure area, opposite the Sheraton hotel. Other reports say at least one explosion was close to the American Airlines check-in area but this has not been confirmed. According to the fire department reports more explosive devices may be located in the airport. Rail transport to the facility has been halted.

EC holds meeting with Chief Secy, DGP on poll preparedness

Guwahati, March 22: In Assam, the full bench of Election Commission today held meeting with the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police in Guwahati. Official sources said that the Commission team led by Chief Election Commissioner Nasim Zaidi reviewed law and order situation among other issues. The Commission has also held meeting with Deputy Commissioners, SPs and election officers of those districts where election will be held in the second phase on 11th of next month.

Meanwhile, today is the last date for filing of nomination papers for the second phase. Second phase of polls will cover mostly Lower and Central Assam. BJP, Congress, AIUDF, Asom Gana Parishad and Left Front candidates among others have filed nominations. On the other hand, a total of 541 candidates are in fray for the first phase of polls to be held on 4th of April in 65 seats.

Amit Shah to visit TN tomorrow

Chennai, March 22: Amid uncertainty over his party's alliance prospects in poll-bound Tamil Nadu especially with DMDK, BJP President Amit Shah will "review the political situation" of the state during his brief visit here tomorrow. Shah is scheduled to attend a function involving Kanchi seer Jayendra Saraswathi here and is also likely to meet senior office-bearers of the state unit, a party leader said.

Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi nominated to join Cabinet

Naypyitaw, March 22: Myanmar's President-elect has nominated Aung San Suu Kyi to join the cabinet formed by her National League for Democracy (NLD). According to the new agency a list showed the Nobel peace prize laureate's name next to four ministries: Minister of the president's office, foreign affairs, electric power and energy, and education. Ms Kyi, who has vowed to rule above the next president Htin Kyaw, was named first in a list of ministers read out to lawmakers by the parliament speaker did not specify which position she or others would hold. A parliamentary vote to confirm the posts is expected later in the week.

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Can Narendra Modi honour Manipur by accepting ILP and

When Modi wave had impacted almost the entire country in 2014 Lok Sabha election, in Manipur, the entire two seats in Lok Sabha were voted for the Indian National Congress by the politically conscious voters of Manipur. Manipur is the only state in the entire country where out of its 3 (three) MPs in Parliament, all of them are from the same party - the Congress. Manipur is also a unique state where, despite having larger percentage of Hindu population, the issue of one nation, one religion, one food habit, one language, one faith has failed to attract the Hindu Vaishnavites of Manipur. In fact, the Hindus of Manipur, along with the people of other faiths and non-believers, have been traditionally supportive of the ideas and ideals of secularism, inclusiveness and social development of the people of the state.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the reincarnation of Lord Krishna, does not belong to any political party, and this philosophy is very well understood and practiced by the Meitei Hindu Vaishnavites of Manipur. Imphal is such a beautiful place where one can witness the living existence of vibrant religious harmony from the fact that in the heart of the capital city, which begins from the ancient capital - The Kangla, it is encircled by the ancient Meitei Sanamahi temples, Govindajee Temple, Ramji Prabhu temple, Nityananda temple, Masjid, Catholic Church, Protestant Church, Kali Mandir, Shani Devta Mandir, Jain Mandir and Sikh's Gurdwara. Such harmony is the living testimony of the greatness of the culture of Manipur and it, therefore, becomes a way of life for every people of Manipur to accept the philosophy of 'religious tolerance, social inclusiveness, secularism, cultural acknowledgment, democratic debates, mutual respect and space for each other, love for peace and humanism' and this is where the Indian National Congress, the only party among all other parties, has understood for Manipur and in Manipur since 1949. Thus, the Congress party is a natural party accepted, from hearts and minds, by the common people of Manipur. It is with this logic and empathy that there has been a Congress government continuously, without any break, in Manipur since 2002.

Can such beauty of harmonious mutual existence be allowed to come to an end by accepting the ideas which oppose ILP in Manipur, keep imposing AFSPA in Manipur and make a serious attempt to destroy the territorial integrity of Manipur by dividing the indigenous people of Manipur? Will the common people of Manipur allow it to happen in 2017? The answer lies both in the maturity of the electorate of Manipur and the deep understanding of the Congress

for the people of Manipur. What has Prime Minister Narendra Modi done for Manipur so far? Has he even discussed the 3 bills passed by the Manipur Assembly in his own Union Cabinet? If so, then, what has he decided on it? Why is he silent on AFSPA in Manipur? Why is he not welcoming the genuine wish of Irom Sharmila to meet him? What has made Narendra Modi to believe that setting up AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences), IIM (Indian Institute of Management) and IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) in Manipur is of no significance as the Congress government in Manipur is neither an ally nor of the same party to which he belongs? Why is Narendra Modi not explicitly stating that the territorial integrity of Manipur will never be compromised and destroyed? If the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh could remove AFSPA from 7 assembly segments of Imphal valley, then why can't the Prime Minister Narendra Modi remove AFSPA from hills and the rest of Manipur's Imphal valley? If the Congress government of Manipur has initiated and succeeded in passing the 3 bills to protect the indigenous people of Manipur unanimously in Manipur assembly, then what has stopped the party, in which Narendra Modi believes, from also supporting and converting the 3 bills into acts to safeguard the indigenous people of Manipur? Why is Narendra Modi neither showing any interest towards protecting the indigenous people of Manipur, by converting the 3 bills into acts, nor removing AFSPA from Manipur?

What has Prime Minister Narendra Modi done for the people of the North East India so far? During the tenure of the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, Bezbaruah Committee was constituted and its report was submitted when Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister. What has Prime Minister Narendra Modi done on the reports of Bezbaruah Committee? Who and what has stopped Prime Minister Modi from implementing the Bezbaruah Committee in toto? When the then BJP Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi was expressing his sadness on the death of Nido Taniam through his speech, Rahul Gandhi was with the people of the North East India demanding 'Justice for Nido Taniam' at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. The then BJP Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi stated that the death of Arunachal Pradesh student Nido Taniam in Delhi was a matter of national shame and asked the then UPA - II government and the Delhi government to shun their blame game on the issue and ensure justice for him. Is not implementing Bezbaruah Committee report in toto

by Modi government ensuring 'Justice for Nido Taniam' and a 'national pride' now? Has Prime Minister Modi forgotten Nido Taniam after May 16, 2014? What has Prime Minister Narendra Modi done to stop the infiltrations of illegal migration from Bangladesh and Myanmar towards the North East India? Why is he not acting to stop the illegal migration of foreigners from Bangladesh and Myanmar towards the North East India, particularly Assam and Manipur? The then BJP Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi criticized the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh for failing to ensure the development of the North East region despite representing it for the last 23 years in the Rajya Sabha. The present question is, has the Prime Minister Modi done anything to implement Bezbaruah Committee report in toto, to accept and extend 3 bills of Manipur passed unanimously by Manipur Assembly to safeguard and protect the indigenous people of Manipur, to remove AFSPA from Manipur and meet Irom Sharmila in person, to stop, detect and deport the illegal foreigners and unauthorised occupants from Bangladesh and Myanmar in the North East India, particularly in Assam and Manipur, to protect and preserve the existing territorial integrity of all the North Eastern states of India from getting compromised and destroyed in the last almost 2 years of Modi *sarkar* in India?

If Modi could criticize Dr. Manmohan Singh's silence, why should not Modi's inaction and silence on the above serious questions be posted by the conscious electorate of the North East India before Assam and Manipur state assembly elections in 2016 and 2017 respectively? Can Prime Minister Modi meet Irom Sharmila before 2017? Can Prime Minister Modi accept and convert the 3 bills of Manipur to acts to protect the indigenous people of Manipur before 2017? Can Prime Minister Modi remove AFSPA from the hills of Manipur and the remaining parts of Manipur valley? Can Prime Minister Modi ensure the protection of existing constitutional powers and integrity (territorial, administrative, constitutional and financial) of Manipur before 2017? Can Prime Minister Modi be willingly accepting to honour the dignity and truth of the common people of Manipur by answering to the aforementioned questions before he comes for an election campaign in Manipur for its 2017 state assembly election? Can Prime Minister Modi really salute the history and civilization of Manipur before 2017? *Ningombam Bupenda Meitei, educated at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, is an author and poet.*

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