

# Editorial

Imphal, Wednesday, March 9, 2016

## Humiliations to NE people continues

Humans have always had an intrinsic need to protect and propagate their own kind. Wars were fought and kingdoms were ruined as result. We've also always had this inherent feeling of curiosity, distrust and suspicions for anyone not of our own race or group. While most of the civilized minds have come to accept different cultures, traditions and ethnic groups, yet there still exist individuals who mock and are cynical of the behaviors and lifestyles of others belonging to another race, religion or region. This immature outlook and narrowed mentality often hurt the sensibilities, and in some instances, are the cause of conflicts and confrontations.

Only recently some students from the North eastern states were reportedly assaulted by the owner of the house at the capital city of New Delhi for playing music that the house owner did not want to listen. The other day two ladies of the state were molested at Pune and police had to registered an FIR only after media takes the matter to the notice of the higher ups.

This incident, shocking as it is, but not the first incident where physical confrontations result from uncouth remarks, or misplaced racial superiority have resulted in death and other atrocities against people from North east India. Instances are too varied and numerous to cite, and despite repeated assurances from authorities in the capital, such atrocities continued unabated. Question is, should the people from the north east continue waiting for those promises to be delivered, or is it time to take precautions and measures as a collective whole to safeguard themselves? What concrete steps are being taken up by the respective State Governments to ensure the safety of the people from the region in the capital, which is incidentally being tagged as the "Rape Capital of the world"? The issue needs to be approached and handled with extreme care and caution. A concerted effort and understanding between the State and Central Government and the concern authorities needs to be established. There have been reports of the Delhi police refusing to entertain complaints lodged by people from the North east, as well as constant refusal of accommodation to students from the region. These instances point to some sort of serious communication gap or misunderstanding, or rather a negative preconceived notion of the people from the North east. A thorough introspection may reveal more into the genesis of such distrust and muted aggressions. It would surprise many from the "developed Metros" of India to learn that most of the influential and flourishing traders and businessmen are from mainland India, who are given the freedom to lead their lives and follow their faiths in the North eastern states without discrimination or ill will - a lesson these metro cities could learn. A proactive law and order system could impact a huge positive change in the present atmosphere of uneasy distrust and uncertainty. Meanwhile, it could be more lasting if one can learn to brush off the snide remarks from uncivilized characters, or better still, raise the issue through the police, however unconvincing and frustrating the exercise may prove to be, for they are duty bound to serve and protect the citizens of this country of which we are very much a part and parcel of, whose frontiers we are safeguarding. And when every other avenue seems to close out, there is always the press and the media who are ever prepared to take the troubles to take any instances of discrimination and abuse to the people and highlight the reality without fear or distortions.

### Minor raped inside train toilet; accused arrested

**PTI Deoria (UP), Mar 9:** A youth has been arrested for allegedly raping a minor girl inside the toilet of a train, police said here today.

The victim was on her way to Siwan to meet her sister on March 5 during which she met a youth Pintu of the same village, Government Railway

Police said. She alleged that at Bhatni railway station Pintu took her to the toilet and raped her, it said.

The GRP said the victim alleged that later Pintu fled to Gorakhpur. On the victim's complaint, a case was lodged yesterday and Pintu had been sent to jail.

### 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 work 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.

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## 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

Contd from yesterday

But there has been little other coverage of this case. There seem to have been developments in the case in February 2016 but links to these stories are to be found only on page ten of a Google search, and then rather mysteriously, get you nowhere. For the search result 'Feb 22, 2016 - Zee News employee's complaint against Naveen Jindal dismissed.' you get this link. What's more, under the current government dispensation the same Zee editor—Chaudhary—who was under attack when Jindal was influential, gets X-Category security from Delhi police following a threat perception. (In September 2015) Now, once again under Chaudhary's watch, a number of JNU scholars and the premier institution itself have been thoroughly maligned as 'anti-national' by the video footage which was shown repeatedly by Zee. BJP spokesman, Sambit Patra has taken the footage to other channels and shown it on those too.

The videos have since been questioned for their authenticity even as Chaudhary has presented lab reports to show that they were not doctored. Zee ran newer footage on Umar Khalid, the authenticity of which was also questioned for the way in which the clips were stitched together to create a narrative. A journalist working for the Zee group resigned in disgust over what he calls the manipulated coverage of JNU.

Based on this dubious 'evidence', some of the channels like Times Now and NewsX, along with Zee, have run a campaign to rouse mob violence (Umar Khalid's sisters get threats, youngest unable to attend school, JNU professor attacked by protesters from BJP youth wing in Gwalior, LU Prof faces ABVP's wrath over article on Umar Khalid and also JU woman student gets death threat for backing Kanhaiya Kumar) against JNU and people associated with it, calling it an 'anti-national

cabal' that supports Maoists, and separatists and contrasting them with the soldiers who have died on the front. Infante and jingoistic patriotism - asking co-panellists to repeat *Bharat mata ki jai*, or debating about flying oversized flags in universities - is passed off on these channels as a news debate. Even as all this was going on, on Zee 'News' Chaudhary has also reported that a picture of PM Modi's mother in hospital was circulating on social media. (The ABP channel has called this out as fake.) He also claimed on the show that he personally spoke with the PM and reported an elaborate conversation between the PM and his mother.

This confidence to flaunt access must derive from the perception of proximity to the PM that Zee News seeks to project, which largely remains uncorrected by the PMO and the BJP. Apart from the easy telephonic access that Chaudhary claimed on air, the Prime Minister launched Subhash Chandra's cryptically titled autobiography, "The Z Factor: My journey as the wrong man at the right time", at his official residence with Chaudhary introducing the speakers. When he spoke, Narendra Modi said that his relationship with the Goel family goes back many years, and cited anecdotes.

The Zee empire is into a range of other businesses and its media empire is not just a tool to manage public perceptions but also to control the regulatory impulses of the state. At this point, with a well inclined government in power, Chandra is making forays into infrastructure and looking at the potential in Smart Cities.

"Human rights and civil society representatives are invited to the shows and shouted down as traitors for questioning the government of the day without getting any opportunity to argue their views." The 'radical, subversive conservative agenda' of some of the

channels that represent the corporate interests of their parent entities has been to target any rights-based discourse, any articulation of liberal opinion, and to viciously attack it. Human rights and civil society representatives are invited to the shows and shouted down as traitors for questioning the government of the day without getting any opportunity to argue their views. Panellists who speak the language of peace and the need for negotiated political solutions to complex conflicts are quickly labelled as anti-national and unpatriotic sell-outs. With media houses clearly saying that they are in the advertising business and not in news, the profit motive and serving dominant corporate/political interests by hounding all counterforces that question their power, seems inevitable.

Yes, stories like the Sushma Swaraj-Lalit Modi (SS-LM) passport affair or the Vyapam deaths are discussed by these channels but in such a way that the terms of engagement and the framework within which the discussion is allowed to be conducted is predetermined. Now we have a student leader who was arrested on sedition charges based on what seems to be a fake video and after that the 'law must take its course'. Yet, after days of combative and obfuscating coverage of the Sushma Swaraj-Lalit Modi affair or the Vyapam scandal, no legal action is seen. This bestows these channels with feathers in their caps for being "non-partisan" while controlling the conversation. It gives them an aura of impartiality, which they never fail to boast about on prime time.

The 'News of the World' did similar sensational stories where paediatricians were hounded as paedophiles, phones tapped, information bought from willing accomplices who had access, corrupt police officers wine and dined and ruling and aspiring

politicians schmoozed up to. The sensationalism of the tabloid style was not just to make money for the News Corporation. It was also to create a captive uncritical audience for the political message of Murdoch's friends. We see much the same thing unfolding before us. The circulation/TRPs as metrics merely serve to legitimize the players as popular among consumers. Some channels are peddling false and sensational information as news. It is not a coincidence that these channels are able to repeatedly violate the basic ethics of media practice. This would not be possible without overt and covert political patronage.

In an attempt to distance himself, Vineet Jain, managing director of Bennett, Coleman & Co Ltd —sister company of the one which owns

Times Now —began tweeting view points contrary to those recently espoused by Arnab Goswami in his JNU coverage saying that the demand for a separate state (Kashmir) is not secession. And an editorial page article was published in the *Times of India* on February 29 which explains the editorial structure in the Times Group as "Federalism in structure and pluralism of views". This is a variation on the Murdochian strategy that says if the editorial hatchet men bring in the profits and political connections it is all ours, if they bring opprobrium, it's entirely their responsibility.

Using channels for political advantage is perhaps inevitable. But the channels that criminalise the public discourse and violate the basic tenets of public morality by encouraging lynch mobs to attack ordinary people based on a fabric of lies deserve to head down the same path as *The News of the World*.

*Padmaja Shaw is a media scholar, columnist, broadcast journalism trainer, and a retired professor of journalism. (Concluded)*

### National & International News

## Sanders Upsets Clinton In Close Michigan Primary

**Miami:** Sen. Bernie Sanders pulled off a narrow upset in the Michigan primary Tuesday, buoying his challenge to Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton and giving him bragging rights to a big, diverse state outside his previous areas of strength.

Sanders's come-from-behind victory was fueled by a relentless focus on his opposition to "disastrous" trade deals that have battered the manufacturing sector in Michigan. He will carry the same message to Ohio, North Carolina, Illinois and Missouri next week.

Clinton, meanwhile, cruised to an expected win in the primary in Mississippi, the latest in a series of contests in Southern states where she has bested Sanders largely on the strength of her appeal to African American voters. Clinton had always been favored in Mississippi, and Sanders did not seriously compete there. With most precincts reporting late Tuesday, she boasted a 67-point lead. Clinton's victory in Mississippi was amplified by her strength among African American voters - who made up a greater share of the electorate than any other state that has voted this year, according to preliminary exit polling reported by CNN.

"What tonight means is that the Bernie Sanders campaign... is strong in every part of the country, and frankly, we believe that our strongest areas are yet to happen," the senator from Vermont said during a hastily arranged address to reporters here.

"What the American people are saying is they are tired of a corrupt campaign finance system and super

PACs funded by Wall Street and the billionaire class."

Despite Tuesday's split decision, Clinton's overwhelming victory in Mississippi increased her large lead in the delegate count needed for the Democratic nomination. But Sanders's triumph in Michigan - on the heels of wins in three smaller states over the weekend - signals that the nomination fight is likely to remain a slog. Sanders has vowed to stay in the race until the Democratic convention in July, and his advisers have argued that the upcoming calendar of states is more favorable to him than those that have voted thus far.

The outcome raises the stakes for the candidates' debate Wednesday, sponsored by The Washington Post and Univision. It will also air on CNN. Clinton has now won 13 states in this Democratic primary contest, including eight from the old Confederacy, where black voters are a major force in any Democratic race. Sanders has won nine states, but - because many of his victories were in smaller states, and because Clinton has dominated among superdelegates, who make up their own minds - he is far behind in the race for delegates to the Democratic convention.

Michigan was the prize Tuesday, with 130 delegates at stake and bragging rights to a big, diverse state. With most precincts reporting, Sanders was ahead by two percentage points.

On the eve of the primary, Clinton urged her supporters to vote so that she could quickly wrap up the Democratic nomination. "The sooner I can become your

nominee, the more I can begin to turn my attention to the Republicans," she told a crowd of nearly 900 in Detroit. She moved on to next-door Ohio - which will vote next Tuesday - where she addressed a primary night party before the results in Michigan were clear.

She pivoted past Tuesday's contests to appeal to Ohio voters, merging her economic message with her call for a kinder, gentler politics.

She noted her support for the auto bailout when the industry was "on the brink." And she touted her proposal to force companies that move their operations overseas to pay an exit tax.

"America grows when your paycheck grows," Clinton said. "And I know the idea of corporate patriotism might sound quaint in an era of vast multinationals, but that's exactly what we need."

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## Opposition slams govt over Art of Living foundation on Yamuna

Naqvi said NGT was hearing the issue and the programme was happening with all permissions. "You cannot doubt his (Ravi Shankar) intentions. He is running a campaign to clean Yamuna and is committed to protection of environment. It is not right to question his intentions," he said. Leader of the House and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley asked whether the issue "should be heard here (in Rajya Sabha) or in the National Green Tribunal."

If a matter is pending before any tribunal, it cannot be raised here, he said. "How is chair even allowing this? The rules are clear on this," he said quoting a rule of business procedure.

As Kurien took up other issues, Congress, SP, JD-U and Left members were up on their feet rejecting the government response. They soon trooped into the Well raising slogans.

"What is the rationale for coming and disturbing the House. This is unjustifiable. This is unnecessary shouting," Kurien said and urged the members to return to their seats.

Amid sloganeering, Sharad Yadav cited a rule to counter Jaitley for citing a rule that matters pending before court or tribunal could not be raised in the House. "(He) is misleading the House," Yadav said. Congress members continued to raise slogans.

At one point AIADMK members too trooped in the Well. However, the reason could not be known amid din. The Deputy Chairman kept asking the protesting members to return to their seats as some members sought to raise Zero Hour issues. "You people are becoming laughing stock before the people and country," Kurien told protesting members. Towards the end of Zero Hour, the Chair adjourned the House for two minutes.