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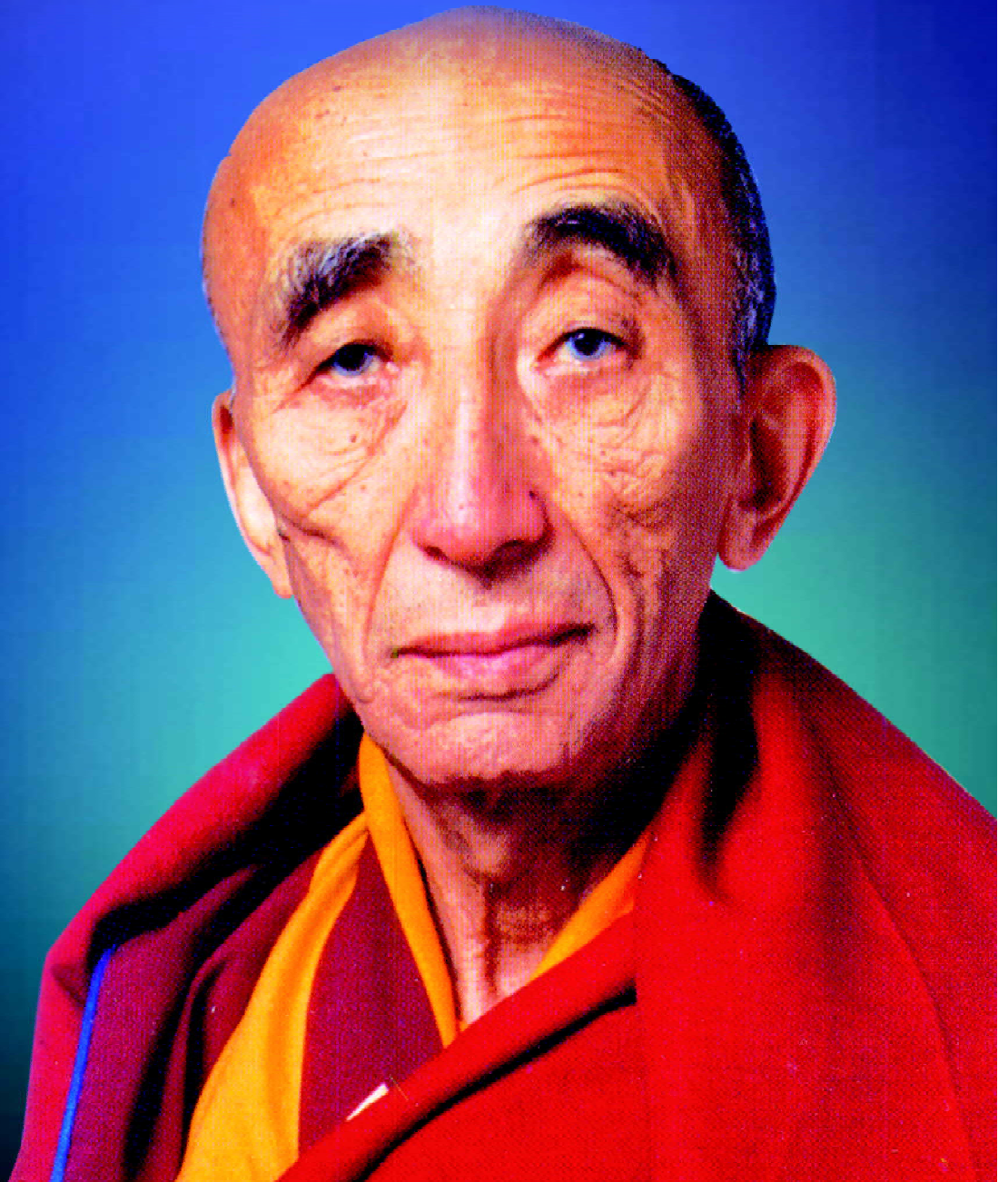
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HERITAGE EXPLORER

LET KNOWLEDGE COME FROM ALL THE SIDES

A Monthly News Bulletin

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India's
contribution
to the rest of
the world



According to the
Gemological Institute
of America, up until
1896, India was the
only source for
diamonds to the
world.

Courtesy : <http://www.slideshare.net/jirendraadhikari/indias-contribution-to-the-world>

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Editor : Amarendra Brahma

May Day – has it lost its significance?

The month of May brings to our mind the historic struggle of the people belonging to the working class world over, who toiled day in and day out to eke out a living. The nineteenth century was a century of struggle for obtaining universal recognition of the simple division of 24 hours of a day for a tolerable and human condition of living. The demand was for 8 hours work per day - 8 hours of rest per day and 8 hours for entertainment & enjoying life and leisure. The protagonists of this demand continuously fought to achieve their goal by holding meetings, marching through the streets and striking work. Many laid down their lives either by police bullets or by hanging at the dictates of the crooked laws of the time. Ultimately they achieved what they fought for but could never enjoy the benefits. But they did not fail to leave a message of self sacrifice for the common good.

As we all know, the struggle for a humanely possible working hours took roots in the soil of America in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The agitationists were so committed to their cause that they agitated from sunrise to sunset without any break. From 1827 to 1865, the construction workers of Philadelphia, the bread makers and bakers of New York and many others working in manufacturing or service sectors fought ceaselessly to extract the concession. In 1886, the first ever national level convention was held in Baltimore where the National Labour Union resolved to free the working class from the slavery of the capitalists first and demanded that in all the states America the standard working hours for all workers should be fixed at 8 hours. In the later part of the year, the same resolutions of the demands were adopted in the Geneva Convention. Between 1881 and 1886, the agitational programmes swelled from 500 to 11,562 and more than 5 lakhs of workers joined the campaign. To press for their demands the American Federation of Organized Trades and Labour Unions called for a general strike and ceaseless agitation. In the course of this agitation, on 1st May, 1886, a

riot broke out in Haymarket in Chicago. Many lives were lost and lots of bloods were shed. It was the saddest day for the working class world over but at the same time it was also the day of ultimate triumph for the working class, for on this day world unanimously approved the 8 Hrs. Working day and in recognition of the sacrifices of the worker, named the day as the International Labour Day.

Unfortunately, sanctity and the importance of the International Labour Day do not attract much attention any more. The most visible thing in the working environment of the industries, business and service sectors is that there is no uniformity in working hour, salary and the admissible amenities. The employers and their managers decide the time when a worker can go off duty. The universal policy of same pay for same work is never followed. A teacher in one school gets half of the pay what a teacher of the same subject with same qualification gets in another school. The private sector schools are fleecing the students but are reluctant to pay the teacher a decent salary. The authorities neither know nor want to know. There is huge gap in the salary structures of permanent & temporary employees, Part time and full time Doctors, regular labours and contract labours. The latest technique of looting the working class is to engage them through labour contractors. This way the labours get only the niggardly “Minimum Wage” and the employers derive double benefit by saving the standard payables admissible to a regular employee. One can cite innumerable examples of Government apathy, mischief on the part of the capitalist employers, corrupt trade union leaders and party oriented trade union movement.

Arise and Awake. We must wake up fast to avoid another revolution and unrest and the resultant turmoil. None will benefit if the deprivations grow and the discontent turns into disillusionment. Let the working class come together irrespective of party lines and work unitedly to achieve a semblance of justice and equality.

Editor

Kushok Bakula Rinpoche – The Divine Monk

Jammu Kashmir especially its northern part has played a vital role in the rise of Buddhism, protecting India culturally, historically and geographically. Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, magnetising personality considered as the incarnation of divine powers, highly revered for his erudition and his gentle humility, played a cardinal role in reviving Buddhism. He was one of the best-known lamas of Ladakh, a statesman and international diplomat of the Republic of India. In 1988, in recognition of his distinguished service of the highest order to the nation, the President of India awarded him “Padma Bhushan”. He is known for his efforts in reviving Buddhism in Mongolia and Russia linking them with the community of Tibetan exile in India. He played a leading role in the upliftment of socio-political life of the people in the Ladakh region. On his death, the Prime Minister of India Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee paid his condolences saying: “In the death of noble Lama Kushok Bakula, we have lost a great saint, guide and inspiring personality of the Buddhist world. It is difficult to imagine Ladakh without him.”

Kushok Bakula was born to the Mangtro Royal couple on the auspicious Saga Dawa, Buddha Purnima day on 19th May 1917 in a small village called ‘Mangto’ in Ladakh. When the young Prince Lobzang Thupstan Chognor attained the age of 6, he was confirmed by the 13th Dalai Lama Thupten Gyatso as the 19th reincarnation of Arhat Bakula, one of the 16 Arhats (direct disciples of the Shakyamuni Buddha). He was later enthroned at Pethub Monastery, where he received his primary education. On 22nd of February 1940, he earned his degree of “Gheshe Lharampa” the highest degree of Buddhist Metaphysics, in the presence of the young 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso. He came to be known among his contemporaries as the Gyalras Bakula Rinpoche of Ladakh.

The emergence of Kushok Bakula in the late 1940s was historic. It was the time when the great transformation was taking place with India becoming independent after centuries of Colonial rule. On his return to Ladakh, Bakula Rinpoche like a wish-fulfilling angel helped to remove the sufferings of its people.

He became the voice of Ladakh. He not only ensured that Ladakh became a part of India but also ensured its future development and security. However, the significant victory came in 1950. Rinpoche spearheaded a strong opposition to the 1950 Ordinance and opposed it tooth and nail. This Ordinance prohibited Buddhist monasteries from keeping more than 120 kanals of landholding. It would have indeed been a death knell for Buddhism. Finally, it was with the intervention of the Prime Minister of India Nehru and India’s law minister Dr. B. R. Ambedkar that Ladakh’s monasteries were exempted from the purview of the ordinance. This significant victory and his active social drives brought Bakula Rinpoche in the forefront of Ladakh’s social, religious and political sphere.

To safeguard the interest of Buddhist monasteries of Ladakh, Rinpoche founded the All Ladakh Gonpa Association. He also made available land for construction of Chokhang which became the headquarters of Ladakh Buddhist Association. A landmark development in the post-independence history of Ladakh was the arrival of Holy Relics of the Lord Buddha and his two principal disciples - Sariputta and Mahamogallana from Moolagandhakuti Vihar located in Sarnath. To enlighten the people of their right in democratic India, Bakula Rinpoche toured every part of Ladakh which he aptly described as the land of Tattu (mule), Pattu (woollen) and Sattu (barley wheat). Under the leadership of Bakula Rinpoche, the people of Ladakh were freed from the heavy burden of debts, subjugation of landlords and atrocities of government officials. Earlier, Bakula Rinpoche had repeatedly warned Prime Minister Nehru about impending threats from China not only to the existence of Tibet but also to India’s on the border. His visit to Lhasa in 1955 left no doubt in his mind about the situation in Lhasa and told the Government of India about impending threat from China. Unfortunately, India woke up when it was too late. In 1962 when China attacked India, Rinpoche called upon the people of Ladakh to help Indian Army to defend its border which alone could save its rich religious and cultural heritage. He allowed the Indian troops

to convert a section of his Pethub Monastery into a makeshift military hospital. When a section of people in Kashmir demanded plebiscite, Rinpoche categorically stated that Ladakh would never go to Pakistan and would remain with India. For his role in building post-independent Ladakh, Rinpoche is hailed as the 'Gandhi of Ladakh' and 'Architect of Modern Ladakh'.

As an astute and zealous parliamentarian, Bakula Rinpoche served the nation and the Government of India brilliantly. He was elected as the member of legislative assembly of Jammu Kashmir in 1951. He became a minister in Jammu and Kashmir Government. He was elected Member of Parliament representing Ladakh for two consecutive terms, i.e. in 1967 and 1971. In 1977, Morarji Desai, the Prime Minister, appointed Rinpoche as a member of the newly constituted National Commission for Minorities. In 1989 he was appointed as ambassador of India to Mongolia. He thus became the first and only Monk diplomat in the world. Over a period of ten years, he helped re-open ancient monasteries, organize Buddhist peace conferences and re-established Buddhism. Under his guidance, Pethub Monastery and Dechen Ling Nunnery in Ulaanbaatar developed into important centres of learning for the Mongolian Buddhists. He took the Holy Relics of Lord Buddha to Ulaanbaatar to let the devotees get blessings of it. This was a historic event of unparalleled religious and spiritual significance. Bakula Rinpoche worked as the Guardian of Mongolia. During a movement to establish democracy in Mongolia, he appealed to both the government and the citizens of Mongolia to maintain peace. Respecting his appeal, the movement ended without any violence from either side and multiparty democracy was established. As an expression of gratitude towards him, he was awarded 'Polar Star', the Civil honour of the highest degree in Mongolia in 2001.

Bakula Rinpoche was the first Buddhist monk to have been able to visit communist stronghold of USSR, Mongolia and China. He single-handedly laid the foundation for the Buddhist Revival in the region. In 1968 Rinpoche became one of the founders of Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace with its headquarters in Mongolia. The Red Army vandalised the Buddhist

temple in St. Petersburg called 'Gunzechoinei' built by Buriyat Lama Agvan Dorjiev (1853-1938). His meetings with Soviet leaders paved the way for the return of the monastery to the Buddhist community of Russia. In 1989 the Buddhist community in St. Petersburg was officially recognised. Rinpoche was also the first high Lama who visited Kalmykia, the Eurasia land whose people suffered immense persecutions at the hands of Stalin after the Second World War. Rinpoche laid the foundation of a first post-communist monastery there. During many years of public engagement, he met leaders of all faiths and political affiliations including Mikhail Gorbachev, former President of the Soviet Union. He was the first ever Buddhist monk to have been invited by the Queen of England at Buckingham Palace, London in 2002. Tireless in his work, he travelled on to the 3rd World Buddhist Conference hosted by His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Bakula Rinpoche was a man of vision, and his prime focus was on promoting spiritual values, a Buddhist perspective on nature conservation and reviving Buddhism in countries where political systems had denied that right to the people. He had a wonderful sense of compassion, tranquillity and contentment. He believed in democratic values and never forced people to follow a particular ideology. Being fearless, he at Windsor Conference of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), strongly disapproved the activities of Christian missionaries particularly in poor countries who exploited the poor economic conditions of the people and indulged in criticizing local traditional faith. This was against the basic tenet of any religion.

On Tuesday the 4th of November 2003, Bakula Rinpoche attained Nirvana in New Delhi. After 14 days of prayers and rituals, his funeral was performed on 16th November 2013 at Pithub Hills with full State honours. His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama in his condolence message, said "... Bakula Rinpoche worked hard for the people... to help grow a firm seed of enlightenment in their mind. He also worked for the preservation, dissemination and restoration of precious teachings of Buddha... May the incarnation appears soon, by the power of his own prayers and the faith of devotees, For the sake of all sentient beings."

INDIA – the second home of Tibetan Buddhism

Tibetan Buddhism - one of the most ancient religious faith of the world, was almost destroyed by the Chinese after it annexed Tibet some sixty years ago. His Holiness Dalai Lama, the ruling spiritual head of the Buddhist faith residing in Potala palace in Tibet, had to flee and take shelter in India. India not only welcomed the Dalai Lama with open arms but also offered him large tracts of land in Dharmashala to set up the headquarter of his religious capital – in – exile there in 1959. In the years that followed, Dalai Lama and his followers successfully kept alive the spiritual doctrine of Buddhism and helped spread its message of love in Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. While participating in ‘Thank You India’ campaign, Tibet’s Prime Minister-in-exile Lobsang Sangay publicly said that Tibetan Buddhism had flourished due to India’s support in the last 60 years ever since the Dalai Lama arrived in India in 1959. The ‘Thank You India’ event was organised by the Central

Tibetan Administration in McLeodganj near Dharamsal in Himachal Pradesh on March 31 to mark 60 years of the Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama’s arrival in India in 1959. The Prime Minister-in-exile also admitted that Tibetan Buddhism could be preserved due to the support extended by India.

Speaking on the occasion of the function organized to celebrate ‘Thank you India’ Mr. Sangay, who heads the McLeodgan-based Central Tibetan Administration, said that the major agenda is to ensure the return of the Dalai Lama to Lhasa’s Potala Palace. “Our main goal is to return to Tibet. The aspiration of six million Tibetans in Tibet is to see His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, to return to Tibet,” he said. Asked how optimistic he was and whether parleys were on with the Chinese, he said: “It will happen. Of course, we have to talk to the Chinese government — their cooperation is very important.” “However, there is no formal dialogue

(Contd. to Page 8)

India combat ready in Arunachal Pradesh

The tension along the mountainous terrains of Dibang, Dau-Delai and Lohit valleys along the borders with China in the Tibetan region in Arunachal sector following the Doklam face-off refuses to die down. To safeguard the integrity of India and to combat the aggressive intent of China, the Indian army has deployed more troops and increased patrolling significantly. Army officials have disclosed that India is also strengthening its surveillance mechanism to keep an eye on Chinese activities along the borders in the strategically sensitive Tibetan region and has even been regularly deploying choppers to carry out aerial reconnaissance. It has also been clarified that India has been focusing on dominating the treacherous terrains which include snow-clad mountains at an altitude of over 17,000 feet and river passes, as part of its strategy to counter China’s rising assertiveness along the border in Dibang, Dau-Delai and Lohit valleys. “Post Doklam, we have increased our activities manifold. We are fully prepared to deal with any challenge,” said an army officer posted in Kibithu, the eastern most village on India’s border with China’s Tibetan region. The official said that the Army has been intensifying its Long Range Patrols where troops in small groups go for patrols for 15-30 days as part of an overall strategy to maintain the

sanctity of the Line of Actual Control, the de-facto border between India and China.

It is no more a secret that India and China were locked in a 73-day standoff in Doklam from June 16 last year till August 28, 2016 when the Indian army force-stopped road construction work undertaken by China in the disputed area. In response to the aggressive intent of China the Indian army increased the deployment of troops significantly in and around all the strategically important areas, including a tri-junction between India, China and Myanmar. An army official disclosed that there is a need for India to enhance its road network for quick movements of troops to appropriately respond to China’s infrastructure development along India’s border, particularly in the Tibetan region. At present the army uses a foot suspension bridge to carry its military supplies to its Kibithu post, considered very important from operational point of view, as the only road connecting the east bank of Lohit river with west bank remains closed due to landslides for most part of the year. The Indian Army is determined to remedy the situation and give a fitting reply to the Chinese army in the event of a showdown.

Assam must improve crime control

Assam, though not yet been branded as the hotbed of crime and the criminal activities, but it is definitely progressing towards that destination. This is perhaps mainly due to the failure of the State mechanism to safeguard the dignity of women. If this happens it will be a sad day for Assam which is traditionally known for putting women on a high pedestal,

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has recently disclosed that conviction rates on cases relating to crimes against women in Assam were 20.5 per cent, 19.5 per cent and 16.2 per cent in 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively. The statistics for the same year reveals that the national conviction rates on the same kinds of crimes were 28 per cent, 29.4 per cent and 25.5 per cent respectively. From the statistics available it is very evident that the conviction rates of people committing crimes against women in Assam are considerably below the national average. The figures on crimes against women and conviction rates for 2017 are yet to be made public by the NCRB. According to the NCRB reports, Assam had registered 19,169 cases of crimes against women in 2014. Assam Police had arrested 27,667 people in connection with such cases; out of which only 11,943 were charges sheeted and only 556 were convicted.

In 2015, 23,365 cases of crimes against women were registered in different parts of Assam, and police arrested 22,867 people. Out of those arrested, 12,593 were charge sheeted and only 781 were convicted. The scene more or less remained same with the police registering 20,869 cases of crimes against women in 2016 and arrested 21,738 people, out of which 11,589

people were charge sheeted and only 475 convicted.

While the erstwhile Congress regime failed to initiate strong measures to curb crimes against women, the State continued to remain unsafe for women even 2016. At least 1,552 rape cases were registered in the State in 2016-17. Some 1,457 rape cases were recorded between January 2017 and January 2018. Out of the 3,009 rape cases reported, only 1,786 people have been arrested and charge sheets were issued against 1,697. Unfortunately only 76 have been convicted so far. This data was provided in the State Assembly recently.

The only ray hope was seen when the Chief Minister of Assam recently wrote to the Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court requesting him to set up fast-track courts to conduct trials against those committing heinous crimes such as rape and murder against women and the Hon'ble Gauhati High Court's quick consent to set up such courts across the State. The other encouraging development in this context was the issuance of advisories to all States and Union Territories on September 4, 2009 and March 20 and April 12 in 2015 to conduct thorough investigation of such cases in a very fast manner and file charge sheets against the accused within three months from the dates of occurrence of such crimes. The Ministry had simultaneously warned that the quality of investigation of such cases must not be diluted under any circumstances. Unfortunately, as per latest reports, though unconfirmed, it appears that the advisories of the Government of India could bring little change in crime scenario of our state.

(Contd. from Page 7)

INDIA – the second home of Tibetan Buddhism

(with China).” Senior Bharatiya Janata Party leaders, including Union Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma, attended the inaugural event in McLeodganj and former Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit attended the event in New Delhi, which was marked by exhibitions and cultural programmes.

The event included a “Thank You India” song performed and produced by artistes of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, a panel discussion on “India and Tibet: Ancient Ties, Current Bonds”. A day-

long film festival was scheduled for the second day of the event. “This is the Festival of Tibet. Mr. Sangay said that the main focus was on showcasing Tibetan architecture, artifacts, medicine, and Buddhism so that the people in India can see how much they have helped us preserve and promote our civilization, culture and identity.”

The expression of gratitude by the Tibetan Government-in-exile was really touching and deserves our wholehearted praise and return ‘Thank You Tibet’.

Rising atrocities on women

Rilanjana Talukdar

In the Holy land of India, the Devi Sukta hymn of Rig Veda, a scripture of Hinduism, declares feminine energy as the essence of the universe, the one who creates all matter and consciousness, the eternal and infinite, the metaphysical and empirical reality (Brahman), the soul (supreme self) of everything. The woman is celebrated as the most powerful and the empowering force in the Upanishads, the Sastras and the Puranas, particularly the Devi Upanishad, the Devi Mahatmya and the Devi Bhagavata Purana.

Unfortunately, in spite of so much reverence, the women folk of India – the so called Goddesses are still being victimized by the masculine forces. Male violence and atrocities against women have become a very common phenomena today. This might not be faced by every woman but the fear of violence exists and prevails amidst all. The problem of violence and atrocities against women in India is a burning issue today, which cannot be ignored at all.

It is common knowledge that our society is male dominated, and since decades women have been the victims of humiliation, physical torture, exploitation, rape, both physical and mental harassment etc. In the Indian society, the women are considered as a child bearing machine, a house maker and this type of perception have resulted in emergence of various social discrimination and abusive practices.

As on today, though the ability and competence of women are being gradually recognised and their importance for the meaningful role they are playing in the society is acknowledged, still some of the cruel practices continue to thrive in the society. In spite of the legislative measures adopted in favour of women in our society after Independence, the spread of education and women's gradual economic independence, countless women still continue to be victims of violence and extreme cruelty. Crimes like disfigurement by throwing acid, dowry killings, child marriage, domestic violence, and female infanticide, honour killings, accusations of witchcraft, rape, sexual harassment, trafficking etc are quite common. However, out of all those mentioned above, rapes

are statistically the highest. Rape in India has been described as one of India's most common crime against women, and as per UN's Human Rights Chief it is a "national problem". The daily newspapers, rape rears its ugly head almost every day. Sometimes, it is a brutal rape and murder by a stranger, gang rape of a girl by her acquaintances and in many cases rape of a girl by her own father or elderly relatives!

In recent years, there has been an alarming rise in the incidents of rape in India. It is becoming such a common news today that we have become blunt to a great extent and pay little attention to these occurrences. Very few cases are reported and registered in police stations, while a vast majority of the cases go unreported. A recent study reveals that only five per cent of women-related crimes reach police stations in villages and out of that insignificant, only 30 per cent cases are registered by police and actions are taken against the accused.

The danger that loom large today in India is that Indian laws does not differentiate between major and minor rapes. It does not take cognizance of the fact that in every ten rape cases, six are of minor girls. Records reveal that in every seven minutes a crime is committed against women in India. Every 26 minutes a woman is molested. Every 34 minutes a rape takes place. Every 42 minutes an incident of sexual harassment occurs. Every 43 minutes a woman is kidnapped. And every 93 minutes a woman is burnt to death for dowry. One-quarter of the reported rapes involve girls under the age of 16 but the vast majority are never reported. Although the penalty is severe, convictions are sadly rare.

Against the backdrop of such horrific situation, one is compelled to ponder about the reason behind the increasing criminal and barbaric trends amongst the Indian males in general and the youths in particular. One most plausible reason that comes to mind is perhaps our fast acceptance of the globalization and rapid adoption western way of life.

None can perhaps deny that globalization has caused a significant change in the Indian culture and

the social ethos. Late night party culture, discos, dating clubs, fashion shows and beauty pageants have increased manifold in past 10 years. Satellite and cable TV channels and porn websites have grown and are broadcasting almost uncensored videos. Simultaneously, there is a huge increase in pornography materials, both in CDs and on Internet. The Indian entertainment industry (national and regional) and media which have access nearly to every home, present bold scenes and semi-nudity as fashion and symbol of higher lifestyle. The youths are heavily getting addicted to drugs and other intoxicant stuffs. The youths are highly influenced by the superficial glitters of the western culture and traditions whereas the good and constructive aspects of western culture such as discipline, hard work, dedication, tolerance, transparency, honesty, avoidance of corruption etc are being neglected.

It is high time to raise voice and fight against atrocities against women. It is time to make people, especially the youth understand that atrocities against women is a cruel and wicked act against a woman which causes emotional and physical injury or both, not only to her body but to her psyche as well. Effective measures should also be taken to eradicate violence against women by enacting appropriate laws

and enforcing the existing laws that are intended to protect women from discrimination and violence, including rape, physical and verbal abuse, mutilation, torture, honour killing and trafficking.

At the same time financial support should also be extended to make the female members of our society independent, educated and self reliant. They should be encouraged and empowered to fight early and forced marriages, obtain good and effective education, participate in the political activities and economic development process and simultaneously educate the public about the need of self defence trainings for girls in the schools and colleges and the boldness to face the brutes.

India needs to listen to the voices of its women. Though there is growing awareness amongst women in general about their response to sexual violence, some people with animal instincts are not ready to accept women's increasing assertiveness, and they use heinous ways to punish them. Until and unless the perception that "women is a thing of enjoyment and an instrument of entertainment" is challenged to its core, this epidemic of violence will never cease.

(The writer may be reached at rilanjana.talukdar@gmail.com)

Assam Indigenous Games Festival

The Assam State Directorate of Sports and Youth Welfare recently organized a three-day long Assam Indigenous Games Festival to highlight and hold several indigenous games of the state.

Chief Minister Sri Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated the first ever Festival at a function held at Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phookan Stadium in R. G. Baruah Sports Complex in Guwahati.

In the course of his inaugural speech, Chief Minister Sri Sonowal said "It has been one of the endeavours of the present State government to promote the sports which are very close to our socio-cultural life. It is one of the guiding forces for the government to have organised Assam Indigenous Games Festival 2018 to give due exposure to our sporting talents who otherwise remain away from the spotlight." He also said that Assam Indigenous Games Festival would provide a fillip to strengthen social

and cultural values of the State. He further stated that the festival has brought all the indigenous sporting talents of the state on one platform which aims to promote and strengthen friendship and camaraderie among them. At the same time he also called upon the people of the state to make the games festival a grand success. He urged the nine hundred participants from 33 districts to enthusiastically take part in the Indigenous Games Festival 2018 and uphold the sportsman spirit and Assam's richness in indigenous sports. The Chief Minister Sri Sonowal also released a special souvenir released to mark the commencement of the games.

Sri Naba Kumar Doley, Minister of State for Sports and Youth Welfare also spoke on the occasion and gave a brief over view of all the schemes that the State government has taken in the last 22 months in Assam.

India ready to flex military muscle

In the backdrop of heightened shadow boxing with China on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), stretching from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, India slowly but steadily adding some much-needed muscle to its military capabilities all along the 4,057-km long LAC to offset the stark military asymmetry with its largest neighbour. In 1962, India virtually collapsed due to weak defences along the border, paltry number of troops deployed in isolated and uncoordinated forward posts, and poor military command and control structures. The daunting challenge before the Indian troops at that point of our history ranged from lack of requisite roads, bridges and inter-valley connectivity to shortages of artillery, helicopters, drones and specialised ammunition stocks. Today it is 2018 and India is no longer the India of 1962. This was amply proved after China was forced to withdraw its troop from the 73-day face-off at Doklam near the Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet tri-junction seven months ago.

The military might of India was almost non-existent prior to the invasion of India by China in 1962. India relied too much on 'Panchasheel' and 'Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai' slogan and had to suffer the consequences. In international relations there is no place for unconditional faith on a semi dictatorial expansionist and aggressive nation and lenient handling of political relations with that country. India did exactly that and had to pay the price. Fortunately, India realized its folly but it took some time.

The damage control as well as rejuvenation of the armed forces in India were little slow initially but has picked up faster pace during last few years. The operational readiness and troop morale is high, with India slowly but steadily adding some much-needed muscle to its military capabilities all along the 4,057-km long LAC to offset the stark military asymmetry with China. The pace has become faster after the People's Liberation Army of China occupied North Doklam throughout the winter, even as it is disengaged from the actual face-off site on Bhutanese territory.

For example, four infantry mountain divisions (each with over 12,000 soldiers) under the 3 Corps (Dimapur) and 4 Corps (Tezpur), with two more

divisions in reserve are now tasked for the defence of Arunachal Pradesh alone. The troop density at Tawang, which China claims to be part of south Tibet, is particularly high to thwart any nefarious designs. A senior officer overseeing the forbidding frontier in the Kibithu-Walong sector asserted that "Our primary task is to maintain the sanctity of the LAC and dominate the heights in peacetime, and be ready for war if it's thrust on us. We shall not allow them to pass this time."

Indian troops are also conducting long-range patrols on routine basis, which sometimes take up to 28-30 days in the harsh terrain, to "physically dominate" disputed areas along the LAC. India is also backing its foot soldiers with some firepower for credible deterrence, from deploying additional T-72 tanks in eastern Ladakh and Sikkim to the 290-km range BrahMos supersonic missiles and Bofors howitzers in Arunachal. The Sukhoi-30MKI fighter squadrons in the North-East will also be bolstered with the first squadron of the spanking new Rafale jets, which can also deliver nuclear weapons, at Hasimara by 2020.

It is now a well-known fact that the expansionist China is flexing its muscles. The number of its "transgressions" across the LAC went up to 426 last year, with around half of them resulting in troop face-offs, as compared to 273 in 2016. The upward trend continued in 2018 too.

It is a matter great rejoice that the newly raised 17 Mountain Strike Corps and associated units, with a total of 90,274 soldiers for "quick-reaction ground offensive capabilities will be fully operational by 2021-2022. After the 59 Infantry Division of the 17 Corps became fully operational at Panagarh (West Bengal), the 72 Infantry Division proposed to be headquartered in Dehradun is now taking shape, with its first brigade to be raised at Roorkee by April, 2018.

The military debacle of 19623 happened because we were grossly unprepared. We are no longer unprepared or blind in terms of surveillance, as we were even 15 years ago and have enough boots on the ground to prevent any misadventure by the Chinese army.

Women weightlifters of Manipur shine at Commonwealth Games

Indian athletes had a good time at the 21st edition of the Commonwealth Games at Gold Coast, Australia, though it failed to top the chart, it established its credentials quite emphatically. Manipur women played a vital role in this regard.

Star weightlifter Saikhom Mirabai Chanu, who works in the Northeast Frontier Railway headquarters at Maligaon in Guwahati, won the first gold for India at the 21st edition of the Commonwealth Games at Gold Coast with a power-packed performance in the women's 48 kg category. The Manipuri powerhouse – a champion in last year's World Championships held in the USA, succeeded in setting Games and Commonwealth records in the snatch, clean and jerk as well as the total. She registered 86 kg in the snatch and 110 kg in clean and jerk for a total of 196 kg. In her dominant display of prowess as a wrestler she smashed records in each of her six lifts in the competition and helped in creating 15 new records – nine Commonwealth Games records and three Commonwealth records and three national records. Mirabai Chanu began on a rousing note by breaking the existing Games record with a lift of 80 kg. She went on to break the record another two times with successful attempts of 84 kg and 86 kg, the latter being her new personal best. Chanu started the clean and jerk session in a similar fashion, lifting 103 kg in her first attempt to take the lead straightaway. While another successful lift of 107 kg consolidated her position, she went on to post a new personal best with 110 kg in her third and final attempt to close off a stellar performance. Prime Minister Narendra Modi today congratulated Chanu for winning India's first medal in the Commonwealth Games. He tweeted - "Congratulations to Saikhom Mirabai Chanu for winning India's first gold at the CW 2018 games and breaking three CWG records. India is delighted by these achievements."

Chanu, the reigning world champion thus wiped out the previous Games record of 175 kg set by Nigeria's Augustina Nwaokolo at the 2010 edition

by a considerable distance. Chanu's previous personal best was 194 kg which she had set during her title-winning run at the World Championships in 2017. At Gold Coast, Marie Hanitra of Mauritius finished a distant second with a total lift of 170 kg, while Dinusha Gomes of Sri Lanka took the bronze with an effort of 155 kg.

Another Manipuri sportsperson Miss Khumukcham Sanjita Chanu also contributed in inflating the medal tally of India. The star weightlifter lifted a total of 192 kg (84 kg in snatch and 108 kg in clean and jerk) in the women's 53 kg category on the second day of the Commonwealth Games 2018 at Gold Coast in Australia to win the gold medal. She gave India its second gold medal by dominating the women's 53kg event at the Carrara Sports and Leisure Centre on the second day of the Games. Back at the venue where last year she won the gold in the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships, the 24-year-old from Manipur broke the existing CWG record with a lift of 84kg in the snatch category and then lifted 108 in the clean and jerk to finish with a combined effort of 192kg.

Inspired by the iconic N Kunjarani Devi of Manipur, Sanjita Chanu took up weightlifting as her chosen field of sports. She made headlines after winning gold at the 2009 senior nationals before grabbing a bronze at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in 2011. In 2012, she won gold at the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships. At the 2014 CWG, at just 20 years of age, Sanjita won gold over Mirabai Chanu with a total lift of 173 kg which was just two kgs short of the Games record. Sanjita booked a spot at the 2018 CWG after taking gold in the women's 53kg with a total lift of 195 kg (85kg+110kg) at the Commonwealth Senior (men and women) Weightlifting Championships.

In total, 227 Indian athletes took part in the 21st Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast amongst whom Sushil Kumar, Mary Kom, PV Sindhu, Saina Nehwal were some of India's top medal winners.

Mopin festival celebrated

Arunachal Pradesh, a state inhabited by more than 26 major tribes and more than 100 sub tribes is truly a melting pot of diverse traditions and cultures. Despite the diversity and distinctly different cultures and traditions, they have lived peacefully respecting each other's cultures.

The Mopin Festival, which is actually an annual harvest festival of the Galo community of Arunachal Pradesh, is today considered more as a community festival and the gaiety and fervour associated with it encompasses all the indigenous people of the state.

On Thursday, the 5th April, 2018, the annual harvest festival Mopin was celebrated across the State with traditional gaiety and religious fervour. Attending the Mopin celebration at Itanagar, Chief Minister Sri Pema Khandu, lauded the elders of Galo community for preserving their rich culture and tradition and passing it down to the younger generation. He announced that the State Government is working hard for preservation of indigenous faith and culture and has allocated Rs 6 crores for celebrating all indigenous festivals, which is a huge increase from earlier allocation of Rs 1.5 crores per annum. This fund will be disbursed to all districts and then to all community based organisations. The Chief Minister in his speech, also stressed on the need for preservation of the indigenous languages, which he felt is the root of cultural foundation of a community. He added that to achieve this lofty goal his Government has allocated Rs 1 crore and placed it at the disposal of the Research Department to study the status of different dialects in the State in view of UNESCO categorising 26 of them as highly endangered.

The Mopin festival was similarly observed at various other places across Arunachal Pradesh with spontaneous gaiety and fervor.

The golden jubilee celebration of the Mopin festival was observed at Kamba in West Siang district, where Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju joined the festivities. At Aalo of the same district, Sports & Youth Affairs

Parliamentary Secretary Sri Nyamar Karbak took part in the festivities. In his address to the large gathering he stated that "Festivals showcase our rich culture and distinct identity, and every member of the society, irrespective of religious affinities, should celebrate them." He also advocated documentation of the Galo culture and preserving it for future generations and said that "Festivals should act as a platform to bring oneness, mutual trust, goodwill and understanding among various communities," he added. Mopin Festival Celebration Committee President Sri Doli Lollen and Secretary Sri Gemar Padu spoke on the history and mythological aspects of Mopin, and urged the participants to "rise above social taboo and participate in such celebration."

At Pasighat in East Siang district, the three-day Mopin celebration concluded on Saturday, the 7th April, 2018 evening spreading the message of peace, brotherhood and prosperity. Cultural performances, including traditional dances and folk music, along with exotic cuisine and various competitions marked the celebration. On Friday the 6th April, 2018 evening, members of the Pasighat Central Mopin Celebration Committee (CMCC) and a troupe from Aalo thrilled the audience at the Deputy Commissioner's residence with their melodious songs and traditional Popir dances. Deputy Commissioner of Pasighat Sri Tamiyo Tatak in his message urged the community to adhere to its age-old customs and expressed gratitude to the community for 'celebrating the festival in a befitting manner for social unity.' Sri Tatak expressed hope that such celebration would bring good luck and prosperity, along with good harvest and relief from diseases, calamities and evil spirits. Showcasing an amazing array of ritualistic and cultural activities for three consecutive days, the people prayed for blessings from Ane Mopin for a bumper harvest, communal harmony, and good health for all. The celebration of the festival was organised by the CMCC-2018, under the chairmanship of ADC Mr. Tatdo Borang.

Crimes against 'minors by minors' - An alarm bell

Assam, once the most peaceful and culturally oriented state in India, is now fast progressing towards anarchy, caused mostly by juvenile delinquents and underage criminals. The official records of the Assam Police reveals that during the past six years the number of 'juveniles' as 'criminals' and the 'minors' as 'victims' have increased manifold. A senior official in the crime branch of the State police force has said that when the records of crimes of the past six years in the State are examined, it becomes crystal clear that most of the persons who committed the crimes are juvenile delinquents. The stark reality is that most of the victims of the crimes are also minors. The latest example of this trend can be clearly understood if we analyze the recent incident of rape of a minor girl in Batadraba in Nagaon District, in which two of the three youths who had committed the crime were minors.

Accordinging crime reports of the Assam Police for 2010-2016, as many as 1,275 cases against rape of minor girls were registered in the State. "While 39 cases of rape of minor girls were registered in 2010, 40 such cases were registered in 2011. The number of such cases suddenly rose to 333 in 2012, 230 in 2013, 271 in 2014, 42 in 2015 and 464 in 2016."

The statistics of crime in Assam is very alarming. In the past six years, 98 of the rape victims were of the age group 6-12 years, 407 victims were of the age group of 12-16 years and 767 were 16-18 years of age.

As to the reasons of this abnormal rise the Police claim that the lack of sex education in school leads to the occurrences of such crimes in society. Nowadays, a child often sees the use of drugs, alcohol and other social evils at their home. A section of children are hooked on to mobile phones with internet connections to navigate around YouTube, face book and other porn sites. They see some scenes which they shouldn't see at their age. Such children gossip such things with their peers and attain sexual maturity out of sync with their age. Since they generally don't share such experiences with their parents and the parents in general do not care to keep track of the activities of their children, this underage generation often goes astray. Imparting sex education by teachers in schools and conscious parents can make children realize the ill effects of such developments.

Bringing positive change in the crime scenario involving minors is not as simple as it may look. Most of us are bent on heaping blames on the Government and the police for all our woes but none of us are ready to do our little bit to correct the situation. It is little understood that the future of a nation, a community or a society cannot be moulded by an individual or a single agency. Only collective effort and collective action can achieve the goal. The Parents, Teachers, Society Elders on one hand and the Government and the Police on the other must join forces to remodel the present day of social anarchy.

Mangaldai & Kokrajhar protests over crimes against women

Mangaldai Town is known all over the state as a township populated by educated, socially conscious and responsible citizens, who never fails to stand up for justice and decorum in public life. The recent spurt of crimes against women in the state again brought to the fore their ire for such heinous degeneration.

On March 31, 2018 a public rally was organised at Mangalddai to protest against the growing incidents of crime against women in the State in recent times. Around 100 citizens comprising members of several local women's organisations, student bodies and NGOs, including Bhebarghat Mahila Mancha, Mangaldai Mahila Kalyan Samaj, Mangaldai Girls' College Students'

Union, Saraswati Mahila Samabai Samiti of Hirapara, Crystal Vision etc took out a rally from Bhebarghat Public Bus Stand premises through the main streets of Mangaldai town by shouting slogans and displaying placards to generate awareness on crimes against women and demanded capital punishment for criminals convicted in rape cases.

The rally culminated into a public meeting at the Bishnu Mandir premises where several social activists and student leaders, including Smt Rashmi Rekha Sarma of Mahila Kalyan Samaj, Sri Sekhar Mazumdar, Kumari Jagyasmita Goswami of Mangaldai Girls'

(Contd. to Page 24)

Shad Suk Mynsiem - The Dance of the Happy Hearts

Shad Suk Mynsiem which means dance of the happy hearts, is one of the most prominent festivals of the Khasi community of Meghalay, the abode of clouds. It is also known as Weiking dance, a folk dance form where the Khasi maidens graciously move inside a circle, while the men with whips and swords dance with full zeal outside the circle. The Khasis perform 6 different dances in Shad Suk Mynsiem. They are Mastieh, Pyllun, Padiah, Klang, Dum Dum and Shad Nalai. The dances take place till sunset.

The celebration of the festival starts on April 7 and concludes on April 9 as a mark of thanksgiving to Mother Nature for good harvest and for fresh sowing of seeds as also to mark the harvest season and to pay obeisance to God. Khasi men and women in thousands celebrate 'Shad Suk Mynsiem' in various parts of Meghalaya with spontaneous gaiety and fervour.

As per custom, both men and women participate in the dance where steps of women are subtle and those of men more energetic. Only unmarried women are allowed to participate in the dance. The dance begins with drumbeats, flutes and cymbals picking up the tempo. Two circles are formed with women on the inside ring and men on the outer ring. With eyes down, the women take small steps forward and backward as they gradually shift sideways to move in a circle. They keep their body straight and arms loose at shoulders. The men do a more energetic dance with swift movements in clockwise and anticlockwise direction around women. Men play the part of protectors of the women. The Shad Suk Mynsiem dance is considered symbolic of women fertility where they are receptacles of seeds and bearers of fruit, and men are cultivators who plant, cultivate and nurture the seeds until they are harvested. The three-day annual Shad Suk Mynsiem festival also reflects the matrilineal and patrilineal aspects of the Khasi society.

In Shillong, despite heavy downpour, hundreds of boys and girls decked up in their traditional attire of fine silk, gold and silver jewelries participated in

the Shad Suk Mynsiem Festival at Weiking ground in Jaiaw of the city. Thousands of spectators from the State, including tourists from outside, assembled at the venue to witness the colourful traditional thanksgiving dance. It needs a special mention that the festival is being observed at the Weiking ground for the past 108 years.

People belonging to the Niam Khasi, including young and old, took part in the dance festival accompanied by the beats of the drums and playing of flutes (Tangmuri) to thank God for all His blessings that He has bestowed upon them.

This year an 88-year-old man Mr. Billy Thabah from Sohiong took part in the 'dance of the Happy Hearts' on the closing day of the festival. While taking a break from dancing, Mr. Billy Thabah said, "This is for the first time I'm taking part in the festival after a gap of 25 years as I want to encourage other youths to participate in this traditional dance of the Khasis." He also added that "I want to try and teach the youth the original dancing techniques and moves." Mr. Thabah further said there was lack of equipment, traditional ornaments and attires during his days but for today's generation everything is easily available. Referring to the exploits of Mr. Thabah, the President of the Seng Khasi (Kmei) Mr. Bantei Rumnong said that "An elderly person despite his (Thabah) age has participated in the dance festival. We are delighted as this will encourage our youth to come forward and take part in this traditional dance."

Lamenting over the fact that increasing number of Khasi faithful shying away from the age-old traditional faith and associating themselves with other faiths, President Mr. Bantei Rumnong said, "Seng Khasi from time to time try to unite its entire faithful and teach them the values of the traditional Khasi faith. However, some people might feel that the Khasi faith is not right for them and they prefer to associate with other faiths."

The festival was first organized at the Weiking ground on April 14 and 15, 1911. However, from 1902 till 1910, the festival used to be held at Mawkhar.

NRC and Citizenship Act

Dr. Manmohan Das

Immediately after India attained independence, the need for preparation of a National Register of Citizens (NRC) was conceived. Accordingly, the process of its preparation was started basing on the 1951 census and the 1951 voters' list in all the States of India including Assam.

The need for updating the NRC of 1951 only in Assam arose because of the reason that in many places of Assam, the copies of the NRC were not preserved properly or are surreptitiously missing, as a result of which it was not possible to detect a large number of infiltrators particularly coming from erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. During the long period of the Congress rule, Assam had been largely infiltrated by a horde of non-Indian citizens who were used as a vote bank and therefore no concrete steps were taken to detect and deport them to their country of origin. No actions were also taken to prevent their further infiltration into Assam. Unfortunately, the illegal migration mainly from Bangladesh has still been going on unabatedly through the porous border.

In 1979 a statewide movement for expulsion of foreign nationals from Assam was launched by All Assam Students Union and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad, which continued for long six years. In 1985, a tripartite accord known as the Assam Accord was signed on August 15, 1985 among the representatives of the Central and State governments and the leaders of the Assam Movement (AASU and AAGSP) with the objectives of detection, deletion of their names from the voters' list if already included and deportation of all the illegal foreigners, irrespective of religion, who entered Assam after March 25, 1971. But it is really very discouraging that nothing has been done by the successive governments, whether it was the Congress or the AGP, to detect, delete and deport the illegal foreigners during the last 33 years after the signing of the Accord.

It is necessary to mention here that the Asom Sanmilita Mahasangha, consisting 26 indigenous groups of people of Assam, has filed a PIL in the Supreme Court seeking to quash 1971 as the cut-off year for identifying the foreigners and in its place restore 1951 which is constitutionally valid and still

applicable in all other States except Assam. The final verdict on this appeal is still pending in the constitutional bench of the Supreme Court. Without waiting for the verdict of the Supreme Court, the Citizenship Act, 1955 was amended by incorporating clause 6 (A) into it in order to accord Indian citizenship on the basis of 1971. The Mahasangha argued before the three-member division bench of the Supreme Court that while throughout the country, the definition of citizenship is determined on the basis of the 1951 NRC, how the cut-off year of according citizenship in Assam can be 1971. So it has appealed to the highest court to quash the clause 6 (A) of the Citizenship Act, 1955. In response to its appeal, the Chief Justice has directed to form a five-member constitutional bench to examine thoroughly the issues raised in March, 2018.

It is not known what will be the final verdict of the SC on this disputed issue. If the verdict will be for 1951, then what will be the fate of the ongoing vigorous exercise of the NRC updating process? At a time when the first part of the draft NRC has already been declared, the second part is going to be announced very soon and the process of completing the final copy before June 30, 2018 is going on in full swing, will the verdict not jeopardize the whole process of NRC updating? Is it also not absurd to know that on the one hand, the SC has already directed to complete the NRC updating on the basis of 1971 and on the other hand, the same SC has accepted the appeal of the Mahasangha to examine the constitutional validity of 1971?

However, at the behest of the SC and under its direct supervision, the process of NRC update has been started only in March, 2015. It has been going on smoothly steering clear of political interferences and resistance from the circles of some vested interests. The BJP government is also trying to settle the Hindu migrants and accord them citizenship. With that purpose, the BJP-led NDA Government has promulgated an ordinance on September 8, 2015 by amending the Passport Act, 1920 and the Foreigners' Act, 1946 in order to settle first the Bangladeshi Hindus and other non-Muslim illegal migrants in Assam and

then to accord them citizenship.

It appears that the ordinance has violated the fundamental principle of secularism enshrined in the Constitution by dividing the migrants/refugees on the basis of religion and secondly, since there is no law for refugees in India, all the migrants are covered by the Foreigners' Act, 1946. No law can be changed by an ordinance. In order to do so, the standing law should be amended first in the Parliament. With that end in view, the Union Home Minister placed a Bill in the Parliament on July 19, 2016 to accord legal status to the ordinance so that the illegal non-Muslim migrants can get Indian citizenship. But because of the stiff resistance from some members of the Opposition parties, the Government was compelled to send the Bill to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) constituted by 30 members headed by Dr Satya Pal Singh. The committee must take the responsibility to present the Bill in both the Houses after scrutinizing all of its points taking hearing of different organizations and individuals in all the States concerned that are for and against it.

The JPC took hearings of several organizations and individuals concerned in different States. However, it did not visit Assam for taking similar hearing. In the meantime, after Sri Satya Pal Singh left the committee

to join the Central Ministry, its activities remained suspended for last one year. However, recently Sri Rajendra Agrawal has joined as its Chairman and the process of hearing has started once again. He has also expressed his willingness to visit Assam before a delegation of the AGP. Because of such a reason, the JPC could not place the corrected Bill in the present Budget Session of the Parliament. The Home Minister has however mandated the JPC to complete the process so that it can be placed in the Summer Session of the Parliament.

In spite of strong opposition against the Bill, the Central Government seems to be firm to pass the Bill in the Parliament with the help of its majority. It is regrettable that the State BJP-led Government is also blindly supporting the Central Government knowing very well that the Assamese-speaking people of Assam would be reduced to minority in their own homeland. If the Bill is passed to give it a legal status, will it not violate the clauses of the Assam Accord? Will it not jeopardize the whole process of NRC updating? Therefore, it is high time to fight against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill by different organizations, political parties and conscious citizens unitedly for the survival of the Assamese and other indigenous groups of people.

Vanvasis Must Get Opportunity to Make Progress

“Vanvasis never supported the demonic forces, rather they fought against them. They have protected and preserved the Sanatan Hindu values and Vedic traditions. They are our own brethren and we should acquaint our children with them. It is our cultural legacy, which has to be transferred to the next generation,” said RSS Sarsanghachalak Shri Mohan Bhagwat, while addressing a Hindu Sammelan at Aasave village in Dahanu on April 15.

About 60,000 people from remote areas of Palgharh district participated in the Sammelan. A book, Van Jan Gatha, published by Hindusthan Prakashan was also released on the occasion. After the function, the Sarsanghachalak visited Talasari project. This project was started 50 years ago by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to curb the conversion activities by Christian missionaries in the region.

Addressing the Hindu Sammelan, Shri Mohan Bhagwat further said the Vanvasis must get

opportunity to make progress. “If we provide one third of our income and some part of our life for the progress of these people, the shops bring run by some vested interests in such regions will be shut down permanently. Talasari project has produced the dedicated and committed workers who are always vigilant,” he added. He said the Hindus have forgotten their real identity following differences of languages, regions and castes. He called upon the people to preserve their Hindu identity.

About Shri Ram temple in Ayodhya, he said those who demolished the Mandir there were not Indian Muslims. An Indian citizen cannot do it. The alien forces targeted the temples here. But today we are free and we have the right to reconstruct what had been demolished. It is the matter of our identity. We hope the temple would be rebuilt at the same place where it existed, he added.

(Organiser, May 6, 2018)

Herbal Heritage

Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

During the early part of this year, I had the opportunity to re-meet Dharmeswar Barua, resident of a interior village of Sonitpur district, Assam. He is an expert herbal healer as well as magico-religious or occult medicinal practitioner. He helped me in identifying various plant varieties, their various parts useful for curing various diseases and ailments. It was one of my early research expeditions. There was another person from the same district who developed certain home-made medicine out of his prolonged exploration and experience gathered through some published texts. Late Sunphul Lahkar, his graceful face is still afresh in my mind. The way he moves along with me in his kitchen garden and nearby localities, and his small shop, in front of his road side house, arrangement of bottles inside the shelf's of the shop, proper labeling by names of diseases around the glass bottle of different shapes and sizes, exemplifies the glorious heritage of herbal medicine in this region.

Herbal medicine has a worldwide acceptance due to two important factors: cost efficacy and fewer side effects. In the midst of modern or western medicine, the relevance of herbal medicine cannot be subsumed. There are giant companies, industries, brands like Patanjali in India, dealing with various products where herbs are the main ingredient. In Indian context, the Ayurveda system of medicine has been based on the knowledge of plant varieties. It is still going on. Even in the modern medicine, if one look around at the composition of drugs, will be seen that various plant ingredients apart from other chemical component have been used to prepare the medicine. For, eg, tulsi plant leaves is utilized in preparing many cough syrup. There are many such examples where various modern medicines are derived from various herbal resources. North east, being rich in biodiversity is the place where many plants having medicinal value grow in abundance due to favourable climatic conditions. Large numbers of medicinal plants have been also identified in various ethno-botanical explorations and expeditions. Studies reveal that traditional communities have developed a close nexus with such plants having medicinal properties within the ambit of 'traditional wisdom' through prolonged contact, access, experience as well as trial and error method. It enhances in the

development of an indigenous healing practices for various diseases and ailments among the various indigenous people residing in the nook and corner of this region where modern health care system is still unavailable. Some specialized persons known as medicine man (local name differs among different groups, in Assamese *bez* or *oja*) emerge within the context of own society and culture.

Their role of herbal medicine is immense in the rural context in spite of western drugs. Even in contemporary times, a large section of people rely on medical pluralism. In other words, they have developed the tendencies to utilize both the forms of medicine. There are some scientific orientations also. In recent times, in Assam there was *dengu* outbreak and effected many. It is wellknown that the modern health care practitioners prescribed *dengu* effected patients to consume juice of papaya leave as an important remedial measure. Except the surgery, herbal medicine has lots of orientations from remedial point of view. Even in bone fracture, it is reported that a kind of creeper (*har jora lota*), really plays the role of paste bandage in Assam. Efficacies, significance, lesser side effects, low cost, accessibility, increasing popularity, make a few sections of people to bring it at commercial level. It is beyond the level of Dharmeswar Barua, Sunphul Lahkar that is stated earlier. Two such initiatives come to mind while reviewing the situation in the context of Assam: late Dr Gunaram Khanikar and Axom Prakritik Udyog (nature-based industry) of Makhibaha, Tihu, Nalbari. It was Late Dr Khanikar who was instrumental in bringing forth the rich herbal heritage in commercial milieu. In his native place at Golaghat district of Assam, he had developed a wonderful nursery of medicinal plants. Prolonged studies, research and experiences enabled him to develop various herbal medicines useful in various minor and serious diseases viz nervous debility, diabetes, hair loss, stomach related problems, rheumatism, face pack, indigestion, blood purification and many other problems. It is observed that some of this knowledge is available in a scattered manner in the indigenous domain of Assamese society. His real contribution can be understood from how he gathered such extensive knowledge through empirical

experiences, observation, even added new formulations by innovative means, so that people has easy access to such knowledge in utilitarian perspectives. He has written many books on herbal remedies. These books are indeed a real testimony of herbal heritage of Assam. Except few, most of these books are written in simple Assamese language depicting the rich medicinal plant diversity of north east, utilities of various fruits, vegetables, leafy vegetables, edible roots and tubers, flowers, spices available in and around us for curing various minor and major diseases, information relating to composition of various components for using as medicines, with prescription of doses needed for particular problem. These books have become very popular among common masses. His sudden demise has no doubt affected the indigenous herbal industry of Assam. Nevertheless, Axom Prakritik Udyog, has continued the legacy of herbal medicines at commercial level. They have also developed various drugs for various diseases and problems from the locally available medicinal plants. It has reached to users from various outlets, fairs and events.

Barua, Lahkar, Dr Khanikar, Prakritik Udyog are some

Grass too can fight climate change

The greatest worry of the world today is climate change that is affecting not only the balance in nature but is also disturbing the life on planet earth as a whole. The only aim of all the scientists' world over, who are working hard to find a way to bring back the balanced eco system, is to find a way to stop global warming and climate change. In this desperate scenario a girl from Assam – Miss Karabi Pathak, daughter of social worker Rudra Kumar Pathak and Joymoti Pathak of Abhayapuri town of Bongaigaon distric, has succeeded in identifying a grass species, Imperata cylindrica which can play a vital role in climate change mitigation. Miss Karabi did her PhD in 'Carbon Storage and Sequestration Opportunities of Imperata Grassland in Barak Valley, Assam' under the guidance of Dr. Arun Jyoti Nath and Prof. Ashesh Kumar Das of Assam University, Silchar while she was guided by Prof. Yadvinder Malhi in the University of Oxford, UK. Her research papers were published in renowned journals, including Land Degradation and Development, Current Science. This finding is expected to open new doors of opportunities and add to the list of various ways being implemented by

of individual identities acting as a torch bearers of herbal heritage of this region, in one hand, the traditional communities preserve many knowledge on such dimensions within the ambit of their traditional wisdom transmitting across the generations since times immemorial. The advent of modern medicine, western health care systems, physicians, pharmaceutical companies, have made an impact on such practices as seen in the declining number of herbal practitioners reported in recent times. Lack of interest of our parents and seniors for such indigenous health care systems, development of improved technique of modern health care, efforts for quick and speedy action, poses serious threats to such traditional system in the contemporary period. Advent of new diseases, huge expenditure for modern health care facilities and medicines, often compel to look for new alternatives for effective execution under the changing circumstances. Under such situation, issues pertaining to conservation, preservation and restoration of vibrant herbal heritage of this region need adequate attention from the real stakeholders and appropriate authorities to redefine and re-explore the entire possibilities and potentialities for fruitful yield.

different countries in the mission of climate change adaptation and mitigation and de-warming the world environment, as agreed upon in the Paris Convention in 2015.

In a recent one to one discussion with The Sentinel newspaper, Miss Karabi Pathak disclosed that there are ample opportunities to explore this variety of grass because it was found during her research that Imperata grasslands removed about 3 Mg CO₂ per hectare per year that exerts a negative feedback to global climate change.

She further added that, on sloppy and degraded lands, Imperata grasslands can be managed to restore physical, chemical and biological properties of soil. She stressed that since the Imperata grasslands are managed traditionally in rural landscapes of Northeast India for monetary benefits; efforts should be made to encourage its promotion keeping other utilities of the grass variety in mind. She expressed the hope that her research findings will go a long way in de-warming the environment and save the smooth flowing eco system.

How Do Christianity, Islam And Hinduism Compare?

Maria Wirth

There are different criteria on which one could compare those 3 religions. I want to focus here only on the most important one: which one of the three is closest to truth.

Christianity claims that the full truth has been revealed 2000 years ago only to Jesus Christ by the one Supreme Being (called God in English), and therefore truth is only with his Church. All must become Christians and follow what Christ said, if they want to be saved from hell.

Islam claims that the final truth has been revealed some 1400 years ago to Prophet Mohamed by the one Supreme Being (called Allah in Islam) and therefore Islam is the only true religion. All must become Muslims and follow what Prophet Mohamed said, if they want to be saved from hell.

Isn't it strange that even in the 21st century those unsubstantiated claims about eternal hell for "others" are not debated and dismissed as superstition? Further, obviously at least one of those religions can't be true, if not both – so why nobody mentions this? Yet instead of a debate on what is true, the "right to freedom of belief" is protected. It's surely strange.

Now where does Hinduism stand? It usually is seen as inferior to the two big, established, 'respected', rich religions. And if one goes by common perception, Hinduism is mainly about caste system, sati and worshipping many gods, which (idol worship) is the greatest sin in both Christianity and Islam, because the Christian God and Allah are claimed to be jealous of other gods.

Hinduism is a rather new term. It was introduced by the British for the ancient traditions in India based on the Vedic texts.

Why was Hinduism introduced? Today's 'Indians' were called Hindus earlier and even today are called Hindu in China. Hinduism would be akin to Germanism or Frenchism.

I got a clue why Hinduism was introduced, when I read that Voltaire, too, among many others in the

west, praised the Vedas as the greatest gift to mankind and said "we are eternally indebted to India". Voltaire fought against the influence of the Church and indeed, when the Vedas reached Europe, it had two effects: the influence of the Church went down and science took off in a big way (intriguingly, it is not mentioned today that those 2 effects could have anything to do with Vedic knowledge reaching the west).

Clearly, the Church was not amused that the intellectual elite preferred Vedic wisdom over Christianity. It needed some strategy to stop losing her sheep.

Now what is contained in the Vedas which are claimed to be as old as the universe? Veda (it means knowledge) is about what we need to know to live a meaningful, fulfilling life. Vedic knowledge is vast, though most of it has been lost by now. Vedas tell us even about maths, the age of the universe, of parallel universes, even the distance to the sun, how to analyse, how to connect with powers (devas) greater than humans, etc.

And most important, the Vedas tell us the truth about us, the Supreme Being and the universe.

The Vedas differs from the two other religions in a major point:

The Vedas claim that Brahman (Supreme Being) has become this universe. It means all is permeated by Brahman. All is essentially divine including our person. The names and forms are not really real. They appear only as real. Brahman alone is real, and Brahman is best described as sat-chit-ananda (blissful awareness). And the Upanishads, which are part of the Vedas, declare "Aham Brahmasmi" (I am Brahman), or "Ayam Atman Brahma" (This Atma is Brahman).

Does this claim make sense? Yes, it does. Quantum physics came meanwhile to the conclusion that all is one energy and that there are no separate entities anywhere. Incidentally, physicists like Schroedinger, Einstein, Heisenberg, etc. drew inspiration from the Vedas. So far, the Vedas were never proven wrong by

science whatever was tested.

So the claim, that Brahman is the essence in all, is surely closer to the truth than the claim by Christianity and Islam that the Supreme is separate from his creation, including the human being, and will send all those who don't believe in a certain book for eternity to hell. This Vedic claim of divinity in humans gives naturally inner strength to a human being and also kindness (as Brahman is in others, too).

Now why was Vedic knowledge suddenly made into a Hinduism, placed next and yet below the 2 big religions and associated from the start with a 'divisive' caste system (which is a social issue and prevalent everywhere) and other negatives like sati?

My conclusion is that the Church was afraid it would lose out when people come to know what Vedic knowledge really contains. They would stop blindly

believing but go after genuine knowledge which is there in the Vedas.

That's why they had to coin a new term and demean "Hinduism" in the eyes of common people right from the start. They were successful. Everywhere children learnt in schools about the 'terrible caste system' in Hinduism. People didn't ask further. They *knew* now that Hinduism is greatly inferior to the two big religions.

Yet there is always the fear that people may discover that they were deceived for the sake of power and that truth may be different from what they were taught in religious class. In Germany, there is a saying which expresses certain folk wisdom:

The King says to the Pope: "You make sure that people stay stupid and I make sure they stay poor."

The Pongtu festival of the Tutsa's of Arunachal

The Pongtu festival, one of the most popular festivals of the Pongtu community of Arunachal Pradesh, was observed with spontaneous gaiety and fanfare at Khonsa, Lowang extolling their traditional literatures, folklores, folktales and folk songs and dance. The festival was inaugurated by unfurling the festival flag and offering prayer to the almighty "Rangkhothak" and inauguration of 'Romnok'. The celebration commenced with Rangtaam rituals led by Chief of Tutnu in presence of the invited dignitaries in Tutsa's Pang (Morong hut).

Taking part in the celebrations Sri Wangki Lowang, the Agriculture Minister of Arunachal Pradesh hailed the Tutsa community for its effort in preserving and promoting their cultural traditions. He said that the traditional literatures, like folklores/folktales are in danger of becoming extinct. He urged the research scholars to find ways to preserve and promote them. The local legislator, who is also the chairman of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), Sri Wanglam Sawin, urged the Tutsa community to preserve, protect and promote their age-old culture and traditions. Sri Sawin further emphasized that folk songs and folktales and the village council/ Chieftainship system

which are being practiced from time immemorial must be taught to the younger generation.

The celebration was marked by colorful traditional dances performed by villagers of Kothung and Tutnu and Tutsa modern mega dance performed by young girls of Tutsa community. The celebration was attended, among others, by the Deputy Commissioner of Tirap Sri P.N. Thungon, Commandant Officer 16 Assam Rifles Col Sri Robin Kumar, former MLA Sri Kamthok Lowang, ZPC Sontung Lowang.

Pongtu festival was also celebrated with much pomp and traditional gaiety at Changlang on Wednesday. Attending the festival Minister for Food & Civil Supplies and Geology & Mining, Sri Kamlung Mossang urged the people not to mix religion with culture and called for preservation of the age-old culture and tradition. Parliamentary Secretary (Hydropower) Sri Phosum Khimhun advised the young generation to learn their mother tongue and languages, traditional songs and promote the traditional games and sports. Parliamentary Secretary (DoTCL) Sri Tesam Pongte said one of the main motives behind celebrating Pongtu festival centrally was to showcase the rich culture and traditions of Tutsa people.

Sexual crimes and inadequate State response

Patricia Mukhim

Sexual crimes dominate the media today. The number of rape cases in Assam has spiralled crazily. But Assam is not alone in this scourge of humanity. Across States, rape is a daily fare and governments seem inured by this heinous crime against women. Setting up emergency call numbers for rape victims to call is a knee jerk reaction. It's the justice delivery system that's failing us. The accused often go unscathed even if they spend a few years in jail. Rape is a premeditated crime and after the infamous Nirbhaya rape case in 2012, many stringent legal provisions have come up to deal with the offenders but the numbers continue to rise. Hence, punishment per se is not a deterrent. If laws could control crime then India would have been safer for women after 2012 but it isn't. We hear of attempted rapes or of cases of rape committed on female foreign tourists as well. This brazenness shocks us but it is happening. As a woman one wonders, where do we go from here? And while Assam is in the news simply for the sheer number of reported rape cases, women in all seven NE sister States experience this depravity on a daily basis. In Meghalaya, a former legislator who is still serving jail time raped a minor girl repeatedly at different locations. He was supplied the girl by people who allegedly hired her as a housemaid. The helpless girl at last managed to escape and report the crime to the police. The legislator lost the election this time although he still got a substantial number of votes.

In the recent Assembly session in Assam, rape and other sexual crimes against women became a heated topic of discussion. At least 3,009 rapes cases and 17,106 cases of violence against women have been registered since the BJP Government led by Sarbananda Sonowal took charge in 2016. In 2016-17, 1,552 rape cases were registered in Assam. Then from January, 2017 till date there are 1,457 reported rape cases. These figures were given by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary who also stated that at least nine women were killed after being raped during this time. Of the 3,009 rape cases reported, only 1,786 persons were arrested and 1,697 are chargesheeted. But the conviction rate is dismal. Only 76 accused have been convicted so far. Cases of violence against women numbering 8,771 were registered in 2016-17 and from January, 2017 till date,

the figure is 8,335. This figure is likely to go up. What is shocking is the number of cases of abduction of women. Roughly 4,794 women were abducted in 2016-17 and 4,314 in 2017-18. So where the law and order is, one might ask. Or is the present system incapable of handling these sensitive cases? Is the police training given thus far equal to the task before it? How are rape cases actually handled? It would be interesting if a research is done on police standard operating procedures (SOP) once a rape case is reported. How quick is the response time? Or is police suffering from compassion fatigue? How many policewomen make up the police force in any State? How trained are these police women in understanding the nuances of gender and what triggers crimes against women?

While it is futile to expect the police alone to deal with this social crime, the fact remains that the police are the punitive arm of the law and they are the first respondents to citizens' complaints. The police know exactly why rape cases go under the radar and why they fail in a court of law. Evidence gathering is weak and insufficient to nail the culprit (rapist) in a justice system where it is believed that no one should be punished without every shred of evidence being tested and found sufficient for such conviction. Hence, these days, the public have decided to take the law in their hands rather than rely on the criminal justice system. This happened in Arunachal Pradesh where a girl child was raped. It is happening in Assam where minors are raped. And this vigilantism is bound to take a copycat mode if the law fails to deter future rapists. The public mood is that rapists should be castrated because that is the only justice that can be delivered for such a heinous crime. While human rights activists might go queasy, the fact remains that desperate times call for desperate measures and if one is to go by the news reports from Assam, then the situation does warrant desperate measures.

As a society, however, we are left to wonder as to what has gone wrong with our social mores. Why has the instinct of the beast overtaken humans to the point that a rapist fails to see the face of his mother/sister/ daughter in the rape victim? Is it rage that

drives men to rape? Is it repressed sexuality which parents have not been able to sufficiently explain and which is let loose because the avenues for watching pornography are now just a click away? Parents today complain that their kids (sons and daughters) retire to their rooms for the night but spend long hours well past midnight fiddling with their gadgets. Parents moan that it's no longer possible to monitor what their children watch once they are out of the house or in their own bedrooms. This should make us rethink our tested parenting strategies. What are we as parents doing to confront the growing crime of rape and violence against women? How are our sons introduced to sex and sexuality? Is the sex education imparted in educational institutions enough to orient the male mind towards understanding the brutality of raping a young girl or a girl child or a woman, for that matter?

There is an attempt to profile rapists in Assam as being of Bangladeshi origin as they have nothing to lose. They can commit crimes and escape into their little ghettos or cross the borders with impunity. But we would be missing an important perspective if we believe that only men of a certain social strata can commit rape and other sexual crimes. Rapists come from different socio-economic profiles and the 'Me

Too' campaign has emboldened women to speak up and narrate their tales of molestation, most often at the hands of male family members (uncles, cousins, et al). Research informs that rape is often committed by a person known to the victim/ survivor and/or by family members. But that categorization is no longer sacrosanct. These days rape is committed by complete strangers on unsuspecting young women and children. This makes it difficult for the law to reach out to every nook and corner of the country. It is here that society has a role to play. Merely condemning a rape and raging and ranting about it on social media are no solution. We need citizens' action groups to start speaking about the crime of rape and to help us understand what part of the male psyche triggers this crime.

We need to seek out psychologists and psychoanalysts to enable us to get a grip on how to deal with and counsel our young sons and male members of the family to allow their sexuality a healthy outlet. A peer support group for this cause is imperative because, while we may not be able to find words to counsel our own, but, our group members can help our children while we can help theirs.

Can we start somewhere instead of lamenting our fates?
(The Assam Tribune, April 5, 2018)

Bangladesh reluctant to take back illegal foreigners

Assam is on boil ever since the NRC documentation process was started in 2017. As per unofficial estimates, more than a lakh Bangladeshi foreigners are in Assam without any valid document. The Foreigner's Tribunals set up by the Government of Assam with the Government of India concurrence have detected several cases of illegal infiltrators and ordered for the deportation. Unfortunately because of some legal snags these foreigners are yet to be deported.

Even though India and Bangladesh agreed way back in 2013 to follow the policy of official deportation of all Bangladeshis staying illegally in India, the Bangladesh Government is giving a lukewarm response to implement the policy on the ground. The verification reports of the addresses of 284 illegal Bangladeshis as declared by Foreigners Tribunals in Assam, which have been sent to Bangladesh, are yet to come, pending process of deportation. Despite the fact that the neighbouring country assured India of extending full cooperation in taking back all its citizens who illegally entered India, the Bangladesh

Government has shown very poor response to the address verification process.

Prior to March, 2013 the Border Police of the state used to push back declared illegal foreigners to Bangladesh through the Indo-Bangla border, but the new policy adopted by the two countries in March, 2013 had done away with the system of pushing back. Instead Bangladesh had agreed to the system of deportation of illegal Bangladeshi migrants. Though the agreement sounds good, it has not yielded much positive results on the ground, with India has so far been able to deport only two declared illegal foreigners and 72 convicted illegal foreigners to the neighbouring nation.

There is a difference between declared illegal foreigners and convicted illegal foreigners. Declared foreigners are those entering India illegally without any valid document. Convicted illegal foreigners, on the other hand, are those who enter India with valid

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Mangaldai & Kokrajhar protests over crimes against women

College Students' Union, among others, spoke about the issues leading to occurrence of crimes against women and cautioned the people to remained alert to check such crimes in future. The protesters subsequently submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang in support of their charter of demands, which included setting up of a fast track court in Mangaldai for speedy trial of such cases, introduction of One-stop Centre scheme called 'Sakhi' for mitigating the problems of needy women victims, arrangements for making the new Women Police Station in Mangaldai operational and filling up vacancy of the regular District Social Welfare Officer-cum-District Protection Officer charged with the responsibility of promptly handling all cases related to oppression of women. Simultaneously, a meeting of the Darrang District Women's Cell presided over by its Chairperson and attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Mangaldai District was held at the Deputy Commissioner's office to discuss the issues raised by the protesters. The meeting expressed serious concern over the rising graph in regard to crimes against women in the district over the last few years. The meeting was attended, among others by Sipajhar Circle Officer Smt. Manali Jain, Mangaldai Election Officer Smt. Antara Gogoi, Additional Superintendent of Police, Darrang Sri Satyajit Nath, Sub-Divisional Medical and Health Officer Dr Nirmal Kumar Beriya, lawyer Sri Premeswar Sarma, representatives from District Child Protection Office, women activists, social entrepreneur and journalist Sri Mayukh Goswami deliberated on different

issues related to crime against women, including effect of smart phones, role of anti-social elements, contraband drugs and suggested for forming village-level action groups, pragmatic time-bound plans for mass awareness, among others.

It is necessary to mention here that the Mangaldai district recorded 1,046 cases in 2015 with subsequent increase every year. The figure in 2016 stood at 1,286, with an increase of 240 cases. In 2017, the figure stood at 1,422, and during the current year till February, the figure reached 174.

The uproar over the atrocities on women was also reflected by the action taken by the public and the district administration of Kiokrajhar. Recently a meeting was convened by the Deputy Commissioner of the district in his conference hall to discuss the issues relating to crime against women and children in the context of the recent developments in the district. The meeting was chaired by Nirnanjan Baruah, Deputy Commissioner of Kokrajhar. The meeting stressed on the importance of generating awareness among the public as to how prevent crimes against children, girls and women. In his speech, the DC expressed his concern over the growing incidents of crimes like molestation, rape, kidnapping of women across the State. He assured of holding awareness meetings at the village level involving Gaonburhas, NGOs, members of different social organisations and concerned Government departments. Participating in the meeting.

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Bangladesh reluctant to take back illegal foreigners

documents but continue to stay in the country even after expiry of the term of their legal documents.

Parliamentary Affair Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary recently informed the Assam Assembly that the State has been successful in sending back 769 illegal Bangladeshis to Bangladesh in the last 10 years. Out of 769 such illegal foreigners 74 of them had been "officially deported" to Bangladesh, he said. Patowary said the State has been able to detect 90,020 Bangladeshis till December 31, 2017.

The BJP before coming to power at the Centre in

2014 had vowed to send back all illegal Bangladeshis from Assam to their homeland with bag and baggage. Unfortunately, due to several legal hurdles and non-cooperation of the opposition benches the State Government has not been able to deport detected foreigners to their country as expected. Altogether 920 declared illegal foreigners are staying in six detention camps in the State. It is high time the BJP-led Government in Delhi took up the issue with its counterpart in Bangladesh to deport illegal foreigners. Dispur should also pursue the issue with the Centre.

The Unforgiving Monkey

Chandra was a king, whose sons kept a group of monkeys as pets.

These monkeys were treated as royal pets, and were provided with the choicest of foods and the best of care. As they did not have much to do, they had become fat.

The chief of these monkeys was very wise. He followed great philosophers and was learned in many sciences. He always tried to teach the other monkeys, but they had become too absorbed in their lavish lives to follow much of his teachings.

On the other hand, the princes also had two strong rams (billy goats), which used to draw the carriage used by the young princes.

One of the rams was a glutton, and would creep into the kitchen whenever he could and eat whatever he could get there. This made the cooks very angry, and they would keep a watch. The cooks would throw anything they could lay their hand on, to hit the ram, when he would be near the kitchen.

Noticing the cooks trying to hit him with sticks, earthen pots, copper pans and anything they found handy, the chief of the monkeys thought, "This behaviour could lead to accidents, and this entire city may perish. What if they threw something with fire?"

The chief of monkeys summoned the other monkey and said, "The behaviour of the cooks towards the ram can lead to some mishap any day, and we may well be on the losing side, if that is to happen. Let us get away from here, before some accident is to happen."

But, the other monkeys were enjoying their lavish treatment, and did not go back to the jungle. They refused to heed the chief's warnings, and decided to stay. They assumed that the chief was getting old, and having all types of weird thoughts.

Thus, the chief of monkeys decided to leave

alone. He said, "You are more fools than crazy not to foresee the danger. I shall leave here, as I value life more than the abundant foods served here!"

After the chief of monkey had departed to the jungle alone, one day, the ram entered the kitchen and ate some food that was being organized to be served to the king.

One of the cooks got very angry, and unable to get anything else handy, threw a half-burnt log from the oven. The log hit the ram. As the ram's body was covered with wool, it instantly caught fire. In the pain of fire on him, the ram ran to the stable. The dry grass for the horses caught fire, and in a moment the whole stable was engulfed in fire.

There was a pandemonium, and by the time, the fire was extinguished by the palace workers, the horses suffered grave burnings. When the news reached the king, he was very depressed that such a thing had happened to his favourite horses, and summoned veterinary surgeons to prescribe him remedy.

After referring many scriptures, the veterinary surgeons advised, "O King, the wounds caused by fire will recover fast, if they are applied with monkey's fat."

Thus, the king ordered all the pet monkeys be caught, and killed immediately. The fat from their bodies were then used to treat the horse's wounds.

When this news reached the chief of the monkeys, he was very sad. He thought, "The monkeys were foolish not to heed the warnings, but the king is wicked for doing this to his pets. I will make him pay for his actions!"

He had not eaten food, or drunk water for several days as he was heart-broken. Absent-mindedly, he came to a lake full of beautiful lotus. He was thirsty, and decided to drink some water. As he came near the lake, he noticed that there

were many footprints of both men and animals, that led to the lake, but not a single footprint led away from the lake.

He became aware, and concluded there must be something wrong in this beautifully decorated lake. He fetched some hollow stems of lotus plant nearby, and using them as a pipe, drank water from a distance.

As he was doing so, a monster emerged from the lake. He had a necklace of jewels around his neck. He said, "I am a monster who lives in this lake. Whoever enters this lake to bath or drink water, ends up in my tummy. For so many years, I have not seen anybody as wise as you! You drink water from the lake, but maintain a distance where I cannot touch you. I am so pleased with you, that I shall grant any wish you may want!"

The chief of monkey immediately remembered that he had a revenge to take, and said, "Tell me, how many can you eat? I have a certain king as my enemy. If you give me your necklace, I shall use it to persuade the king and his men to enter the lake."

The monster replied, "If they enter the lake, I can eat thousands of them. Go ahead and bring as many as you can!"

The chief of monkey wore the necklace in his neck and jumped from tree to tree to reach the palace as early as possible. He went straight into the king's court.

When the king and everybody else saw the chief of monkeys wearing a beautiful necklace of jewels, they became curious. They asked the chief of monkeys all sort of questions.

The chief of monkey said to the king, "O king, while wandering in the jungle, I have come across a large treasure that Kuber (God of treasures) has hidden. It is secretly hidden inside a lake. Anyone, who takes a bath in the lake on a Sunday, can have as much treasure as he can carry. This necklace is nothing compared to the other treasures there! The diamonds in the lake would even put the sun to shame!"

When the king heard this, he said, "Hey Monkey Chief, if this lake really exists, please take lead us to it. I will come to see it myself, and even bring everybody in the palace along with me."

It was decided, and in the early morning of the very next Sunday, the king and the chief of the monkeys set to travel inside the jungle. They were followed by the princes, queens, ministers, household workers and everybody else in the palace.

When they reached the place, everybody was awe-struck to see the lake full of lotus. The chief of monkeys said, "Everybody should enter the lake at the same time, or only the first few will received the blessings. As for you, my king, you should wait. I will show you a special place to enter the lake after they have gone into the lake."

The greedy king, and everybody else followed his instructions and got into the lake. One by one, they started to disappear. The king kept anxiously waiting for them to return with treasures.

When his people and relatives did not come out of the lake after a long time, the king asked, "O Monkey Chief, why do they not come out? Why is it that they take so long time?"

The chief of the monkeys jumped to the top of a tree and replied, "O wicked king, a monster lives in this very lake that has eaten all your court members, and relatives. I have now killed all your family, as you have killed mine. The scriptures say, it is not a sin to return evil for evil deeds."

He continued, "I have saved you, for you were once my master! You may return to your palace, empty-handed and alone."

Thus, the king returned to his palace after losing all his relatives and household members, while the chief of monkeys had his revenge.

**The wise indeed say:
Greed surely brings disaster and destruction
in the end.**



TUSTA COMMUNITY OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH



MOPIN FESTIVAL