



Today's Thought

Good design is making something intelligible and memorable. Great design is making something memorable and meaningful.

Dieter Rams.

60 pc is no longer first class The 95 pc generation !

It is raining marks, marks as understood in the Class XII board examinations. Technically 60 pc may be a first division, but in reality today this is nothing much more than a simple pass. Take a look at the reality. With over 12 thousand students scoring 95 pc and above in the just announced Class XII examination results conducted by the CBSE and many more thousands coming in just a notch or two behind, there just does not seem to be any room for students who manage to score a respectable 75 pc or even 80 pc. It is more or less the same with students coming from the CISCE. No wonder some colleges in India, including the well known St Xavier's Kolkata is understood to have different yard sticks to measure the scores of students coming from CBSE, CISCE (ISC) and the West Bengal Board. For those who managed to crack NEET and the JEE, the marks that one scores in the Class XII board exams may not mean much but not all are meant to be doctors and engineers and many will have to throng colleges which offer the three year degree courses. And remember not all are Science students and students from Commerce and Humanities will have to undergo the three year degree course and hence getting admission into some of the better placed colleges becomes a stiff competition amongst the students. Anxious days for the students and their parents and guardians. The interesting question is, is this a case of students now becoming so smart that scoring a 100 out of 100 even in a subjective paper like English is something which is not unthinkable? No wonder reputed colleges from reputed universities have set the cut off for admission as high as 98, 97, 96 pc. St Stephen's has already announced its cut off list and a look at the list will convey the point that is sought to be made here.

The trend will continue when Delhi University comes out with its first cut off list on June 19. It is not only Delhi University but also some other reputed colleges spread across different universities in the country. Young students doing well is good, but yet at the same time the manner in which marks are rewarded is not above questioning. **The Sangai Express** does not know the parameters used in marking the answer scripts of the students, but when a 100 is scorable even in subjects like English then a relook at the system may be just what the doctor prescribed. The interesting question is, is the high scoring trend an indication that students are now smarter than their elders or is it a case of the syllabus so scientifically structured that it becomes easier for the students to score. This is a multi-million dollar question, but remember there was a time not so long back when scoring 60 pc was more than respectable. In a State like Manipur, there was a time when the number of students passing the Class X and Class XII (then PUC) examinations in the first division did not cross the figure of 50. And it was during those days when a 57 pc or a 58 pc was considered good enough or a high second division. It is raining marks, but it is still to be seen whether the high marks scored in the examinations will mean anything constructive in the real practical world.

Weird & Interesting Facts

Covers the most time zones - France

If you count everything, including overseas territories, then France claims the title by covering 12 time zones. The United States would be the runner-up with 11 and then Russia with 9.

Most likely to disappear beneath the waves - Maldives

With all the talks of global warming and rising sea levels, it is the residents of the Maldives that have the greatest reason to fear. With an average height of around 1.8 meters above sea level their nation is the lowest on Earth.

Most overweight population - Nauru

With over 95% of its population being overweight, the small island nation of Nauru is by far the fattest country on Earth. Its obesity epidemic is primarily attributed to the importation of western fast food that coincided with an increased standard of living in the 20th century due to the global popularity of its phosphate exports. It's almost non sequitur...almost.

Roads made of coral - Guam

Because Guam doesn't have any natural sand, but rather coral, the island nation makes its asphalt using a mix of ground coral and oil rather than importing sand from abroad.

Has 350 sheep for every person - Falkland Islands (UK)

With only about 3,000 people the Falkland Islands are home to approximately half-a million-sheep. Not surprisingly wool is a major export.

Oldest sovereign state - Egypt

This largely depends upon your definition of a sovereign state but if you are going by first acquisition of sovereignty then Egypt would be the first country in the world to achieve sovereignty based upon the formation of the first dynasty in 3100 BC.

Most lakes in the world - Canada

With over 3 million lakes 9% of Canadian territory is actually fresh water and over 60% of all the lakes in the world are found within its borders.

Least likely place to meet your neighbor - Mongolia: At 4 people per square mile Mongolia is the least densely populated country on Earth. Compare this to the Mong Kok district of Hong Kong that has the highest population density in the world with 340,000 people per square mile.

Before the trains arrive, a must read for every Manipuri

Dr Govind Singh

The Jiribam-Imphal Railway Line Project is now nearing completion and will soon put Imphal on the Railway Map of India. It is as if the Vision 2020 of former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam is being realized under the leadership of the current Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. This is certainly a sign of a healthy democracy. It is also an achievement signifying that the Government has finally understood that its Look (now Act) East Policy must first focus on developing its own North-east.

The arrival of the Railways all the way till Imphal, the capital and heart of Manipur, will be a much needed boost for the ongoing development initiatives in the region. Railway connectivity will ensure transportation of goods produced in Manipur at cheaper cost and will thus help increase profits for the people of Manipur. It will also allow for easier transportation of raw materials as well as finished products into Manipur thereby enhancing sales and making business more profitable. There is also the added benefit of ready availability of all kinds of products and household items in Imphal and inrest of Manipur due to the Railways.

Another significant benefit that will be immediately felt with the arrival of the Railways is the boost to the tourism industry. The Internet is full of illustrated articles announcing the top 10 places that everyone must visit in Manipur to top 7 things to do in Imphal, etc. This has inspired and attracted large number of people who have now put visiting Manipur on their Bucket list. While the option to take a flight has existed for some time, it is not something that everyone can afford. The Railways will surely remove the affordability barrier and once on the Railway Map, Manipur will soon become the most preferred travel destination due to its beautiful landscapes and rich cultural diversity.

While there are myriad of benefits that Railway connectivity will bring to Manipur, it must not be forgotten that all development projects have some or the other adverse impacts as well. The people of Manipur must make themselves aware of these adverse impacts and ensure that these are prevented by making adequate preparations before the trains start arriving at the Imphal Railway Station.

One of the first impact of the trains arriving at Imphal will be on the local handloom, food processing and manufacturing industry in Manipur. These sectors will immediately start facing stiff competition from products and brands located outside Manipur. There is thus a need for the Manipur State Government to start framing policies favouring the local industry. It is equally important for all Manipur based industries to prepare themselves for fighting this competition through continuous improvement of quality and business skills. The people of Manipur must also remember to support local production by choosing Made in Manipur products and items over those manufactured outside the State.

Another major impact of the trains arriving at Imphal going to be the influx of large number of people, some of whom may not be tourists. This must already be a concern for every Manipuri, living in the valley or in the hills. As is true for the rest of North-east India, Manipur is suffering from the sinister problem of illegal migration. The Railways should not in any way add to this problem and the Manipur Police and the State Government must create plans to check this from happening. This will require greater coordination with the Railway Ministry and certain other divisions of the Government of India. However, the initiation has to be made by Manipur Government and the sooner the better.

What naturally comes to mind while talking about containing illegal and unwanted migration in Manipur are the Inner Line Permit (ILP) and Protected Area Permit (PAP) protocols. There can be no argument over the matter that the rights of the indigenous people of Manipur are paramount and must be protected at any cost. This is relevant not only for the people of Manipur but also for a country as vast as India, which often boasts of its rich cultural heritage. If ILP is not implemented in Manipur soon, especially before the first train arrives in Imphal, India will stand to lose the rich cultural, linguistic, religious and tribal diversity of Manipur at the hand of illegal and unwanted migration. The latter will affect the demography and dilute the cultural practices of Manipur.

It is clear from the above that the lack of timely implementation of ILP will affect the daily lives of local people of Manipur. It is therefore the responsibility of the Manipur Government to urgently look into this matter in order to protect the basic human rights of the very people they serve. However, and at the same time, it is not the Government alone but also the civil society and all leaders and headmen of different sections of Manipuri society that need to play their part. This is because there is a need to develop a consensus on the nitty-gritties of the ILP before the State and the Central governments can be urged to implement the same. All stakeholders must therefore come together through community-level workshops and discussions, overcome any past grievances and help in the preparation of a draft ILP proposal for the Government. This must be done urgently lest if the first train arrives without an ILP in place, it could prove catastrophic for the Manipur way of life.

The Railways will bring certain other opportunities for the people of Manipur, which require foresight and pre-planning so that they can be availed. Significant among these are the job opportunities that will be created within the Indian Railways around its Imphal station. The Indian Railways is the world's eighth largest employer and the jobs will include everything from Station Master, engineers, technicians, security personnel to Group D employees. Each of these jobs require specific educational

qualifications and the youth of Manipur should not only keep a close eye on this development but also start preparing him/herself by pursuing the required diplomas and degrees. The Civil Society and Manipur Government can also play their part by urging the Indian Railways to already let know of the proposed recruitment related details with regards to eligibility for such posts. Since these would be Central Government posts and would otherwise be filled with people from all over India, the appointment of local youth and workforce in these posts will also help prevent undue demographic changes in Manipur.

The one sector which stands to benefit the most from the arrival of the Railways in Manipur is tourism. However, unregulated tourism can cause considerable harm to the local environment and disturb the fragile ecosystem of Manipur. There is thus a need for ensuring that all tourism in the State follows the principles of ecotourism or responsible tourism. The tourists entering Manipur should be made aware of the balance of nature which is still maintained in the State. Since Imphal will be the most impacted due to the flow of tourists, the Imphal Municipal Corporation should begin taking pro-active steps in this direction. The expanding tourism sector will lead to construction of more and more hotels and resorts and other supporting infrastructure. This will be a challenge for Imphal Valley since the land availability is limited. Care should be taken to protect common resources like ponds and wetlands and keep them free from any construction. Simultaneously, development of homestays should be encouraged to the maximum possible extent. The Manipur Tourism Department and all tourism promoting forums in Imphal should thus initiate this shift towards promoting and adopting ecotourism in the State.

The North-east region has remained deprived of the fruits of India's development since a long time. With the expected arrival of the Indian Railways in Manipur sometime in the year 2020, Manipur will witness a consistent flow of resources and all kinds of opportunities. The efforts and hard work of the people of Manipur have been appreciated by the educated class of all parts of India where Meiteis and individuals from tribal communities of Manipur have gone and settled. It is time that Manipuris receive the same resources in their home State so they can use their hard work and dedication for sustainable development of Manipur. The arrival of the Railways will certainly enable this to happen and Manipur has two years from now to prepare itself to reap the benefits of this new opportunity. May the forces combine for a resurgent Manipur!

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Road to Russia: 21st quadrennial FIFA World Cup

Sanasam Bamdev

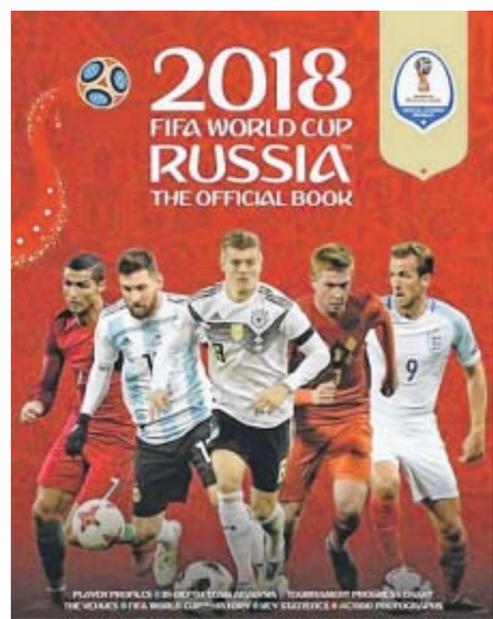
The forthcoming FIFA World cup Russia 2018 will witness the most extravagant showpiece in the tournament's 88 years history (1930-2018). With the cup coming for the first time on Russian soil—Moscow mulls it will add spice to the biggest sporting spectacle after winning the right to host the 21st edition of the greatest show on earth.

Just after the last world cup Brazil 2014, a Kremlin communiqué issued a statement citing its President Vladimir Putin words—Russia will present a best ever world cup. The judoka Presiden even pondered for a ceasefire in Crimea and Syria for a peaceful passage of the tourney fearing the volatile situation in the region.

Russia 2018 will showcase a fierce competition of 32 teams in 12 venues— from Moscow to St.Petersburg, Stalingrad to Kiev, Sochi to Kazan....The top ten teams of Fifa ranking—Germany, Brazil, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, France, England, Argentina, Poland and Switzerland...are favourites to win the Julius Rimet trophy. But for Africa and Asia winning the cup still remains a distant dream. Europe and South America stay as master of the global game with 20 titles between them—Europe 11 and South America 9. This world cup has two new debutants—Iceland and Panama. An island nation of Iceland in the Arctic Ocean with just a half million population has qualified for the cup and Panama which is size just a combine of Manipur and Nagaland too join the competition. The absence of four times champion Italy and three time finalist Netherlands is a big miss. Russia 2018 will see a gladiatorial fight for top players in their prime and peak form—in the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar, Lionel Messi and Egypt's Mohamed Salah.

Portugal the 2016 European champion with the exploits of CR7 (Ronaldo) has a point to prove this world cup. For decades Portuguese have been eluded of the trophy since it came close in Eusebio's 1966 and Figo's 2006. Brazil's Neymar Jr. should salvage some pride this time for his countrymen after suffering the most humiliating defeat in the Brazilian soccer history in the 2014 semi-finals at the hands of Germany which Neymar missed out of spinal injury. Had he played the result might have been different. Argentina's evergreen Lionel Messi saved his team from certain exit in the qualifiers against Ecuador with his hattrick made to the finals. For Albiceleste it was a escape from the jaws of death. Russia 2018 should be a redemption time for magical Messi since its defeat to Germany in a gruelling finale in 2014. A major title is still eluding this great player—be it Copa America or World Cup. Egypt's Mohamed Salah, north African desert fox is a man to watch.

Euro 2016 finalist France can fancy their chances with the trio of Paul Pogba, Greizman and Benzema. Les Blues last won the world cup as host country in 1998 with Zinedine Zidane's genius. Can a new face and young England team reconcile their title drought for half a century—last time England won was way back in 1966 as host nation—Bobby Moore's English summer. Fifa ranked world no.3 Belgium will spring some surprise. 2010 unexpected winner Spain is still a force to reckon. Can



Iniesta bring second title for the La Roja?

Here, never write off the Germans—the reigning world champions is poised to retain the title given their superb form and recent victories—a chance to create history like Italy and Brazil which won back to back world cups—Azzuris in 1934-38 and Selecao in 1958-62.

Germany's most successful coach Joachim Loew boasted of his team saying his substitutes are like his playing XI—he has already proven his words—Deutschland second-string squad won the Olympic silver medal against Neymar's Brazil in 2016 and cakewalk to the Fifa confederations cup title in 2017. DieManschaft's well oiled machinery is still working to perfection with a bit of Spanish tiki-tika flavor and Bavarians rampaging run with a total teamwork. This German team has world's safest hands in goal—sweeper keeper Manuel Nuer—who won golden glove in last world cup.

Revel in Russia this summer — behold the colossal clash of the footballing giants

The colourful and exotic world cup will kick start on 14th June—host Russia and lowest ranked team of the cup Saudi Arabia will play the opening match in Sparta Stadium, Moscow.

Russia's last best performance was reaching the semi-finals in England 1966 via its legendary goalkeeper Lev Yasin—he is the only custodian to win the ballon d'or

award in history. This summer football fans from Buenos Aires to Berlin, Mexico city to Tokyo will be on its feet spellbound and lie/lay in thrilling suspense.

Back home Kolkata will pray for Brazil and Argentina's triumph—worshippers of Pele and Maradona and city of Mumbai exults for Germany and Portugal victories. Which side are you on and *Meri doosri country* is the buzzword in the sub-continent. Coming to the northeast soccer mad highlanders of Shillong, Kohima, Imphal and Aizawl will dream of their players making to the world cup in future—with Shillong Lajong, Aizawl FC and Neroca FC making to the national stage with impressive performance—the north-easterners has a reason to smile.

The future of Indian football is bright under its coach Stephen Constantine who is nurturing upcoming talents from nook and corner of the country with full devotion and dedication in great level. Last year India debuted in U-17 World cup as host country—first ever participation in FIFA tournament. The young Indian side put up a good fight powered by maximum Manipuri players—six from the state represented the country. Goalkeeper Moirangthem Dheeraj's performance was phenomenal and made a special impression to football fans worldwide—he even caught the eyes of European clubs and is currently undergoing training in Europe. Not to be forgotten Thounaojam Jeakson's powerful header against Colombia was the first ever goal by India in FIFA tournament.

FIFA has repeatedly claimed India is a sleeping giant in world soccer given its vast diversity with diverse people like Brazil—if it works, India can produce vibrant football. So far in Indian football history, it did well in 1948 London Olympics —came at fourth place. A decent performance under the captaincy of Dr T Ao—Tamerlain is an Ao from Mokokchung, Nagaland. In 1950 FIFA invited India to participate in World Cup in Uruguay but the proposal was turned down by AIFF due to travel constraint and also not knowing much the importance of FIFA World Cup at that time—preference was given much to Olympics during those days.

India was once Asian powerhouse in 1950's. Even Manipur had great footballers in 1940's and 1950's. Sir Churachand KCSI is an avid football lover—British rulers admired the skill of Manipuris playing in the pologround. Maharaj Bodhchandra introduced CC Meet from early 1950's under his father's name to promote football in Manipur.

From 2026 India is quite certain to qualify for the World Cup as the new and young FIFA president Gian Infantino has already announced that—from USA 2026 the World Cup will be expanded from current 32 teams to 48—thus Asia will enjoy more continental slots from present 4 to 6, 7 or 8. Its high chance India will make a cut after Korea, Japan, China, Iran, UAE and Saudi Arabia. Hope maximum Manipuri players represent India and participate FIFA World Cup for the first time ever—if not in USA 2026 and it can be at Uruguay 2030.

Let the beautiful game unfold—cup of joy forever !

India needs to re-strategize in the Indo-Pacific region

Dr Nehginpao Kipgen and Shagun Nayar

The Indo-Pacific region is one of the world's most significant geostrategic and economic features, replacing the emphasis enjoyed by the Atlantic-Pacific region. With a high volume of seaborne trade passing through the Strait of Malacca, the Straits of Singapore and the Gulf of Hormuz, the region has become a theater of competing claims and power plays. Due to increasing threats to its waters over protection of sea-lanes of communication, maritime trade, freedom of navigation and deep seabed exploration, the region has become a point of convergence for India, the U.S., Japan, Australia and Vietnam. The common ground achieved between these players is centered on China's rise to power and its increased aggression in the South China Sea. India's ambitious "Act East Policy," America's renewed "Pivot to Asia" and Japan's bid for a "Confluence of the Oceans" share a common strategy for the future of the region. This realization has given rise to new alliances with the primary aim of countering growing Chinese interests through policies such as the Look East Policy, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. On the other end is an increasingly aggressive China that is expanding its influence in the region through

strategic partnerships and financial assistance. China has embarked upon forging strategic partnerships with some of India's critical neighbors in the Indian Ocean region.

Additionally, its "String of Pearls" strategy and the Belt and Road Initiative possess the capability of alienating India in terms of connectivity and trade. China's clout in the region is supplemented by its increasing military presence in the South China Sea. Due to competing claims over sovereignty and authority, the region has emerged as a hotbed for possible conflict being played out between regional players, coupled by external powers to expand their own interests in the region. The aforesaid reasons have led to partnerships with a common objective of securing peace in the region, away from Chinese influence.

The trilateral partnership between India, Japan and the U.S., the Malabar Naval Exercise, and the Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean region are some examples. New Delhi's renewed focus in the region has been complemented by similar policies being pursued in Japan, the U.S., Australia, Vietnam and France, among others. However, these strategies lack a comprehensive plan of action to combat Beijing's rise to power.

Any treaty that aims to secure the region needs to confront issues relating to not only defense, maritime trade and security but also technology, connectivity and the blue economy. Therefore, the changing contours of security in the region call for greater participation by India in pursuance of its bid to become a responsible regional power.

The Indo-Pacific region constitutes significant strategic and security interests for New Delhi, which is why attempts at increasing engagements and alliances in the region need to be comprehensive. Such initiatives need to incorporate traditional and non-traditional aspects of security in order to attain an all-inclusive regional framework.

Due to the evolving nature of the dispute, there is an urgent need to ensure the security of India's maritime and coastal borders through strategic investment in naval capabilities, advancement in information technology and communication, digital connectivity, maritime research and critical infrastructure development. The decisive shift in New Delhi's strategy for the region signals the rising importance of the Indo-Pacific region in determining India's peace and security, countering Chinese influence and emerging as a responsible regional power.