

Meghalaya IBSD to set up hi-tech Orchidarium in the state

Agency
Shillong, Dec 6,

A state of the art Orchidarium and Orchid Production Unit will be setup here in Meghalaya in a few months time by Institute of Bio resources and Sustainable Development (IBSD). Meghalaya Chief Minister

Conrad K. Sangma and Urban Affairs Minister, Hamletson Dohling laid a foundation stone for Orchidarium and Orchid Production Unit respectively here at IBSD, Upper Shillong. Sangma said that the Orchidarium and the Orchid Production Unit

will have a huge impact on the lives of local entrepreneurs and will be viable and a profitable business. Stating that tourists all over the world have a connection with orchids, the Chief Minister added that it will be a game changer for the tourism sector.

Manipur State smugglers join hands with Thailand-based gangs to carve gold route

IT News
Imphal, Dec 6,

Manipur's smugglers have been reported to have joined hands with Thailand-based gangs to carve out a new gold route between Kerala and Manipur, after authorities tightened surveillance and plugged several porous spots in areas bordering Bangladesh and Nepal. Demand for gold from Thailand and Singapore

has gone up following crackdown by agencies on smugglers from Dubai and other West Asian countries, the traditional source of smuggled gold. The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and Customs are keeping a close watch on the development as rackets sneak into Manipur from Myanmar, and travel by road and rail routes to supply gold to Kerala, Tamil Nadu

and Karnataka. The Ministry of Home Affairs data reveals there is a quantum leap in the flow of gold from Manipur. While only 61.56 kg gold was seized in the northeastern state in 2015-16, it jumped to 156 kg in 2017-18. Customs Commissioner Sumit Kumar said the rackets, after smuggling in gold through the Indo-Myanmar border, transport it mainly by road.

Tripura: Nominations filed for Municipality polls, BJP files for all 4 AMC seats

Agency
Agartala Dec 05,

The BJP today submitted nomination papers for all four municipality seats under Agartala Municipality Corporation. The BJP candidates with its supporters held a rally and marched to file the nomination papers to SDM Ashish Datta in Udaipur for by-polls in 21

wards. Today 20 candidates filed their nomination papers for the Melaghar Municipality by-polls out of which 8 were CPM candidates and the remaining 12 candidates belonged to Congress. For five wards under Kumarghat Municipality, nominations were filed by 16 candidates for the by-polls. The by-election will be held on December 22.

Assam Mentally unstable killed in police firing during first phase of Panchayat polls

Agency
Guwahati Dec 6,

On Wednesday, one person was killed in election-related police firing during the first phase of panchayat polls in Assam. A machete-wielding man had charged at voters at Habial village in Golaghat district following which a police team stationed there fired at him, said police.

"The man was attacking voters and even charged at police personnel. We had no option but to resort to fire to restrain

him and prevent injury to others," said a local policeman on condition of anonymity. The injured man was rushed to a hospital where he succumbed to injuries. The victim, identified as Gyanendra Rajkhowa, was said to be suffering from mental disorder. The first phase of polling in 16 districts of the state, which began at 7 am, concluded at 4 pm. There were reports of minor disruptions at some places due to mismatch of names of candidates and their election symbols and

names of voters missing from electoral rolls.

A total of 43,515 candidates were in the fray for the first phase of polls for district, block and village panchayats. Polling took place at 14,077 stations amid tight security. The panchayat polls is being seen as a report card for the two-and-half-year-old Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition government in the state. Alliance partner Asom Gana Parishad is contesting the polls independently.

Nagaland fares poorly in implementation of RPWD Act: Report

Agency
Kohima, Dec 6,

Two years after it was passed by both Houses of Parliament, Nagaland has fared poorly in implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016.

This was stated in a study conducted by Disability Rights India Foundation (DIRF), in collaboration with National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) and National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (NCRPD), with support from Titan Company Limited, to evaluate the progress made in implementation of the RPWD Act in States and Union Territories (UTs).

The report was released by Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC). Altogether 19 questions were sent out to the States and UTs primarily focusing on rules, administrative structures, notifications and

allocation of funds and reservations of persons with disabilities – basically the underpinnings of the implementation of the Act. Responses were received from 24 States and UTs, including Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Delhi, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Odisha, Puducherry, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal, the response rate being 66.6%.

Out of these States and UTs, 58.3% have not notified the State rules, which should have been notified within six months of enforcement of the Act. And though there are 21 official languages, the Act has only been translated only into two languages – Hindi and Odia. NCPEDP, out of its own initiative and with support from State partners, has translated

the Act into nine languages, and also the in-sign language.

Further, 50% of these States and UTs have not yet constituted State Advisory Boards, while 83.3% are yet to constitute district committees.

Also, there are no commissioners for persons with disabilities in 37.5% of the States and UTs, while there is not much progress in remaining 62.5% where the commissioners have been appointed. Many States don't have full-time commissioners and only three States (12.5%) have constituted advisory committees comprising of experts to assist the commissioner.

What is also worrisome is that 79.2% States and UTs have not constituted the State fund to implement the Act.

Only four States (16.7%) have appointed a nodal officer in the district education office to exclusively deal with matters relating to admission of children with disabilities.

Also, 58.3% States have not notified special courts in the districts for trying offences under the Act, while 87.5% have not appointed special public prosecutors as mandated by the Act. And 87.5% of the States do not have designated authorities to decide what sort of support, and in what manner, can be provided to persons with high support needs to enable them to exercise their legal rights.

Though, as per the Act, every establishment (private and government) has to formulate an equal opportunity policy and register it with the disability commissioner, 91.7% of the respondent States and UTs have reported NIL to the question as to how many equal opportunity policies they have received. Only two States – Delhi and Himachal Pradesh – reported having received 1,244 and one such policies respectively from the establishments.

The study found that 54.2% of the States and UTs have not made any

provisions for increasing reservation in employment from 3% to 4% in government and public sectors.

Only one State has taken some action to increase the quantum of assistance (by at least 25%) for people with disabilities in social security schemes. And only 50% States and UTs have started issuing disability certificates pertaining to new disabilities added in the Act.

The study also prepared a scorecard to rank the States and UTs according to the positive steps they have taken as per the provisions of RPWD Act. Accordingly, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha scored the highest by answering in affirmative 12 out of 19 questions (63.2%) in implementing some of the provisions of the Act.

Ten States and UTs have scored extremely low by being able to answer in the affirmative in less than 25% of the questions. The RPWD Act was passed by the Parliament on December 16, 2016.

Mizoram State govt proposes 3 names for CEO post

Agency
Aizawl, Dec 6,

The government has proposed the names of three IAS officers, as desired by the Election Commission (EC), for the post of a new chief electoral officer (CEO) in the state, an official said on Sunday.

The poll panel had asked the state government to suggest the names after it decided to replace CEO S B Shashank, who had courted controversy in the poll-bound state. The

names suggested by the government were – Lalhmingthanga, H Lalengmawia and K Lalhawmmawia – the official said.

He also said deputy election commissioner Jain, who led the second EC team to Mizoram Friday, had told officials that it would take two-three days to select and appoint a new CEO. Jain had also assured the NGO Coordination Committee leaders – who were spearheading the movement against

Shashank – that the CEO would be replaced and the Bru voters housed in relief camps would exercise their franchise from Mizoram, which were the primary demands of the organisation. The EC had initiated the process of finding an alternative to the Mizoram CEO on Saturday. An EC spokesperson had said in New Delhi that the poll panel had "only decided to call for a panel of names for the post of the state CEO from the chief secretary of Mizoram."

Missing US-based NRI from Vadodara traced in Daman

Agency
Vadodara Dec 6,

A US-based Non-resident Indian (NRI), who went missing late last month while on a visit to Vadodara in Gujarat, has been traced to adjoining Union Territory of Daman and Diu, a police official said Wednesday. Advertising Mittal Saraiya, who went missing while visiting a bank on November 27, was found in a hotel in Daman, Anupamsingh Gahlaut, Vadodara police commissioner, said.

"We had formed several teams with a total of 90 personnel to track Saraiya after his uncle lodged a complaint of kidnapping with the Karelibaug police station," he said. The teams were dispatched to various parts of the state, including religious places, to trace the 51-year-old NRI, who lives

in Florida, US, the commissioner said. He was found staying in a hotel in Daman and a team has been sent to bring him back to Vadodara, he said. According to the police, the NRI told them he slipped into depression after his friend cheated him in the US. Saraiya was also facing financial problems and went to Daman to relax, the police added.

The NRI had arrived in the city to enquire about the health of his ailing uncle who resides in the Karelibaug area, the police had said.

Saraiya, who is also a former cricketer, was visiting the city after a decade. photocopy of his passport, police had said, adding he left for home to get the document. However, he did not return home after which his relatives got worried and lodged a police missing.

West Bengal govt denies permission to Amit Shah's rath yatra



Agency
New Delhi Dec 6,

The West Bengal government has denied permission to BJP president Amit Shah's rath yatra from Coochbehar, Attorney General Kishore Dutta informed Calcutta High Court on Thursday. Advertising The BJP moved the high court yesterday claiming that the West Bengal administration and the police were not responding to its

applications seeking permission to take out three rallies in West Bengal from December 7. Amit Shah is scheduled to kickstart the party's 'Save Democracy Rally', comprising three 'rath yatra', in the state on Friday. The BJP campaign is scheduled to begin from Coochbehar district in the north on December 7, from Kakdwip in the South 24 Parganas district on December 9, and from the Tarbith temple in Birbhum district on December 14.

BJP is a 'cancer' that needs to be destroyed in polls: Ashok Chavan

Agency
Mumbai Dec 6,

The BJP is a "cancer" India has developed and the party will "destroy" the country unless it is rooted out in the 2019 general polls, Maharashtra Congress chief Ashok Chavan said Wednesday.

He alleged it was due to the "wrong policies" of the BJP-Shiv Sena government that the farmers in Maharashtra are suffering and the agrarian crisis had deepened. The Lok Sabha MP from Nanded also hit out at the Shiv Sena, saying it has been "helpless for power" and charged the party with politicising the Ram temple issue for it has no performance to show to seek votes.

The former chief minister also termed Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray's recent Ayodhya visit as a "publicity stunt".

"The BJP is a cancer the country has contracted. The country will be destroyed if this cancer is not rooted out in the upcoming (general) polls," Chavan said at a rally in Morshi, Amravati district.

The rally was organised as part of the fourth leg of the 'Jan Sangharsh Yatra' the Congress has taken out in the Vidarbha region.

Former Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan, All India Congress Committee secretary Ashish Dua, ex-state minister Naseem Khan and others took part in the rally.

Attacking the Devendra Fadnavis dispensation in the state, Ashok Chavan said it has been over a year since the government announced a farm loan waiver, but farmers have not yet benefited from it. He said the drought-like situation in the state has turned grave and that the



government has "not started taking steps to combat it". Claiming farmers are committing suicides daily in Maharashtra, Ashok Chavan alleged the BJP chief minister had failed in governing the state. "The BJP is trying to win elections using money...but the people will show the BJP its place defeating it in the elections," Ashok Chavan said. Speaking on the occasion, Prithviraj Chavan alleged the

country's economy was in peril under the BJP's watch.

"The decision of demonetisation has ruined industries and caused rise in unemployment. Since the government lacks financial, they are increasing taxes to loot the people," he said. Advertising

The opposition party has covered parts of Western Maharashtra, Marathwada and North Maharashtra regions in the previous three rounds of the yatra.