

Editorial

Imphal Monday, November 21, 2016

Toast to a mirage

The state government, in its efforts to showcase and promote the multifarious potentials of the state has been organizing the Manipur Tourism Mega-Fest which is arguably the biggest and most extravagant affair in the state every year from 21st to 30th November and has been renamed 'Sangai Festival' since 2010 as a way to highlight the uniqueness of the Brow-Antlered Deer of Manipur. The state government, as has witnessed in the past, will spare no efforts or resources to make this year's much anticipated event beginning today an astounding success. Tourists, dignitaries, cultural troupes, artisans and participants from abroad will also be witnessing the event which will undoubtedly provide an international feel to the whole affair. In all, the whole exercise can only be described as an attempt to showcase and promote the best of what the state has to offer to the world in terms of art and culture, handloom, handicrafts & fine arts, indigenous sports, cuisines & music, eco & adventure sports as well as the scenic natural beauty of the land and ethnic diversity of Manipur Society. The intention of the state government cannot be doubted. What remains unclear is the impact of this annual tryst on the state in terms of improvements or achievements of its intended objectives- and more importantly, what should have been inferred from this recurring disappointments in terms of the results rather than the actual hosting of the event which has been successful for the most part albeit with a few unfortunate and violent incidents which have failed to mar the spirits of the public.

And while the euphoric public is anticipating the extravaganza like every year, the overall atmosphere in the state is muted and even cautious. It would be interesting to see what the combined impact of demonetization and the ongoing economic blockade will have on the turnout and spending habits of the visiting public. Admittedly, the limelight for the next many days will be on the Festival. And as with every past years, very few, if ever will even wonder about the plight of the shy and gentle endangered creatures whose namesake festival draws thousands of crowds from far and near to witness and experience the best the state has to offer. The total population of Sangai is at best contentious, for according to the 2013 census report, there are 160 Sangais (after allowing for standard error) in its natural habitat at Keibul Lamjao which jumped to 260 according to the latest census carried out by the Forest Department this year. What is certain though is that the Ithai Barrage has started to wreak havoc with the natural habitat of floating biomass or Phumdis on which the endangered and delicate species have thrived as the natural process of soaking up of vital nutrients by the biomass from the ground during the dry season has been prevented by the perennial waterlogging of the lake due to the barrage. While many schemes and plans are in the offing to address the problem, going by experience, there still remains the very real and imminent danger of the natural habitat of the endangered Sangai thinning down and disappearing, and along with it the prized state animal for good if action is not taken in time and in right earnest. There still is a very distinct possibility of the state holding a toast to a mirage.

6.4-magnitude earthquake jolts Argentina, Chile

Buenos Aires, Nov 21: A 6.4-magnitude earthquake has jolted western Argentina and parts of Chile, with no immediate reports of damage, authorities said. The quake rocked San Juan province at 1757 local time yesterday, striking at a depth of about 130 kilometers, Argentina's seismological institute said. In Chile, the quake was measured at a

magnitude of 6.5, officials at the government's National Emergency Office (ONEM) said. The earthquake was felt in northern and western Chile in the regions of Atacama, Coquimbo, Valparaiso, O'Higgins and the Santiago metro area. Cellular phone service was briefly knocked out in San Juan province.

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Demonetization – Modi's Proud Socialist Moment

Move to correct unacceptable level of inequality between rich and poor
Role of big money and black money in politics will come down

By : Dr R. Balashankar

November 8, 2016 will perhaps go down in history as the day India ushered in the most comprehensive finance sector reform that transformed the country as never before. Now, ten days later, it can be said, that it has almost been pulled off with aplomb with the least possible hardship to people. There is no doubt that there are queues in front of the banks, the rural economy has to get used to the fast changing monetary reform and that there is going to be a temporary fall in the demand in the retail sector. Making 86 per cent of the currency in circulation illegal in one stroke, the secrecy and shock in a country where still half of the population is outside the banking system and habitually hoard hard earned income and loathe the idea of going to the bank, is itself revolutionary. And of the 14.90 lakh crore high denomination notes almost 70 percent was kept as black money, hidden away from the banking system by those who have stashed away the national wealth. Those opposing the demonetization in the name of the suffering of the poor have not produced a single coherent argument to support their dissent. All agree that corruption has to be fought. They also agree that black money is the biggest source of corruption. It leads to inequality and price rise and devaluing the currency. Equally worrying is the presence of huge chunks of counterfeit currency

running away from debate," Jaitley asked. "This is clear now that the opposition is not ready for debate and is coming up with new excuses to disrupt the House." Stating that the notice for suspension of business under Rule 267 was accepted on first day of the winter session and a debate had started, he said the reported deaths could come up during the course of this debate and the reply to it. No sooner that the House mourned the death of 130 persons in the derailment of Indore-Patna Express near Kanpur on Sunday, Sitaram Yechury (CPI-M) said an obituary reference condoling the death of 70 people due to hardships caused by the demonetisation should be moved by the Chair. He was supported by Mayawati (BSP) who said people have died standing in queues because of hunger, want of medicines and waiting for currency for marriage.

Leader of the Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad (Cong) said while condolences have been expressed for those killed in Wednesday's train accident, the same should be done for the 70 people who have lost their lives in last 15 days. "They are also citizens of this country. We want such an obituary reference to come from the Chair," he said, adding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should also come to the House for the debate. Kurien said if the members were ready, the discussion on demonetisation issue can resume immediately. "I would like to make it very clear that the Chair is ready for discussion if you are ready," he said. Stating that 11 bank employees were among the 70 who lost their lives, Yechury asked the Chair to take the opinion of the House on moving a resolution condoling their death. He said the debate could be held after the obituary reference is made by

direction. With this, the Prime Minister has proclaimed his commitment to what Dr. B.R. Ambedkar called "social and economic equality" along with political equality enshrined in the constitution. With this, the role of big money and black money in politics will come down. It will become a level playing field for all political aspirants - attracting better talent in politics. This will bring prices and lending rates down. This is bound to encourage investment. This will stop the use of black and fake money in crime and terror activities and make life safer for the common man. The drive on black money will bring more revenue to the government's kitty making it possible to spend more on infrastructure, welfare schemes, health and education. The days of capitation fees are over. Education will no more be business as usual. Modi's dream of house for all and 50 million free gas connections to BPL families would not have been possible with the existing levels of inflated realty prices. Modi has positioned as the messiah of the poor. The road map the government has aims at creation of an egalitarian social structure, eliminating power brokers, black money and corruption with a focus on equitable distribution of wealth. Demonetization marks the beginning of transparency in public spending and end to splurge and vulgar extravaganza of a few at the cost of the rest. (Courtesy PIB)

National & International News

Oppn forces RS to adjourn twice over demonetisation issue

PII New Delhi, Nov 21: A united Opposition on Monday forced two adjournments in Rajya Sabha in the pre-noon session, asserting that no discussion on demonetisation would take place till the House mourns the nearly 70 deaths caused by hardships due to the withdrawal of higher denomination currency notes. While Congress, BSP, TMC and CPI(M) among others wanted a resolution condoling the deaths to come from the Chair, Leader of the House and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley charged the Opposition of running away from the demonetisation debate. Slogan-shouting opposition members rushed into the well of the House, forcing Deputy Chairman P J Kurien to first adjourn the proceedings till 1130 hours and then again till noon. "Why are they (opposition parties)

running away from debate," Jaitley asked. "This is clear now that the opposition is not ready for debate and is coming up with new excuses to disrupt the House." Stating that the notice for suspension of business under Rule 267 was accepted on first day of the winter session and a debate had started, he said the reported deaths could come up during the course of this debate and the reply to it. No sooner that the House mourned the death of 130 persons in the derailment of Indore-Patna Express near Kanpur on Sunday, Sitaram Yechury (CPI-M) said an obituary reference condoling the death of 70 people due to hardships caused by the demonetisation should be moved by the Chair. He was supported by Mayawati (BSP) who said people have died standing in queues because of hunger, want of medicines and waiting for currency for marriage.

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the Chair. Kurien however virtually ruled it out saying "condolences are not done on demand. That has to come spontaneously. You can approach the Chairman (on that)." To this, Yechury said "take consensus of the House". At this point, opposition Congress, BSP and TMC members rushed into the Well shouting slogans. "Narendra Modi sharam karo, sharam karo (shame on Narendra Modi)", "Modi sadan mein jawab do (Modi please reply in the House)", "poonjiwadi ki yeh sarkar nahi chalegi (this government of capitalists will not be tolerated)", "Jan virodhi Narendra Modi sharma karo, sharam karo (shame on anti-people Narendra Modi)," they shouted. TMC members carried placards with "Financial Emergency" written. Kurien then adjourned the proceedings till 1130 hours.

1 dead, four soldiers injured as Pak violates ceasefire in Rajouri

PII Jammu, Nov. 21: One BSF jawan died and three others were injured as Pakistani army resorted to heavy cross-border firing in Rajouri sector of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday night, in third ceasefire violation since Saturday. "Pakistani army resorted to heavy cross-border firing in the Rajouri sector, in which four of our soldiers have been injured," an Army officer said.

He said the army was giving befitting response to the Pakistani fire and the exchange of fire was going on till last reports came in. The ceasefire violation came a day after a BSF jawan and a woman were injured and two houses were damaged when Pakistani troops targeted Indian posts and civilian areas along the Line of Control (LoC) in Nowshera and Sunderbani sectors of Rajouri with mortar attacks and small arms fire.

On Saturday morning, Pakistani army resorted to violation of the ceasefire in the Nowshera sector and in the afternoon, they started firing in the Sunderbani sector targeting Indian posts and civilian areas. On Thursday, Pakistani army had targeted Indian posts and civilian villages+ along the LoC in the Pallaanwala sector of Jammu district. Pakistani troops on Tuesday targeted Indian posts with heavy

firing and shelling for four hours along the LoC in Rajouri in Jammu and Kashmir, forcing Indian troops to retaliate. There have been 286 incidents of firing and shelling along the LoC and the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistani troops that have resulted in the death of 26 people, including 14 security personnel, since the surgical strike on terrorist launch pads in PoK on September 29.

HC to hear tomorrow plea against demonetisation

PII New Delhi, Nov 21: Delhi High Court today agreed to hear a plea against demonetisation, saying once the currency was invalidated then how could the government direct certain public utilities including hospitals and petrol pumps to accept old notes. A bench of Justices B D Ahmed and Jayant Nath listed for hearing tomorrow the plea which also sought discontinuation of the new Rs 2,000 currency note, terming the move as "unconstitutional and bad in law". Petitioner Pooja Mahajan, running a

designer showroom, mentioned the matter pleading urgency on the ground that she is being deprived of earning her livelihood and her fundamental rights are being infringed. She also blamed the government for taking a dual stand saying on one hand it was encouraging people to deposit old notes in bank accounts and on the other hand threatening them of prosecution for depositing over Rs 2.50 lakh. Advocates, A Maitri and Radhika Chandrashekhar, counsel for the

petitioner, urged the court to quash various notifications with regard to demonetisation issued on and after November 8, saying they are in contravention of the Constitution of India and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act. Section 24 of RBI Act deals with the denomination of notes which empowers the RBI and Centre to issue bank notes for various denominations as mentioned in section 24(1) and (2) of the Act, the plea said. "Till date, government has not issued any notification under section 24 (2)

of the RBI Act for discontinuing currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000. It further said that Rs 2,000 notes are being circulated by the government against mandate of section 24(1) of the Act. Seeking direction to Ministry of Finance, the petitioner said the government's decision is "arbitrary and unconstitutional" as on one hand it has cancelled the currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 but simultaneously circulated high denomination notes of Rs 2,000 without the mandate of RBI Act.