

Editorial

Imphal, Tuesday, May 24, 2016

Need for a different approach

You know you have an enduring problem in your hands when the first thing your child enquired after waking up is whether there is a bandh or blockade announced for the day. The uncertainty and distortions in the daily routine has begun to run so deep that most school going children have given up on their daily routine that was supposed to instill discipline and shape their future. What is more worrisome is the fact that the constant bickering and incessant chants of separatist ideologue have started to seep into their young minds. There are also an increasing number of people coming out with their opinions against the incessant disruptions in normalcy, raising the question of implementing an alternative method of pressurizing the state government rather than the steps being employed at present which is evidently doing more harm to the cause of enforcing the implementation of the ILPS in the state. What about inconveniencing the elected representatives of the people rather than the public themselves; as a prolonged stifling of the general public will eventually give rise to animosity and negative impact on the issue as for most of the people in the state, 'wasting a day's work would often mean a step closer to starvation, not to mention the immense loss of revenue for the already fund-starved state. Who are we really targeting when we prevent a sick or wounded person from availing that much needed and vital medical help because we are frustrated at the inaction or indifference of the state government? Have those officials of the organizations spearheading the agitations and blockades ever considered the ever growing feelings of resentment against the methods, which are almost always destructive, being used to demand their various issues? What difference is there left if the agitating parties are getting immune to the concerns and condemnations of the common people- the very point for which agitations are being organized against the state government. The level of frustrations of the common people can be gauged by the fact that quite a few individuals have even come out to state their objections against the bandhs and blockades which have become so regular that there is now an overlapping of upto three or four bandhs and blockades on the same day, albeit for different issues which might be genuine.

The growing consensus of the common public is that there has to be another way of drawing the attention of the state government and, or putting pressure to take up issues other than bringing the state to a grinding halt. The present system has to go, and with it the ingrained habit of mindless destruction and mob culture. It is time to adopt a posture of controlled aggression so that the interests and economic conditions of the common public is affected to the minimum. The state government also should consider the various demands and take up timely action for the deserving issues without delay or fear of public opinion. A good point to start is by increasing communication and transparency.

Three IAS among 6 officers shuffled in J-K

PTI Srinagar, May 24: Jammu and Kashmir government has posted Zubair Ahmad as the new Director Information of the state, in place of Muneer-ul-Islam, as it transferred six officials. The state Cabinet which met here yesterday under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved transfer and posting of three IAS and as many Kashmir Administrative Service (KAS) officers, an official spokesperson said here today. He said Zubair Ahmad (KAS), Member, Service Selection Board has been transferred and posted as Director, Information, J-K. Muneer-ul-Islam (KAS), Director,

Information, J-K has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner, Pulwama in place of IAS officer Niraj Kumar who has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner, Udhampur. IAS Officer Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Deputy Commissioner, Udhampur has been transferred and posted as Additional Secretary in the Chief Minister's Secretariat. While IAS officer Sushma Chauhan, awaiting orders of adjustment, has been transferred and posted as Director, Tourism, Jammu in place of KAS officer R K Varma who has been transferred and posted as Secretary in the Planning, Development and Monitoring Department.

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National and International News

Islamic states blasts kill almost 150 in Syrian government-held cities

Reuters Beirut, May 24: Bombs killed nearly 150 people and wounded at least 200 in Jableh and Tartous on Syria's Mediterranean coast on Monday in the government-controlled territory that hosts Russian military bases, monitors and state media said. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks in the cities that have up to now escaped the worst of the violence in the five-year-old conflict, saying it was targeting members of President Bashar al-Assad's Alawite minority. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 148 people were killed in attacks by at least five suicide bombers and two devices planted in cars. State media had said 78 people had been killed in what is Assad's coastal heartland. The attacks were the first of their kind in Tartous, capital of Tartous province and home to a Russian naval facility, and in Jableh in Latakia province, near a Russian-operated air base. The Kremlin said the blasts underscored the need to press ahead with peace talks after the collapse of a Feb. 27 ceasefire in April due to intensifying violence in a war that has killed at least 250,000 people. "This demonstrates yet again just how fragile the situation in Syria is. And this one more time underscores the need for new urgent steps to continue the negotiating process," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists. Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated his readiness to fight with

the Syrian government against "the terrorist threat" and sent his condolences to Assad, the Kremlin said. The Syrian Foreign Ministry sent a letter to the United Nations, state television reported, saying the blasts were a "dangerous escalation by the hostile and extremist regimes in Riyadh, Ankara and Doha", referring to support given to the rebels by Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon condemned the attacks. "BLOOD AND BODIES" One of the four blasts in Jableh happened when a man walked into a hospital emergency department and blew himself up. Another blast was at a bus station. The Tartous bombs also targeted a bus station, the Observatory and state media said. Youssef Hassan, a doctor at the Jableh hospital, said he heard an explosion at the bus station, followed less than a minute later by the hospital blast. "Everything went into emergency mode, wounded people began arriving," he told Reuters by phone. The International Committee of the Red Cross condemned this latest attack on healthcare. The Tartous explosions occurred in quick succession, a driver at the bus station said. "People began running but didn't know which direction to go, cars were on fire, there was blood and bodies on the ground," Nizar Hamada said. Footage broadcast by the state-run Ikhbariya news channel showed

several twisted and burnt-out cars and vans. Islamic State claimed the attacks in a statement posted online by the group's Amaq news agency, saying its fighters had targeted "gatherings of Alawites". A second statement from the militant group said the attacks were carried out in a government-held area "so they experience the same taste of death which Muslims so far have tasted from Russian (and Syrian government) air strikes on Muslim towns." Amaq said 10 Islamic State members died in the attacks, 5 in Tartous and 5 in Jableh. Syria's Information Minister Omran al-Zoubi said in an interview with Ikhbariya that terrorists were resorting to bomb attacks against civilians instead of fighting on the front lines, and vowed to keep battling them. The government refers to all insurgents fighting against it as terrorists. The Observatory said an area of Tartous hosting internally displaced Syrians near a blast site was briefly attacked by government supporters in reaction to the bombings. Some tents were burned but nobody was killed. Tartous governor Safwan Abu Saadah told Reuters reports on social media about refugees being shot were not true. He said some Tartous residents had gone to refugee areas to protect them from possible attacks. "Two days ago some camps in Tartous province experienced fires because of electrical problems ... today's reports that

people burned (these camps) are not true. Nobody would turn against our guests in this way," Abu Saadah said. Bombings in Damascus and the western city of Homs this year killed dozens of people and were also claimed by Islamic State, which is fighting against government forces and their allies in some areas, and separately against its jihadist rival al-Qaeda and other insurgent groups. Latakia city, which is north of Jableh and capital of the province, has been targeted on a number of occasions by bombings and insurgent rocket attacks, including late last year. Government forces and their allies have recently stepped up bombardment of areas in Aleppo province in the north, which has become a focal point for the escalating violence. Insurgents have also launched major attacks in that area. The only road into rebel-held areas of Aleppo city has suffered a week of increasingly heavy air strikes. Zakaria Mahalfeji, a senior official in the rebel group Fastaqim that operates in the Aleppo area told Reuters the road was bombarded again on Monday and was dangerous to use. He said Iranian-backed fighters, who are supporting government forces, were mobilising in the southern Aleppo area. France's Foreign Ministry called the Tartous and Jableh bombings "odious" and said violence from all sides must stop if a political transition is to take place.

Court refuses bail to 14 suspected ISIS operatives

PTI New Delhi, May 23: A special court today refused bail to 14 suspected ISIS operatives, arrested from across the country for allegedly financing and recruiting people to join the terror group. District judge Amar Nath rejected the bail application of the accused persons saying the allegations were of serious nature and they do not deserve the relief. In the bail application, the accused had sought statutory bail, saying the period of probe had expired on May 18. "The period of investigation was extended up to 120 days and the same expired on May 18, hence the indefensible right to statutory bail arises and the applicants-accused have been

entitled to be released on bail.... "It is, therefore, most respectfully and in the interest of justice prayed that the applicant-accused may kindly be released on statutory bail," the bail application moved by the accused appearing for the accused persons said. While accused Nafees Khan and Mohd Shareef Moineuddin Khan were arrested on January 22, the other accused including, Abu Anas, Mohd Afzal, Suhail Ahmed, Mohd Aleem, Asif Ali, Mohd Hussain Khan, Mohd Imran Khan, Syed Mujahid, Mohd Obaidullah Khan, Mudabbir Mushtaq Shaikh, Najmul Huda and Mohd Abdul Ahad were arrested on January 23. Earlier, the probe agency had told the court that the accused were involved in a larger conspiracy of the outfit, in India and abroad, including recruitment of resident

and non-resident Indians. The terror group has captured vast territories in Iraq and Syria. The accused were arrested from different parts of the country for allegedly recruiting and financing people to join the terror organisation. The NIA had earlier told the court that the accused, in course of interrogation, had admitted to "their involvement in this case about recruiting and financing persons willing to join the Caliphate of ISIS at Syria". They were arrested under several sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and IPC. A case was registered by NIA on December 9, 2015 against unknown and unidentified persons involved in the activities of Islamic State (IS) in India and Asian powers in peace with India.

SC refuses to ask Maharashtra to totally cut water supply to liquor industry

New Delhi, May 24: The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to direct the Maharashtra government to completely cut water supply to distilleries and breweries in the drought-hit regions of the state. A vacation bench of Justices P.C. Pant and D.Y. Chandrachud pulled up the petitioner for approaching the apex court for a complete ban on water supply to the liquor manufacturers, saying the Bombay High Court has already passed an interim order in this regard. "Why are you coming against an interim order of the high court? The high court has already allowed 60 per cent, now what do you want? These are all policy decisions. There has to be a balance," the bench said.

Uttarakhand CM Harish Rawat appears before CBI

New Delhi, May 24: Uttarakhand chief minister Harish Rawat was on Tuesday questioned by CBI in connection with a probe into the sting operation involving him. Rawat accompanied by some supporters and an MLA arrived at the CBI headquarters at 11am. The CBI had last week rejected the state government's notification withdrawing the nod for probing the case which was given during President's rule. The Uttarakhand high court also did not stay the CBI probe as requested by Rawat. CBI had said the notification was rejected after taking legal opinion, which said there was no ground for its withdrawal and it was "not legally tenable".

CBI had registered a preliminary enquiry (PE) on April 29 to probe the "sting operation" purportedly showing Rawat offering bribes to rebel Congress lawmakers to support him during a floor test in the Uttarakhand assembly. The agency had summoned Rawat for examination for May 9 but he had sought more time after which he won the floor test and returned to power. Rawat had denied the allegation and called the video fake after it was released by the rebel Congress legislators but later admitted that he was on camera in the sting operation. After Rawat's victory in the floor test, the state cabinet met on May 15 and withdrew the notification

recommending a CBI probe into a sting operation involving him. Instead, the state cabinet decided to constitute a special investigating team to probe the case as it was a state subject.

Mild tremor hits central Nepal

PTI Kathmandu, May 24: A mild tremor, an aftershock of last year's deadly earthquake, was felt in Kathmandu and surrounding areas in Nepal after midnight. It was of local magnitude 4.2 with its epicentre in a location between Naubise and Jeewanpur of Dhading district, 80 km south-west of Kathmandu, according to the National Seismological Centre (NSC). The tremor was recorded at 12.54 am. The National Seismological Centre said it was a light aftershock of the last year's earthquake. Thousands of aftershocks have followed the deadly April 25 earthquake. However, the NSC has processed data of around 460 significant aftershocks, with 4 or more magnitude.

'11 dead in Myanmar landslide, many missing'

Yangon, May 24: At least 11 people died in a landslide in a remote jade mining region of northern Myanmar with many more feared missing, authorities said today, in the latest deadly incident to hit the shadowy industry.

"We have found 11 dead bodies so far. When the landslide happened, about 50 people were searching for jade," Nilar Myint, a local official from Hpakan in Kachin state, told AFP, adding that the rescue operation was ongoing.

The counsel appearing for petitioner Sanjay Bhaskarrao Kale, said the entire region is severely drought-prone and there is a policy in this regard. To this, the bench said these are all policy decisions and the court's interference will be like taking over governance. The apex court dismissed the petition as withdrawn after the counsel agreed to withdraw the plea. The court, however, granted the petitioner the liberty to approach the high court. The Aurangabad Bench of the Bombay High Court had recently asked the state government to curtail water supply to the liquor industry by 60 per cent from May 10, an order which will be operational till June 27. The plea filed in the apex court had sought that instead of a curtailed water supply, there should be no supply at all as the entire region is facing acute water shortage. The petition had said that people were dying in the region due to the shortage of water and there is a limited water stock available. The counsel for the petitioner had said people were being deprived of drinking water as it is being given to the liquor industry. Earlier, the Bombay High Court had also asked the Maharashtra government to cut supply to other industrial units in Marathwada by 25 per cent after May 10.