

Editorial

Thursday, Feb. 15, 2018

Tomorrow's Manipur

Hope and ambition are an intrinsic part of human beings.

People almost always find a way to wriggle out of any situation however difficult or seemingly hopeless it might seem. People of the state had witness this irrepressible human trait witnessed and experienced in our state. Beset with problems and disappointments in every sphere of life- be it the crony politics and contract culture pervading every public development projects and schemes taking precedence over concepts of progress and development, the duality and conflicts on culture and increasingly alienating stands, artistic constraints and vigilantism that is slowly yet surely chocking freedom of artistic expression and individuality, or worse still, the rise of a breed of human parasites and opportunists ready to pounce on and capitalize upon the slightest hint of weakness of anybody or anything, employing any and every means at their disposal- connections, coercions, threat or even violence to have their way.

The perfect ingredients for a superhit blockbuster, one might even summarise with enthusiasm, only if it isn't for the grim reality of the situation. Just as the darkest hour precedes the dawn, so does the seemingly endless feeling of gloom and despondency in the society gives rise to an undying flicker of hope and expectations, for as things stand now, things couldn't get any worse than it already is, and that we can only go forward, for the uncomfortable fact remains that our society as a whole is standing with its back against the wall at the moment.

And so we move, or at least we hope to. The Imphal-Dimapur national highway has been assured of upgrading to make it withstand the vagaries of nature throughout the year which will translate to increased efficiency in connectivity, decrease in disruptions in transportation of essential commodities thereby stabilizing prices, increase in comfort and safety to travelers, among others. The Solid Waste Treatment Plant at Lamdeng has already been operational but report said it is not performing as expected before its commencement. This still is a big hindrance in the effort to keeping the city clean, not to mention the clogging of drainages causing flooding and water stagnation raising the threat of spreading vector-borne diseases such as Malaria, Dengue, Japanese Encephalitis etc.

A host of other developmental works is either in the offing or is already in various stages of completion. While the increasing pace and seemingly increasing amount of developmental activities bodes well for the state which has been reeling under numerous forms of disruptions mainly due to the lack of opportunities for development and infrastructures that could make it so, past experiences has put a huge question mark on the end result of these efforts. Those entrusted with the projects should take a proactive role in seeing that these vital activities are carried out according to specifications and in time for the people of this state to stand a fighting chance of catching up with the rest of the world. It is the end result which will ultimately prove the intentions of the leaders true- or otherwise.

Court sends suspected IM terrorist to police custody

Agency

New Delhi, Feb 15: A Delhi court has sent an alleged Indian Mujahideen terrorist, who had escaped during the 2008 Batla House encounter and was wanted in connection with several blasts, to 25 days police custody.

Additional Sessions Judge Sidharth Sharma gave Delhi Police 25 days to conduct Ariz Khans custodial interrogation. Khan, who was arrested on February 13, was produced before the court last evening. Seeking his remand, the special cell of the police told the court that he was required to be quizzed in relation to the Batla House case and in various other serial blasts in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Delhi. A team of Delhi Police special cell had arrested the 32-year-old suspected terrorist from

Banwasa, along the Indo-Nepal border, on February 13.

Khan was an alleged member of IMs Azamgarh (Sanjarmur) module and was based in Nepal where he was teaching at a school. His associate, Tauqueer, was arrested earlier by the Delhi Police in January this year, police said.

He was wanted by the Delhi Police in connection with serial blasts in September 2008 in the national capital in which about 30 people were killed and over 100 injured. He was also wanted in the Batla House encounter in the same year in which Delhi Police Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma was killed. He was linked with deadly terror strikes in which about 165 people were killed and over 535 were injured, police said. Interpol had issued a red corner notice against him.

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National & International News

Modi in Northeast: Huge excitement to hear PM speak, says Tripura BJP

Kolkata, Feb. 15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on a one-day trip to North East and will be visiting Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura.

PM Modi will be addressing a political rally in Shantibazar in South Tripura and will also hold road show, a first in north east in Left ruled state of Tripura.

PM Modi will be addressing the people of Shantibazar, a CPI stronghold and also the seat of the incumbent Minister of Prisons in the state. It is interesting because previous BJP rallies were

focussed on North Tripura and now he will be visiting South Tripura. This however, is also the first time he will be addressing a massive gathering in the capital city of Agartala. BJP state president of Tripura, Biplab Deb said, "The enthusiasm and excitement to hear the Prime Minister is huge across the state...since he cannot travel to all constituencies we are selecting places and including Agartala because both urban and rural people want to hear him."

Modi will be visiting Arunachal Pradesh in the first half of the day where he will visit Itanagar to inaugurate the state Civil Secretariat complex, convention hall and also lay the foundation stone of the Film and Television Institute in the state capital. Modi also addressed a public rally at Indira Gandhi Park.

Modi last visited the state in February 2015 and attended the Statehood Day function.

He will launch a new Doordarshan channel Arun prabhat for Arunachal Pradesh.

He will also lay foundation stone of academic block of Tomo Riba Hospital of Medical Science and the convention hall is dedicated to late Dorjee Khandu, Former Chief Minister and also father of incumbent Chief Minister Pema Khandu.

Interestingly, 16th is the last day of campaigning for Tripura and Rahul Gandhi will be holding rallies in Tripura, just a day after PM's visit making it a triangular fight in the state ruled by Left for more than 20 years.

US: 19-year-old ex-student kills 17 in shooting spree at Florida high school

HT

Washington, Feb. 15: A 19-year-old former student gunned down at least 17 people, including students and staff, and injured 15 in a Florida high school on Wednesday afternoon, officials said, in yet another mass shooting in the United States.

The assailant was identified as Nikolas Cruz, who was expelled a year ago for unspecified disciplinary problems. Investigators said he carried an AR-15, a semi-automatic rifle used in several mass shootings, and multiple magazines.

"This is catastrophic... There really are no words," sheriff Scott Israel, whose children went to the same school, said.

The shooting took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland city, a middle-class community about 72km north of Miami, at around 2.30pm, just minutes before the close of school. Witnesses and local leaders briefed by investigators indicated the assailant had planned the shooting meticulously with the intention to maximise casualties. He came wearing a gas mask and was

carrying smoke grenades. He set off the fire alarm to draw students into the hallway and waited for them at the entrance with the semi-automatic gun.

"People were halfway down the stairwell, it just stopped, the alarm stopped," a student identified only by her first name, Alex, told a CNN affiliate station. "And we heard gunshots coming from the first floor, the second floor and people were running upstairs. We all got upstairs and into our classroom. As (my teacher) was closing the door he was actually shot and killed right there. The door was left open the whole time so as (the shooter) walked by, the door was open. He could have walked in at any time."

Most of the victims - at least 12 of them - were shot inside the school building. Two were killed outside and the last one further away as the assailant tried to flee. The gunman was arrested not too far from the school and was said to be cooperating with investigators.

"It's a day that you pray every day when you get up that you will

never have to see. It is in front of us. I ask the community for prayers and their support for the children and their families," Robert Runcie, superintendent of Broward county schools told reporters near the school. Parkland falls in Broward county.

"We received no warning. Potentially there could have been signs out there. But we didn't have any warning or phone calls or threats that were made."

But a teacher at the school told the Miami Herald newspaper that Cruz had been identified as a potential threat to fellow students in the past and that the school authorities had sent out an email warning teachers about him.

"We were told last year that he wasn't allowed on campus with a backpack on him," Jim Gard, the teacher, was quoted. "There were problems with him last year threatening students, and I guess he was asked to leave the campus." The rampage would be counted among the most horrific school shootings in US history, eclipsed only by the massacre at an elementary school in

Connecticut's Newtown in 2012 in which 26 people, included 20 first graders aged six to seven years, were killed.

The Florida massacre was the 30th mass shooting - any gun-related violent incident that leaves four or more people dead or wounded - in the US this year alone.

In 2017, 346 incidents were reported against 383 a year before, according to gun-violence trackers, who also said 2018 has already seen 17 school shootings. Gun rights and easy access to firearms will be fiercely debated over the next few days, as it happens after every mass shooting, before the powerful gun lobby spearheaded by the National Rifle Association would hit back deploying its cliched defence, blaming it all on mental health.

A defender of gun rights, President Donald Trump steered clear of the debate, which had already started, and tweeted, "My prayers and condolences to the families of the victims of the terrible Florida shooting. No child, teacher or anyone else should ever feel unsafe in an American school."

Reports of 'honey trapping' Lt Colonel are pure speculation: Senior Army official

ANI

New Delhi, Feb. 15: A senior Army official on Thursday dismissed reports of a Lieutenant Colonel posted at Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh falling prey to a honeytrap by Pakistani intelligence as "pure speculation", reported ANI.

The assertion comes after the officer in question was picked up for questioning by a team from the Army Headquarters in Delhi. The Army's counter-intelligence (CI) wing and Military Intelligence (MI) also carried out searches at his official premises.

"Reports of detention of officer, 'honey trapping', money

exchange at this stage are pure speculation and neither accurate nor substantiated. Details on the outcome of the enquiry will be intimated in due course as per progress," the senior Army official told ANI.

A preliminary enquiry was ordered on February 12 by the Army to ascertain facts on suspected leakage of classified info from IT devices of a Lt Colonel posted in Jabalpur. It is yet to be established whether it has happened inadvertently or deliberately as reported, the official said.

There are multiple theories doing rounds and it's not clear

if the Lt Colonel was honey-trapped or is being investigated in a corruption case. It is also being alleged that the officer has fallen victim to spear phishing e-mails due to which some classified information got leaked. Spear phishing is a targeted e-mail-spoofing attack, different from phishing for financial gain, and is solely aimed at unauthorized access to sensitive information.

"The officer has only been questioned as part of ongoing enquiry and nothing else. Therefore he continues to perform his routine duties in unit. Evidence related to case

including digital evidence has been seized and sent for further forensic analysis," the Army official confirmed.

The incident came days after Group Captain Arun Marwah, posted at the IAF headquarters, was interrogated by the IAF's counter-intelligence wing on charges of espionage and subsequently handed over to the Delhi Police.

The Group Capt was allegedly leaking classified documents to a woman, suspected to be an ISI spy, he had befriended on Facebook in December last year through WhatsApp, according to investigators.

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