

Editorial

Saturday, November 17, 2018

Tourism and Sangai Festival

Finally! the much anticipated extravaganza conceptualized to showcase and promote the diverse socio-cultural heritage and the rich traditional wealth of the state is knocking at the door.

That the State Government spared no expenses and efforts to make an impression to the visiting tourists would be an understatement. The Imphal city has been transformed within an incredibly short span of time into one which can be compared to any other mid-sized or tier II cities in the country- well almost. Despite the best efforts and undoubtedly noble intentions which had made tremendous improvements in the public facilities and certain infrastructures, a closer look into the activities brings to light various clear indications of the haphazard and rushed nature of it all.

Even as hectic preparation is being taken up many are still left unfinished. Now that the Sangai Festival will begin on Nov 21 and continue till November 30, one cannot help feeling apprehensive about the longevity of the commitment the State Government initiated towards beautification of Imphal City.

If previous instances are any indications, we will be seeing a change in inertia and a visible drop in enthusiasm making the whole efforts an exercise in futility. The incredible potential for attracting tourism in the State has been well known and even documented. From the enchanting misty mountains to the incredibly beautiful ethnic handiworks and crafts, from the inherently hospitable people to the excellent climatic condition, the unbelievably beautiful and mysterious caves and lakes- this small state has it all, and in no small measures.

This naturally endowed land has been wasted and neglected for centuries, our inability to see the big picture, occupied as we are in finding ways to secure our own personal lives through means fair or foul being the main reason.

With the air connectivity with our neighbouring Asian countries are at the verge of becoming reality, it would be an act of utter foolishness not to cash in on the euphoria and enthusiasm such a development has created. Without going into the details of the nitty-gritty of tourism and it's pros and cons, it is an undeniable truth that with proper planning, timely and effective checks and due diligence, tourism would only improve the economy, change the perceptions of the local people towards the visitors and their way of life, adopt a more tolerant view of things and most importantly help in propagating our cultures and traditions throughout the world. For all these to happen, basic infrastructures and basic amenities must be put in place and make the whole state a tourist friendly one.

A lot more needs to be done to be where we want this State to be from where we are now. Only a dedicated, committed and sustained effort can make things possible. Working in fits and starts will get us nowhere.

Chidambaram responds to Modi, lists out names of Congress presidents

Agency New Delhi, Nov 17

Former Union minister P Chidambaram Saturday hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for targeting the Congress, reminding him of the party's legacy by listing out the names of its presidents from outside the Nehru-Gandhi family. He asked the prime minister to now speak on the Rafale aircraft deal, unemployment and suicide of farmers during his rule.

In an election rally in Chhattisgarh on Friday, Modi had asked the Congress to make a Congressman, from outside the Nehru-Gandhi family, president of the party for five years.

In a series of tweets, Chidambaram listed out the names and said the Congress was proud of the humble origins of its post-Independence leaders like Babasaheb Ambedkar, Lal Bahadur Shastri, K Kamaraj and Manmohan Singh and many others besides thousands others during pre-Independence days.

"To jog PM Modi's memory: among the Congress Presidents since 1947 were Acharya Kripalani, Pattabhi

Sitaramayya, Purushottamas Tandon, U N Dhebar, Sanjiva Reddy, Sanjivaiah, Kamaraj, Nijalingappa, C Subramanian, Jagjivan Ram, Shankar Dayal Sharma, D K Barooah, Brahmananda Reddy, P V Narasimha Rao and Sitaram Kesri (sic)," he said.

In a dig at Modi, Chidambaram said he was grateful that the prime minister was "concerned" about who is elected as Congress president and he devotes a lot of time talking about it. "Will he spend half the time and speak about demonetisation, GST, Rafale, CBI and the RBI? "Will PM Modi speak about farmers' suicides, massive unemployment, lynchings, rape crimes against women and children, anti-Romeo squads, gau rakshak vigilantism and increasing terror attacks?" he said.

At the rally in Ambikapur in north Chhattisgarh, Modi had also attacked Congress president Rahul Gandhi and asked him to give an account on the contributions of the four generations of the Nehru-Gandhi family to the nation.

'Journalism is a service and journalists must be allowed to function freely'

By Our Correspondent Guwahati, Nov. 17

Journalism is a service to society and the nation. Anyone wanting to make money should not be in the profession. Only those who have the flair, the passion and the right attributes should enter, for only such people can take on the challenges and survive in the long run," said Sashi Nair, Director of the Press Institute of India and Editor of its journals, Vidura and Grassroots, while addressing the 'Meet the Press' programme of Guwahati Press Club on Friday.

While stressing the watchdog role of Press Council of India to ensure ethics and quality in news presentation, Nair agreed that the PCI's ambit could be expanded to include electronic and online or social media as well because print and digital were two parts of one whole.

With National Press Day lending a special significance to the programme, Nair spoke from Chennai at length about media issues during his interaction with city-based scribes here via video conferencing. "India still remains a country of newspapers. Most Indians continue to trust newspapers as conveyors of factual information," Nair said, pointing out that the circulation of newspapers in India was healthy compared to downward trends in other parts of the world and that this was a good sign. He agreed that it was in rural India where the newspaper reading habit flourished and where people



were often seen gathered around one newspaper and sharing information. Do today's editors retain the influence of the ones of earlier generations? Nair felt that today's editors of newspapers are no longer the giant-like figures of the past; it was a reflection of the changing times and things, in any case, were never the same after the invisible wall between editorial and advertising had crumbled several years ago, he said.

One of the main challenges for journalists in the days ahead would be tackling fake news or misinformation, Nair pointed out. Listing out various examples, he said there was no solution in sight yet to tackle the malaise and the onus was on editors and journalists to double-check at every stage.

Nair spoke about the hardships journalists in India today faced,

especially if they were investigative journalists. He said India ranked low on the Press Freedom Index (compiled and published by Reporters Without Borders), that journalists often faced threats and intimidation, and that the killings of journalists who were just doing their job (Gauri Lankesh, Shujaat Bhukari, Santanu Bhowmik, Sudip Datta Bhaumik and others) had cast a dark shadow and created fear. It was not right that this should happen in the largest democracy in the world, he said, adding that journalists must be allowed to function freely and be protected.

When asked about the woeful coverage of subjects such as health and agriculture by newspapers, Nair said that indeed it was true save for a few newspapers and that a lot more attention was being paid towards politics and entertainment

than hard issues that concerned the common person.

To a question relating to some publications inflating circulation figures to attract government advertisements, Nair said that publishers of repute would not resort to such a practice and that such instances must be reported. He was all for transparency within the media and for news publishing houses publishing their accounting figures yearly. "When editors and journalists report on the need for transparency and want individuals and companies to adhere, they should lead by example, he said.

Nair said news publishing houses and their managements must pay their journalists reasonably well and provide them the necessary facilities to function. For, after all, the financial and social security of journalists mattered a lot.

PM Modi to attend Swearing-In of New Maldives President today

Agency New Delhi, Nov. 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the inauguration ceremony of Maldives President-elect Ibrahim Mohamed Solih on Saturday.

This will be PM Modi's first visit to the Maldives as prime minister. "I will convey to the new Maldivian Government of Mr Solih the desire of the Indian Government to work closely for realisation of their developmental priorities, especially in areas of infrastructure, health care, connectivity & human resource development," PM Modi

said in a series of tweets.

He said the recent elections in the Maldives represent the collective aspirations of the people for democracy, rule of law and a prosperous future.

"We in India strongly desire to see a stable, democratic, prosperous and peaceful Republic of Maldives," the prime minister said. He also congratulated Solih on his victory in the recent elections and wished him "the very best for his tenure".

PM Modi had recently accepted the invitation extended by Mr Solih to attend his swearing-in ceremony.

DU cancelled DUSU president Ankiv Baisoya's admission a day before he stepped down

Agency New Delhi, Nov. 17

Former Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) president Ankiv Baisoya's admission was cancelled by the university's Department of Buddhist Studies on November 14, a day before he stepped down from his post and the RSS-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) suspended him pending an inquiry.

Officials said the admission cancellation was carried out after the department received confirmation from Tamil Nadu-based Thiruvalluvar University that an undergraduate certificate submitted by Baisoya to seek admission to the Delhi University (DU) was "fake".

HT has accessed a copy of the response sent by the Thiruvalluvar University's controller of examinations B Senthil Kumar to DU's Department of Buddhist Studies on November 13.

A scanned copy of the letter, written by Kumar on a university letterhead, had been emailed to the DU on the same day. "With reference to your inquiry, it is informed that the copy of the certificate of following candidate (Ankiv Baisoya) has been verified and found that the said certificate is not genuine. It is a fake certificate," Kumar said in the letter.

Officials at the department, including department head KT Sarao, and DU registrar Tarun Das confirmed that they received Thiruvalluvar University's response on November 13.

While Sarao refused to comment further, officials at the Department of Buddhist Studies said a meeting had been called on November 14 wherein Baisoya's admission was cancelled.

"We received the response from Thiruvalluvar University on the night of November 13 hence we could not take action on the same day. We, however, called a meeting the next morning and cancelled Baisoya's admission," said an official, requesting not to be identified.

Under DU norms, Baisoya was automatically removed from the post of DUSU president as soon as his admission was cancelled by the department on November 14.

The ABVP on Thursday said they asked Baisoya to step down citing intent to maintain the "genuineness" of the student union. The party also suspended him from the organisation till an inquiry is conducted.

Officials at Department of Buddhist Studies said they also informed the DU registrar's office about the cancellation of admission. However, the DU registrar confirmed that the department had also sent a communication to the proctor's office.

"As per University norms, such matters are sent to the proctor's office and they look into it. The proctor's office has received a communication from the department and they are looking into it. The university will take whatever action is required as per rules and regulations," Das said.

Despite several attempts, DU proctor Neeta Sehgal did not respond to calls and messages. Delhi Police has investigated several cases of students using forged and fake degrees to get admission. Submitting a fake degree is listed as a crime under the Indian Penal Code.

Harender Singh, additional DCP (north), meanwhile, confirmed that the police had received a letter from the head of Department of Buddhist Studies. "He has written a letter to registrar informing the cancellation of admission. A copy of this has been given to SHO. We have written to the registrar. If any communication is made by any authority, we may take legal action," he said.

Soon after Baisoya's election as DUSU president on September 13, Congress-affiliated National Students' Union of India (NSUI) had accused him of submitting a fake degree to secure admission in the DU. NSUI had later moved the Delhi High Court seeking cancellation of Baisoya's admission.

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