

## 1 PLA arrested

IT News  
Imphal, March 2

39 Assam Rifles apprehended an active cadre of PLA identified as Thouchom Premjit Singh of Kakching Chumnamg Leikai S/O The Modhu Singh from Chairel Lamkhai yesterday at around 830 AM. Army source said that the arrested cadre served at the rank of 2nd Lieutenant and his army number is 301. The army source said that the arrested cadre got basic military training at Bunning Camp Tamenglong in the year of 2005.

## SEACO urges govt. to include Sanamahi religion as minority religion

IT News  
Imphal, March 3

South East Asia Cultural Organisation (SEACO) in a statement has urged the government to include Sanamahi Religion as Minority Religion. The statement elaborated on the present status of the people following Sanamahi religion. It said that after August 28, 1709 during the reign of King Pamheiba, the indigenous religion has been severely affected. Till today the traditional religion has been affected with the number of followers going down. The SEACO appealed the government to include Sanamahi religion as minority religion to preserve it.

## Absconded KCP leader Lamyamba Khuman and associate arrested

IT News  
Imphal, March 2

Leader of the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) People's War Group (PWG) Lamyamba Khuman who had absconded after abrogating the suspension of operation with the government of Manipur and re-established the armed group KCP (PWG) as Chairman has been reportedly arrested by a combined team of Manipur Police and Delhi Police from New Delhi.

Source said the KCP PWG leader Lamyamba Khuman @ Laishram Mangoljao Singh was arrested along with his associate Hujbur Rehman from Nirankari Sarovar Bus Stand of Burari, New Delhi by the combined police team.

Report said that non-bailable warrant against both have been issued from the concerned courts and a cash reward of Rs. 1 lakh was announced by the Manipur Police on the arrest of Laishram Mangoljao Singh @ Lamyamba Khuman. Further investigation is under progress.



The KCP-PWG head Laishram Mangoljao Singh @ Lamyamba Khuman S/o Laishram Mano Singh of Awang Khunou Mayai Leikai, and Hujbur Rahman @ Ithemcha Lokhon @ Boby S/o Md. Babu R/o Sora Maning Leikal, district Kakching, Manipur, are likely to deport here in the state. Lamyamba Khuman group of KCP once surrendered and had agreed to sign suspension of Operation with the government of Manipur but he was reportedly absconded from the custody where his party were allotted and started committing several terror-related activities like lobbying of grenades, shoot-outs, killings, planting of bombs, running extortion

networks by intimidating businessmen and politicians etc. a source said. The source further added that Lamyamba Khuman the Chairman of the KCP (PWG) had even threatened to the Chief Minister of Manipur besides serving extortion note to private companies and individuals. The state police team had been tracking his whereabouts since he started committing terror activities in the state since the last couple of years.

## Tension erupts after man died in scuffle at Thoubal district

IT News  
Thoubal, March 2

Tension erupted at Hijam Khunou area in Thoubal district after a person reportedly died in scuffle at Nongpok Sekmai area in Thoubal district today morning at around 6.30 am. Report said that a person identified as Maibam Santikumar Meitei (35) s/o M. Ibocha Meitei of Hijam Khunou under Nongpok Sekmai police station chopped at the neck of Md Mangi (50) s/o Md. Wahe of Shikhong Muslim by using dagger in a deadly scuffle.

Md. Mangi was rushed to PHC, Nongpok Sekmai but the Doctor declared him brought dead. Following the news of the death of the person party of the deceased vandalized the house of the accused, however a police which rushed the spot



intervene and dispersed them. In the police action to control the mob three persons identified Md. Qutub Ali (55) of Shikhong Khunou, Md. Kamaruddin (42) of Shikhong Muslim and Md. Tahir Ali (55) of Shikhong Muslim sustained injury.

injured on right palm and thigh, now at PHC, Nongpok Sekmai. Now the situation is under control. I have called

both the parties at Nongpok Sekmai PS for a meeting together. Md. Qutub Ali sustained injury on the belly and has been evacuated to Thoubal hospital after giving first aid at PHC, Nongpok Sekmai. Md. Kamaruddin and Md. Tahir Ali sustained injury on the right palm and are reportedly treated at PHC Nongpok Sekmai.

## Five crores worth of contraband betel nuts deposited at Imphal Customs Depot by Assam Rifles

IGAR (South)  
Imphal, March 2

Troops of Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) delivered huge quantities of illegal Betel Nuts which were recovered on 28 January 2020 from Mekan and Wanglee villages. These illegal items were delivered at Department of Customs, Imphal Depot on 28th February 2020 after persistent efforts from Assam Rifles.

Since 28th of January, these illegally smuggled Betel Nuts from Myanmar were dumped across the border for further black marketing, had to be kept under round the clock observation by Assam Rifles as the representatives and vehicles from Customs Department could not reach the remote areas of Mekan and Wanglee. Finally custom officials were assisted by Assam Rifles in reaching the



location of seizure. The nefarious anti-national elements released false allegations against Assam Rifles to the extent of siphoning off the recovered items. These accusations released with the malicious intent to tarnish the incorruptible image of Assam Rifles has been silenced once again by Assam Rifles' conscientious acts. It raises questions on authenticity of report biased towards creating

pressure on Assam Rifles to reduce their vigilance. Assam Rifles is and always has been against any unlawful activity in Manipur and will continue to pursue the National cause against illegal activities. On the other hand Troops of Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) seized suspected Brown Sugar worth Rupees Fifty five Lakhs at Tengnoupal Check Post near

Sita Road Junction on 29th Feb 2020.

During routine checking of the vehicles, at around 02:50 pm, troops of Assam Rifles stopped a suspicious grey coloured Maruti Eeco Van bearing registration No. MN 051-0907 at, Tengnoupal Check Post near Sita Road Junction. The vehicle was driven by Mr. Jamkhomang Baite, age-40 years, S/o Mr. Lhunkhojong Baite along with a passenger named Mr. Thangkhaohao Baite, age-26 years, S/o Lhunkhojong Baite travelling towards Imphal. On carrying out a thorough check of the vehicle, suspected Brown Sugar 279 Grams worth Rupees Fifty five Lakhs in the international market value was recovered and being transported to Imphal.

The apprehendees along with the recovered Brown Sugar have been handed over to Tengnoupal Police Station for further investigation.

## Nagaland vehicles denied entry into Assam

Agency  
Dimapur, March 1

The situation remained tense as hundreds of people from Assam gathered at Nagaland Gate in Lahorjan protesting detention of 30-40 non-Naga people by Nagaland Police in the name of ILP.

The protestors from the border areas in Assam's West Karbi Anglong district blocked the NH39 and prevented Nagaland vehicles from entering Assam at Lahorjan near Dimapur town. "The people blocked the road and did not allow vehicles to enter Assam as a mark of protest against detention of 30-40 people from Assam in

the name of implementation of ILP in Dimapur," said sources. Sources said the mob also did not allow Naga people from entering Assam in protest.

"The protestors stopped the vehicles having Nagaland registration at the Nagaland Gate," added sources.

The tense situation continued for several hours and after the arrival of an Assam police team, the mob was dispersed. The non-Naga people residing in Dimapur and who visit the town on regular basis have alleged that they have been harassed in the name of Inner Line Permit (ILP), which is being implemented in Dimapur, the commercial hub of Nagaland.

## Men-Tsee-Khang Imphal branch clinic opens in MIU Administrative Headquarter

IT News  
Imphal, March 2

Men-Tsee-Khang (Tibetan Medical and Astro Institute) opens its Imphal Branch clinic at Manipur International University (MIU) Administrative headquarters. Speaking at the event Dr. Choenyi Samdup, Chief Medical Officer of Men-Tsee-Khang (Sowa-Rigpa) Imphal Branch Clinic, stated that "Sowa-Rigpa derivation and medical practice is one of the oldest Tibetan medicinal practice passed down from ancestors more than 3000 years ago. Sowa-Rigpa means 'the Art of Healing'. The Sowa-Rigpa practice spread to Tibet with the spread of Buddhism from India. Sowa-Rigpa was reintroduced in India when the 14th Dalai Lama came to India in 1959 and established Men-Tsee-Khang (Sowa-Rigpa) in Dharamshala. Now Men-Tsee-Khang (Sowa-Rigpa) has a Pharmaceutical, Research centre, etc. The Sowa-Rigpa medical practice takes a holistic approach to

the treatment and wellbeing of an individual. Sowa-Rigpa provides preventive measures, although curing every ailment is difficult but its uses have been lauded tremendously".

Dr. Thangam Bhimo, JNIMS Director praised every individual in the field of medicine, stating that it takes the coordination of every individual (Doctor, Nurse, Locals, etc.), he spoke about the goodness of traditional method of Medicine (including Sowa-Rigpa even though it is completely new to Manipur). He believes that it will benefit the people, improve prevention from chronic diseases and he will give full cooperation from his and the side allopathy.

Hon'ble Speaker Shri Khyamchand Singh spoke about his first meeting with HH the Dalai Lama and his invitation to visit Manipur. He also lauded the efforts Manipur International University in bringing development and investment to the state of Manipur, working to



transform not only in education but also in the healthcare sector as well. "His Holiness the Dalai Lama maiden visit to Manipur in 2017 by the invitation of our Hon'ble speaker Mr. Y. Khemchand Ji laid the foundation for future friendship and the opening of Men-Tsee-Khang (Sowa-Rigpa) Imphal Branch Clinic today is proof of that friendship. It also stands as a testament of MIU's promise to open the doors of the Indian Education

system to rest of the world, while welcoming opportunities, talent, and technology from the rest of the world" said Dr. Harikumar Pallathadka, Chancellor of MIU at the opening of the clinic.

Appreciating and lauding the endeavors of the Manipur International University and Men-Tsee-Khang, His Holiness XIV Dalai Lama states, "I am also pleased to learn that the University proposes to

have a Center for Tibetan Medicine and Astrology. This alternative medicine system will certainly enable the students and the community alike to appreciate the importance of a holistic approach to treatment".

This is the first step towards the establishment of the International Medical College of Tibetan medicine in Manipur as per the agreement signed between MIU and Men-Tsee-Khang at Dharamshala on 12th February 2020.

Men-Tsee-Khang Imphal Branch Clinic is the 57th Clinic in India. Men-Tsee-Khang has multiple branch clinics in several cities across the country in cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, J&K, and West Bengal, etc. and spread across countries like Bhutan, Mongolia, and Russia. The uniqueness of Men-Tsee-Khang is that their clinics open only through invitation and demand of the people. And the Imphal Branch Clinic is supported and sponsored by the Manipur International University.

**Manipur International University (MIU)** is an Autonomous State Statutory International University established and recognized by the State Government of Manipur. MIU is established by an Act of State called Manipur International University Act, 2018 and it is recognized and listed by the University Grants Commission (UGC), Govt of India.

**Men-Tsee-Khang (Sowa-Rigpa)** (Men = Medicine, Tsee = Astro-Science, Khang = House or Institute, Sowa = to heal, Rigpa = Knowledge or science) is a charitable, cultural and educational institution, registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. It is the oldest, largest and most reputable Sowa-Rigpa Institute in India for learning, treatment, and pharmacology. It was first established by the Great XIII Dalai Lama in 1916 in Tibet and in 1961 the institute was re-established by His Holiness the Great XIV Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, India.

# Editorial

Monday, March 2, 2020

## Stop bullying young talents

Cyber bullying discouraging the talents of youths is not a sign of civilize society. Recently, in an interview with talented people at IMPACT-TV, a local cable television service a young girl, who was picked up for her par excellent in writing song lyrics was bullied in social media. The young girl unable to bear the humiliation finally ran away from home and was reportedly married to someone. Just because she said that she had learned English grammar when she was in Kg 1, people started humiliating and discouraging her by bullying at Social networking sites. Another talented girl who is presently working as a cabin crew was also bullied by many uncivilized people just because she said that she started writing a story when she was in class 1. The interview was broadcasted at IMPACT-TV in early 2018, after she was crowned Miss Manipur in 2017.

Peoples of our state seem to have forgotten that there are highly talented children across the world and Manipur is no exception. It should have been the pride of the society if someone like the two who started learning grammar or writing stories or even singers are born in our society.

If one reads about exceptional people across the world there are people like the two girls who had extraordinary talents.

Well nobody bullied when a four-year-old boy, Ayan Gogoi Gohain hailing from Assam's North Lakhimpur, was announced as the 'Youngest Author of India'.

The wonder kid from Assam has managed to pen a book titled 'Honeycomb' when he was 4 years old.

Austrian composer Johann Chrysostom Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart popularly known as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was the child prodigy par excellence, playing songs on the harpsichord at four years old and composing simple music at five. When he was seven years old, the Mozart family went on the first of several tours to demonstrate the prodigious musical abilities of the young marvel and his elder sister Maria Anna ("Nannerl"), who was also remarkably gifted. So there is no shortage of anecdotes about the young Mozart's astonishing musical dexterity, memory, and creativity in composition.

At the age of six the Hungarian American mathematician John von Neumann was able to joke with his father in classical Greek. As a party trick, the pint-sized prodigy would memorize pages from the telephone book and answer questions about the names, numbers, and addresses or just recite the page from top to bottom.

Juana Ramirez de Asbaje of Viceroyalty of New Spain (now Mexico) showed remarkable intellectual potential early on, learning to read at the age of three.

Stevie Wonder, the singer managed to become a skilled musician in early childhood, learning to write music, sing, and play the piano, organ, harmonica, and drums. In 1962, at age 12, he began recording music and performing professionally under the name Little Stevie Wonder.

Akrit Jaswal of India started reading Shakespeare at the age of five. At the age of seven, he performed surgery on his neighbor, who couldn't afford healthcare. He became the youngest student to be admitted to a medical school and was regarded as a medical genius.

At the age of 14, Aravind Chithambaram became a chess champion is a Grand Master and is frequently addressed as the "next Vishwanathan Anand". Aravind ranked 1079 in the world and ranked 12 in the under-16 category. He became the Grand Master in April 2015 and the International Master in 2014.

What we need to keep in mind is that Manipur too has child prodigy par excellence in many fields.

Please stop bullying our young talents as it disturbed them a lot besides discouraging them. Instead of bullying them the need of the hour is to encourage them.

## EAM S Jaishankar says govt is working to evacuate Indians stranded in Iran amid novel coronavirus outbreak

Agency  
New Delhi March 2

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said the government is working to evacuate Indians stranded in Iran amid the outbreak of novel coronavirus. He said, the government is collaborating with Iranian authorities to set up a screening process for the return of Indians from Iran.

Iran has reported 54 deaths from COVID-19, the second-highest after China. 87 people have been

infected from the virus.

In a tweet, Mr Jaishankar said he has directed the Indian Ambassador to keep all those concerned of the progress in this regard.

External Affairs Minister was responding to requests made by the Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor to evacuate Kerala fishermen stranded in Iran following the coronavirus outbreak.

These fishermen are working with Iranian fishing companies.

By- Dr. Harsh Vardhan

The story of India in the 21st century has been one of extraordinary growth and innovation. In the health space, we have eliminated polio under incredibly challenging circumstances, and have been validated for maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination before the global date-two very significant achievements. A crucial pillar of our growth story has been the contribution of women, who have shaped our society and our productivity in immeasurable ways. They are a priority for the Government which is ensuring through its policies and initiatives a progressive future for them.

The programs, schemes and initiatives that are implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) care for women right from birth to adolescent and adulthood, what it's called as the 'life cycle' approach. Vaccines, home-visits by frontline health workers, nutrition (across the lifecycle) are provided to ensure a healthy childhood, from where the adolescent health programs - Menstrual Hygiene program, Weekly Iron & Folic Acid Scheme (WIFS) and the Saathiya (Peer Educators), take on. Thereon married women are provided with family planning services and an enhanced basket of choice for contraceptives and ultimately specialized care is provided around pregnancy and child birth through dedicated programs of Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA), Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN), LaQshya (labor room quality improvement initiative), mid-wifery services etc. With the Ministry's commitment for providing universal healthcare, cancer screening for breast and cervical cancers is made available to women, free of cost, through Ayushman Bharat - Health & Wellness Centers (AB-HWCs).

PMSMA launched in June, 2016 aims to provide assured comprehensive and quality antenatal care - a minimum package of antenatal care services (including investigations and drugs), free of cost, universally to all pregnant women on the 9th day of every month. The Abhiyan also involves private sector's health care providers as volunteers for specialist care at the Government facilities. Till date more than 2.38 crore pregnant women have received antenatal care under PMSMA and more than 12.55 lakh high risk pregnancies have been identified.

## International Women's Day Women are the foundation of a healthy and progressive nation

To improve the quality of care in labor rooms and maternity operation theatres, LaQshya, was launched in December 2017 with an aim to reduce preventable maternal and newborn mortality, morbidity and stillbirths associated with the care around delivery in labor room and Maternity Operation Theatre (OT) and ensure that pregnant women receive respectful and the best quality of care during delivery and immediate post-partum. Till date, 506 labor rooms and 449 maternity operation theatres are State certified; 188 labor rooms and 160 maternity operation theatres are LaQshya certified at the national Level. Not just labor rooms, state-of-the-art Maternal and Child Health (MCH) wings have been sanctioned at District Hospitals/District Women's Hospitals and other high case load facilities at sub-district level, as integrated facilities for providing quality obstetric and neonatal care. As on date, 650 dedicated MCH Wings with more than 42,000 additional beds have been sanctioned.

The latest program for women has been the SUMAN Initiative, launched on 10th October 2019. This initiative aims to provide assured, dignified, respectful and quality healthcare, at no cost and zero tolerance for denial of services to every woman and newborn visiting the public health facility in order to end all preventable maternal and newborn deaths and morbidities, and provides a positive birth experience. Under SUMAN, all existing schemes for maternal and neonatal health have been brought under one umbrella in order to create a comprehensive and cohesive initiative, which goes beyond entitlements and provides a service guarantee for the entitlements.

Moving onto universal healthcare, AB-HWCs screen all 30+ population for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) i.e. diabetes, hypertension and three types of common cancers (oral, breast and cervical). Women are being screened for breast cancer and cervical cancer, and till date more than 1.03 crore women have been screened for the former and more than 69 lakhs women for the latter.

Programs and facilities need skilled human resource and thus a national training programme named 'Dakshata' was launched in 2015. It is a strategic 3-day training capsule for building the skills of health care providers, including doctors, staff nurses and ANMs, for providing quality

intrapartum care. Till date, 16,400 health care providers have received Dakshata trainings.

More recently, the Health Ministry took the policy decision to roll out 'Midwifery Services Initiative' in the country in order to improve the quality of care and ensure respectful care to pregnant women and newborns. This aims to create a cadre of Nurse Practitioners in Midwifery who are skilled in accordance to competencies prescribed by the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) and are knowledgeable and capable of providing compassionate women-centered, reproductive, maternal and newborn health care services. To give a boost to these training programs, the Government of India has established five National Skill Labs - "Daksh" functioning at National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW), Lady Hardinge, Safdarjung, Jamia Hamdard and Trained Nurse Association of India institute in 2014 in Delhi and NCR region and 104 stand-alone skills labs established in different States such as Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Jammu & Kashmir etc. for capacity building and skill enhancement of healthcare providers to offer quality RMNCH+A services. Till date around 3375 (1238 in FY 2018-19) health personnel have been trained at National skills lab and around 3375 (7750 in FY 2018-19) at State skills lab from different cadre including nursing tutors, skills lab trainers, professors, medical officers etc.

The collective efforts of the Ministry have borne fruits: the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) of India has declined by eight points in one year as per the latest Special Bulletin on MMR released by the Registrar General of India. This decline is important as it translates to nearly 2000 additional pregnant women saved annually. MMR has declined from 130/lakh live births in 2014-16 to 122/lakh live births in 2015-17 (6.2% decline); with this persistent decline, India is on track to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target for reducing MMR by 2025, five years ahead of timeline of 2030.

This has been possible with sharp rise in institutional deliveries in India - from 47% in 2007-08 to over 78.9% in 2015-16 based on the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) while safe delivery has simultaneously climbed from 52.7%

to 81.4% in the same period. Schemes such as JSY and JSSK have contributed towards meeting this goal. Under JSY, pregnant women going to a public health institution for delivery are provided cash entitlement in one go at the health institution. Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK) entitles all pregnant women delivering in public health institutions to have absolutely free and no expense delivery, including caesarean section. The entitlements include free drugs, consumables, free diet during stay, free diagnostics and free blood transfusion, if required. This initiative also provides free transport from home to institution, between facilities in case of a referral and drop back home. The scheme was expanded to cover complications during ante-natal and post-natal period and also sick infants up to 1 year of age.

Also, Maternal Death Surveillance and Response (MDSR) including Maternal Death Reviews that have been institutionalized across the country both at facilities and in the community have played a significant role in reducing maternal mortality. The States are being closely monitored under this to identify not just the medical causes but also some of the socio-economic, cultural determinants as well as the gaps in the system, which contribute to these deaths.

Besides these programs, laws have been passed to empower and protect the rights of women viz. Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994 which was enacted by the Parliament of India to stop female foeticide and arrest the declining sex ratio in India.

Also, women are not only the beneficiaries of the healthcare programmes, but are in fact an important part of the team delivering healthcare services to society. This army of frontline health workers includes Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), staff nurses and women doctors who form the foundation of our healthcare system. The same is also true for services delivered by other Ministries eg: Aanganwadi workers are the backbone of the services delivered by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The government initiatives thus provide employment opportunities for women and foster women empowerment. Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare

## Women can take lead in promoting international trade: Bangladesh Commerce Minister

By Raju Vernekar

Mumbai: Women should be encouraged to take lead in promoting in trade and commerce in seven nations of BIMSTEC region, Bangladesh Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi said here while addressing "BIMSTEC Expo 2020", organised in Mumbai.

The fourth BIMSTEC summit emphasized the need to expand connectivity by road, railway, waterway and air to allow seamless movement of goods and services across South and Southeast Asia and BIMSTEC has also initiated negotiations to conclude Coastal Shipping Agreement and BIMSTEC Motor Vehicle Agreement, Munshi said and added that the importance of Government-Private sector partnership to improve business climate cannot be over-emphasized. "It is heartening to see that the government officials and private sector honchos on the same platform in this expo, to find ways and means to regain BIMSTEC region's past glory as a global commercial hub" Munshi said.

The BIMSTEC Region comprises seven nations-Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and

Thailand, adjacent to the Bay of Bengal. The expo was jointly organized by All India Association of Industries (AIAI) and MVRDC World Trade Center (WTC), Mumbai in association with Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) at the WTC in South Mumbai. The expo comprised exhibition, conference and B2B Meetings. The representatives of member nations had displayed stalls exhibiting various goods and services. The focus was on pharmaceuticals, engineering equipment, textiles, tourism, education and other sectors. BIMSTEC Secretariat Director D B Paudel, Director, said, "The long pending BIMSTEC Free Trade Area needs to be established as early as possible and the agreement on trade in goods should be signed as soon as possible. Besides, an agreement on cooperation and mutual assistance in the matters of customs should also be concluded soon to simplify customs procedures".

Exim Bank's Managing Director, David Rasquinha also said though BIMSTEC Free Trade Area Framework Agreement was signed in 2004, it was yet to be made operational. There is a three-fold increase in trade between India and other BIMSTEC member states in the

last ten years (from USD 13.7 billion in 2008-09 to USD 39.4 billion in 2018-19). While India's exports to BIMSTEC countries increased from USD 8.8 billion in 2008-09 to USD 28 billion in 2018-19, the country's imports from BIMSTEC region also doubled from USD 5 billion in 2008-09 to USD 11.4 billion in 2018-19. Additional Secretary (BIMSTEC, SAARC and Nalanda) Ministry of External Affairs Dr. Virander Paul, said that BIMSTEC represents 1.7 billion populations and total GDP of around \$3 trillion. Although the high growth of the respective countries continued for the last two decades, the regional share of trade and investment remained below 4%, which was significantly low compared to other trading blocks of this region. As such there was need to revisit the entire process once again.

"Agro-tourism is one of the most suitable strategies to improve the income of rural communities. Awareness programs for rural communities and potential investors on agro-tourism would help add new dimensions on agriculture. Considering the existing gender gap in respect to skill levels, job status and wages that favour males, importance of improving access to

finance for women entrepreneurs has been a vital concern for member states. As such BIMSTEC should take initiative for arranging fund for the women entrepreneurs and assist them in developing their entrepreneurial skills, Dr Paul added. AIAI President and VC, WTC, Mumbai Vijay G. Kalantri, suggested setting up a bank on the lines of the New Development Bank (BRICS) to promote infrastructure, investments and tourism, to introduce multi-modal transport connectivity by road, rail, maritime and air and enhance lines of credit, on line of Rupee-Rubel trade, among countries so that they can trade in their own currency regardless of dollar volatility.

Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Director General Dr. Rajeev Singh, Commissioner Investment Bihar cum Managing Director Bihar Area Development Authority R.S. Srivastava and Consular General of Thailand in Mumbai Thanawat Sirkul and others spoke on the occasion. Caption

Bangladesh Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, actress Poonam Dhillon, AIAI President Vijay Kalantri at the inauguration of "BIMSTEC Expo 2020" in Mumbai.

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