

Editorial

Making a change to education scenario

Some of the demands by All Tribal Students' Union of Manipur (ATSUM) need to be appreciated. Government should listen to it before it sparks into another trouble. The student body is demanding teachers, school infrastructures and improvement related works with the education system.

Education is a must for enlightening the society. "Education - an enlightening experience", so says the experts.

In our society mired with deep rooted beliefs and traditions, the one means of lifting the veil of superstition and bringing the public to their senses turns out to be enlightening the common people to the realities of the present world. The role of education cannot be emphasized enough in bringing about a change in the mindset of the people. Yet, and as we have been experiencing it, the critical role of education has been missing, leading to a slow progression and a hindrance to the fast paced race for development in the present world.

In a welcome move by the present minister who is in charge of education, various changes have been mooted- and many have been implemented. Yet the fact remains that the system is still in need of a holistic overhaul- not so much for want of regulations as it is for want of an effective implementation of the various policies and programs drawn up to boost the quality of education being dispensed at present in the state.

In what can be termed as a mass malpractice of reformation, the present practice of substituting local individuals in connivance with the appointed teachers to take their place in various far flung places is becoming an accepted way of escaping the harsh realities of the actual hardships that comes with the trade. An undeniable fact that has been conveniently overlooked- the end result felt only by the students.

Promises have been made to make state run educational institutions an ideal place of study- a brave attempt to challenge the monopoly of private educational institutions. Though the move is a welcome one considering the exorbitant fees being levied by these private educational institutions of which there has been such a hue and cry about, the fact remains that almost every parent or guardian still prefers to enroll their wards in such private schools. Isn't it then reason enough for the state agencies and concerned authorities to delve deeper into the matter to find out the reason behind all these fiasco? What has the so called "model schools" become? What are the checks and balances that have been put in place to ensure such model schools perform to their optimum? How are the teachers, selected after much hype and controversies performing? Or are those selected teachers really performing their entrusted duties to the best of their abilities? Questions only those in the know of things can give a definitive answer to.

Yet the undeniable results showed otherwise. It is time to question the facts and admit the lapses to bring about the desired result. The open secret of the surrogate teachers needs to be busted in time to prevent the decaying rot in the education system in the State. The media is ready- is the Government ready to take the fall?

Vehicle stolen

My newly bought two wheeler vehicle (Blue colour Activa -4G; Frame No. ME4JF507FH7336835, Engine No. JF50ET-5337109) was stolen by unidentified persons/ person while parking at my home on the night between September 19 and September 20, 2017.

Any persons come across the vehicle may kindly contact the undersigned or informed to the nearest police station.

Sd/-
Brainy Sarangthem
Haobam Marak from Leikai,
Imphal West

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National & International News

J&K: Pakistan shells border posts in Arnia, RS Pura sectors; two BSF jawans among 5 injured

Jammu, Sept. 23: In an overnight shelling and firing by Pakistani rangers along the Ramgarh, Arnia and RS Pura sectors, two Border Security Force personnel (BSF) among five other people were injured on Friday. Though there has been no official communication from BSF about injuries on its side last night, police sources said that two BSF personnel were injured in Ramgarh sector. Identified as Subash, Vandana and Pushpinder, the civilians were residents of

Satowali in R S Pura sector. The Pakistani troops fired 120 mm and 80 mm mortar shells but the loss had not been much as most of the shells fell in agricultural fields or open spaces.

The BSF retaliated effectively and strongly causing heavy damage on Pakistan side, sources said, adding that firing from across the border stopped around 6.15 am. "There are only a few areas which are clearly visible from our side. Damage visible, but extent not known," said

a BSF spokesperson here. Also Read: India, Pak DGMOs discuss ceasefire violations in Jammu Over 700 civilians including men, women, and children were evacuated to safer places from near the international border in the wake of escalation in the situation along the international border on Thursday night. Also Read: J&K: Pakistan violates ceasefire twice in Arnia Sector, BSF retaliating Earlier on September 11, a BSF constable and a civilian were killed

in an unprovoked and intensified shelling by Pakistani troops in Nowshera district of Jammu and Kashmir. In view of the uncertainty in situation along the borders in R S Pura, Arnia and Ramgarh sectors, sources said that police and civil administration have advised people not to move out of their houses and keep their lights switched off during the night. The educational institutions in border areas of Arnia have been closed as a precautionary measure.

Mexico school collapse spurs doubts over building code for quakes

Reuters
Mexico City, Sept. 23: The school collapse this week that killed at least 19 children during an earthquake has prompted many Mexicans to question whether building codes developed after a devastating 1985 temblor are too easily flouted. Stringent codes enacted after a massive temblor killed thousands three decades ago minimized damage this week across the metropolis of 20 million people, even if experts say it is nearly impossible to design structures to withstand any quake. At least 293 people died in Tuesday's quake, measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale, but the toll could have been far worse. Still, the collapse of some structures built under the new codes, including the Enrique Rebsamen school that became a symbol of this week's tragedy, has sparked concerns over implementation of the rules.

"There are still gaps that mean new buildings don't always fully comply," said Roberto Meli Piralla, a structural engineer and expert on seismic preparedness at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. It is too early to know if code violations, neglect or corruption were factors in the collapse of the school or about 50 other buildings in Mexico City.

Yet engineers said that challenges remain in enforcing the codes uniformly and ensuring that builders, inspectors and property owners follow approved plans. Inspectors can be criminally liable if a building they OK proves structurally

unsound. The mayor of the district where the school is located said her office has been unable to find documentation to assess its construction and structural history. She blamed problems, including corruption, on a predecessor administration.

"When we came into office, there were many files missing," said Claudia Sheinbaum, the mayor of the Tlalpan district. She said she had no proof that corruption had anything to do with the collapse. Before the quake, municipal officials were already discussing revisions to strengthen code oversight, said Piralla, who is part of an engineering group that made recommendations to the city in recent weeks.

One suggestion, according to another engineer involved in the discussions, was to have an independent, third-party review of designs before inspectors sign off on them. The Secretary for Housing and Urban Development, the municipal office that oversees the code, could not be reached for comment.

"WHO COULD HAVE APPROVED THIS SCHOOL?"
Even if compliance were universal, engineers said, there is no way to fully prepare because earthquakes vary widely. Tuesday's temblor generated a different frequency of shockwave from the 1985 quake and toppled mid-sized buildings of roughly six to eight stories, compared with towers of about 12 to 15 floors in 1985.

"It's not possible to say what

problems could have been foreseen," said Antonio Gallardo, a member of the board of architects in Mexico City, a council that upholds professional standards across the capital. Most of the damage on Tuesday happened in central and southern districts where soils are less solid than in northern neighborhoods, and urban development, even after improvements in recent decades, is still patchwork.

Although the toppled buildings are still being investigated, some were built after the 1987 code, which has periodically been revised since. At the school, which is in southern Mexico City, the older of two structures remained standing while a newer building collapsed. It was built early last decade and opened in 2004, according to several people familiar with its history.

The school is a private facility founded in the 1980s by the family that runs it, according to two adult former students. The principal, a daughter of the founders, lived in an apartment that was part of the collapsed structure. She survived the quake, current and former students said. Neither the principal nor other family members could be reached for comment. But local authorities, neighbors and parents are demanding answers.

"Who could have approved this school?" asked Raul Diaz, a doctor whose 7-year-old son, Eduardo, died at the school. "The building was poorly built." If prior quakes are any guide,

investigations and a full accounting will take years. But experts said it would be impossible to build structures that could withstand all quakes.

"There is always going to be a degree of uncertainty," said Mary Comerio, a professor of architecture and researcher on disaster recovery at the University of California at Berkeley. She cited the 2011 earthquake that leveled even costly, modern structures in Christchurch, New Zealand. The extent of a phenomenon known as liquefaction, in which solid soil behaves like a liquid, surprised scientists.

Notwithstanding architectural advances, many other variables come into play including human error, ground conditions, the location, depth and force of an earthquake. In 2006, Comerio authored a paper in the journal Science called "Can Buildings Be Made Earthquake-Safe?" "The answer is largely no," she said. (Additional reporting by Paulo Prada and Daniel Trotta; Writing by Paulo Prada; Editing by Daniel Flynn and Cynthia Osterman)

Bengal govt issues passes to tourists for Durga Puja visit

PTI
Kolkata, Sept. 23: The West Bengal government for the first time has come up with special passes for tourists to enable them to visit all Durga Puja pandals in and around the city.

The state tourism department has issued the 'Sharodotsav 2017 special guest passes' for the Pujas and the Red Road carnival on October three, a tourism department official told PTI on Saturday.

Each pass, depicting the face of goddess Durga, will enable one person to visit all Durga Pujas being held in Kolkata and its neighbouring Salt Lake City and Howrah district besides the October-3 carnival. The pass will be valid from September 23 to October 3.

"We want to publicise the Durga Puja which is the biggest festival in the world. We want to show to the world what Durga Puja is all about. And it is probably also the biggest food festival in the world. So for the first time we have planned to showcase it," the official said.

In fact, the tourism department has contacted all hotels, starting from top five-star facilities to budget hotels which are preferred by foreign tourists, he said.

The Consulates in the city have also been provided with these passes, he said.

Last year the tourism department had tried to woo foreign tourists for the Durga Puja carnival on the Red Road with poor response.

"This year we do not want to take any chances and hence the passes have been prepared. All the hotels in the city have been asked to provide the passes to their guests. Foreign guests have shown immense interest in it and we are getting calls from hotel authorities for more passes," he said.

Budget and small hotels in south Kolkata's Sudder Street have also been interested in the passes, he said.

Cross-border attacks turn hamlet into ghost town

By Anil Bhatt(PTI)
Jammu, Sep 23: Night after night, Anita Kumar and her family huddled together under a bed in one corner of a room, surrounded by the deadly sounds of gunfire. After heavy cross-border shelling over several days, the family finally decided to leave their home along the India- Pakistan border yesterday.

"We chose to stay here, despite the intermittent attacks.

But on Thursday night, the situation got worse, two shells hit our house, damaged it and killed a buffalo," Kumar said.

The once-bustling border settlement of Arnia now resembles a ghost town. Like Kumar and her family, many have fled the town to escape the shelling that has been carrying on for seven days.

"The mortar bombs fired by Pakistani troops will kill us if we don't leave our homes," Arnia resident Pitam Chand told PTI. Not just Arnia, 20 adjoining hamlets also wear a deserted look as its residents move to relatively safer areas.

Night times, residents of the border areas stressed, were the most frightening, as guns and mortar shells boomed.

Chand, whose family members fled Arnia and took shelter at his son-in-law's house in the Chatta area of Jammu, pointed to the bullet holes scarring the walls of his house and said it had been hit by three mortar shells.

"Thursday night's shelling almost led to the partial collapse of the house," he said.

Over 60 per cent of the houses in the area had been hit by mortar shells, Chand said.

"Had our family not left the house, we would all have died yesterday," he said.

The shelling leaves behind a lethal trail of destruction - at least two persons were killed and 19 others injured in explosions last week.

"In our ward, 12 houses were hit on Thursday night," Chand said, adding that over 90 per cent of those who had stayed back in Arnia had now left the town.

Kumar, her husband Bhag Singh, their two children and her mother-in-law have taken refuge in a relative's home. "We have no money to rebuild our house," she rued.

The sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) of the area, Surinder Choudhary, said roughly 10,000 people had left their homes.

Those who have moved to regions around, come back to their homes in the daytime, mostly to feed their cattle.

Dead cattle in pools of blood, torn off roof-tops and windows punctured by bullets and splinters of mortar bombs are a common sight here. The smell of cordite and gunpowder lingers in the air.

"We live under the shadow of death. Our cattle have been killed and injured. Our houses and cow sheds have been damaged. We

have been forced to leave our homes. Our children are not getting education. Is this the life we wanted," Jabawal resident Shamsheer Singh asked.

People in this border town believed that statements about giving "befitting replies to Pakistan" only invited more attacks.

"When the ministers issue statements about befitting replies to Pakistan from their Delhi offices, we pay for their remarks," a villager said.

The local people demanded bunkers from the government to escape the shelling from across the border.

"Instead of issuing statements, the government should provide us with individual bunkers and plots for constructions of safe houses away from the firing ranges," Kumar said.

There have been continuous firing and shelling by Pakistani troops along the International Border (IB) and the Line of Control (LoC) between September 13 and September 18.

After a two-day lull, firing and shelling resumed on September 21. Incidents of ceasefire violations by Pakistani troops have increased sharply this year. Till August 1, there have been 285 such actions by the Pakistan army, while in 2016, the number was significantly less at 228 for the entire year, according to figures by the Indian Army.