

Editorial

Imphal, Tuesday, March 8, 2016

Cycle of deceit

In spite of the plethora of developmental efforts being taken up by the State Government aimed at improving the quality of life of its residents, the sense of satisfaction and achievement has been sorely lacking in everything that has happened here in the collective minds of the population. A slew of promises have also been made with increasing frequency, the ultimate fate of which has not yet been ascertained. The trend is not one of recent origin. Successive parties and Governments, without any exception, have carried out the same modus operandi of garnering votes and ditching the promises made earlier. The question here is not how much the Government has done for its people, as it is a given that the Government is there for the very purpose of providing governance, utilizing the resources at its disposal for the betterment of its people. A more important and pressing question pertains to the manner in which the precious resources at the disposal of the State Government are being utilized to maximize development and progress. It is no secret that the heads of state, entrusted with the task of overseeing and regulating the development of the state as a whole, has been playing hide and seek with their responsibilities while exercising more than their fair share of the rights. They have evidently lost their connection with the real world, cocooned inside their own safety arrangements. The everyday travails of the common man being a thing of make belief. The ever increasing congestion and traffic snarls being faced by the common man does not concern them, the roads being cleared and secured by their cronies and security guards, insulated from the grime and dirt, not to mention the deafening sound of vehicles jostling for space in the narrow roads on which shoddy repair works have been carried out in fits and starts. The inconvenience is compounded by the perennially flashing orange lights along every intersections and junctions, serving nothing in particular. The everyday ordeal does not end when an ordinary person reaches home after a hard day. Greeted with a dark and chilly welcome, the wait for one's quota of electricity becomes an all consuming obsession for those who are not fortunate enough to have alternative back-ups. And the whole cycle starts from the very moment one wakes up, with the efforts to collect the precious water which the PHED so generously provides every few days for a few minutes, the quality of which is better left unsaid. And these inconveniences are for the city dwellers. Imagine the plight of those who could only dream of being in such a place as Imphal. Without going into the details of the deficits the government has so prominently and frequently vocalized, it should be made clear that the most important thing lacking with the present government is the political will to make things happen. Providing clean water, adequate and fair distribution of available power to the people and upgradation of road and other basic infrastructures does not call for someone with qualifications of a rocket scientist. More than anything, a proactive and transparent approach with a genuine concern for the betterment of the common man will work wonders in making a visible and positive change. That will be the greatest gift the government can give its embittered people.

Two persons killed in bomb explosion in West Bengal's Murshidabad district

Berhampore, March 8: Two persons were killed while another was injured when a crude bomb exploded at Bindarpur village in Murshidabad district on Tuesday. The men were making bombs at an open ground in the village when the bomb exploded, a police officer said.

Both the victims were in their 30's and their identities were yet to be established, he said. The injured identified as one Azad Sheikh has been rushed to a hospital, he said. Locals alleged that the incident was related to a conflict among two factions of the Trinamool Congress.

Wanted Sub-Editor

Imphal Times is looking for an experience sub editor with excellent writing skill in English who can read Bengali written script. Working hour is 12 noon till 3 pm. Honorarium is Rs. 3000 p/m. Preference will be given to candidate who had already worked in English daily as desk editor. Age no bar, and Imphal Times have no problem with those candidates working in other newspaper at night shift.

WHENEVER YOU SEE CONSTRUCTION AND MINING EQUIPMENTS, JUST THINK OF US

A SOLUTION FOR EVERY CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT



Automobile Engineering Works-1
R K WORKSHOP
 New Checkon Road, Purana Rajbari
 Imphal East,
 Manipur - 795 001

Authorised dealer **BEML Limited**
 (A Government of India Mini Ratna Company under Ministry of Defence)

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times' can be sent to our e-mail : imphaltimes@gmail.com. For advertisement kindly contact : - 0385-2452159 (O)

Criminalising the public discourse

A much bigger game is being played out in the JNU episode, involving political power and corporate interests. Eyeballs are not sought for advertising alone, says PADMAJA SHAW

Much media analysis has followed the shocking events of the past fortnight after the arrest of Kanhaiya Kumar, Umar Khaled and Anirban Bhattacharya of JNU based on allegedly dubious videos that spread with the help of some television news channels. Media analysts have put it down to chasing TRPs and the consequent disrespect for due diligence. While chasing TRPs at the expense of diligence may be distasteful, it would still hint at a level of 'professional' anxiety to be more interesting and marketable than the competition. This could partly explain the unfolding events but one suspects that it is not the whole story.

There are many news channels in the country that are struggling to survive in the ad-driven television news industry but it is the market leaders, backed by the deep pockets of their corporate parents, that seem to indulge in this unscrupulous chase. The eyeballs are not being sought for the advertisements alone; it is the agenda of political masters and their nexus with corporate interests that is seeking to be served. And this appears to have global parallels.

The sudden closure of Rupert Murdoch's *The News of the World* in the UK in July 2011 showed up the murky co-habitation of political operatives, the police establishment, and sections of unscrupulous media. The process of outing the nexus and laying it bare before the unsuspecting public took several decades, by which time much damage was inflicted on the polity. Importantly, the process of outing was led by media fraternity who cared enough about their profession and the health of their

democracy. Charles Moore, a former editor of *The Daily Telegraph* of the UK, writing after Murdoch closed *The News of the World*, in an interestingly titled edit-page piece, 'The spell is broken for a media sorcerer with a touch of evil' says, "Above all, the cynicism extends to politics. Rupert Murdoch has genuine political beliefs - probably best described as radical, subversive conservatism - and he advances them fairly consistently. But his main interest is using his existing power to get more of it... his main game became simply to work out who was likely to win, back him, and then threaten him if he did not grant the commercial concessions which he sought. It was on the basis of this Devil's bargain that Tony Blair and Gordon Brown constructed the strategy of New Labour."

"We too witness the issues that are treated as molehills if favoured political conservatives are involved, becoming mountains when it is about the opposition leaders."

Maligning and ridiculing political opponents and manufacturing hype about favoured politicians is a staple, as is being witnessed in British politics and the contrasting ways Murdoch's stable serves up news about David Cameron and Jeremy Corbyn. We too witness the issues that are treated as molehills if favoured political conservatives are involved, becoming mountains when it is about the opposition leaders.

With the Delhi Police using allegedly doctored tapes to label the students of Jawaharlal Nehru University as anti-nationals and to arrest them, the enthusiastic participation of sections of the media, the police, the

ruling party politicians and their cheerleaders appears to have brought us to that moment of truth in India as well.

The news head of Zee News, Sudhir Chaudhary, has a record of dubious news adventures. On 28 August 2007, while he was the CEO of Live India channel, a video sting was shown on the channel about a mathematics teacher at a Delhi School, Uma Khurana, saying that she was running a prostitution racket and was inducting school children into the business. The outraged parents and others assaulted and abused Uma Khurana. The Delhi police played a dubious role by arresting and harassing her. After such public humiliation because of an easily convinced 'public' who turn into lynch mobs, it was found that the video sting was fake.

As channel head, Chaudhary merely called his reporter a criminal and tried to walk away. But the channel was ordered off air for a month because of the seriousness of the offence.

This is a formula that was also successfully deployed by the Murdoch papers. In 1995, when Lord Spencer cornered *The News of the World* over transgressing the privacy of his family, Murdoch startled media-watchers and delivered a public rebuke to his editor, Piers Morgan, saying Morgan was a young man who had 'gone over the top' and needed 'to remember his responsibility to the code to which he as an editor - and all our journalists - subscribe in their terms of employment'. (Bob Franklin and Rod Pilling in *Taming the Tabloids: Market, moguls and media regulation* in *Media Ethics*, ed. Matthew Kieran 2002, p

112). The ethical hollowing out that later led to the closure of *The News of the World* in 2011 and the revival of Murdoch media since then in the UK with the collusion of political conservatives, is a part of the inglorious history of free media.

After Live India, Chaudhary was welcomed into Zee News and became its news head. During the UPA regime he was involved in the Jindal extortion case, for which he was arrested and briefly jailed. He is currently out on bail.

The Broadcast Editors' Association removed him from the position of Treasurer and its primary membership. However, no other punishment for such serious transgressions of the broadcast codes and for causing serious damage to people like Khurana have come forth from the industry that claims to regulate itself. On the contrary, last year the Express Group gave him an award for being the best broadcast journalist in Hindi, for the year 2013.

The interplay between political and corporate interests, in the case of those who own big media, is best demonstrated by the Zee Jindal case and its changing fortunes depending on who is in power. If both Chaudhary and his proprietor Subhash Chandra faced police action during the tenure of the United Progressive Alliance, their fortunes have altered dramatically now. On June 5 last year, Focus News, a channel in which Naveen Jindal has interests, reported that a Patiala House court on Friday issued notices to him and another Zee News editor questioning their bail in a case related to extortion of Rs 100 crore from industrialist Naveen Jindal. (Courtesy The Hoot) (To be contd.....)

National & International News

B'desh court upholds Jamaat leader's death sentence

PTI Dhaka, Mar 8: Bangladesh's Supreme Court today upheld the death sentence of a top Islamist leader for war crimes during the country's independence struggle against Pakistan in 1971, paving the way for his execution. Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha announced the apex court's verdict to dismiss the appeal of Jamaat-e-Islami stalwart and media tycoon Mir Qasem Ali, who was convicted

of murder and abduction during Bangladesh's liberation war. "The sentence (death penalty) is maintained," Sinha announced in a crowded courtroom. The decision of the five-member bench of the top court came 16 months after the country's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) sentenced 63-year-old Ali to death for atrocities committed during the liberation war in 1971. He had challenged the verdict.

He was convicted of running a militia torture cell, Al Badr, that carried out killings of several people. The court found as valid most of the charges against him, including carrying out murders and tortures siding with the Pakistani troops in line with the policy of Jamaat, which was opposed to Bangladesh's 1971 independence. Ali headed a media corporation aligned with Jamaat before his arrest

in 2012. He was the Al Badr's third most important functionary after Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami and Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid. Political analysts said his funding helped the Jamaat secure a strong foothold in independent Bangladesh. Officially, three million people were killed by the Pakistani army and their Bengali-speaking collaborators during the 1971 liberation war. Ali faces the gallows within months unless his case is reviewed by the same court or he is granted clemency by the president.

Kejrival alleges CBI not following procedure

PTI New Delhi, Mar 8: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal today claimed that CBI did not follow proper procedure for summoning his officials, a charge firmly refuted by the agency. CBI sources said the questioning of personal staff of the Chief Minister's Principal Secretary Rajendra Kumar by the agency was approved by Kejriwal himself as

mentioned in a written correspondence from the Delhi Secretariat yesterday. Rubbishing his claim that the officials were called for questioning over phone, CBI sources said all necessary formalities were done through correspondence. The response came after Chief Minister took to Twitter to claim that his staff had been summoned "on phone without notice". He also claimed 150 officers have been summoned so far in this manner. Citing the link of a newspaper report, Kejriwal tweeted, "CBI summons Delhi CM staff 'informally' on phone without notice. Staff of other ministers' called earlier like this." He said the government has nothing to hide, but CBI should follow proper procedure.

In series of his tweets, Kejriwal said, "Which sec of CrPC empowers CBI to summon on ph? Till now, more than 150 officers summoned on ph(sic)". "We hv nothing to hide. I hv told all officers to cooperate. But CBI shud follow law- summon thro proper notices(sic)." CBI sources said the response from authorities in the Secretariat said the questioning has approval from the Chief Minister. It also asked CBI not to seek their presence together as it will hamper the work, which was agreed to by the agency. They said said only the staff of Kumar has been called in connection with ongoing investigation into graft allegations against Kumar.

Three senior Jamaat officials and a leader of the main opposition party have been executed since December 2013 for war crimes.

Two injured as security force fire in Kashmir

IAN Srinagar, March 8: Two people were injured when security personnel opened fire at protesters in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district on Tuesday after being attacked by people while laying a cordon to trap separatist guerrillas. A senior police officer said two people were injured, one of them seriously, in Ashmuqam (Pahalgam) village when security forces fired at a group of protesters who attacked them. It occurred when the security forces were laying a cordon following specific information about hiding guerrillas there. "The injured have been shifted to hospital for treatment. Senior army and civil administration officials have rushed to the spot to take stock of the situation", the officer said.

JNU student leader Kanhaiya Kumar to get security cover after death threats: Govt

New Delhi, March 8: Government told Rajya Sabha today, security will be provided to Jawaharlal Nehru Students' Union President Kanhaiya Kumar, in the wake of threats to his life. Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi told agitating opposition members, the investigating agency will also probe

the role of certain media organisations in airing interpolated video of the controversial speech of Kanhaiya Kumar. Kumar was arrested for sedition and criminal conspiracy by Delhi Police for allegedly raising anti-national slogans on the basis of these video aired by certain channels, but granted interim bail by the Delhi High Court.