

OUTPOST

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Fam-Jam!

An article by Vedansh Jindal

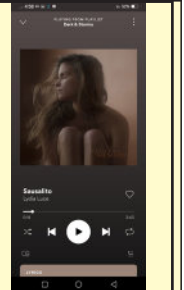
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THIS WEEK'S THE PLAYLIST

Featuring:
Pluto Projector by Rex Orange County
and
Sausalito by Lydia Luce

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New years bring with it new challenges however it is upto us to settle the troubles of the past to make way for the future. As another year makes way for the next, hope lies around the corner that we can close the distance put in place by our troubles, embrace our friends, make new memories and share a few stories, for the winter winds will hold us together.

-Jeremy Jahau, Editor-in-Chief

The Green Gang

-Neelabh Kashyap

Amidst a lot of hue and cry, three bills with unnecessarily lengthy names, referred to as the 'Farmers' Bills' for ease's sake, were passed through voice vote in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, waiting only for the green light from the President before they become acts. These three bills respectively seek to end the tyrannical monopoly of the Agricultural Produce and Marketing Committees or mandis over the farmers' produce, allow the farmers to sell their produce to private companies at pre-planned prices, and provide the agribusinesses the freedom to stock as much produce as they want. In other words, the bills will remove a lot of restrictions imposed on the farmers. The farmers will be able to bypass the mandis and the middlemen and sell their produce in any district, state or country or to any private company directly. They will also be able to carry out 'contract farming' with the private enterprises. The main purpose of these bills is to attract more private investment in the farm sector and help the farmers. Well, that is what the government says. The Opposition says otherwise, and the people who will be ones to be 'affected' once these bills become acts think otherwise too.

The main concern of the farmers, as of now, is that because of the new bills, the Minimum Support Price for agricultural produce will no longer exist and the government-organised mandis will collapse. The farmers will have to become more dependent on private companies, which could exploit them or make them sell their produce for prices way lower than the MSP. States like Punjab and Haryana have a large dependency on MSP

and APMCs and thus, the protests are extremely intense in these states. The Shiromani Akali Dal, one of BJP's long-time allies, left the NDA in protest of the bills being passed. The passage of two of the three farm bills were controversially passed in the Rajya Sabha and came under the scanner, following which eight Opposition MPs were suspended. Although, it is indeed amusing to know that the very Congress, which is now so vehemently opposing the passing of the three bills, had stated in their 2019 party Manifesto that the "Congress will repeal the Agricultural Produce Market Committees Act and make trade in agricultural produce—including exports and inter-state trade—free from all restrictions." Whether the Congress is being hypocritical and going back on its words is not what matters, for they are only following what is known as "Opposition-ism". They seem to have made the term the core purpose of their life for they seem to Oppose each and every move of the Government without paying too much attention to what they are opposing. What is more important is whether the bills will be beneficial to the farmers or not. The government has slammed the Opposition for misleading the people, and assured that the MSP and public mandis will stay. However, none of these statements are actually written in the bills, which is the main cause of worry for the farmers. The bills, albeit being referred to as the Farmers' Bills, seem more beneficial to the private companies and entrepreneurs than the farmers themselves. Will they be a blessing for the farmers, or a curse? Only time will tell.

The S-Word

-Nomera Ibnat Alam. XII

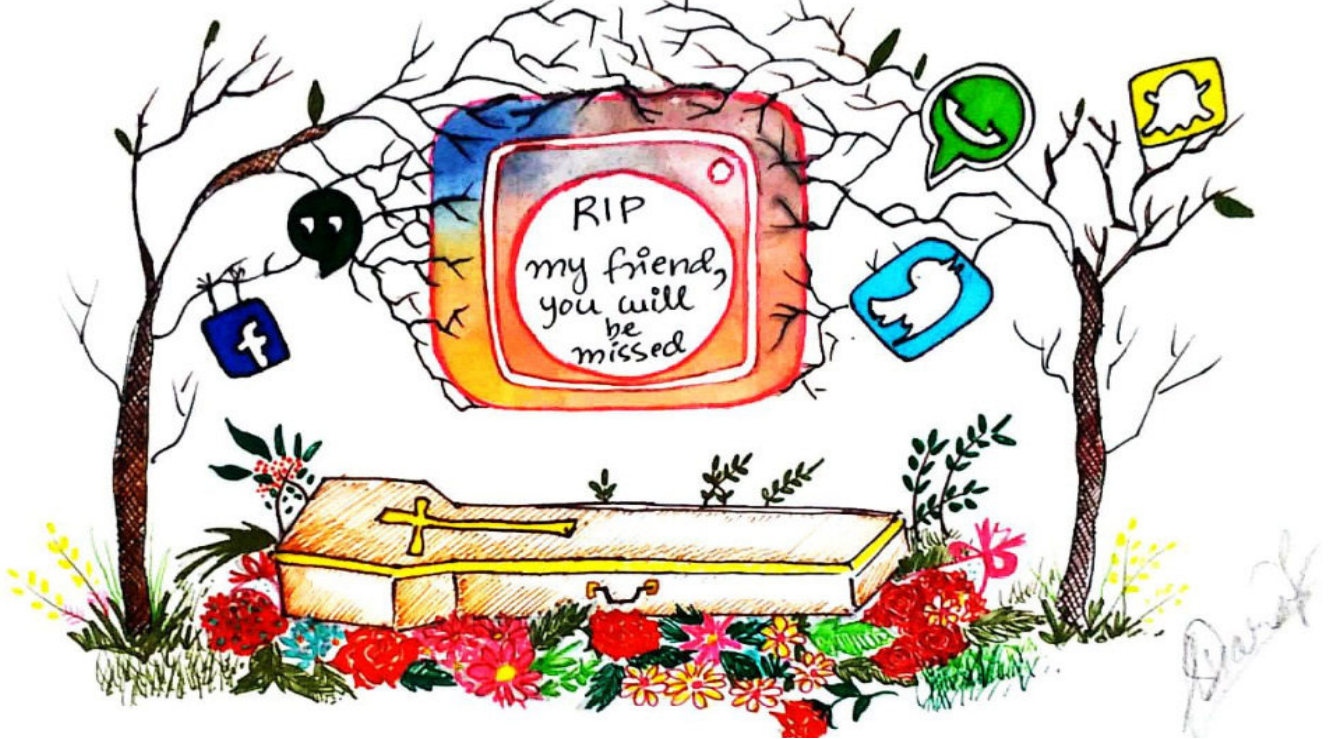


Illustration: Ssara Jha

I wish. I really really wish I was just talking about sushi. Or salmon. Or solar-powered cars even. But no! It's the most horrible s-word and I don't want you to be even thinking about it. 'Because suicide, my friend, is never an option. Let me share a story with you all which should more than explain it.

The year was 2018 and I was in Class 9. There was this Facebook friend of mine – a mutual friend – whom I never really talked or interacted with. She was the daughter of a single mother and had a younger brother. I remember something had gone wrong with her relationship in the past, presumably in the year 2016, and she had been badly laughed at on social media. The toxic circuit of friends kept talking about her for days because minding their own businesses never seemed entertaining enough. This had had a terrible effect on her.

Gradually, the hubbub died down and people forgot about the issue. The girl too seemed to have moved on with her life, from what I could discern from her posts. Came June, and her friends threw her a surprise birthday party. I saw the photographers and was wholeheartedly happy for her. I loved the smiles on their faces and the joy reflected in those photos. Everything seemed so perfect.

Two days after the birthday party, I returned home from school to find my cousin waiting for me with some devastating information. "You heard the news?" Perplexed, I asked, "About what?" And the answer I got was something that I never would have expected. "That girl committed suicide this morning," my cousin dropped the bomb.

I was stunned. I stopped whatever I was doing and asked

him if he was sure it was the same girl. He said that it was and I could not still grapple with this piece of news. The posts on Social Media confirmed the nightmare.

What I saw there made me despair even more. All those stories which had read "Happy birthday, my friend" just two days ago had turned into "RIP, my friend. You'll be missed." I cried. My hands were shaking. The social media circle went ahead with their posts and statuses, mentioning what they do every time someone committed suicide.

None of them, not even a single human being, knew what she had been going through. It was unbelievable and shocking to everyone. The reason behind her drastic step and the agony she left her mother in, seemed to have no answers. I didn't even know her properly. All I could see was what the social media was showing me. She was gone, gone forever.

I keep thinking about it and it is this intractable memory that made me write about it. The horror of a life lost languishes in the days of those left behind. After all, our lives are not merely all about ourselves. We have so many people connected to our existences that we don't even realize just how much our actions and emotions affect them.

Before you go ahead and "assume" something about a person or his/her life, please rethink. Think about what you casually say and joke about someone. Is the person comfortable with it? Lend an ear to those who wish to share. And most importantly, stop bottling up your feelings. It's okay not to be okay. Don't feel like a burden to someone. Trust me, people would love to listen to your problems rather than attend your funeral.

Fam-Jam!

-Vedansh Jindal, XII

The conventional definition of the family puts forth certain terms and conditions for a group to be called a family. We see things that we want to and perceive them in a certain way. Although truth be told, the cosmos of a family as in human life is constantly evolving. A family need not be of a set of parents, children with their respective relatives. It can be a group of strangers who grow to be friends and then extend to becoming each other's families. Everything we do is for a purpose and it's that purpose that prompts us to excel and achieve. A family is like an anchor that gives us roots. Some have weak roots that tend to snap when pressure is applied. Some have a sturdy deep rooted hold that survives storms and upheavals. Such a bond sustains us through mental and physical pressures blowing the cool air of love and togetherness when the going gets tough. The element that makes this anchor life-giving is that it seeks no permission and gives despite all odds. Like the tree of life, it becomes the source of life, love and traditions its intricate trajectory built of traditions becoming the foliage that protects and preserves. This attachment too has certain requirements. This cord remains intact on the supplements of endearment, tenderness, warmth, and mindfulness. The layout of a family run through its own labyrinthine corridors which could delve into a tendency to complicate things and disturb its natural balance. Earlier times, saw large families live under a single roof and charter existence from the

nourishment provided through a single kitchen. Today it is all about personal space and privacy. While we demand love we are unwilling to invest time and attention to it. These cords are very delicate and if not handled mindfully, can change the harmony of our lives.

A family draws the semblance of normalcy around us allowing us to live our lives and pursue our dreams whether they range from a regular job or the opportunity to enjoy a favourite concert. The essence of our lives we so often forget lie in the magic of togetherness and comfort of those whose company we value. For this is a joy no materialistic fervor could replace. It is the very essence of life an asset that sees us through the darkest of days and brightens further the happiest hour.

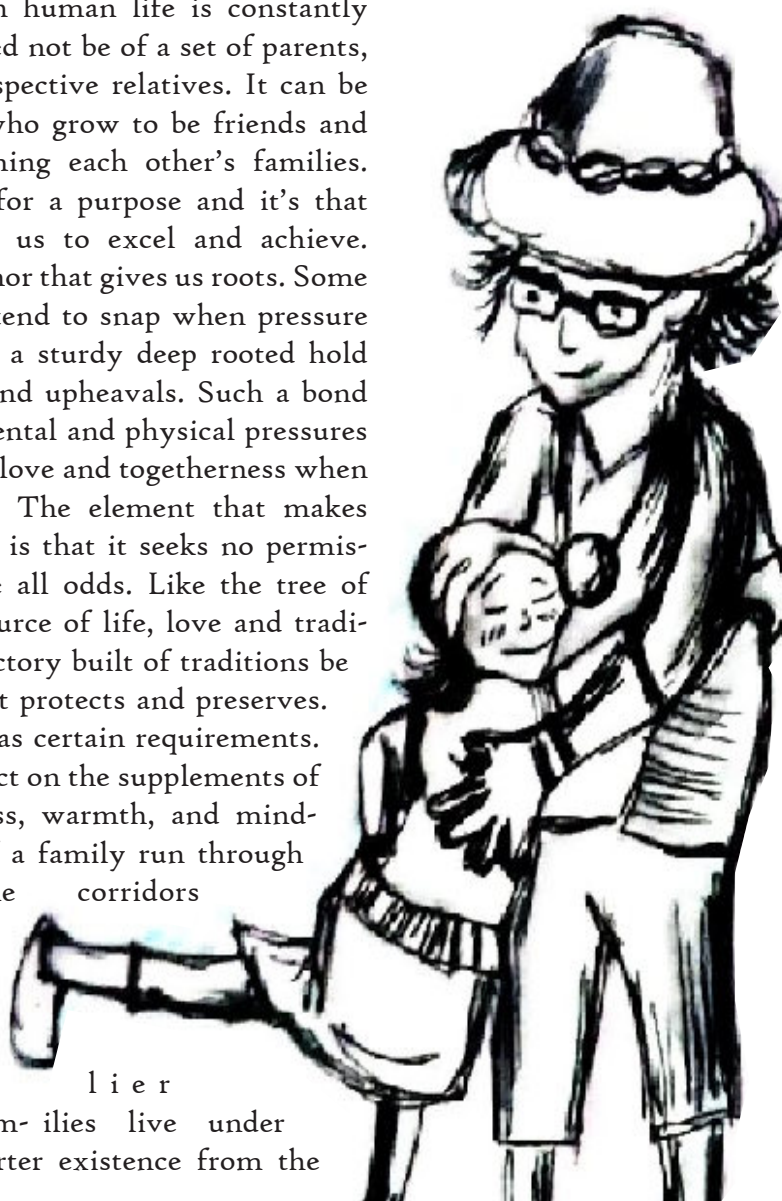


Illustration: Sourav Khodal

UNSETTLING BOUNDARIES

-Anoushka Rabha, XII

THE EDITOR'S PICK

The most violent conflicts in 2020 have been arrayed along border disputes in several parts of the world. The Sino-Indian skirmishes in the Himalayas or the age-old Ethiopia-Eritrea dispute along the Nile in Africa, they have all reached the boiling point in 2020. India has nurtured yet another in-house border dispute that hasn't been covered by the media enough. Not because it's not important enough but simply because the Hindi heartland's media powerhouses can't get enough of reporting on the Dragon's movements. That is, when they are not analysing the issues plaguing our other troublesome neighbour.

Since the 29th of October 2020, scores of vehicles headed to Mizoram, many of them ferrying essential goods to the hill state, had been grounded along National Highway-54 at Lailapur, courtesy of a road blockade by its residents. The town is part of South Assam's Cachar district. It lies along the Assam-Mizoram boundary, where tensions have flared up since early October. The blockade has led to a severe shortage of essentials in Mizoram. The NH-54 is the state's only reliable road connection to the rest of the country and this has led to fraying tempers across the border. Fuel stocks had dried up and the price of food items have skyrocketed.

The sister states, Assam and Mizoram, have been locked in a boundary dispute for long now. While Assam has accepted the boundary defined by a 1933 notification, Mizoram continues to stick to an earlier demarcation drawn up in 1875. Mizoram was carved out of Assam as a Union Territory in 1972. In 1987, it became a full-fledged state. The three South Assam districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj share a 164.6 kilometre-long border with Mizoram's Kolasib, Mamit and Aizawl districts. Much of the border cuts through thick forested slopes where the Mizo hills meets the Barak Valley at the southern tip of Assam.

Mizoram's perception of the border is based on an 1875 notification that flows from the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act of 1873. The Act demarcated the hills from the plains and valleys in the North East, restricting free travel between the two zones. The hills were deemed to be "excluded areas". Assam, for its part, goes by a 1933 notification by the State Government that demarcated the Lushai Hills, as Mizoram was then known, from the province of Manipur.

The last incident of violence along the border was in March 2018 when members of the Mizo Students' Union tried to reconstruct a resting shed on the disputed land that the Assam police

personnel had demolished. Now, highways leading into Mizoram from Assam's three southern districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj have been blockaded since 28 October, forcing the Mizoram government to begin exploring alternative supply lines via other neighbouring states.

The ongoing tensions began in October and intensified following clashes on 17 October on the border near the villages of Vairengte (Mizoram) and Lailapur (Assam), which left several people injured and also led to the burning down of makeshift huts along the highway. Peace was restored on October 22 but people in Cachar district of Assam enforced an economic blockade again on October 28 after the Mizoram Police refused to budge from some disputed areas they had allegedly occupied. The central government had subsequently deployed several companies of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) to Assam and the Border Security Force (BSF) to Mizoram in an attempt to defuse the crisis. Personnel of the force will also be deployed near Thinghulun, a village in Mizoram's Mamit district, near the spot where the current imbroglio began on 9 October after suspected miscreants from Assam's Karimganj district allegedly burned down a local resident's hut. Mizoram has filed an FIR in the incident. Apart from that, they'll also be deployed near Saihapui V, in Kolasib, where tensions escalated after officials from Assam allegedly tore down a Covid-19 check-gate set up by the village administration and where explosions at a school have threatened to further escalate tensions in the area.

On November 8, following the Centre's intervention, Mizoram did withdraw a section of its forces from "advanced" positions – but temporary Mizoram police posts remained along the NH-54, a few hundred metres behind. It is of course noteworthy that they did not have a presence in these areas before the hostilities erupted. Mizoram though insists they have been deployed for the security of the local population in border areas. The "advanced" positions are now being manned by "neutral" Central forces acting as a buffer between the police forces of the two states – the Border Security Force on the Mizoram side; and the Sashastra Seema Bal on the Assam side. The hostilities that has been fuelled by years' worth of conflicts has now reached an impasse. Though the removal of the blockade and the intervention of the Centre helped ease some of the acrimony, there's only a fleeting glimpse of peace in the storm.

THE OUTPOST

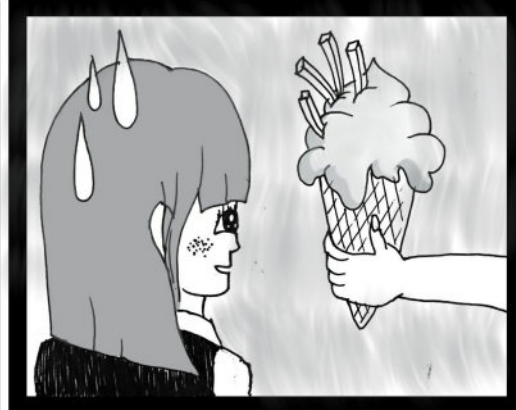
Illustration: Eloziini Senachena



UK becomes the first country to green-light the use of Pfizer Covid-19 vaccines, Scotland runs its first hydrogen driven eco-friendly bus. The assassination of Iranian Nuclear scientist Fakhrizadeh poses yet another problem for the upcoming Biden presidency. Trump seem intent on making it a difficult tenure for Biden. Assam and Mizoram's borders remain volatile while the Indian army settles down to a watch under sub-zero temperatures in Ladakh. Municipal elections in Hyderabad and Panchayat elections in Kashmir grab the country's attention. The farmer's ongoing protest ring an ominous bell for the government as pro-Khalistan elements simmer at the periphery.

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By: Tanisha Bhadra



Ripple #145

-Letminlun Haokip, Deputy Editor

*Reminiscing over past lives,
I drift aimlessly through
space and time,
a lonely ghost with a lonely
fate,
caught between a dream
and a half*

The Quarantine Playlist

Need help finding a gem amidst a sea of monotony? Grab a cup of coffee or tea and dive into the world of these enthralling stories told through tunes, here is a list

TAKE ME TO CHURCH BY HOZIER: The Irish singer-songwriter hits spiritual and philosophical questions head on with a worldview that in many ways reflects exactly where mainstream culture is at today.

CANADA BY LAUV AND ALESSIA CARA: The song is about young lovers fantasizing about living the Canadian dream. This is for one of the "Let's get away!" moods.

SAUSALITO BY LYDIA LUCE: A soulfully decorated piece with interlacings of viola and guitar. Carefully composed, organic and soothing.

PLUTO PROJECTOR BY REX ORANGE COUNTY: The acoustic track is a meditation on the existential, with the string ensemble taking center stage by the end.

LUCID BY RINA SAWAYAMA: A song about living a different life through dreams, and sounds effortlessly cool.



Keep It Reel!

GLOW AND GROW

-Joya Abedin, XI

Editor-in-Chief: Jeremy Jahau

Deputy Editor: Letminlun Haokip

Associate Editor: Anoushka S. Rabha

Correspondents: Ojas, Lavanya, Ssara & Neelabh

Design & Layout: Tanisha Bhadra & Jeremy Jahau

Illustrator: Takhe Tamo Reela, Eloziini Senachena and Tanisha Bhadra

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E-mail: ave@assamvalleyschool.com

Telephone: 09678074320/08812009627 Website: www.assamvalleyschool.com

Patron: Dr. Vidhukesh Vimal, The Headmaster of The Assam Valley School

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