

Editorial

Imphal Friday, November 4, 2016

Beyond the hills

"People's participation is becoming the central issue of our time," says UNDP in its Human Development Report 1993. In order for the people to practice effective participation, communication and connectivity are the keys. The myriad issues and disruptions being faced by our society can be traced back to the lack of participation of the public in governance and determining policies, or rather the practice of keeping the public away from having their say or expressing their concerns over most social issues for so long. In a way, it is the manifestation of the stirrings of a collective realization of a repressed society who have been denied the right to effective participation and inclusion in the overall shaping of the society. But as with all things without exception, the situation is set to change. The recent signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India, Government of Manipur and Airports Authority of India for implementation of Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) in the state with the objective of facilitating regional air connectivity by making air travel affordable through the collaborative support of the central government, state government and airport operators by providing concessions on regional routes and other financial incentives to the airline operators is a much needed step in the right direction. The ambitious scheme- ambitious because of the challenges it entails from the inhospitable and often risky terrain to the apprehensive and suspicious natives in the hinterlands, not to mention the omnipresent danger of a few myopic armed groups jeopardizing the whole exercise with a single blast- has the potential to make a dramatic turnaround of the ground situation we are experiencing today. The central and state planners, when identifying and formulating development programmes, will be able to consult with a wider reach of people in order to take into account their needs, attitudes and traditional knowledge. Only with increased and effective communication will the common people become the principal actors to make development programmes in the state successful as development involves change and new ways of doing things which, in the absence of effective communication, will remain a tantalizingly unreachable possibility. Connectivity has been widely accepted as the cornerstone for regional cooperation and integration and has rightly been increasingly pursued in countries which have felt the need and the benefit for it. The impetus of an increased connectivity and communication amongst the various far-flung places in the state as well the North Eastern region of the country especially in terms of trade and commerce have been more than adequately documented and studied. But more than the economics of it, the possibility and the opportunity such an exercise presents for integration and assimilation of cultures and traditions is what should excite and enthruse us to support the scheme. Increasing connectivity and communications helps in breaking the barriers put up by apprehensions and hype of the unknown and the uncertain. Politicking by various leaders and representatives of the numerous ethnic groups and communities for their self-serving agenda will no longer be effective once people from these communities come to the realization that ideologies, identities, unique histories, common aspirations and ambitions are but names given for attributes which pales before real friendship, understanding and mutual respect which is a natural progression of communication and connectivity.

Wallet lost

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The Newshour will end—mercifully

By : Amrit Dhillon

Even if Arnab Goswami had not resigned, the Newshour was not going to be long of this world. The name was a misnomer. It was not news but entertainment, not debate but a blood sport, not information but insult-trading, and not neutral anchoring but one long, exhausting, hectoring, bullying, mocking diatribe by Goswami. It was a cock fight and every show ended not with the death of one of the roosters but the death of reasoned debate. But that's not the reason why it was reaching the end of its shelf life. Other changes were making the format untenable such as unsustainable levels of crudity, walk outs, and guests turning into mini-Arnabs. A curious change has taken place in guest behaviour. Many people who earlier used to accept being silenced by Goswami began turning the tables on him. They spoke to him with as much belligerence as he did and jabbed their fingers right back at him. When not allowed to speak or finish a sentence, they retaliated, with aggression, demanding insistently and vehemently that he let them speak or refused to speak until he had piped down and guaranteed them at least 30 seconds. These days, they shout him down. To mention only two, Congress Party supporter, the indefatigable and garrulous Rajeev Desai, in his ad nauseam rants, gives Goswami a run for his money. BJP spokesperson Meenakshi Lekhi hectors him back. "A curious change has taken place in guest behaviour." The complaint that 'you are a one man show', 'why do you invite me if you won't let me speak', 'you are not giving me a chance', 'you are judge, jury and executioner all rolled into one Arnab' are being heard very frequently. When a guest refuses to speak until Goswami has lowered his voice, Goswami used to be stumped - though not for long. It is happening all the time now, the latest incident being the other day during a debate on Rahul Gandhi

and Arvind Kejriwal being arrested following the suicide of Subedar Ram Kishan Grewal over his pension. A panelist whose name I can't recall ordered Goswami imperiously to lower his voice before he would answer the question. He kept up this refrain until Goswami had no choice but to lower his decibel level. Guests are also becoming devious in their handling of Goswami. (Why they agree to appear on the show in the first place when they must know they will be humiliated is a matter for shrinks to answer). Actor Om Puri was in the dock recently for his tasteless comment last month in connection with the death of soldier Nitin Kumar. When questioned over why he backed Pakistani actors when Indian soldiers like Nitin Kumar were giving up their lives for the country, Puri had said, while appearing on another channel, "So who asked him to join the Indian Army?" When he appeared in the Newshour kangaroo court and Goswami began taunting him, Puri interjected, saying 'go ahead, go ahead, you are right, you are right' and other sarcastic remarks (at least I presume he was being sarcastic). Goswami lowered his voice and warned Puri not play any stunts with him. But Puri continued the game, saying: 'I'm guilty. I'm guilty. I want to be punished, Arnab Goswami'. Goswami looked nonplussed. Not knowing how to react to this mock capitulation, all he could say was "That's it?" A straightfaced Puri continued on: 'I am ashamed, I am guilty'. Others guests have used sarcasm too and the point is that this approach does rather take the wind out of Goswami's sails. It stops the bullying in its tracks. Puri even put on the face of a chastened schoolboy stoically accepting his whipping. You could see Goswami getting frustrated because the debate was not playing out as he wanted. Another change is that fed up guests are taking off their mics and

walking out. I don't know how many times it has happened but National Conference spokesman Junaid Mattoo walked out this week during a debate on the burning of schools in Kashmir because Goswami would not let him speak. Even if they don't storm off, Goswami has started kicking them off. In one of his debates on his demand that Bollywood actors should take a stand against Pakistani actors who refuse to condemn Pakistan terrorism, actress Mita Vashisht in Mumbai was clearly struggling to hear the other panelist, Colonel V. N. Thapar, in the studio. 'Do you want to hear my view or do you want me to agree with you?' asked Vashisht. She asked Thapar, or perhaps Goswami, to 'stop screeching'. Goswami lowered his voice (always a sign of trouble) and said menacingly: 'Get me loud and clear, you are speaking over Colonel V.N. Thapar. I am taking you off the show right now till you learn to speak with respect to an army officer.' Vashisht's jaw dropped at this and her eyes widened with shock. 'Oh shut up Arnab' she said and angrily yanked off her microphone. But more than these developments, it is the fact that the exchanges are getting nastier and nastier and this is the slippery slope towards the gruesome circuses of ancient Rome. It is in the nature of these things, that you have to keep raising the ugliness of the tone and comments, a bit like pornography addicts having to move from vanilla sex to all sorts of perversions and configurations in order to get the same arousal. Or ancient Romans going from straightforward chariot races to people being torn apart limb by limb by lions in order to their bloodlust satisfied. "So we have Goswami's sadism, guest masochism, people telling one another to shut up, competitive nastiness, and no finished sentences, much less arguments." This was evident earlier this week, in the debate on Kashmir schools burning, when Supreme Court lawyer Shabnam Lone accused her

colleague at the bar, Mahesh Jethmalani, of being in Dawood Ibrahim's pocket. Jethmalani in turn wanted to know how much money Lone was getting from Pakistan and added, for good measure, that she had 'the mindset of a terrorist'. Lone was livid. 'Really? Really? And who are you? Who are you? Shame on you,' she spluttered. In January, 2015, Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra kept telling an interjecting Goswami to let her finish her sentence. When he refused, after a long and pointless slanging match, she showed him the middle finger. So we have Goswami's sadism, guest masochism, people telling one another to shut up, competitive nastiness, and no finished sentences, much less arguments. In the initial years, this had some novelty value because it was so different. Year in, year out, though, the format cannot be sustained. Fatigue sets in. Fans of the TV series The Walking Dead, known for its sickening violence, finally revolted in the last few weeks over the violence rising to a new level of sadism. To get the same shock value, Goswami would have had to keep sinking further and further till he was rolling around in the mud, inciting guests to punch one another. But never mind all this; the point is that his lungs, which must have a biological age of 82, could not have taken it any longer. And it's good that Goswami will go before dear old snarling and spittle-specked General GD. Bakshi bursts a blood vessel and before R. N. Singh is wheeled out of the studio having convulsions. It was reaching the point where Times Now would have had to cover itself against claims for compensation by asking guests to have their blood pressure and pulse checked before walking into the studio. We were close - so close - to having oxygen cylinders dotted around the studio. But mercifully, it will not come to that because Arnab Goswami is going, even though, judging by reports about his future plans, it looks as though it's going to be an revoir rather than adieu. (Courtesy : The Hoot)

National & International News

Pakistan, India may temporarily recall their envoys: Report

PII Islamabad, Nov.4: Signalling a fresh slide in ties, Pakistan and India may temporarily recall their high commissioners and scale down the size of diplomatic staff in each other's missions in the wake of the latest diplomatic spat over the spying episode, a media report said on Friday. The latest spat started last week after a staff member of Pakistan's high commission in New Delhi was detained by police for questioning over espionage charges, the Express Tribune reported. The fresh slide in ties may also lead to a 'scaling down' of the strength of diplomatic staff by the two neighbours, the paper said. The tension intensified after tit-for-tat naming of diplomatic staff for alleged spy work by both sides. Mahmood Akhtar, who was working as a visa officer at the Pakistani high commission, was later expelled from India. "However, India, using a statement Delhi police extracted from Akhtar through coercive means, implicated other Pakistani staffers. The identities of at least six such officials were leaked to the media, jeopardising their security. The move prompted Pakistan to withdraw them from New Delhi," it said. In what appeared to be a tit-for-tat move, Pakistan on Thursday claimed that eight officials posted in India's high commission in Islamabad were agents of RAW and IB. The disclosure left New Delhi

with no other options but to withdraw the named officials, the paper said. An official with knowledge of latest developments said that India had breached an "understanding" by revealing the identities of certain Pakistani officials posted in New Delhi, the paper said. The official said both sides knew that certain officials worked under cover and they did so with the full official knowledge, it said. "What India did was unthinkable," the official added, saying the Indian move would have serious implications for the two countries. He said the immediate fallout of this

controversy could be the recalling of high commissioners by the two countries for the time being, the paper said. The official said another implication might be 'cutting down' the size of diplomatic staff posted in each other's countries till the situation normalised, it added. **MP CM orders judicial probe into Bhopal jail break, encounter** city on October 31. Before escaping from the jail, the SIMI activists also killed a head constable Ramshankar Yadav. Since the encounter took place, conflicting versions from police and state Home Minister surfaced, leading to allegations that it might be fake. A controversy also raged over the

police action following the daring pre-dawn jail-break, after TV channels showed footage purportedly from the encounter site in which a policeman is seen pumping bullets into a man from close range after some unidentified person takes out what appears to be a knife said to be in a plastic cover and places it back. **Car bomb rocks southeast Turkey after pro-Kurdish lawmakers detained** Reuters, Nov. 4: A car bomb rocked southeastern Turkey's largest city on Friday, killing one person and injuring more than 40, security sources said, hours after police detained politicians of the mostly Kurdish region's biggest party. The blast struck an area near the police station where some of the party leaders were being held in a terrorism probe, the sources said. It tore off the facades of buildings and firefighters were searching debris for people trapped there. Police raided the homes and detained the joint leaders of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), the second-biggest opposition party in the national parliament, and nine other HDP lawmakers early on Friday after they refused to give testimony for crimes linked to "terrorist propaganda".