

# Editorial

Friday, October 19, 2018

## Absentee in history

The inauguration of Manipur Legislative Assembly Museum and Archives at Old Manipur Legislative Assembly Building by Governor Dr Najma Heptulla on the 18<sup>th</sup> of this month marks a historic occasion and fulfilled a vital need for various individuals and parties with interest in the political history of Manipur to cull correct and relevant information and enrich the knowledge of the past. The occasion is made more significant as the first sitting of the Manipur State Assembly was held on this day in 1948 at the Durbar Hall of the royal palace where Maharaj Bodhchandra addressed the inaugural session of the first assembly in both Manipuri and English. The main purpose of the newly inaugurated facility is to collect, preserve, research, exhibit and interpret historical documents and material for public knowledge and education and consist of collections of archival materials, rare artifacts, photographs of historical significance and other invaluable items and a perpetual source of precious information and a referral treasure for the eclectics. The governor also rightly pointed out that Museums and archives not only serve as the fountainhead of information and knowledge but also keep us connected to the rich cultural heritage and exciting past. We become wiser and our knowledge becomes richer from what we learn in such an institution. We are better equipped to face the future and the wisdom we gain teaches us to negotiate our way for a more fulfilling life.

The atmosphere of positive expectations and historic milestone was however marked by the conspicuous absence of the leader of the house of the state legislative assembly. There was no report of the Chief Minister being out of the state which further adds to the curiosity of one and all. While the CM must be having his own reason for failing to turn up for such a historic occasion—one which will certainly go down in the annals of history of the state, the public is unanimous in the opinion that the head of the legislative assembly should have made the occasion complete with his presence and inputs which invariably is a graphic presentation of a shining Manipur to be achieved in the tantalizingly near future. And not unexpectedly, speculation of a breakdown in communication has started doing the rounds. Keeping the importance of the occasion into consideration, an official release or announcement regarding the absence of the Chief Minister would have laid such speculations to rest, but unfortunately none has been forthcoming so far which will only serve to lend more credence to the rumour of the appearance of a rift amongst the ruling party.

Besides the obvious privileges and perks, being the head of state has its responsibilities, and like it or not, should be ready and willing to be the subject of public scrutiny. No matter how good the intentions might be, if anyone is unable to take the criticisms and suggestions just as gladly as the adulations and praises, one might not aspire to be working in the public domain to start with. The eager public needs to be assured of each and every step and action of its leaders, not necessarily with suspicion but also with expectations and hopes.

## CJI Ranjan Gogoi nod to suspend RCT judge 'involved in Rs 50-crore scam'

New Delhi, Oct. 19

Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi has given his approval to suspend Railway Claims Tribunal judge RK Mittal, under the scanner for a Rs 50 crore scam related to compensation claims in Patna. The file was pending with the office of the previous CJI for months. Justice Gogoi's office cleared it this week and sent his approval to the Railway Board, sources confirmed. This is the first time that a sitting RCT judge is facing suspension over corruption charges. The case is being investigated by Justice UU Lalit on the allegations of financial irregularities by Mittal in connivance with a select group of lawyers appearing for victims of railway accidents. RCT Chairman Justice K Kannan had written to the Railway Board

seeking Mittal's suspension a few months ago. Mittal was transferred to the Trivandrum bench of the RCT from Ranchi earlier this year after the scam came to light. The Railway Board had considered legal opinion that a sitting judge of a tribunal could not be suspended without the CJI's approval. The file was then sent to the CJI's office. The scam, unearthed by an internal investigation by the Principal Bench of the RCT, was reported by The Indian Express. The probe found that Mittal as judge of the Patna bench had awarded compensation claims amounting to at least Rs 50 crore to fictitious victims and to the same claimants for the same accidents several times. It was also indicated in the probe report that lawyers pocketed the money in genuine cases.

## Egalitarian development is the only way forward: CM



DIPR Imphal, Oct. 19:

Chief Minister N. Biren Singh has said that the so-called hill-valley divide will cease on its own when there is no disparity in development between hill and valley. He made the observation while taking part at an interactive session held as part of a conclave organised by People's Campaign for Resurgent Manipur on the topic, 'Idea of Manipur towards a life with dignity' at Sangai Hall of Hotel Imphal yesterday.

The Chief Ministers said that the new Government initiated 'Go to Hills' and 'Go to Village' missions in order to bring egalitarian development across the State. The Chief Minister said that his Government had been able to gain the confidence of the masses with the introduction of Meeyangi Numit, Hill Leaders' Day and many other people-friendly welfare programmes. Observing that the hill-valley divide is due to past flaws in the system, the Chief Minister said that the legislations detrimental to the oneness and integrity of the State

were not resisted on time. Stating that there has been considerable change in the mindset of the hill people ever since the new Government came to power, the Chief Minister informed that he had been told that around 1500 students had come to Imphal from Mao alone for higher studies during the past one year.

With the coming of new Government in the State and at the Centre, the topographical need based budget had been introduced, he said. Accordingly, Hill Area Development Fund had been introduced, he said while adding that Tamenglong district had been included among 82 districts of the country which would be benefited under the newly introduced fund.

Speaking on the weakness of the current generation, the Chief Minister opined that people tend to take diverse steps instead of focussing on the main agenda which would be fruitful in resolving the issue at hand. MLAs Omam Lukhio and Heikham Dingo, former Chief Minister Radhabindoo Koijam and former MLA Ng. Bijo were also present at the conclave among others.

## Congress, BSP release first list of candidates for Assembly polls in Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh, Oct. 19

Congress and BSP and its ally Janata Congress Chhattisgarh have released their first list of candidates for the forthcoming Chhattisgarh Assembly elections.

As the process of filing nomination for the 18 assembly segments of Chhattisgarh is on, the political parties have started declaring their candidates.

Congress has released the first list of its candidates for 12 constituencies of Chhattisgarh. Bahujan Samaj Party has also declared its candidates for six seats. BSP has a pre-poll alliance with Janata Congress Chhattisgarh, a regional party led by former Chief Minister Ajit Jogi.

BSP is contesting in 33 seats of Chhattisgarh while Janta congress Chhattisgarh is contesting in 55 seats and has declared candidates for 46 seats.

Aam Admi Party has also declared candidates for 85 seats so far. Chhattisgarh has a total 90 assembly constituencies.

## PM Modi hands over keys to beneficiaries of govt housing scheme in Maharashtra

Maharashtra, Oct. 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi handed over keys to Grameen beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana at Shiridi in Maharashtra on Thursday.

He interacted with beneficiaries of the scheme across Maharashtra through video conferencing. Under the scheme, nearly 2.5 lakh houses have been built in the state. Prime Minister arrived in Shiridi this morning. He performed a pooja at Saibaba Mandir and released a silver coin to commemorate the Centenary year of Shri Saibaba Samadhi.

The Prime Minister also unveiled the plaque to mark the laying of foundation stone of various development works of Shri Saibaba Sansthan Trust. Prime Minister also launched a ten-megawatt solar project, Darshan Queue Complex, Sri Sai Baba Knowledge Campus and Sai Shrishti, where all significant works of Sai would be digitally available for tourists.

## India make winning start to defence of Asian Hockey Champions Trophy

New Delhi, Oct. 19

In Men's Hockey, India began their title defence of Asian Champions Trophy with a stunning 11-0 win over hosts Oman in their opening round-robin match at Muscat last night. Dilpreet Singh netted a hat-trick, with Harmanpreet Singh scoring

a brace. Lalit Upadhyay, Nilakanta Sharma, Mandeep Singh, Gurjant Singh, Akashdeep Singh and Varun Kumar were the other goal scorers.

In their second round-robin game, India will clash with arch-rivals Pakistan tomorrow, before playing Japan on Sunday, and Malaysia and South Korea next week

## Onions prices on rise in Delhi wholesale markets

New Delhi, Oct 19

Wholesale onion prices in the national capital have shot up to Rs 23 per kg in last ten days on tight supplies from producing states, a traders body said. A similar increase was seen in the retail markets, where the kitchen staple was quoted in the range of Rs 30-40 per kg depending on the quality and locality.

"There has been Rs 7-10 per kilo increase in wholesale rates of onion in the last ten days," Onion and Potato Merchants Association (Azadpur mandi) General Secretary Rajendra Sharma said.

Not only the price gap between the old and new crop has come down, but also the arrival of new kharif

crop is yet to begin in full swing as farmers have not started harvesting due to the festive break, he said.

Meanwhile at Lasalgaon in Nasik district of Maharashtra, Asia's largest wholesale market for onion, prices skyrocketed to Rs 21-22 per kg on reports of a possible drop in the kharif output of the bulb crop because of heat wave in the state.

The prices were ruling at Rs 15 per kg in the year-ago period at the Lasalgaon market, the official data showed.

The major onion producing states are Maharashtra, Gujarat, Orissa, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Punjab and Rajasthan.

## 3 terrorists killed in infiltration bid in J&K

Srinagar, Oct 19

Three unidentified terrorists were killed in a failed infiltration bid along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district, a defence spokesman said Friday. The Army Thursday foiled the infiltration bid along the Line of Control (LoC) in Uri sector of Baramulla district, the spokesman said. He said alert troops noticed some suspicious movement along the LoC near Tourna in Bonyar area in the early hours of Thursday and challenged the infiltrators. The infiltrators opened fire towards the positions of the security forces which was retaliated, he said, adding three terrorists were killed in the gunbattle. The identity and group affiliation of the slain terrorists were not immediately known.

## 2 Women almost at Sabarimala Shrine blocked by protesters, priests

New Delhi, Oct. 19:

Two women in body armour and helmets, who had trekked 5 km uphill to the Sabarimala temple on Friday escorted by about a 300 policemen in riot gear, were just 10 minutes from the shrine when a large group of protesters formed a human wall to block them.

The women, including a journalist, were 500 metres from the 18 steps — the golden steps — that lead to the sanctuary sanctum of the famous shrine where no woman between 10 and 50 years has been allowed for centuries. On these steps sat about a dozen priests today, chanting and clapping, apparently to stop the women if they did make it through the last half km.

Last month, the Supreme Court overturned the ban on women of menstruating age entering the temple of Lord Ayyappa. But in the three days that Sabarimala has been

open for the first time since the landmark order, no woman below 50 has made it to the shrine.

"I believe I've come here to enforce the Supreme Court order. Those women have the right to visit the temple," said S Sreejith, the Inspector General of Police leading the police escort with the women. "I am also an Ayyappa devotee," he told protesting devotees. But his historic mission seemed to get progressively more challenging as the minister in charge of the Devaswom Board, which runs the temple, described the women as activists — not devotees.

Devaswom Board minister Kadakampally Surendran told NDTV any genuine devotee who wants to go up will be given protection. "But we will not allow activists to turn Sabarimala into a place to prove themselves," Mr Surendran said. Kavitha Jakkal, a journalist with Mojo TV from Hyderabad, started

the climb in riot gear and a yellow helmet, ring-fenced from protesters by policemen.

The other woman, wearing black clothes and carrying the traditional prayer kit irumudikkettu offered to Lord Ayyappa, walked separately. Both started the 4.6-km climb from the base camp Pamba.

Protests by devotees in the last two days to block women from entering the temple led to violence and clashes at the base camps of Nilakkal and Pamba. Reporters were attacked, their vehicles damaged, and women who started the long climb forced to turn back amid threats and intimidation.

On Thursday morning, two journalists of the New York Times who tried to reach the temple had to return after protesters blocked their way.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said no one would be allowed to stop women from going to Sabarimala.

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