

Editorial

Imphal Wednesday, April 26, 2017

A matter need to be pondered

Although no written document about the history of Nagaland exists, medieval documents of the neighbouring Ahom in present Assam State mentioned that in 1816 Assam was invaded by the Burmese (ava) after which they controlled the place (1819-1826). After 1826, the British annexed the region and started ruling over it. By 1892, the entire Naga region excepting Tuensang came under the British rule thus bringing to an end the massive bloodshed and inter-regional conflict. Post independence, the district of Assam called Naga Hills and Tuensang were made to represent a single unit under Indian administration. At the Naga Peoples Convention in 1960, it was finally decided that Nagaland will be considered a full-fledged state of India and in 1963, Nagaland was finally declared a separate state. But political and factional conflicts continued all these while and even presidential rule was declared after which many anti-government leaders agreed to accept the administration of the Indian Government. This is the simplest version of the so called unique history of the Nagas. Cut to the present- the demand for an "alternative arrangement", according to the Committee on Alternative Arrangement, the proposed regions will have a political system independent of the Manipur Government-meaning in simpler terms- freedom to do anything they like and wish without any government intervention (extortion, collection of illegal taxes from vehicles plying through the regions, looting and vandalizing of goods, battering of drivers to death, molesting women): otherwise why has the committee still adamant on sticking to their point of a separate region by disintegrating the state of Manipur, even when the Government has promised to review the working of the various development projects in all the hill districts of the State and to expedite ongoing ones. The contention of being neglected for decades is also one based on misinformation and lack of understanding of the past history of the state. It would bode well for the committee to ponder over the questions- how many decades in total has Mr. Rishang Keishing- the most prominent Tangkhul in the state, been the Chief Minister of the state and what were his achievements regarding development works in the hill districts of Manipur during his tenure? How many of the candidates from the NPF won the Manipur state assembly election? What was the message conveyed by that result? Which system will be more rational-allotment of constituencies according to the area covered or according to the density of population? Has the representatives of these group ever expressed concerns of inequalities or misappropriation over allocation of resources and benefits meant for their people? Before declaring their intention of handing over the decision for the course of action after the tripartite talks which is nothing but a veiled threat of inciting communal riot and mob laws, the matter should be looked at in an impartial and different perspective. Threats of resorting to violence and disruptions as a means to achieve their end will only result in regression of development in their region and alienation by the neighbouring states. The flagbearers of this non-issue should instead draw up a pragmatic plan of action to bring development and prosperity for their people if they are genuinely interested in their welfare and advancement instead of pushing the unwary people to conflicts and confrontations. Rest assured that every group, whether minority or majority, will extend their helping hand in their endeavour. One cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.

10 Maoists surrender in Jharkhand

PTI Lohardaga, April 26: Ten Maoists, including two self-styled 'area commanders' carrying a reward of Rs two lakh on their head, today surrendered before the police in Lohardaga, officials said. The Maoists surrendered under the "Bandhook Chhodoo Volleyball kshelo abhiyan" (drop guns and play volleyball) programme before Deputy Inspector General of Police A V Homker, Deputy Commissioner Vinod Kumar, Superintendent of Police Karthik S and others, they said. The two 'area commanders', identified as Bishal Kherwar and Kailash Kherwar were carrying a reward of Rs two lakh on their head. This is the biggest achievement of Lohardaga police in their anti-naxal-operation, the police said. The police had on April 22 rescued six minors from the clutches of the CPI (Maoist).

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National and International News

China launches first domestically-built aircraft carrier amid rising tensions over North Korea

Reuters Beijing, April 26: China on Wednesday launched its first domestically built aircraft carrier, which will join an existing one bought second-hand, amid rising tensions over North Korea and worries about Beijing's assertiveness in the South China Sea. State media has quoted military experts as saying the carrier, designed in China and built in the northeast port of Dalian, is not expected to enter service until 2020, as it will take time to fully kit out and arm. The launch had been well-flagged as foreign military analysts and Chinese media have for months published satellite images, photographs and news stories about the second carrier's development. China confirmed its existence in late 2015. The carrier's hull is fully constructed, the official Xinhua news agency said, adding that the propulsion, power and other main systems are in place. **LAUNCH OF THE SHIP** The ship's launch "shows our country's indigenous aircraft carrier design and construction has achieved major step by step results," Xinhua said. State television showed the carrier, its deck lined in red flags, being pushed by tug boats into its berth. Fan Changlong, a vice chairman of China's powerful Central Military Commission, presided over the launch ceremony, Xinhua said, during which a bottle of champagne was broken on the bow. The launch follows China's celebration on Sunday of the 68th birthday of the founding of the Chinese navy, and comes amid renewed tensions between North Korea and the United States over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programmes. **CHINA'S AIRCRAFT CARRIER PROGRAMME** Little is known about China's

aircraft carrier programme, which is a state secret. But the government has said the carrier's design draws on experiences from the country's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, bought from Ukraine in 1998 and refitted in China. The new conventionally powered carrier has a displacement of 50,000 tonnes and will be able to operate China's Shenyang J-15 fighter jets. China's navy has been taking an increasingly prominent role in recent months, with a rising star admiral taking command, its first aircraft carrier sailing around self-ruled Taiwan and new Chinese warships popping up in far-flung places. **CLAIMS OVER SOUTH CHINA SEA** China claims almost all the South China Sea, believed to have huge deposits of oil and gas, through which about \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year, and has been building up military facilities like runways on the islands it controls. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also have claims. Self-ruled Taiwan, claimed by Beijing as its own, has said China is actually building two new aircraft carriers, but China has not officially confirmed the existence of another carrier. Chinese state media has quoted experts as saying that the country needs at least six carriers, and a network of bases around the world to support their operations, though the government has been coy about suggestions it wants a global military presence to match the United States. The Liaoning has taken part in military exercises, including in the South China Sea and more recently near Taiwan, but is expected to serve more as a training vessel than having an actual combat role. The People's Liberation Army Navy significantly lags the United States, which operates 10 aircraft carriers.

Sasikala banners removed from AIADMK office, OPS camp says 'positive step'

PTI Chennai, April 26: Party workers pulled down posters and cutouts of AIADMK (Amma) general secretary VK Sasikala at its headquarters in Chennai on Wednesday, hours after the arrest of her nephew and the faction's deputy general secretary TTV Dinakaran, indicating the shape of things to come in the beleaguered ruling faction in Tamil Nadu. Dinakaran was arrested by Delhi Police on Tuesday night over allegations that he paid a bribe to a middleman to get the disputed two-leaves party symbol for his faction. He was arrested along with his aide Mallikarjun after 3 days of questioning at the Chanakypuri crime branch office. The dispute over the symbol erupted after the AIADMK split into Sasikala-led AIADMK (Amma) and former chief minister O Panneerselvam's AIADMK (Puratatchi Thalaivi Amma) following the death of party supremo and then Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa. The rival camp is now led by chief minister Edappadi Palaniswami, a Sasikala loyalist. Workers at the party headquarters tore down the posters as demanded by Panneerselvam-led group's presidium chairperson E Madhusudanana as a precondition for the talks between the two factions for a merger. "This is definitely a positive step. We are happy the cadres have decided to remove the banners," media coordinator of the Panneerselvam-led camp 'Aspire' K Swaminathan told news agency PTI.

The Panneerselvam camp has stuck to its demands of the expulsion of Sasikala, Dinakaran and other family members from the AIADMK and a CBI probe into the death of late chief minister J Jayalalithaa as pre-conditions for talks. "Now that Dinakaran has been arrested and his aunt Sasikala is serving a sentence, slowly the EPS camp is realising the altered ground situation and might be more eager to commence merger talks," a senior leader from the Panneerselvam camp told Hindustan Times on Wednesday morning. The arrest of Dinakaran and his aide sent shockwaves in the ruling faction with the prospect of more names tumbling out in the case. The number of supporters of Dinakaran is already dwindling, as there were not many backers on Wednesday morning. According to sources, both sides were continuing with back-channel talks but Dinakaran's arrest is expected to accelerate the matter in the AIADMK, especially as the opposition DMK has begun amassing allies and preparing for any eventuality. The tone and tenor of the AIADMK (Amma) district office bearers meeting for the second day on Wednesday is expected to change as the leaders are likely to impress upon the cadres on the need to maintain unity, an euphemism for distancing from the Mannargudi Mafia. "Mannargudi mafia" is a derisive reference to Sasikala's hometown and the alleged corrupt dealings of her family that enjoyed immense clout in early days of Jayalalithaa's rule. Other than Thanga Tamilvelam, an MLA known to be a close supporter of Dinakaran, not many were willing to be seen as supporting either Sasikala or Dinakaran, especially as the situation remained fluid. Sources in both the camps indicated that there were chances of formal merger talks to start sometime in the afternoon. However, there was no official confirmation as yet. Panneerselvam's supporters and his core team are also expected to hold a meeting and take stock of the emerging political situation after Dinakaran's arrest. The group is also watching out for, as is the EPS camp, on the possible revelations from investigators. Notwithstanding the progress of merger talks or lack of it, the Panneerselvam camp is going ahead with its case before the Election Commission and submitted 6000 more affidavits to the poll panel that is considering its claim as being the real party. It has also challenged the validity of Sasikala's election as the general secretary and questioned all the decisions she took as general secretary of the party.

Centre has no plans to impose any tax on agriculture income, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley says

TNN New Delhi, April 26: The Centre has no plans to impose any tax on agriculture income, finance minister Arun Jaitley said on Wednesday. "I have read the paragraph in Niti Aayog Report entitled 'Income tax on agriculture income'. To obviate any confusion on the subject, I categorically state that the Central Government has no plan to impose any tax on agriculture income," Jaitley said in a statement. "As per the Constitutional Allocation of Powers, the Central Government has no jurisdiction to impose tax on agricultural income," the FM said. Niti Aayog, the government's think tank, has strongly backed taxing of agricultural income above a certain threshold and removal of exemptions on personal income tax as part of a strategy to expand the tax base and prevent evasion. There is a view within the think tank that the blanket relief on agricultural income was aimed at protecting farmers, but it was being misused by many non-farmers who declare agriculture as their source of income to evade tax. "But the eventual answer to expanding the base on the personal income tax other than elimination of exemptions is also to tax the rural sector, including agricultural income above a certain threshold," NITI Aayog member Bibek Debroy had told a news conference convened on Tuesday to unveil the draft three year agenda which is replacing the Soviet style five-year plans followed by the erstwhile Planning Commission.

Trainee aircraft crashes near MP-Maharashtra border, woman trainee pilot among 2 dead

Bhopal, April 26: A two-seater trainee aircraft of the National Flying Training Institute in Gondia (Maharashtra) crashed in the jungles near the Madhya Pradesh-Maharashtra border on Wednesday morning, killing two pilots. The incident took place in the jungles of Kherlanji area of Naxal affected Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh (450 km from Bhopal) at around 10.30 am. The aircraft had reportedly taken off from the Birsai Airport in Gondia. One of the two pilots who died in the crash is possibly a female trainee pilot, inspector general of police (Balaghat) G Nanardan told the *New Indian Express*. The police ruled out any involvement of the left-wing extremists in the crash. The primary information suggests that the craft crashed after coming in contact with a high tension wire, said the IG. Superintendent of police (Balaghat) Amit Singh is expected to reach the accident spot in a short while.

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