

# Editorial

Imphal Monday, November 28, 2016


## Anathema to progress

The biggest extravaganza in the state that is Sangai Festival is drawing to a close. It is apparent that the state government, as with every past editions of the event, has spared no expenses or efforts to make it one of a kind affair which could showcase the diverse and amazing forms of arts, culture, traditions, customs and natural endowments to the rest of the world. Yet for all its efforts and self-congratulatory statements, the much anticipated festival remains far short of what its objective states. True, thousands of people throng the venue everyday and enjoyed the various displays and services on offer. But has the state government or the department (s) responsible for organizing the event even thought of estimating the number of visitors from outside the state year-on-year so that a reliable database of the progress or popularity of the festival can be gauged? What about the uncomfortably regular blasts in the vicinity of the venue just before the commencement of the festival? Why hasn't the government still consider the installation of CCTV cameras in and around the city despite reams of paper being written about the immediate necessity as well as the admission of the ministers to the same. The level of crimes, thefts and other unwanted incidents in and around the small city could have been reduced or avoided had the state government have the balls to implement such a relatively easy yet necessary move. But the unfortunate fact is that despite the absence of such facilities in public places around the city, yet the private and official residences of these VIPs, representatives and officials are jam-packed with the very same facilities. What about the total absence of facilities for the physically challenged people to witness the mega-event? Despite repeated reports regarding the unfortunate oversight for years, there still is no visible impact on the organizers to rectify or address the pressing and very vital issue which should be taken more as a blatant display of the callous and indifferent attitude of the organizers given the fact that incorporating such basic facilities such as ramps, guard rails etc does not entail huge costs. As it is, the state government is keeping the budget of the mega-event a closely guarded secret despite efforts from various quarters to find out the truth which naturally points to the undeniable fact that the festival has become a happy hunting ground for filling their personal coffers by those few who are conducting the whole operations. Court cases regarding allocation of contract work for the festival have also made headlines earlier. Digressing from the stated objective of making the event a platform for accelerating the overall progress of the state, the event has turned into an ignoble exercise of siphoning off huge amounts by the organizers and a feeding frenzy for the smaller fries and unscrupulous contractors whose sole objective is to extract maximum profit out of the tendered works. Spending huge sums in extending invitations to a few foreign dignitaries for a few days each year and rolling out the red carpet will do precious little towards improving the prospects of tourism in the state. If the state government does not take stringent corrective measures and realign the purpose and objective of the festival while making the preparations more transparent, the very intention of hosting the event will be defeated and also carries the inherent danger of bleeding the state of its precious resources.

## TMC denies rift, says Opposition united against demonetisation

**New Delhi, Nov. 28:** The Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Monday denied rumours of a rift between the opposition parties with regard to demonetisation and asserted that there is utmost unity as far as opposing the currency swap is concerned. TMC leader Sudeep Bandhopadhyay said it is just the Left parties, who have called for shutdown in their bastions. "As far as demonetisation issue is concerned, the opposition parties are broadly united. We have decided to observe 'Aakrosh Divas', we will be protesting against demonetisation. However, the Left parties have called for a bandh, which is not right because when we take a decision we take it unitedly. In my view, no party should go and implement their own programs like this," said Bandhopadhyay. The Congress party also denied the call for nationwide bandh and said the 'Aakrosh Divas' is being observed to highlight the nation's anger due to the government's demonetisation drive. The opposition parties have called for a countrywide protest today against what they call the government's "mishandling" of the currency ban. Only the Left Front, which has a presence in Kerala, Bengal and Tripura, has called for a strike or 'Bharat Bandh' in the three states.

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## National & International News

# KLF chief Harminder Singh Mintoos arrested from railway station in Delhi

**PTI New Delhi, Nov. 28:** Khalistan Liberation Front Chief Harminder Singh Mintoos, who had escaped from Nabha jail in Punjab along with five other inmates yesterday, has been nabbed from Nizamuddin railway station here. The militant outfit leader was arrested late last night from Nizamuddin railway station, Arvind Deep, special commissioner of police, Special Cell, said today. "Punjab Police

had suspicion about his movement towards Delhi and they contacted Delhi Police. Following intensive checking and tracking, he was arrested from the railway station last night," said the officer. A team of Punjab police will take him back to the state. It is the second arrest in the case. UP police last evening arrested the alleged "mastermind" of the daring daylight jailbreak, Parminder Singh. He was arrested from

Kairana in Uttar Pradesh's Shamli district when the getaway vehicle—a Toyota Fortuner—was stopped at a police picket. Mintoos yesterday escaped along with five other prisoners in a sensational jailbreak after armed men in police uniform tricked the sentries into opening the gates of the jail in Patiala, nearly 200 km from here, and bolted out with the inmates while firing a hail of bullets. Officials said efforts are on to nab the other prisoners

who managed to flee. Mintoos was arrested by Punjab Police after he was deported from Thailand in November 2014. He was wanted in ten terror cases. The KLF chief was brought to India along with his key aide Gurpreet Singh 'Gopi' after Punjab Police, in coordination with central agencies, traced them in Thailand, a senior police official said. Among the escapees was another terrorist Kashmiri Singh, according to Punjab police chief Suresh Arora.

# Bomb defused near US Embassy in Philippines: Police

**Manila, Nov. 28:** Philippine police defused a bomb found in a rubbish bin near the US embassy in Manila Monday, authorities said, with officials blaming Islamic terrorists for what they called an attempted terrorist act. An improvised explosive device composed of a cellphone, blasting cap, nine-volt battery and 81-millimetre mortar bomb was found by a street sweeper about 200 meters from the embassy, according to Manila police. National police chief Ronald dela Rosa said Islamic militants in the southern Philippines who have pledged allegiance to the ISIS group were probably behind the incident. "This is an attempted act of

terrorism," Dela Rosa told a news briefing. "Because of an ongoing police/military operation there, (the militants) have many casualties. We can theorise that this is a diversion to loosen our operations," he added. The military began an operation last Thursday against the Maute group, which staged a deadly bombing in President Rodrigo Duterte's home town in the southern city of Davao that killed 15 people in September. The militants are holed up in an abandoned government building in the mainly Muslim rural town of Butig on Mindanao island. Troops have been firing artillery to flush them out.

Dela Rosa said he believed the Maute gang or the Ansar Khilafa Philippines, another southern-based group sympathetic to IS, left the bomb near the US embassy. Police said the bomb was left early Monday by a taxi passenger, who stopped and threw the device into a trash bin. A street sweeper later found the package and reported it to police, officials added. The bomb could have caused injury or damage within a 100-metre radius, police said. Dela Rosa said the bomb had the same design as the device the Maute group used in the Davao attack. "Unless we get hard evidence, by analysis we can theorise this can be linked to Maute because of

what happened in Davao," he said. The Davao bombing prompted Duterte to put the nation under a "state of emergency" that led to tighter security measures. The southern Philippines is home to various extremist groups and a four-decade Muslim separatist revolt that left more than 100,000 people dead, according to government estimates. Manila police chief Joel Coronel said authorities were coordinating with the US embassy to determine if the mission was the target of an attempted bombing. The embassy thanked police for their "quick and appropriate action".

# LS adjourns amid Opposition protests over demonetisation issue

**PTI New Delhi, Nov 28:** A vociferous Opposition in the Lok Sabha today continued their protests against the government over the demonetisation issue, forcing adjournment of the proceedings till noon. Soon after the House expressed its condolences over the death of Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, Opposition members, including those from the TMC and

Congress, demanded that they wanted to speak on the demonetisation issue. With Speaker Sumitra Mahajan declining their request and saying that the matter could be taken up after Question Hour, Opposition members trooped into the Well holding placards and shouting slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as the government. "No placards please... No papers," Mahajan told the protesting

members and also reminded them that it was against the rules. Over 30 members, including from Congress, TMC and the Left parties, were in the Well while members of AIADMK were seen standing near their seats. Amid the din, the Question Hour went on for around 20 minutes and saw four questions as well as supplementaries being taken up. With the protests continuing unabated, Mahajan adjourned the

House till noon. Opposition parties have been stepping up their protests against the government's decision to withdraw old Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes and are also observing 'Jan Aakrosh Diwas' across the country today. Lok Sabha has witnessed a virtual washout of proceedings since the Winter Session started on November 16 due to the protests over the demonetisation issue.

# Eight Indonesians jailed for tanker hijack in Malaysia

**Kuala Lumpur, Nov 28:** Eight Indonesians were sentenced to between 15 and 18 years in prison by a Malaysian court for the hijacking of an oil tanker last year,

an official said today. The tanker MT Orkim Harmony was carrying around 6,000 tonnes of petrol worth an estimated USD 5.6 million when it was

commandeered by the eight men on June 11 last year. The tanker was en route from Malaysia's western coast to the port of Kuantan on the east coast. Six of the pirates were sentenced to 15 years in jail and five strokes of the cane, while the other two were handed 18-year jail sentences, a Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency official told AFP.

security forces by escaping from the tanker on a lifeboat under cover of darkness. Malaysian authorities said at the time, after warships were scrambled to hunt down the men. The tanker's 22 crew members were mostly unscathed except for an Indonesian sailor who was treated for a gunshot wound to the thigh. The hijackers subsequently washed up on Vietnam's southwestern Tho Chu island on a lifeboat claiming to have had an accident at sea about a week after the hijack. But they were taken into custody after local officials discovered they were carrying large sums of cash, and were accused of hijacking the MT Orkim Harmony oil tanker. "We welcome the tough punishment. It will send a strong signal to potential pirates that crime does not pay," he told AFP. The eight suspects had eluded

# Rajnath to lead Indian team at Fidel Castro's funeral

**PTI New Delhi, Nov 28:** Home Minister Rajnath Singh will lead the Indian delegation at the funeral of Cuba's revolutionary leader Fidel Castro. The delegation is likely to include leaders from various political parties like Congress, CPI(M), CPI and Samajwadi Party. The team will leave for Havana tomorrow and is expected to return on Thursday evening, official sources said. The composition of the delegation is still being worked out by the Prime Minister's Office in consultation with the Ministries of the External Affairs

and Home. After two days of commemorations in Cuba's capital Havana, Castro's ashes will go on a four-day island-wide procession starting Wednesday before being buried in the southeastern city of Santiago de Cuba on December 4. Castro died on November 25 at the age 90, after defying the United States during a half-century of iron-fisted rule and surviving the eclipse of global communism. Castro, whose 1959 revolution toppled a dictatorship with the promise of bringing justice and equality to his Caribbean island, was a major 20th century figure.

He said that the Indonesians pleaded guilty after they were charged yesterday in the southern state of Johor, neighbouring Singapore. Noel Choong, head of the International Maritime Bureau's Kuala Lumpur-based Piracy Reporting Center, said the shipping community hailed the punishment. "We welcome the tough punishment. It will send a strong signal to potential pirates that crime does not pay," he told AFP. The eight suspects had eluded

security forces by escaping from the tanker on a lifeboat under cover of darkness. Malaysian authorities said at the time, after warships were scrambled to hunt down the men. The tanker's 22 crew members were mostly unscathed except for an Indonesian sailor who was treated for a gunshot wound to the thigh. The hijackers subsequently washed up on Vietnam's southwestern Tho Chu island on a lifeboat claiming to have had an accident at sea about a week after the hijack. But they were taken into custody after local officials discovered they were carrying large sums of cash, and were accused of hijacking the MT Orkim Harmony oil tanker. "We welcome the tough punishment. It will send a strong signal to potential pirates that crime does not pay," he told AFP. The eight suspects had eluded

# Encounter between militants, security forces in Kupwara

**PTI Srinagar, Nov 28:** An encounter broke out between security forces and militants in north Kashmir's Kupwara district today, but the ultras managed to flee, police said. Security forces launched a search operation in Langate area of Handwara in Kupwara following intelligence inputs about the presence of militants there, a

police officer said. He said that as the forces were conducting search, the militants fired upon them, prompting retaliation. "As a cordon was being laid, the militants fired upon the forces, which was retaliated, but the militants managed to escape," the officer said. He said the search operation to trace the ultras was on.

# Nepal earthquake: No casualties reported so far after 5.5 magnitude quake

**Kathmandu, Nov. 28:** A moderate intensity earthquake measuring 5.5 on the Richter Scale shook Nepal in the early hours on Monday. According to the National Centre for Seismology, a unit of Ministry of Earth Sciences, the quake occurred at 5.05 am at a depth of 10 km. The epicentre was located at Solukhumbu district near the Everest region, around 150 km east of Kathmandu, Nepal's National

Seismological Center said. It recorded the intensity of the quake at 5.6. This was the 475th aftershock, of magnitude 4 and above, of the devastating April 2015 tremor in the quake-prone Himalayan country. There was no immediate report of any damage or casualty. The earthquake was also felt in Kathmandu and other parts of central and Eastern Nepal.