

NORTH EAST COLORS

NORTH EAST COLORS • AGARTALA
SATURDAY • 2nd JULY • 2022

Time to be alert

Manipur witnessed one of the worst natural disasters of recent time in the northeastern part of the country when a massive landslide caused the death of many people and the loss of huge properties. Around midnight after 1 pm of 29/ 30 June, a massive landslide struck the Tupul Yard Railway Construction Camp and the company location of 107 Territorial Army of the Indian Army deployed near the Camp for protection of an under-construction railway line from Jiribam to Imphal. The Tupul Yard Railway Construction Camp and the 107 Territorial Army of the Indian Army unit is located near Tunnel number 97 of Tupul Railway Station in Makhua Village of Marang Hill range Noney. Only a few days ago Meghalaya also witnessed a similar incident of landslide.

The incident took place close to the heel of another major natural disaster in the region when Silchar, one of the most important towns of south Assam, got flooded due to a break in the embankment. A large quantity of water entered into the localities and kept the city underwater for nearly two weeks. The sufferings the people had to face do not require description. The government of India and the concerned state governments also jumped in all earnest for relief and rescue operations. The government efforts may give some solace to the people who lost their near one or properties but can't compensate for the trauma they have suffered. It will take a lot of time to restore normalcy.

There is no doubt that both are natural disasters but there are some differences. In the Silchar incident, a little carelessness of the people liable to look after the embankment could have saved such a major disaster. A detailed investigation is needed to find out who is actually responsible for such a disaster and if there is any negligence which is definitely the responsibility that must be fixed. At the same time, necessary steps must be taken to prevent the recurrence of such a disaster in the future. In the case of landslides in Manipur of Meghalaya, it is immediately difficult to make anyone liable but the authority must increase its scientific investigations on how to avoid such losses.

In one of the northeastern states, Tripura must take lessons from these experiences. The hills in this state have not yet shown such hostility. Still, the authority also is admitting that there are lacunas in maintaining the embankments, especially one that is protected the city of Agartala for more than a hundred years. In view of the Silchar incident, the issue came to the fore and the authority must take it in full earnest.

NEC MESSEGE

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

Shimla Treaty

On July 2nd 1972, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed the Shimla Treaty which contained the principles which should govern future relations between both countries. The Shimla treaty came shortly after the 1971 war the previous year, which saw the



creation of a separate nation of Bangladesh. This land was earlier known as East Pakistan and was a provincial part of Pakistan. Even though the agreement came after a war, the Shimla agreement was more than just a request of withdrawal of troops and getting back prisoners of war. Under the Shimla Treaty, both countries committed to renounce the conflict which had blemished their relationship in the past and work together towards establishing peace, friendship and cooperation. The Shimla Agreement contained a set of principles which would be mutually agreed upon by both India and Pakistan and which both countries would follow while conducting relations with each other. The principles included respect for each others national unity, political independence, sovereign equality, while not indulging in adverse propaganda. During the Shimla agreement, Indira Gandhi insisted that an overall settlement be achieved which would cover some basic issues. This settlement would also include the Kashmir issue. Mrs. Gandhi was keen on getting back Indian territory occupied by Pakistan as well as prisoners of war before the talks reached the Kashmir debate. After this, India suggested that both countries focus on outstanding disputes if they wanted long lasting peace and that could only be done when the Kashmir issue was tackled. Bhutto, on the other hand, wanted to address the Kashmir issue later. She demanded rather the release of prisoners of war and the trials of a few Pakistani officers charged with war crimes by Bangladesh to be dropped. Pakistan also demanded that India hand back Pakistani territory they were occupying in spite of the fact that Pakistan was illegally occupying Azad Kashmir since 1947. Hence, Pakistan tiptoed around the issue of Azad Kashmir when Indira Gandhi demanded back territory which India had occupied in 1971.

The Day in History :

- 1698: Thomas Savery patents the first steam engine.
- 1823: Bahia Independence Day: The end of Portuguese rule in Brazil, with the final defeat of the Portuguese crown loyalists in the province of Bahia.
- 1897: British-Italian engineer Guglielmo Marconi obtains a patent for radio in London.
- 1940: Indian independence leader Subhas Chandra Bose is arrested and detained in Calcutta.

■ By Pradip Chandra Kundu, VU3IOP

Story of a Pirate radio



Recently, I had the opportunity to listen to such a station which was once a pirate radio station. Actually, they started transmission 45 years ago and after an eventful long period, in 2009, they became a legal broadcaster. Now they are popular Metal and Rock music broadcaster in Europe. But the long way of their journey to reach this stage was not so easy.

So many types of radio stations are here around the airwaves. One of which is known as pirate radio station. Pirate radio station is a radio station that broadcasts without a valid license. In some cases radio stations are considered legal where the signal is transmitted, but illegal where the signal is received, especially when the signal cross national boundary. In the 1960s, in the UK., the term referred to not only a perceived unauthorised use of the state run spectrum by the unlicensed broadcasters, but also the risk-taking nature of offshore radio stations that actually operated on anchor ships on marine platforms.

Recently, I had the opportunity to listen to such a station which was once a pirate radio station. Actually, they started transmission 45 years ago and after an eventful long period, in 2009, they became a legal broadcaster. Now they are popular Metal and Rock music broadcaster in Europe. But the long way of their journey to reach this stage was not so easy. It's really a very interesting story. It reveals to what extent the determination, dedication and fighting spirit of some radio-loving people can go.

The station I am talking about is Radio Sylvia which is based on Hamburg, Germany. This station was

established on the 7th July 1977 by a group of dedicated team of long time music and radio enthusiasts hailing from Germany, the U. K. and the U. S. A.

The beginning of their broadcasting activities were inspired by the radio scene of that time. The ships of the now legendary Pirate stations were anchoring off the Dutch and Belgian coasts. Radio North Sea International, Radio Veronica, Radio Mi Amigo, Radio Atlantis etc. - and of course, Radio Caroline. Furthermore, there was a lovely land pirate scene in the UK, Ireland, Belgium, Holland, the Scandinavian countries and Germany.

This radio scene encouraged that group - intensified also, by the dullness of the official public Radio stations - to start their own station and come on the air with alternative programmes. All arrangements were made. The station's name was taken from the single "Sylvia" released in 1972 by the Dutch band "Focus".

The initial tests and after that regular broadcast began on Medium wave 1345 and 1562 kHz. However, those transmission ceased in June 1978 as both were suffering from permanent technical difficulties.

In November 1978, Radio Sylvia started regular

broadcasts on 100.5 MHz FM. For security reasons, all programs were pre-recorded in a secret recording studio. The transmissions were

trouble and causing recurring financial loss. So, Sylvia team decided to shift to Shortwave transmission which would enable them to



conducted from various sites without any person being present during the broadcasts. But searching by German post office and police continued and several times they arrived at the broadcasting sites and confiscated the equipments without getting hold of any person. This was really a big

use far away site without affecting reception area. They succeeded to start a shortwave transmission on 6225 kHz. It was once a month broadcast. Listeners feedback was very much positive. Having overwhelming response from listeners, they were much excited. Authorities made

several futile attempts to trace them out. But on the 9th December 1994, when a 90 minutes programme was going on German post office and police arrived at the broadcasting site. There was no time to get away. Four persons were temporarily arrested. The broadcasting equipment was switched off and confiscated.

After this sad end of Radio Sylvia, finding it to be too risky to restart broadcasting with an own transmitter, the team started contacting various foreign shortwave Pirates for hiring airtime to broadcast programme. Negotiation became successful with the Belgian station Radio Delmare. The team started programming again, but this time with a new name RADIO SCORPIO. It was on 6206 kHz every first Sunday of the month.

However, on 17 May 1987, Belgian authorities finally silenced Radio Delmare.

After that, they came in a new contract with the Irish station "Radio Ireland International" and started regular transmission on 6312 kHz. But due to very poor reception in Central Europe they decided to move to the Scottish pirate station "Scottish Free Radio Network" on 7423 and 7428 kHz. However, problem remained unchanged.

Reception in German target area was too poor and listeners feedback declined drastically. Understanding the fact that their radio project no longer made any sense, the Scorpio team with a heavy heart decided to cease all broadcasting activities at the end of 1989.

So many years passed away. Meanwhile, the era of internet has emerged. Many new windows opened. Sylvia team seized the opportunity. You will wonder that even after such a long gap of 20 years, they brought back Radio Sylvia on the air again. No, not as an illegal pirate, they are now broadcasting 24/7 as a legal internet station by a team of seven talented members under the leadership of seniormost Mark Anderson with studios located in Hamburg, Germany. Again they are using their old brand ID 'Radio Sylvia'. In addition to their online programs, regular shortwave transmissions are also conducted via Radio Channel 292, Rohrbach waal, Germany on first Saturday of every month on 6070 kHz from 1600 - 2200 UTC and on 3955 kHz in between 1600 - 1800 UTC.

To conclude my story of Radio Sylvia, I must say that it is not just a fascinating story, it's really an ideal example of love, dedication, patience, courage and commitments to radio.

■ By Durba Ghosh

Rescue personnel silver lining amid flood catastrophe in Assam

Bright orange-coloured lifeboats navigating through brackish floodwaters, with rescue personnel on them holding out food packets and jackets, are the only beacons of hope for Assam's marooned population struggling to stay afloat, having lost their homes and, in some cases, loved ones.

Nearly 86 lakh people in the state's 32 districts have been affected by heavy rain and subsequent floods this year, bringing life to a screeching halt in many parts. More than 150 people have died so far.

Sixty-eight-year-old Manjurani Nath, a diabetic, had been at her wits' end trying to find a way to move to safety with her ailing husband in Silchar town, one of the worst-affected areas, when NDRF personnel reached out to her with aid.

Nath, who had been reeling under flood with water having entered her home, said the food and other amenities provided to them by the NDRF personnel, after a long wait, was nothing short of manna from heaven.

The latest wave of floods, caused by unprecedented rains, has wreaked havoc in several areas, submerging villages, destroying crops and damaging infrastructure.

In Lower Assam's Barpeta district, Sabera Begum and her family of five in Rupakuchi village had lost many of their belongings that got washed away in the flood waters, but they have held on to each other amid the crisis.

That we got a chance to escape without any scratch or injury is no less than a miracle, thanks to the rescue personnel, she said.

A total of 97,993 people have been evacuated over the past weeks from the flood-affected areas of Brahmaputra and Barak river basins by the personnel of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), army and paramilitary forces, with support from policemen, fire brigade

officials and trained volunteers.

Santosh Singh, the assistant commandant of an NDRF 01 battalion, said its personnel have been maintaining tactical positions in the vulnerable districts of the flood-prone state.

Since May, we have been in tactical positions in the vulnerable dis-

tricts of Jorhat, Bongaigaon, Barpeta and Cachar. As the situation worsened (in June), we moved to the Central Assam districts of Nagaon, Hojai and Morigaon, he said.

Currently, NDRF has 22 teams deployed in Assam, with nine in Silchar, he said.

As many as 600 trained personnel are engaged in evacuating marooned people with night-long operations underway in some of the affected districts. More than 20,000 people have been evacuated and nine saved from drowning, he stated.

A medical team that accompanies the rescue personnel provides pre-hospital responses" to the affected population, including pregnant women and elderly citizens, Singh explained.

Challenges are many, particularly in the midst of strong water currents and sudden flash floods. Our teams are very motivated, nevertheless. They are working round the clock to rescue people, some-

times risking their own lives, he added.

The Indian Air Force had been air dropping food packets, drinking water bottles and other essentials in the affected areas. It has also airlifted at least 300 people in Silchar and moved them to safety.

Assam Director General of Police Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta said that the SDRF, Fire and Emergency Services along with other police personnel are also rescuing people on war-footing.

"Two of our men were washed away during a rescue mission in flooded villages. Their bodies were recovered the next day. Our police personnel work silently. Only when such a tragedy strikes, their hard work and sacrifices come to light, he said.



■ National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel rescue people from a flood-affected area, in Kamrup district. - PTI Photo.

■ By Sukla Singha

Rath Yatra Musings

I am no expert when it comes to historicizing things. This is just a piece of my mind, the way I grew up watching things.

The Rath Yatra festival (also known as Kang), much like Holi/Yaoshang, is an indispensable part of the Meiteis. In fact, the very mention of the word to an average Meitei will bring the memories of a rainy day, 'khubaakeshai' (performance in praise of the Lord), banana leaves and 'khechir' (dry khichdi).

Meiteis celebrate it for nine days, sometimes eleven. The first day is called the Jaagawron (the awakening) while the last day is termed Shawywn, when the God is lulled to sleep by the devotees. Every meitei 'khul' (locality wise division of Meitei population, though I am not very sure of the exact equivalence in English) has under its jurisdiction a good number of Meitei households. The head of the khul will hold a meeting with the male members of the khul prior to the occasion. The meeting will divide all the families into nine-ten groups, according to the number of days of rathayatra that year. Each group has to perform a 'paali' (offerings) on the assigned day by contributing a specified amount of subscription to the 'lupa-khaibnaba' system.

On each assigned day, only the non-bleeding female members of the household are allowed to go to the mandap, clean it and make preparations for the puja and the bhog, although the main chef is a Brahmin, appointed by the khul and its headman. While the bhog is being prepared, the members in the mandap do an 'aarti' to please the gods. The Brahmin, after offering the bhog to Lord Jagannath, instructs the members to prepare the bhandara (lunch). On all days, the menu remains more or less the same-white rice, black gram daal, ooti (daal), chhola-coconut fry, bitter gourd fry, laphuiromba (banana plant mashed with fragrant herbs), singjoo (fine chopped vegetable salad), ngauthong (mixed vegetable) and kheer, all served on the banana leaf.

After the luncheon, the members again meet in the evening where the ladies perform 'khubaakeshai' (clapping & singing act), 'kortaalpaala', 'dawshabataar' etc. Newly wed girls and little children are expected to actively participate in the events. The food gets served, yet again on a banana leaf. But this time, it's only khichdi and daal/curry. The speciality of the food is that, unlike the sticky and watery khichdi that is served in a Bengalkirtaan, this khichdi is dry and non-sticky, much like the pulao. In fact, this dry khichdi is the very essence of the occasion as it is believed that the Lord is fond of it. An amusing thing to observe during the lunch and dinner sessions is that during the aarti/eshai, the population in the mandap is countable, but as soon as the food gets served, there is a sudden population explosion beyond control. Some people relish it on spot, while others take it home. On the last day, however, kheer is also served after the sandhya-aarti.

Rathayatra is a time when love is all around in the air. While the elders are busy in the mandap singing and performing, young girls wearing colourful fanek and inafi are approached by young men (and vice versa). Proposals happen, some get accepted after much 'umms' and 'hms', while some get rejected outright.

With Rath Yatra just around the corner, the air already smells of 'khechir', yet unfortunately, since last year, owing to the ongoing pandemic, the celebrations have been put on hold. There shall be only ritualistic performance of the puja by the priest without any pomp and splendour.

(Author writes a bit of poetry and fiction, and currently teaches at a school in Tripura.)



A Bhog-Thaali