

Editorial

Imphal Monday, January 30, 2017

Diverting the real issues

The increasingly chaotic din of the election euphoria is silencing some of most important issues of the state. People now have stopped talking about the draconian AFSPA and hardly spare time to discuss issues of massive human rights violations being committed under various outdated laws- the very archaic Act which Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised to scrape while delivering his infamous speech at Madison Square Garden in New York, few months after becoming the Prime Minister of India.

For the Congress party which is in power in the state, the issue of territorial integrity is assumed the most effective card to play with the voters. The congress really have the advantage as BJP which is in power at the centre is the political party that will either be blamed or appreciated for the outcome of the peace talk with the NSCN-IM. The signing of the Frame work agreement and concealing the details of the agreement is another advantage of the congress party in attacking the rival BJP.

However, the apple of discord between a civil society group at Churahandpur and people in valley demanding legislation for protection of an Inner Line Permit system make the Congress party handicapped. They appeared to have been caught between the devil and deep blue sea. The rigid stand of JILIPS of making 1951 as the baseline for determining original residents of the state and the JAC CCPur's strong opposition to introduction of any ILPS Bill is perhaps the greatest challenge the ruling congress is facing.

The issues are of no worry to the congress as they understand the mentality of the voters. The congress is now concentrating on mass recruitment at government departments. They have been issuing notifications and conducted DPC for recruitment of various post in the government department. These recruited candidates or who are in the list for recruitment are considered as bonus votes for the congress. Thanks to the CEO Manipur for directing the state government to furnish all details for recruitment and undertaking recruitment at various government departments that has been taking place since April 1 this year. As for the BJP the issue of Territorial Integrity has been left aside and the ILPS is of no serious matter as they consider these issues to be of no help in election. As some of the BJP hard core in the centre are strong advocates of the draconian AFSPA, the party now had stopped mentioning about the much reviled and contentious Act. Like the congress, the party now firmly believes in the developmental matra as well as providing of easy access to central government grant-in-aid as more important to win more seats in the upcoming assembly poll.

For reasons best known to itself the political party who had promised to punish those involved in the multi-crores Loktak scam has remained silent. The party is also inexplicably silent on fighting corruption with appropriate tool, so no definite words have been spelt out to establish Lok Ayukta till date. Once the election notification was issued the simmering talks about the real and immediate issues of the state have all been swept under the carpet. And people will start enjoying the election festival - the festival that happened once every five years. ILPS or Anti-ILPS is not going to have any significant impact on the upcoming state election, and Chief Minister Okram Ibobi as well as BJP leader Th. Chaoba are clear about this. And the state is back to square one.

Pune woman techie murder: Did security guard strangle the 24-year-old?

Pune, Jan. 30: In a shocking incident, a 24-year-old woman techie's body was found at her office on Sunday night. A 27-year-old security guard employed with tech giant Infosys at its Pune office was arrested in Mumbai on Monday morning for the murder of the woman. The woman was rushed to the hospital where she was declared dead. Identified as Rashila Raju, the deceased hailed from Kerala and was working in a Pune-based IT company. She was found at 8.30 pm on Sunday in her cabin, strangled by a lan wire. The security guard identified as

Bhavan Saikiya was detained at CST and taken to Pune. The police managed to trace Saikiya to CST railway station. He was detained around 6 am, and brought to Pune four hours later. "We are interrogating him," said Arun Waykar, senior inspector of Hinjewadi police station. Saikiya resides at Kisan Rambhau Thakkar in Hinjewadi Phase three. A case of murder has been registered with Hinjewadi police station. Rashila's reporting manager, Abijeet Amrut Kothari, a senior associate consultant with Infosys, told the police that Rashila had been working on Sunday to complete a project.

National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme

By : Rajiv Pratap Rudy

Since the early ages, the transfer of skills has been happening through the tradition of apprentices. A young apprentice would work under the tutelage of a master craftsman to learn the craft, while the master craftsman would get an inexpensive form of labour in exchange of training the apprentice and basic amenities. This tradition of skill development through on the job training has survived the test of time and found its place in the skill development programs of various nations around the world. The key benefits of apprenticeship as a mode of skill development are that it is a win-win model for both the industry and the apprentice, and it leads to the creation of an industry-ready workforce. Most countries around the world have implemented the apprenticeship model - Japan has over 10 million apprentices, Germany has 3 million apprentices and USA has 0.5 million apprentices, while India has only 0.3 million apprentices. This number is relatively low considering the huge population and demography of India with more than 300 million people in the age group of 18 -35 years.

In order to realise the potential of the favourable demographic dividend of India, Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the Skill India campaign and subsequently, a separate Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was formed in November 2014 with an ambition to convert India into the Skill capital of the world. The young and start-up ministry in a very quick time has covered good ground in terms of putting together policy frameworks, launching and scaling up the flagship skill development

scheme - Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), revamping the ITI ecosystem, launching new schemes for entrepreneurship development, etc. Similarly, Ministry has taken two key steps to increase the adoption of apprenticeship model in India:

1. Amendments to the Apprenticeship Act, 1961
 2. Launching of National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) to replace Apprentice Protsahan Yojna (APY)
- Apprenticeship Act, 1961**
The Apprentices Act, 1961 was enacted with the objective of regulating the programme of training of apprentices in the industry by utilising the facilities available therein for imparting on-the-job training. The Act makes it obligatory for employers to engage apprentices in designated trades to impart apprenticeship training on the job in industry to school leavers and ITI pass outs. Graduates engineer, Diploma holder and Certificate in 10+2 vocational stream to develop skilled manpower. During the past few decades, the performance of Apprenticeship Training Scheme (ATS) was not in line with the growth of the economy of India. It was found that a large number of training facilities available in the industry going unutilized depriving unemployed youth to avail the benefits of the ATS. Analysis and interaction with stakeholders revealed that employers were not satisfied with the provisions of the act, especially the penal provision of imprisonment of 6 months. These provisions were considered too rigid by employers to encourage them to engage apprentices. Based on these inputs the Apprenticeship Act, 1961 was amended in 2014 which came into effect on 22 December 2014. The key changes brought about by the amendment are as follows:
- a. Imprisonment is no longer a penalty for violations under the Apprentices Act. After the Amendment, any non-compliance would be punishable only by a fine.
 - b. The definition of worker has been broadened and the method of determining the number of apprentices to be appointed has been amended. These amendments would ensure that employers engage a larger number of apprentices
 - c. The amendment also made provision for setting up a portal leading to electronic management of records, contracts and returns. The motive behind these amendments was to ensure that employers engage a larger number of apprentices and to encourage employers to comply with the provisions of the Apprentices Act.
- National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme**
The government has launched the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) on 19th August 2016 to promote apprenticeship training and incentivize employers who wish to engage apprentices. NAPS has replaced Apprentice Protsahan Yojna (APY) from 19th August 2016. While APY provided sharing of 50% of the stipend as prescribed by the Government only for the first two years, NAPS has provision for sharing of expenditure incurred in both providing training and stipend to the apprentice as follows:
- Reimbursement of 25% of prescribed stipend subject to a maximum of Rs. 1500/- per month per apprentice to all apprentices to employers.

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• Sharing of the cost of basic training in respect of fresher apprentices (who come directly for apprenticeship training without formal training) limited to Rs. 7500/- per apprentice for a maximum duration of 500 hours/3 months. NAPS was launched with an ambitious objective of increasing the engagement of apprenticeship from 2.3 Lakhs to 50 Lakhs cumulatively by 2020. We have received an encouraging response from **1.43 Lakh students who have registered since the launch of the scheme in August**. Ministry of Defence has also shown support for NAPS, by asking all PSUs under its engage over 10% of total workforce as apprentices. Hon'ble Prime Minister recently distributed reimbursement cheques to 15 establishments under NAPS in an event on 19th December in Kanpur. A user-friendly online portal (www.apprenticeship.gov.in) has been launched in order to facilitate the easy processing of entire apprenticeship cycle and for effective administration and monitoring of the scheme. The portal provides end to end service for the employer from registration and mentioning vacancy to submitting claims, and for the apprentice from registration to receiving and accepting offer letters online. MSDE is working towards promoting the skill ecosystem through its initiatives to provide the incentives to employers and creating a regulatory framework to promote compliance. I strongly believe that our initiatives such as NAPS will enable us to create an industry-ready workforce and help us transform India into the 'Skill Capital of the world'.
(Courtesy PIB Feature)

National & International News

Supreme rejects self-styled godman Ashram's bail plea in rape case

Jodhpur, Jan. 30: The Supreme Court on Monday rejected bail plea of self-styled godman Ashram, who is accused in sexual assault cases. Ashram had sought a bail on medical grounds. The instant plea is devoid of merit and hence dismissed, said the top court, while refusing to modify its earlier order that had declined him interim bail. Jodhpur police arrested Ashram on August 3, 2013 and since then he is in prison. A teenager had accused

Asaram of sexually assaulting her during celebration in a village near Jodhpur ashram. He knocked the doors of the apex court seeking bail on health ground, in connection with the two rape cases registered against him. The Gujarat Government had earlier told the top court division bench that the rape case registered against Ashram would very likely proceed in an expeditious manner, adding that the trial would be completed within six months so the bail should

not be granted to him in the case. The apex court had in October last month sought the response of the Centre and five states on a plea seeking a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the alleged murder of children through black magic and attacks on ten witnesses in Asaram Babu rape cases. The petitioners have prayed for a court monitored investigation by a SIT or the CBI into attacks on 10 witnesses, murder of three

witnesses, into the murder of a child for black magic by Narayan Sai and Asaram in Jhabua Madhya Pradesh, into the mysterious deaths of two children at the Motera Ashram, Gujarat and two more children at Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh and for protection of the life of the witnesses, who have been attacked and their families by Central Security Force (BSF, CRPF, CISF or others) and for a National Witness Protection Program.

6 killed after gunmen open fire at Mosque in Canada's Quebec City

Canada, Jan. 30: Six people were killed and eight more injured after gunmen opened fire at a Quebec City mosque, police said today. City spokeswoman Christine Coulombe told journalists that two suspects were arrested following the attack that police were treating as a "terrorist act." Police did not rule out the possibility of a third suspect who had fled the scene. The motive of the attack was not immediately clear. Police set up a perimeter around the mosque. Earlier, a witness told Reuters that up to three gunmen fired on about 40 people inside the Quebec City Islamic Cultural Center. "Why is this happening here? This is barbaric," said the mosque's president, Mohamed Yangui. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Twitter: "Tonight, Canadians grieve for those killed in a cowardly attack on a mosque in Quebec City. My thoughts are with victims & their families." Quebec's prime minister, Philippe Couillard, said in a series of Twitter posts that the government was "mobilized to ensure the security of the people of Quebec." "Quebec categorically rejects this barbaric violence," he wrote. "Solidarity with Quebec people of Muslim faith. In June 2016, a pig's head was left on the doorstep of the cultural center. Yangui, who was not inside the

mosque when the shooting occurred, said he got frantic calls from people at evening prayers. He did not know how many were injured, saying they had been taken to different hospitals across Quebec City. Incidents of Islamophobia increased in Quebec in recent years amid a political debate over banning the niqab, or Muslim face covering. In 2013, police investigated after a

mosque in the Saguenay region of Quebec was splattered with what was believed to be pig blood. In the neighboring province of Ontario, a mosque was set on fire in 2015, a day after an attack by gunmen and suicide bombers in Paris. The attack comes as Canada has vowed to open its arms wide to Muslims and refugees after US President Donald Trump's controversial immigration ban

Friday sparked travel chaos and outrage around the world. Canada will offer temporary residence permits to people stranded in the country as a result of Trump's order, the immigration ministry said Sunday. Canada has welcomed more than 39,670 Syrian refugees between November 2015 and early January 2017, according to government figures.

In 1984, Indian Air Force could have 'inflicted major damage' on Pakistan's nuclear facilities, CIA believed

New Delhi, Jan. 30: The Indian Air Force (IAF) could have "inflicted major damage on Pakistan's most critical nuclear facilities", in 1984, says a secret CIA document from November of that year. The secret "intelligence assessment", made soon after then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination, also said that an attack by the IAF could "destroy or sufficiently damage the facilities to prevent Islamabad from producing nuclear weapons for several years." Surprisingly, the CIA document also says that MIG 29s - which India at the time was awaiting delivery of - had "medium-range capability superior to" that of the F-16s, which were and still are

made by the US. Notably, Pakistan possessed F-16s. Because of "poor command, control, and communications, we judge that Islamabad could not blunt a massed Indian airstrike," the document says. It adds, though, that "surprise and speed" by the IAF were critical for a successful strike on Pakistan's "most critical" nuclear facilities. According to the CIA, those facilities were the Kahuta Enrichment Plant and PINSTECH- New Laboratories facility, both of which were just 30 minutes away by plane from India. India's air force was "larger and better" than Pakistan's, the 1984 CIA document says. "We believe that the Pakistanis can neither provide effective air

defense for their military and industrial targets against a concerted Indian air attack nor seriously threaten most strategic targets in India," it adds. In the event of an IAF strike on Pakistan, the IAF would have most likely used its MIG-23s and its Jaguar aircraft, the CIA believed at the time. "The best window for a preemptive strike, in our opinion, would be during November through February. Low precipitation and lack of clouds make visual target identification the easiest in this period," the CIA document explains. The US intelligence agency document detailing this scenario is one of thousands of recently declassified CIA documents.

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