

## State Observes World AIDS Day

**DIPR**  
Imphal, Dec 1,

As in other parts of the world, the State also observed World AIDS Day under the theme, 'Know your HIV status' today. The State level observance was organised by Manipur State AIDS Control Society (MACS) at 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Manipur Rifles ground with Governor Dr. Najma Heptulla, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh and Health and Family Welfare Minister L. Jayantakumar Singh as the chief guest, functional president and guest of honour respectively. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Najma Heptulla said that it is imperative to make modifications and improvements in the State AIDS Policy statement so as to suit the changing circumstances and trend. She expressed hope that the experts and intellectuals in this field would give their suggestions which would be of immense help to the society in mitigating the bane of HIV/AIDS. The Governor also appealed to the youths of the State to become more aware about HIV/AIDS issues and also to participate actively in the programmes and policies of the Government and NGOs in the fight against the disease.

Observing that the HIV/AIDS issue is no longer a mere health issue, the Governor said that it has covered all aspects of life - social, economic, legal, human rights and even political. The all-out and concerted efforts of the health officials and concerned activists of the State would not be sufficient in tackling this issue, she said while adding that civil societies have also to be actively involved. Stating that she would like to appreciate the role of NGOs and other agencies during the last two decades in providing preventive services and care to the people, Dr. Heptulla said that without the active role of the NGOs, the situation would have been worse.

The Governor urged the people living with HIV/AIDS not to indulge in high risk behaviour because they may contract the virus from their partners out of ignorance and negligence. She also said that she is in favour of promotion of voluntary HIV testing before marriage. Dr. Heptulla said that it is the responsibility of the society at large, particularly women, to have greater involvement in the fight against HIV/AIDS to safeguard the future of Manipur. HIV testing is a must for expanding treatment and ensuring that all people living with HIV can live a healthy and productive life, she opined.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri N. Biren Singh said that though the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is declining in the State, there is still need for a collective hard work of public, NGOs and the Government to achieve the target of having no new HIV infection in Manipur by 2024.



As per the records provided by the State Health Department, the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the State is 1.43 % against the all-India rate of .022%, he added.

He observed that people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIVs) should never be stigmatized and discriminated because they contracted the virus unknowingly. The disease can be tackled effectively only when PLHIVs are given the same respect and right as normal persons, he added. On the other hand, PLHIVs should also not get discouraged because many new inventions and medicines are coming up.

Regarding developmental issues of the State, the Chief Minister expressed serious concern that a large number of deserving people/households are not getting benefits under different Government schemes due to irregularities in data collection and dishonesty of the officials concerned. He said that many well-to-do individuals and families are found enjoying Government benefits meant for poor people, labour class and other weaker sections of the

society. As such, those undeserved beneficiaries should surrender beneficiary cards before the Government takes action against them, he added.

It is a matter of concern that 36% of the population of the State is still under Below Poverty Line (BPL) though the per-head fund provided by the Centre to the State is three times higher as compared with the bigger States, the Chief Minister said. Shri N. Biren Singh said that if any well-to-do or Government employee is wrongfully enjoying benefit under a Government scheme, it can be well assumed that he/she has snatched away the right or benefit from a deserved poor person.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri L. Jayantakumar said that effective awareness is the only answer to stigmatisation and discrimination of PLHIVs. Stating that HIV epidemic is a big challenge to the State, the Minister observed that there is need for a collective effort to eradicate the disease from the soil of the State.

CAF&PD Minister Karam Shyam, Forest and Environment Minister Shri

Th. Shyamkumar, Tribal Affairs and Hills Minister N. Kayisii, Manipur Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker K. Robindro, MLAs, Chief Secretary Dr. J. Suresh Babu, Principal Secretary (Health) Vumlunmang Vualnam and other high ranking officials of the State Government also attended the function.

Earlier at the function, the Governor administered MACS's pledge of World AIDS Day to the gathering. The dignitaries also distributed prizes of written quiz and on-the-spot painting competitions held as part of the observance. They also feted the best performing NGOs and District AIDS Control Officers (DACOs) with certificates and prizes. The Governor also handed over tablets to 25 ANMs each of Thoubal and Imphal West districts.

Later, the dignitaries also visited the stalls opened by different partner NGOs of MACS. Arally taken part by the members of NGOs, PLHIVs, school children, NCC Cadets, MACS employees and general public was taken out from Hao Ground to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Manipur Rifles ground as part of the observance.

## Series of Killing of Livestock is the impact of Destroying Natural Environment in the name of Developmental Projects –Eco Network

**IT News**  
Imphal, Dec 1,

A statement by the Environment Conservation Network (Eco Network) today stated that the series of attack on the livestock is the major impact of degrading the natural environment in the name of Developmental Project.

"As we can see large number of forest are deforested for the construction of Power Grid Lines, Railway Lines, Road Expansion, Construction

of Mega Dams, natural resources exploration, etc, as a result the habitation of wildlife is seriously impacted and its natural food chain", the statement said.

The statement also shows concern about the loss of livestock and appealed the government of Manipur to conduct a survey on how many livestock have been lost and to compensate the farmers.

The statement said that target to the domestic animal by the wild animals is an impact of the greediness of the Human Activities by destroying their

natural forest where the wild animals are dependent upon are often destroyed in the name of developments or for the developmental projects.

The Eco Network statement appealed the people and the government of Manipur to restore the forest which were destroyed in the name of development. It also appealed the Government of Manipur and the people not to destroy the forest so as not to experience the present ongoing experience again in the future.

## Assam Students across the state to take oath to refrain from betel nut or tobacco use

**Agency**  
Guwahati, Dec 1,

Around 45 lakh children studying in government schools across Assam will be administered an oath on Saturday not to use betel nut or tobacco. They would take the oath under the 'Pledge for Life' initiative of the department of education again on December 14, a statement by the organisers said on Friday.

The oath, as per the instructions from the department of Education reads: "I pledge not to use betel nut or tobacco in any form, including smoking cigarettes, bidis, etc, or chewing tobacco as gutka, etc., for the rest of my life and also encourage my family and friends not to do so."

"Assam has more than 45 lakh students in 50,131 Government

schools. We want children to have a healthy life and are protected from the tobacco epidemic," it said.

This initiative has been taken by the education department with support from a number of organisations. Stating that the Sambandh Health Foundation (SHF), one of the organisers, has developed an android-based app 'Pledge for Life', the release said the schools will download a video on how tobacco affects one's life and family.

After sensitising the students on tobacco consumption with the video, the students will take the oath and schools are to upload photographs of the event and the number of students who took the oath on the app.

Sanjay Seth, Trustee & Head Tobacco Control of SHF, said the Pledge for Life campaign will create an atmosphere among students that tobacco is the most 'uncool thing' to consume.

We applaud the education department of Assam in taking such a big step to protect children's health."

He said tobacco kills more than 13.5 lakh people each year in India and nearly half of all above 15 years in Assam use tobacco, compared to 28.6 per cent across the country.

Dr B Borooah Cancer Institute & Voice of Tobacco Victims (VoTV) patron Dr Ashok Das said, "The number of cancer cases is on rise and the sad part is that now young people are being diagnosed with cancers. If we eliminate tobacco, we can prevent 50% of all cancers. 90% of oral cancers, lung can cancers caused by tobacco." Assam has more than one crore tobacco users of which 13.3 lakh are cigarette users, 18.8 lacs are bidi users and 91 lakh take smokeless tobacco, as per the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) 2017, the release said.

## MSAD denounce detention of Kishorchand

**IT News**  
Imphal, Dec 1,

Terming the detention of Wangkhemcha Kishorchand as a cowardly act, Manipuri Students' Association Delhi (MSAD) said that such arrest of dissenting voice should not be treated as isolation case. The MSAD said that such an action is rather the continuation of a series of similar arrests made by the government since its rule. What lay before our eyes naked is a classic example of a true tyrannical government which does not allow different voices of any kind. It is Wangkhemcha Wangthoi today, tomorrow it could be any one of us. The government is generating a culture of silencing people's voices through its use of arbitrary and draconian law - the detaining of Wangkhemcha Wangthoi under National Security Act (NSA) is an example, s that statement said. It further added that BJP

government of Manipur led by its Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren is at a new low again. It has used all means at its disposal to curtail and shut down the voices of the people since it came to power in 2017. On 26<sup>th</sup> of this month, journalist Wangkhemcha Wangthoi @Kishorchand, former sub-editor and anchor of Imphal based ISTV network was arrested by the police on seditious and obscene language charges under section 124-A/294/500 of the IPC after he uploaded a video in social media where he questioned the government's agenda of celebrating Rani Jhansi on the occasion of Quami Ekta Diwas. He was released on bail after the Chief Judicial Magistrate L. Tonsing found that the video which he uploaded through social media did not attract section 124-A and that section 294 and 500 are bailable offences. He was rearrested on the same day of release without any arrest warrant, neither his

family has been informed the reason of his arrest.

Mention may be made here that Wangkhemcha Wangthoi has been a harsh critic and an outspoken voice of the BJP government's policies in Manipur, from the absurd and humiliating statement of the CM at the Madhavpur Mela in Gujarat on 29<sup>th</sup> March earlier this year, to the atrocities carried out by the BJP government during the Manipur University crisis. He was also earlier arrested on 9<sup>th</sup> August this year for similar act of questioning the BJP government.

The Nongthombam Biren led BJP Hindutva government in Manipur has nothing to hide nor nothing to offer to the people of Manipur. Scratch the surface and it reveals its fascist character now and then. The abrupt discontinuation of news analysis and discussion program that used to be aired at 7.30 am news everyday on All India Radio (AIR) under the direct order of the BJP

government clearly reveals the utter distaste of any voice that does not speak the BJP language.

The state government in a desperate measure to cover up its failure in building consensus on its governance in the last one and half year is ready tooth and nail to use any coercive means. However, it should be reminded that public consensus cannot be built by pouring in fear and terror to the collective psyche of the Manipuri population. We strongly condemn the action taken upon Wangkhemcha Wangthoi and he should be released unconditionally. We now ask the people of Manipur to come out and raise their voices against the despotic actions of the BJP government that is becoming fascist as days pass by. The MSAD said the association stands in solidarity with all the people's struggle for freedom and justice.

## 2nd New Era Week Observed; Prize Distributed



**IT News**  
Thoubal, Dec.1,

New Era Higher Secondary School, Thoubal today observed its Second New Era Week at its premises and published its Second ever school magazine.

Chairman, Council of Higher Secondary Education, Manipur, Lamabam Mahendra Singh, Secretary of COHSEM, Ch. Biren Singh and Zonal Education Officer, Thoubal Zone III, A. Anilkumar Singh attended the event as dignitaries.

A traditional dance

competition was also conducted during the event and a prize distribution ceremony was also conducted in which Students who had achieved in the field of sports, culture and education were felicitated by presenting awards.

Cultural programme performed by the school students mark the New Era Week.

Speaking at the event, Chairman of COHSEM, L. Mahendra Singh encouraged the students to have goals in life and pursue them with enthusiasm without wasting time.