

Editorial

Imphal, Monday, March 28, 2016

The approaching cultural crossroad

The most eagerly celebrated festival has come and gone, and the state is still reeling after the after-effects, the festive spirit reluctant to leave the still hesitant souls of many. The revelry and celebration that unfolded this year saw remarkable changes from the traditional and accepted norms which distinctly points to the direction the young society is heading towards. As predicted, there were a sharp increase in the number of casualties resulting from reckless driving as well driving under influence of prohibited drinks and other substances. The increasing adoption of western style of social interaction and dressing sense, especially amongst the growing youths of the state is a cause for concern, especially when such norms of interaction, often frowned upon by the majority of elders and religious teachings are adopted without the casual and nonchalant mentality and attitude that should accompany it. The cultural crossroad which the youths of the state are heading towards present a huge potential opportunity to introspect and understand the peculiar problems, conflicts and social situations existing in Manipur from a radically different and fresh perspective, thereby increasing the odds of finding an enduring solution to the protracted issues bogging down the collective progress of the state. On the flipside, this inevitable cultural shift which is becoming increasingly evident poses a great threat to the battered moral and cultural fabric of the society as wanton acceptance of a perceptibly freer norms and social mores carries with it the inherent danger of corrupting and decaying the traditions and outlook of the land if the mental aspect of the change is missing. The technological advancements are gradually turning the world into a global village, and our little state has become an inseparable unit. Information can be had at the press of a button or a single swipe of the finger- information which can be productive as well as damaging. The need of the hour, therefore, is to make sure that the youths have the strength and moral obligation to take on the increased responsibilities that comes with increased information, power and knowledge. It would be high impossible to take away or deny the youths the use of technologies and information and other advancements that is changing the way we live and learn. To fully prepare them to utilize and reap the benefits of an increasingly globalised and technologically driven world, we need to make them understand the importance of keeping our traditions and customs intact, and to learn from it so that the present can be appreciated more. It is our past that paved the way for the present, and the present that we embrace will predict the future. But through it all, certain attributes will ever remain relevant and vital such as responsibility, awareness and understanding of our own thoughts and actions.

Hyderabad University classes resume after students' protest end

ANI Hyderabad, March 28: Classes at Hyderabad University resumed on Monday, days after students staged protests against Vice Chancellor Appa Rao Podile. Registrar M. Sudhakar Rao told ANI that the situation within the university complex was found to be conducive for resumption of classes. Earlier, angry students had staged protests against Vice Chancellor Podile for going on leave during the ruckus created in the wake of the suicide of Dalit research scholar Rohith Vemula. A case was registered against 27 students including two faculty members of the university in connection with the incident. Podile was under fire for his handling of the suspension of the five Dalit students, one of whom, Rohith Vemula, committed suicide on January 17. Demanding the vice chancellor's resignation, the students had demanded his resignation. Vemula, 26, had hung himself in his hostel room at the university campus in January, five months after being suspended for allegedly attacking an ABVP leader.

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National and International News

Lahore blast kills 72, injures 250: Pakistan Taliban claims credit for Easter attack

IANSLahore, March 28: A powerful blast ripped through a public park in Lahore where Christian families were celebrating Easter on Sunday, killing 69 people and wounding over 250, mostly women and children. The blast, apparently caused by a suicide bomber, occurred in a parking lot at Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park, one of the largest parks in Lahore, the capital of Punjab province, said Haider Ashraf, a senior police official here. "Some 65-70 people have been killed, included women and children, and over 250 were injured," an Edhi spokesperson told IANS. The splinter group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a faction of the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack and said it deliberately targeted Christians on Easter Sunday. "We claim responsibility for the attack on Christians as they were celebrating Easter," a spokesperson for the terrorist group was quoted by the *Telegraph* as saying. "It was part of our annual martyrdom attacks we have started this year," he said and warned that more attacks would follow. "We had been waiting for this occasion... we want to convey... to the prime minister that we we have arrived in Punjab and we will reach you," it added.

The 67-acre park is frequented both by residents and visitors to the city, and is popular with families. It has walking paths as well as rides for children. "It was a soft target. Innocent women and children and visitors from other cities have been targeted," Ashraf said. "Apparently, it seems like a suicide attack." The explosion coincided with violence in other parts of the country as hundreds of protesters took to the streets to condemn the 29 February execution of Mumtaz Qadri, a governor who campaigned for changes in the country's blasphemy laws, in January 2011. Sunday was the 40th day since Qadri's execution, a mourning observance called *chehlum* in Pakistan, and drew his supporters into the streets of a number of cities, including Rawalpindi, one of the country's largest urban areas. Taseer had tried to soften the blasphemy laws, which he said had been used to persecute religious minorities. But to many in Pakistan, the idea of altering the blasphemy laws was itself criminal, and to his supporters Qadri has become a revered figure. Protesters clashed throughout the day with police in Islamabad, marching on the main avenues of

the city and trying to force their way into the Red Zone, a high-security area that includes the parliament building, the Supreme Court and many diplomatic missions. Police used tear gas to disperse the protesters, but appeared to be overwhelmed by their numbers. The protesters said they planned to hold a sit-in on Sunday night in front of the parliament building. Army was called in to secure government buildings. A state of emergency was imposed on hospitals in Lahore after the blast. Television footage showed rescue workers and ambulances rushing to the park and ferrying victims to hospitals. Distraught relatives milled about in hospital corridors as the wounded were treated. "There was no prior intelligence report about the attack," Muhammad Usman, the district coordination officer in Lahore, told reporters. Usman rebutted some reports that Christians were targeted in the blast. "The park belongs to all," he was quoted as saying. Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif announced a three-day mourning in the province. Prime Minister Narendra Modi telephoned his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif and expressed his grief

over the blast. "The coward terrorists attacked children and women," Modi said. "It's condemnable to attack innocent children and women. We are with the Pakistani nation at the time of this grief movement," *Express News* quoted Modi as saying. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Imran Khan strongly condemned the blast. "Strongly condemn the terror attack in Lahore in which our innocent citizens including women & children lost their lives." The US condemned as "cowardly" the suicide attack, vowing to work with Pakistan to defeat those sowing terror in the country. "The United States condemns in the strongest terms today's appalling terrorist attack in Lahore, Pakistan," National Security Council spokesman Ned Price said in a White House statement. British Prime Minister David Cameron also expressed shock over the deadly attack and expressed his desire to give all possible support in the hour of grief. Pakistan, a nuclear-armed nation of 190 million people, is plagued by a Taliban insurgency, criminal gangs and sectarian violence. Punjab is its biggest and wealthiest province but has traditionally been more peaceful than other parts of Pakistan.

India, Pak start talks on Pathankot attack probe

PTI New Delhi, March 28: India and Pakistan today began formal discussions on investigations into the terror attack at the Pathankot IAF base, making it the first-ever visit of a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) from the neighbouring country that included an ISI official. The five-member Pakistani JIT is headed by Chief of Punjab's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Muhammad Tahir Rai and comprises Lahore's Deputy Director General, Intelligence Bureau, Mohammad Azim Arshad, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) official Lt Col Tanvir Ahmed,

Military Intelligence official Lt Col Irfan Mirza and Gujranwala CTD Investigating Officer, Shahid Tanveer. The team was received at the headquarters of National Investigation Agency by Inspector General Sanjiv Kumar Singh. They are being given a detailed presentation on the probe done by Indian agencies so far and evidences that show that the attack was planned in Pakistan, official sources said. The team, which arrived yesterday, will on Tuesday visit Pathankot for the probe into the attack carried out by Pakistan-

based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terror group on January 2, which left seven security personnel dead. In the post-lunch session, the Pakistani team would be raising questions to clear their doubts, if any, before they fly to Pathankot in a special plane on Tuesday morning, the sources said. The IAF base will be visually barricaded by NIA to prevent any view of critical areas. The NIA team would show some of the areas where the Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorists were engaged in an 80-hour-long gun battle with security personnel. India plans to provide the Pakistani team access to all witnesses in the

case, but not to the security personnel from National Security Guard or BSF. The witnesses include Punjab Police Superintendent of Police Salwinder Singh, his jeweller friend Rajesh Verma, cook Madan Gopal and 17 injured persons. The sources said that cooperation to the Pakistani team would be based on the principle of reciprocity hoping that an Indian team would be allowed to travel to Pakistan at a later date. In the 26/11 Mumbai attack case, Pakistan had sent a judicial commission to cross-examine some of the witnesses in the case.

SC asks Centre to file committee report on personal laws

PTI New Delhi, March 28: The Supreme Court today asked the Centre to file before it the report of a committee which was constituted earlier to look into the aspects of personal laws relating to marriage, divorce and custody prevalent in various religious minorities, including Muslims. A bench comprising Chief Justice T S Thakur and Justice U U Lalit

asked Additional Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, to submit the report within six weeks in the court. The bench also asked the Ministry of Minority Affairs to file its response to the petition filed by one Shayara Bano challenging the constitutionality of Muslim practices of polygamy, triple talaq (talaq-e-bidat) and nikah halala. Talaq-e bidat is a Muslim man

divorcing his wife by pronouncing more than one talaq in a single tuhr (the period between two menstruations), or in a tuhr after coitus, or pronouncing an irrevocable instantaneous divorce at one go (unilateral triple-talaq). Meanwhile, the bench directed the apex court registry to make available within six weeks the copy of judicial records of a petition on the issue which was

taken note of as a separate petition by it. The Supreme Court had earlier this month sought response of the Centre on Bano's plea challenging constitutionality of Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 in so far as it seeks to recognise and validate polygamy, triple talaq and nikah halala, and had tagged the matter with a similar suo motu petition.

AI flight makes emergency landing after smoke detected from engine

Agencies Mumbai, March 28: An Air India flight from Hyderabad made an emergency landing after smoke was detected emanating from its undercarriage in Mumbai on Monday morning, official sources said. The flight AI-620 had 120 passengers on board who were immediately evacuated by deploying chutes from the aircraft.

The prompt measures by the concerned authorities prevented a potential disaster and the plane was towed away for repairs. An Air India spokesperson said as the flight was taxiing towards the bay after landing, the pilot suspected smoke emanating from the engine. Immediately, the pilot called for emergency evacuation and chutes were deployed to move passengers and crew out of the

plane. According to him, on preliminary inspection of the aircraft no problem was detected in the engine or the landing gear. Tyre burst has also been ruled out, he added. Further inspection is on to ascertain the reason that led to the emergency

evacuation. The main runway of the airport was shut after the incident, which caused heavy congestion. Due to the main runway closure, all the arrivals and departures at the Mumbai Airport are delayed by 30 minutes.

Rockets fired at Afghan parliament

Kabul, March 28: A huge explosion took place on Monday as a rocket landed near the Afghan parliament building, a media report said. The blast took place when senior security officials were on way towards the building to brief lawmakers, Khaama Press reported. "Some three rockets landed near new parliament building around 10.15am. At least one rocket struck the building's yard, sending up a black smoke in the air," Xinhua news agency quoted an eyewitness as saying. "We still cannot provide details on casualties. But the initial investigation

found no one was injured as a result of the attack inside the parliament compound," a security source said. More details would be provided as an investigation was launched into the attack, the source added. The members of the Wolesi Jirga, the lower house of parliament, were holding a meeting when the attack took place. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack. The Parliament complex was built by India. PM Narendra Modi had inaugurated the newly built parliament complex last year.