

PLA camp attacked at Indo Myanmar border, 3 cadres killed, 4 PREPAK killed

IT News
Imphal, Jan 14:

3 cadres of the armed rebel group Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) were killed in an attack by a large number of heavily armed security troopers at Indo-Myanmar border yesterday morning. Another unofficial report also said that 4 cadres of the PREPAK were also killed in the attack.

Some of the media reports said that the deadly encounter occurred between border pillar No. 47 and 48 at a village along the border which is around 10 kilometers from Khongtan Village in Chandel district. The report said that a security personnel was also killed after the rebel group retaliated.

The report about the incident has not been officially released from either the Indian security forces or from the Myanmar military regime. There is also no press statement released from the PLA authority too. However, source said that the PLA camp was attacked by around 100 heavily armed sophisticated weapons led by Indian Para Commandos. The source added that in the attack some of the mercenaries were also accompanied.

As per a source with the



File picture

Imphal Times, the attack by the security troopers at the PLA camp at the Indo-Myanmar border happened when the mobile battalions of the PLA were preparing to leave after having an important meeting.

The source added that the security forces used sophisticated weapons while attacking the PLA camp at around 6 in the morning. The PLA cadres too retaliated using rocket and grenade gun the source added. In the fierce gun battle, three PLA cadres died while one personnel of the security troopers was found dead. He was dressed in Indian Para

Commando uniform with no official badge. Beside him was a high tech AK-17 rifles and a walkie talkie set found lying, a highly reliable source told Imphal Times.

The highly reliable source told Imphal Times that as the security forces retreated they again encountered some of the armed PREPAK cadres and in the gun battle four of them were reportedly killed.

Indian security agency however denied any operation conducted at PLA camps. As per intelligence source no Indian force were present in the operation to rebel camp in Myanmar.

As according to ANI news agency report the attack was carried out by the Military force of Myanmar. Quoting India government source the News Agency reports the Government of India has received inputs that Myanmar forces have taken action against anti-India insurgent groups, which have set up camps in Myanmar.

The agency also reported that the Indian establishment has been in touch with the military government in Myanmar, which recently handed over five anti-India insurgents to the Indian agencies

Expenditure limit for Assembly polls

By Raju Vernekar
Mumbai, Jan 14:

Even as Assembly elections are slated to be held in five states next month, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has raised the expenditure limit for candidates which would be Rs 40 lakh for Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab and Rs.28 lakh in Goa and Manipur.

The limit has been raised from Rs 20 lakh-Rs 28 lakh to Rs 28 lakh-Rs 40 lakh for Assembly constituencies. These revised limits will be applicable in all upcoming elections. Similarly the expenditure limits for candidates have been enhanced from Rs 54 lakh-Rs 70 lakh to Rs 75 lakh-Rs 90 lakh for Parliamentary elections. These revised limits have been notified by the Ministry of Law, Justice and Legislative Department.

The last major revision in the election expenditure limit for candidates was carried out in 2014, which was further increased by 10 per cent in 2020. The same year, ECI also formed to study the cost factors and other related issues, and make suitable recommendations.

dations.

Election Expenditure Limit:

It is the amount an election candidate can legally spend for their election campaign and has to account for, which includes expenses on public meetings, rallies, advertisements, posters, banners, vehicles and advertisements.

Under Section 77 of the Representation of the People Act 1951, every candidate shall keep a separate and correct account of all expenditure incurred between the date on which they have been nominated and the date of declaration of the result. The candidates will be required to open a separate bank account to incur the election expenditure.

All candidates are required to submit their expenditure statement to the ECI within 30 days of the completion of the elections. An incorrect account or expenditure beyond the cap can lead to disqualification of the candidate by the ECI for up to three years, under Section 10A of RPA, 1951. The limit prescribed by the ECI is meant for legitimate expenditure because a lot

of money in elections is spent for illegitimate purposes. It has often been argued that these limits are unrealistic as the actual expenditure incurred by the candidate is much higher.

The EC has also devised a model rate card for election expenditure:

PPE kit Rs 300/- per kit, Sanitizer (100 ML)-Rs 18/- per can, Sanitizer (500 ML)-Rs 67/-, Sanitizer (1000 ML)-Rs 130/-, Liquid soap-250 ML-Rs 55/-, Face shield-Rs 30/-, Rubber gloves-Rs 06/-per gloves, Thermal scanner-Rs 973/-.

Eatables: Tea-Rs 06/- per cup, Coffee-Rs 10/-, Mineral water-Rs 20 per bottle, Laddu-Rs 200 per kg, Farsan-Rs 180/- per kg and Biscuit-Rs 300/- per kg. The candidate can spend up to Rs 1100/- if they prefer to have havan/pooja.

There is no cap on a political party's expenditure, which is often exploited by candidates of the party. However, all registered political parties have to submit a statement of their election expenditure to the ECI within 90 days of the completion of the elections.

Imoinu Irate Thouni Thouram observed

IT News
Imphal, Jan 14:

Imoinu Irat thouni thouram is being observed across the state today by maintaining Covid-19 appropriate behaviour. Preparations are on for the traditional worship of Ema Imoinu (celebrated as Imoinu Iratpa day) across the State amongst the Meitei community. This day is an invocation to Goddess Imoinu, believed to be the Goddess of wealth, through offerings of seasonal fruits, vegetables and fish to the deity. The day is celebrated every year on the



12th day of Wakching (a month as per the Meitei lunar calendar). People will offer flowers and vegetables to the deity and pray for a peaceful co-existence on the occasion.

Preparations are on in full swing at Wangkhei Ningthem Pukhri Mapal, Yumnam Leikai Singamei Ema Keithel for Ema Imoinu celebrations. Eramdangi Enat Yokhut Lup is also organising the Imoinu Irat Thouni Thouram at Sado Ground, Singamei Saram Leikai. The main event will be held in the evening by displaying lights on the roads and offering rice to the deity.

Guv' greets people on Gaan Ngai

IT News
Imphal, Jan 14:

Governor of Manipur La Ganeshan greets the people of Manipur, particularly our Zeliangrong people on the joyous and auspicious occasion of Gaan Ngai, 2022.

Zeliangrong community celebrates the "Gaan Ngai" which is the 'Festival of Winter Season' for paying obeisance and homage to those departed souls who left this temporal world in the year before. The festival also symbolises bidding adieu to the old year gone by and heralding a New Year, full of hope and aspiration.

"I am also happy to know that one positive development over the years is that the festival along with its religious fervour has become a major cultural event of not only the Zeliangrong community but of other communities as well. Though essentially an occasion of worship and thanksgiving to the Almighty, it is also an occasion of making joy and merriment", the governor said in his message.

IPAK has extended its wishes to the people with the arrival of one of the biggest festivals of the Kabui community of the State, Gaan-Ngai.

PM to interact with Startups on 15th January

PIB
New Delhi, Jan 14:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with Startups on 15th January, 2022 at 10:30 AM via video conferencing.

Startups from various sectors including Agriculture, Health, Enterprise Systems, Space, Industry 4.0, Security, Fintech, Environment etc will be part of this interaction. More than 150 startups have been divided into six working groups based on themes including Growing from Roots; Nudging the DNA; From Local to Global; Technol-

ogy of Future; Building Champions in Manufacturing; and Sustainable Development. Each group will make a presentation before the Prime Minister on the allotted theme in the interaction. The aim of the interaction is to understand how startups can contribute to the national needs by driving innovation in the country.

As a part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, a week-long event, "Celebrating Innovation Ecosystem", is being hosted by DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, from 10th to 16th January 2022. The event marks

the 6th anniversary of the launch of the Startup India initiative.

Prime Minister has been a firm believer in the potential of Startups to contribute significantly to the growth of the nation. This was reflected in the launch of the flagship initiative Startup India in 2016. Government has worked on providing an enabling atmosphere for boosting the growth and development of Startups. This has had a tremendous impact on the startup ecosystem in the country, and has led to a staggering growth of unicorns in the country.

To celebrate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav on the occasion of the Sankranti / Uttarayan Kite Flying Festival

IT News
Imphal, Jan 14:

Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) with the support of the office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India organised a Kite Flying Festival at SEYO Club Ground, Akampat, of the Thongju assembly constituency Imphal East to celebrate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav on the occasion of Makar Sankranti and Uttarayan.

The artisans from the Kite making craft cluster demonstrated their kite flying skills at Seyo Club Ground, Akampat. Kite making has been a tradi-

tional craft in India and has potential to diversify according to the changing trends.

Rajkumar Malhotra, Chairman-EPCH expressed that Makar Sankranti being one of the most important ancient festivals celebrated across the country with much fanfare and is associated with flying kites. The festival also marks the end of winter and beginning of the auspicious period of Uttarayana. This year the festival is even more significant as the country is also celebrating 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' to commemorate the 75th year of its independence. I hope the positivity generated through

this event would help us in our endeavour to fight the current pandemic and keep our spirits high for the whole year.

Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Director General, Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts informed that EPCH organised 14 kite making craft workshops at the kite clusters of Rampur, Bareilly, Lucknow, Prayagraj, Agra, Mathura, Hyderabad, Cuttack, Ahmedabad, Surat, Baroda, Jodhpur, Udaipur and Imphal. The training helped the artisans produce kites of different designs with various themes under the close supervision of the expert designers.

contd. on page 4

Handicrafts artisans sensitization programme held

IT News
Imphal, Jan 14:

One Day Seminar under AHVY Scheme for handicrafts artisans sensitisation of the schemes of DC(H) in cluster activities was held on 13th January 2022 at Salanthong, Imphal East, Manipur.

The program has been organized by Handicrafts Service Centre, Porompat, Imphal East District, Manipur under the sponsorship of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

Chief Guest W. Birenjit, Retd. Asst. Director (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, GOI talked about the existing schemes lying under Ambedkar Hasta Silpa Kala, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India. President Y.



Jagayashowri Devi, Asst. Director (Handicraft), Ministry of Textile, Govt. of India said Medam has shared the objective of the program that promotes and protects the welfare of the artisans in India and Manipur in particular.

Guest of Honour Chanam Mani Singh, Retd. Asst. Director (Handicrafts), Ministry of Text-

tiles, GOI said he has expressed the rationale of the scheme of Dr. Ambedkar Hasta Shilpa Kala schemes. Importance of Identity Card for artisan so-called Pehachand Card, the opportunities get by registered artisans such as old-age pension, Travelling concession, educational sponsorship for children of artisans.

Challenges in poll campaigning through digital media

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



Assembly elections are on the cards in five states (Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand) and the campaigning season is in full swing. Meanwhile, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has added to the troubles of the political candidates by suspending election rallies and street or corner meetings due to the growing fear of Covid pandemic, as the cases of Omicron variant affected people are on the surge. Although this ban on election rallies and corner meetings is only till January 15, after reviewing the situation of the Covid cases, if necessary, this restriction can be extended for a longer period. Political parties have their own social media war rooms where hundreds of trained and professional youths campaign furiously on social media, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. So far it is fine, but the individual candidates have been facing several practical difficulties in this matter. There are many leaders who neither know how to use social media themselves nor have any knowledge of digital mediums. As such, they are completely dependent on others, while in rallies and speeches they might roar like a lion and amaze. Apart from this, the situation is the same among the voters as well.

Most of the aged population is not aware of social media or digital means, nor do they prefer it. It is a big problem for political leaders and candidates to woo or reach out to such voters. There is another problem in hilly areas like in Uttarakhand—there are many areas where mobile signals do not reach. Apart from this, there are many people who do not have Android phones, so how to reach them is a big challenge in front of the candidates. No doubt about it that the youth can be influenced to a great extent by digital election campaigning, but it is difficult to convince the older and illiterate population. For them, it is only possible by giving a public speech or meeting them face-to-face in a social gathering. Some leaders say that digital campaigns in rural areas and in small towns are proving to be a big challenge following the restrictions.

Social media influencers are of great use for promoting any person, product or brand through digital means. In today's time, many influencers have become so powerful that even film personalities or celebrity stars prove to be secondary in front of them. Companies also love to associate with micro-influencers having less followers to propel their brands, because they have immense impact on the masses in their niche areas and people trust them. Their followers do what these influencers say. According to the Influencer Marketing Factory, there are about 50 million online creators in the world. Children, teenagers and youth are present in large numbers in online creators. In the year 2021, the value of the creator market was more than 7.44 lakh crores. This army of creators has come into existence especially in the last ten years. Twitch started in the year 2021, when the foundation of the creator economy was laid. Platforms such as Fans Only, Twitch, Patreon and Substack offer creators the opportunity to earn from the subscription model, while also charging commissions ranging from 10 to 50 percent of their earnings.

Employers Must Prioritise Employee Wellness

By: Kaustov Kashyap

The pandemic is revolutionising wellness among people and organisations. Covid-19 has changed the perception of health and fitness, both at home and in the workplace. It has presented us with opportunities to improve wellness and its parameters, such as mental health, financial stability, relationships and work-life balance, and take those to a higher level. Personal wellbeing is no longer the responsibility of only individuals and doctors, but also that of employers and HR leaders. Things that employers can do to prioritise the wellness agenda for employees in 2022:

Teleconsultations

In the world of technology, more doctors are using online healthcare platforms to connect with patients through video conference or phone calls. It saves time and money as well as ensures social distancing. Employers can tie up with these teleconsultation apps to offer the workforce quick, free and real-time access to a team of healthcare professionals both on working and non-working days. Since the outbreak and especially during the second wave, teleconsultations came to the rescue of desperate patients, connecting them with doctors, hospitals and e-pharmacies.

According to a report, the teleconsultation segment in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of 72% and valued at over \$800 million by 2024. Hence, in 2022, we can expect more businesses, including SMEs and early-stage startups, to adopt teleconsultations for their employees.

Wellness programmes

In 2021, several organisations offered their employees routine health check-ups and wellness programmes, which, apart from Covid-19, covered diabetes, stress, cardiac health, fitness, yoga and meditation, and nutrition among others. In the coming year, we can expect more corporates to unveil wellness programmes that serve the distinct needs of their employees, and accord equal priority to productivity and health in the workplace. With more and more young people falling ill, and even succumbing, to lifestyle-related diseases, it is imperative that companies give as much attention to employee wellbeing as to balance sheets.

Relationship counselling

Healthy personal and sound professional relationships are key to satisfaction in the workplace. Companies are integrating relationship counselling sessions into employee health benefit plans to reduce stress levels and improve mental wellbeing, and by extension, performance. Employers can provide access to self-help apps and organise workshops that result in better employer-employee and employee-to-employee engagement.

Health insurance

Financial wellbeing is directly linked to employee wellbeing. Money, or the lack of it, is a major stress factor and often the cause of underperformance at work, resulting in health problems such as hypertension, cardiac and other illnesses. Employers can provide employees and their immediate families—usually parents, spouses and children—with adequate health insurance or increase the cover in the event they already

Makar Sankranti is an auspicious day in Indian culture and is dedicated to the almighty Surya. This day has historical, spiritual as well as scientific significance. It is set by the solar cycle and corresponds to the exact timing of the astronomical events of transition (Sankranti) of Surya into Makar Rashi (Capricorn). This day marks the termination of cold & harsh winter season and the beginning of longer & warmer days with the onset of spring season. It usually falls on 14th January of the Gregorian calendar and on 15th January in the case of leap years.

Most of the Sanatan Dharma festivals are based on lunar events. Makar Sankranti is one of the rare Indian festivals, which is based on a Solar event. The Gregorian year 2010 observed the special occasion when solar event coincided with the lunar event of Amavasya and had witnessed a great Surya Grahan (Solar eclipse). Makar Sankranti is the festival to thank nature for its abundant resources and has a special time for farmers as it marks the beginning of the harvest season. Farmers across the country pay their gratitude to Surya Dev and wish for a good crop. As cows and bullocks are the centre of farming families, they are also worshipped in different parts of the country. This festival

has no gender-centric rituals and signifies equal importance to every individual in nature.

Before this day the Sun shines on the Southern Hemisphere, i.e. Dakshinayan; due to which the nights are longer and days are shorter. The period from Karka Sankranti to Makar Sankranti is known as Dakshinayan. From Makar Sankranti the Sun begins its journey towards the Northern Hemisphere i.e. Uttarayan journey, resulting in longer days and shorter nights. According to religious scriptures, Dakshinayan is the night of Devi-Devas and signifies negativity, whereas Uttarayan is said to be the day of the Devi-Devas and a sign of positivity.

Makar Sankranti is the beginning of the month of Magh, hence the Mela held on this day is termed as MaghMela. Many Melas are held on this auspicious day in different parts of the country, the most significant being the KumbhMela and the Ganga SagarMela. KumbhMela is held every 12 years at four sacred locations Haridwar, Prayag, Nashik



By: Er. Prabhat Kishore

and Ujjain. People take ritual bath in rivers or other nearby water courses, worship Surya Dev and chant the Gayatri Mantra. The day holds special importance for Indians, particularly the Sikh sect, as two elder sons and forty Shishya/Sikhs (ChalisMukte) sacrificed their lives to protect Guru Govind Singh Ji Maharaj from huge Mughal Army. MaghiMela is organised in Muktsar in the memory of these patriots. In the Mahabharat Dharma Yuddha, severely injured BhishmaPatimah waited for his death till the day of Uttarayan of Surya Dev for Mokshapatri.

There are one nation numerous celebrations on Makar Sankranti as it is observed all over the Indian sub-continent with various other provincial names such as Maghi Bihu (Assam), Maghi (Punjab), Sakarat (Haryana), TilSakarati (Bihar), Uttarayan (Jammu, Gujarat), ShishirSankranti (Kashmir), Pongal (Tamilnadu), MaghaVolaku (Kerala) etc. In foreign countries it is known as Maghe Sankranti (Nepal), PoushSangkranti (Bangladesh),

Songkranti (Siam/Thailand), Thingyan (Burma), Mohan Songkranti (Cambodia).

This day is observed with Mela (MaghMela), Patangbaji (Kite Flying), bonfires, dances etc. Dahi-Chura, Gud, Bhura, Tilkut, Tilwa, TilLaddoo or Anarsa, Kangsubi, Khichdi, Pitha of boiled rice etc. are the traditional dishes of the day. The Til consumed is said to purify the soul. As per BharatiyaPanchang (calendar), this day marks the end of Kharmaas and resumption of all auspicious events or ceremonies such as engagement, marriage, NamankanSanskar, Mundan, Grih-Pravesh (House warming), purchasing new vehicle/property, laying foundation stone etc.

A festival is said to be a binding force between communities. It infuses new energy in people's life and facilitates them to move forward with great enthusiasm. Makar Sankranti, with different names but having same rituals and objectives, is celebrated across the length and breadth of the country and it signifies the unity among the diversity of our culturally rich civilization.

(The author is a technocrat & academician. He holds Master in Engineering from M.N. Regional Engineering College, Allahabad/Prayagraj)

Artificial sun raises hopes

Of life on earth. But today this sun of ours has also become an important means of fulfilling the needs of electricity.

On the basis of many arrangements of solar energy, the electricity needs of the world are being met to some extent in India as well.

These features have certainly made this natural sun useful, but it has some limitations. If the clouds cover it for several days, then the power generation stops. Also, this electricity is not produced in sufficient quantity to meet the current and future energy needs. Perhaps this is the reason why efforts are being made in the world to get unlimited amount of energy by making arrangements like fake sun.

It was recently claimed that China managed to set a world record for achieving extremely high temperatures for one thousand and fifty-six seconds from its artificial Sun. This simulated Sun, called the Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (East), located in southwest China's Sichuan province, is actually a type of nuclear construction, which works on nuclear fusion (fission) technology like the real Sun. In May last year, heat of up to twelve core degrees Celsius was produced for one hundred and one second.

This effort to generate energy from nuclear fusion technology like the real Sun, using hydrogen and deuterium gases as fuel, is being seen as a big hope. It is being said that in the coming times, when the traditional means of generating electricity will be lost or it will not be possible to meet the growing needs with these means, in such a situation, this fake sun will help in keeping the earth lit.

Not only this, this technology, which does not generate any kind of waste including zero radioactive waste, will also offer solutions to all problems including global temperature. So far, the work of generating one million ampere current from this nuclear plant for one thousand seconds and a temperature of 100 million degree Celsius has been done in three different phases. Now the next goal is to carry out all these three processes simultaneously.



By: Vijay Garg

China expects to start building a fusion reactor that produces massive amounts of energy from tokamak five years from now. Its construction will take ten years. After this, electricity generation will start by the year 2040. For the first time in the year 2006, the work of creating a fake sun that gives ten times more heat than the real sun on the earth was started.

In this case, China is not the only country that is working on making energy from the fake sun. The development of reactors powered by nuclear fusion technology was started in America. Its purpose was to build safe nuclear reactors that would not generate any nuclear waste that would be difficult to dispose of.

Special progress in this direction was made when in the year 2006, Russia, Japan, USA, China, South Korea, European Union and India together agreed on a project called International Thermonuclear Experiment Reactor (ITER). The project is to build a nuclear reactor powered by fusion technology. The construction of ITER was started in 2013 in Karahash, France.

It is the largest fusion research project in the world. In this, India was entrusted with the responsibility of manufacturing the largest, heavy and important equipment of the reactor. India has manufactured 'Croatat' for ITER. It is also being called the heart of the reactor. The cryostat is a cylinder-shaped device that controls the temperature of the reactor. Apart from this, the development work of another reactor system (Vacuum Vessel System) is also being done in India. This reactor is expected to be ready by 2025.

It is important to understand how energy will be obtained from fusion and how it is different from the current process of nuclear energy fission. Basically, nuclear energy comes in two ways - one, by nuclear fission and the other, by nuclear fusion. So far the world has been able to generate nuclear energy only through nuclear fission. The energy from nuclear fission has its own problems. This generates large amounts of nuclear waste, which is difficult and dangerous to dispose

of. In such a situation, that nuclear fusion has been seen with new hope, due to which our sun and other stars are illuminated. In the process of nuclear fusion, two or more nuclei collide to form a heavier nucleus. This is in contrast to nuclear fission in which heavier elements break down and become lighter. Both processes produce huge amounts of energy. However, nuclear fusion can give unlimited energy compared to fission. It also does not pose the risk of nuclear pollution. But the question is why the world has not moved in this direction so far.

The answer is that nuclear fusion is very difficult to control. The process of nuclear fusion requires extremely high temperatures, which is a different problem to control. It's just like making a real Sun on Earth. Researchers at Princeton University have discovered an effective and practical way to control the fusion process.

He did this by getting the atoms into a state of plasma for nuclear fusion. By doing this the plasma takes the shape of a bubble or magnetic island, where unlimited energy is released. This is where the risk of the process of fusion going unchecked arises. Researchers tried to control the nuclear reaction with radio signals, that is, to control the magnetic island, which was successful.

The process of fusion has some other advantages. It does not emit greenhouse gases, so it is safe for the environment. All the nuclear reactors in the world today generate electricity by the first method i.e. fission. There is always a risk of nuclear accident from such reactors. The disasters caused by the tsunami in Chernobyl in Ukraine in 1986 and the Daiichi nuclear power plant in Fukushima, Japan in March 2011 are prime examples. The nuclear waste generated from such reactors continues to emit toxic radiation for hundreds of years. Even today, no country in the world has any system for such permanent disposal of nuclear waste.

Apart from this, there is also a danger of the technology being adopted in these nuclear power stations being stolen and falling into the hands of terrorists. The uranium that is used to generate energy in these reactors is the same used in nuclear weapons. This risk is virtually eliminated in the case of fusion reactors and their fuels.

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(The writer is a HR & Career Consultant Jorhat & Guwahati, Assam)

Guwahati-Bikaner Express Accident: Death Toll Rises to 9 Killed, 36 Injured; Inquiry Reveals Glitch in Engine

Agency
Guwahati, Jan 14:

The death toll following the derailment of the Guwahati-Bikaner Express in Domohani area in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district rose to nine on Friday, with more than 70 passengers injured.

Confirming the increased toll to News18, Anshul Gupta, General Manager of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) said rail security officers will reach the accident site at 2pm to investigate.

The Guwahati-Bikaner Express 15633 started from Bikaner in Rajasthan and was heading to Guwahati in Assam via Patna when 12 coaches derailed near Maynaguri in Jalpaiguri district at around 5.15 pm on Thursday. Maynaguri was not one of the train's 34 stoppages' list and the Bikaner Express was merely passing Jalpaiguri at the time of the incident.

The NFR said in a statement in Guwahati that the rescue operations have been completed. There were 1,053 passengers on board the train at the time of the derailment, it said, adding those stranded were provided drinking water and snacks.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi



on the tragedy when they were in the middle of an online meeting to review the Covid situation in the country with other CMs. "Spoke to Railways Minister Shri @AshwiniVaishnav and took stock of the situation in the wake of the train accident in West Bengal. My thoughts are with the bereaved families. May the injured recover quickly," Modi later tweeted.

The Railways have announced an ex gratia payment of Rs 5 lakh to the next of kin of those killed in the accident, Rs 1 lakh to the grievously in-

jured and Rs 25,000 for passengers with simple injury. President Ram Nath Kovind and Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu too expressed grief over the accident and wished speedy recovery to those injured.

"The derailment of coaches of the Bikaner-Guwahati Express near New Maynaguri, West Bengal is distressing. My thoughts and prayers are with the affected passengers and their families. I wish a speedy recovery to the injured, Kovind tweeted. Vice President Naidu said he was deeply saddened

by the loss of lives. "My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. I pray for the speedy recovery of the injured," the Vice President's Secretariat tweeted, quoting Naidu.

Meanwhile, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has asked Energy Minister Bhanwar Singh Bhati and Disaster Management and Relief Minister Govind Ram Meghwal to rush to Bagdogra Airport in West Bengal and coordinate relief efforts on behalf of the state government.

Nagaland killings: SIT to present findings before court

Agency
Kohima, Jan 14:

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by the Nagaland government to probe the killings of 14 civilians by security forces in Mon district on December 4 and 5 last year will submit the final report to the court after receiving the forensic results, a senior official has said.

Nagaland Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Sandeep Tamdage, the overall supervisor of the SIT, told reporters here on Thursday that 85 civilians, and 37 security personnel, including 31 army jawans involved in the botched operation, have been examined and the team has visited the spot multiple times.

"The exhibits, soil and blood samples have been sent to Central Forensic Science Laboratories in Guwahati and Hyderabad and their reports are awaited. As soon as we receive those, we will start preparing the final report which will be submitted to the court," he said.

The official said that once the final report is submitted to the court, everyone can access the findings but not before that as it would not be "legally tenable".

"We have worked against

time to complete the probe, and we have reached this far. But it would be difficult to say how long the forensic laboratories take, but we have made a special request to them to expedite the scientific analysis considering the sensitivity of the case," he said.

He said that six coal miners and seven other villagers were gunned down by a team of 31 army personnel, led by a Major and also comprising two JCOs, in the Oting-Tiru area on December 4, and another civilian was killed in another incident in Mon town on December 5, following which suo motu cases were registered with Tizit police station.

The state government constituted the SIT on December 5 and transferred the case to State Crime Police Station at Kohima to complete the investigation within one month.

More members were co-opted in the SIT, which is now made up of 21 officers, including four from the Konyak tribe to which the deceased belonged, and Inspector General of Police (Range) Limasunep Jamir is the Chief Investigating Officer (CIO).

The SIT was divided into eight teams, of which four teams were tasked with examining the witnesses and survivors in the three incidents, while one team each was

tasked with studying the incident site and collecting evidence, cyber technical analysis, comparison of documents, and coordination with various forensics.

"During this period, the SIT has visited the site multiple times, and collected a lot of material evidence including empty cartridges, and an unmanipulated video. The SIT examined 85 civilians including two survivors undergoing treatment in Assam's Dibrugarh, and other injured people being treated in medical establishments at Dimapur and Mon, besides villagers from Oting and government officials," he said.

The official said that the SIT issued notices to the army under Section 91 of CrPC for collection of documents including names of those involved in the operation, and accordingly 37 officers and other ranks of army and Assam Rifles, including 31 army jawans involved in the operation in the Oting-Tiru area, were examined.

He said that the security forces were cooperative with the SIT.

The officer asserted that the main motive of the SIT was to conduct the investigation in a professional manner so that the evidence stand all odds in the court.

COVAXIN now a universal vaccine for adults and children: Bharat Biotech

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 14:

In a major breakthrough for India, indigenously developed anti-coronavirus vaccine - Covaxin - has now been recognised globally as a "universal vaccine for adults and children".

"Covaxin is now a universal vaccine for adults and children. Our goals of developing a global vaccine against Covid-19 have been achieved and all product development for licensure has been completed," its manufacturer Bharat Biotech said in a statement on Thursday, according to news agency ANI.

As per the latest available data, Covaxin accounts for 12 per cent of the total Covid-19 vaccines administered in India so far since January 2021.

Moreover, Covaxin is the only Covid-19 vaccine administered to youngsters in the age-group of 15-18 years, the vaccination programme for whom began on January 3.

The announcement comes on the day the Hyderabad-

based Indian pharmaceutical company urged the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to give a regular market approval for its Covid-19 vaccine.

"Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL) took up the challenge to develop, produce and clinically evaluate a COVID-19 vaccine (Covaxin), from the SARS-CoV-2 strains isolated from COVID-19 patients in India, Mohan said in the application. It was granted the permission to manufacture Covaxin for restricted use in emergency situations on January 3. In the current submission, all the required complete information regarding chemistry, manufacturing and controls, along with the pre-clinical and clinical data have been provided in five modules. The information contained in the modules is uploaded on SUGAM portal for your kind perusal. We request you to kindly review the same and grant the marketing authorisation, at the earliest," V Krishna Mohan, a top Bharat Biotech official, wrote in his application to DCGI.

Assam reports 3238 new COVID-19 cases, three deaths

Agency
Guwahati, Jan 14:

COVID-19 in Assam continues to grow as on Thursday Assam on Wednesday reported 3238 new cases.

As per the health department, the overall positivity percentage on Wednesday stood at 7.87 per cent.

Of the total cases in Assam, 1070 were reported from Kamrup Metro while the state in total reported three deaths in connection with the virus.

The recovery rate was recorded at 96.96 per cent.

Apart from these, there were no reports of any Omicron case in the state.

It may be mentioned that in order to prevent the further spread of the virus, the government has put in several restrictions including a night curfew.

However, on Wednesday the government announced a relaxation in the curfew timings because of Bohag Bihu and the "uruka" celebrations on Thursday night.

The night curfew timing has been scheduled from 11 pm to 4 am instead of 10 pm to 6 am

on 13 January.

However, the government and district administrations have asked people to strictly follow coronavirus guidelines during the celebrations.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma speaking about the situation said that he cannot "convince the COVID-19 to go away".

Speaking to the media, Himanta Biswa Sarma said, "Corona is not a person and I cannot ask it to go away. I can only take precautions so that the people in the state are safe and healthy."

Director General of Assam Rifles Visits HQ IGAR(South)



IT News
Imphal, Jan 14:

Lieutenant General Pradeep Chandran Nair, AVSM, YSM, visits Headquarter Inspector General Assam Rifles (South), Mantripukhri yesterday.

During the visit, the Director General was briefed in detail by the IG Assam Rifles about

the prevailing security situation and operational preparedness. The General expressed his satisfaction on the security measures and operational preparedness of the Assam Rifles.

He complimented Headquarter Inspector General Assam Rifles (South) for efficiently managing the security situation in the State. The Director General interacted with the Assam Rifles

Sports Team. He also appreciated the untiring efforts of the forces in difficult and inhospitable conditions and commended them for carrying out people friendly operations. The Director General was also briefed about the efforts being undertaken for Force preservation and COVID-19 preparedness of Assam Rifles in Manipur.

14th Round of India-China Talks End in Stalemate But Both Sides Agree on Early Resolution of Pending LAC Issues

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 14:

The 14th round of talks between the Indian and Chinese senior military commanders to discuss disengagement at the remaining friction points at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh ended in a stalemate, even as government sources told News18.com that they were "constructive". The talks started at 0930 hours on Wednesday at the Chushul-Moldo meeting point on the Chinese side and went on for nearly 13 hours to conclude at 2230 hours.

According to government sources, the talks were constructive yet they did not yield any forward movement even with respect to a "full disengagement" at the Hot Springs area where less than a platoon

strength of around 20 troops continue facing each other.

As reported by News18.com on Tuesday, the "complete disengagement" at the Hot Springs area featured in the agenda of the talks. The disengagement at this friction point was already agreed upon by the two sides during the 12th round of military commanders' talks, but was not fully implemented.

Disengagement at other friction points and establishing confidence between the two opposing forces ahead of the approaching summers in eastern Ladakh — when the snow melts, passes open and movement of troops becomes easier — also featured in the talks, the sources had said.

One reason for the stalemate reached in the latest round of talks, the sources said, was

disagreement on who made the first attempt to change the status quo at the LAC, back in April 2020.

"Each side put the onus of initiating the escalation in May 2020 on the other and this led to a disagreement on who made the first attempt in 2020," a source in the government told News18.com.

Army chief General MM Naravane said on Wednesday it was China who had made attempts to unilaterally change the status quo, but that was met with a robust response from the Indian Army and that India was able to thwart this design.

He had also said to expect every round will have an outcome is "unreasonable" and a number of rounds will be required to deal with the situation and resolve them one at a time. Lt. Gen. Anindya

Sengupta, who took charge of the 14 corps recently, led the Indian delegation in the latest round of talks, while the Chinese delegation was led by Major General Yang Lin, who is the People's Liberation Army (PLA) commander of the south Xinjiang military district. The delegations had both military and diplomatic representatives.

A joint statement released by New Delhi and Beijing on Thursday stated that the two sides had a frank and an in-depth exchange of views for the resolution of the relevant issues along the LAC in the Western Sector.

The statement also said the two sides also agreed to consolidate on the previous outcomes and take effective efforts to maintain the security and stability on the ground in the Western Sector even during winter.

India logs 2,64,202 new COVID-19 cases, highest daily rise in 239 days

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 14:

India added 2,64,202 new coronavirus infections, the highest in 239 days, taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,65,82,129 which includes 5,753 cases of the Omicron variant, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday.

There has been a 4.83 per cent increase in Omicron cases since Thursday.

The active cases have increased to 12,72,073, the highest in 220 days, while the death toll has climbed to 4,85,350 with 315 fresh fatalities, the data updated at 8 am stated.

The active cases comprises 3.48 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has decreased to 95.20 per cent,

the ministry said.

A total 2,76,110 coronavirus infections were reported in a single day on May 19.

An increase of 1,54,542 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 14.78 per cent while the weekly positivity rate was recorded at 11.83 per cent, according to the ministry.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,48,24,706, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.33 per cent.

The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive has exceeded 155.39 crore.

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India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one crore mark on December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4 and three crore on June 23.

The 315 new fatalities include 117 from Kerala and 36 from Maharashtra.

A total of 4,85,350 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 1,41,737 from Maharashtra, 50,369 from Kerala, 38,397 from Karnataka, 36,930 from Tamil Nadu, 25,271 from Delhi, 22,946 from Uttar Pradesh and 19,985 from West Bengal.

The ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

Budget session to begin on 31 January, to be held in two parts: Report

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 14:

The Budget session of Parliament will begin on 31 January with the address of President Ram Nath Kovind to the joint sitting of both the Houses and the Union Budget will be presented on February 1 as reported by news agency.

The first part of the session would conclude on February 11. The President will also address both Houses of Parliament assembled together on 11 am on January 31.

"The 256th Session of Rajya Sabha (Budget Session

- 2022) is summoned to meet on Monday, January 31, and subject to exigencies of Government Business, the Session may conclude on Friday, April 8. During this period, Chairman may be moved to kindly adjourn the Rajya Sabha on Friday, February 11 to reassemble on Monday, March 14 to enable the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees to consider the 'Demands for Grants relating to Ministries/Departments and prepare their reports,' a letter of Additional secretary-general of Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs Minister stated.

Kashmir Valley in Grip of Severe Cold Wave; Pahalgam Records Minus 10.3 Degree C Temp

Agency
Kashmir, Jan 14:

The minimum temperature dropped at most places in Kashmir on Friday as the intense cold wave conditions continued in the valley, officials said here. The night temperature settled several degrees below normal for this part of the season.

Gulmarg, the famous skiing resort in Baramulla district of north Kashmir, was the only place in the valley where the night temperature improved on Thursday night, the officials said. The resort recorded a low of minus 10.5 degrees Celsius,

slightly up from minus 11.0 degrees Celsius. It was for the sixth straight night that the minimum temperature has settled at minus 10 degrees Celsius or below, the officials said.

Pahalgam in south Kashmir Anantnag district, which serves as the base camp for the annual Amarnath yatra, recorded a low of minus 10.3 degrees Celsius, a degree down from the previous night, they said. The minimum temperature in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, settled at minus 3.4 degrees Celsius half-a-degree down from the previous night, the officials said.

WHO recommends two new drugs to treat Covid-19 patients amid Omicron spread

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 14:

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday recommended the use of two new drugs for the treatment of Covid patients — baricitinib and casirivimab-imdevimab.

The drug baricitinib (a type of drug known as a Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitor, also used to treat rheumatoid arthritis) is strongly recommended for patients with severe or critical covid-19 in combination with corticosteroids, a WHO Guideline Development Group of international experts said in the peer-reviewed journal, The BMJ.

Their strong recommendation is based on moderate certainty evidence that it improves survival and reduces the need for ventilation, with no observed increase in adverse effects.

The WHO experts note that baricitinib has similar effects to other arthritis drugs called interleukin-6 (IL-6) inhibitors. So, when both are available, they suggest choosing one based on cost, availability, and clinician experience. It is not recommended to use both drugs at the same time.

However, the experts advise against the use of two other JAK

inhibitors (ruxolitinib and tofacitinib) for patients with severe or critical Covid-19 because low certainty evidence from small trials failed to show benefit and suggests a possible increase in serious side effects with tofacitinib.

In the same guideline update, the WHO also makes a conditional recommendation for the use of the monoclonal antibody sotrovimab in patients with non-severe covid-19, but only in those at highest risk of hospitalisation, reflecting trivial benefits in those at low risk.

A similar recommendation has been made by WHO for another monoclonal antibody drug (casirivimab-imdevimab). The experts also note that there were insufficient data to recommend one monoclonal antibody treatment over another — and they acknowledge that their effectiveness against new variants like omicron is still uncertain.

As such, they say guidelines for monoclonal antibodies will be updated when additional data become available.

The recommendations are based on new evidence from seven trials involving over 4,000 patients with non-severe, severe, and critical covid-19 infection.

They are part of a living guideline, developed by the World Health Organization with the methodological support of MAGIC Evidence Ecosystem Foundation, to provide trustworthy guidance on the management of covid-19 and help doctors make better decisions with their patients.

Living guidelines are useful in fast-moving research areas, like Covid-19, because they allow researchers to update previously vetted and peer-reviewed evidence summaries as new information become available.

To make their recommendations, the panel considered a combination of evidence assessing relative benefits and harms, values and preferences, and feasibility issues.

The guidance adds to previous recommendations for the use of interleukin-6 receptor blockers and systemic corticosteroids for patients with severe or critical covid-19; conditional recommendations for the use of casirivimab-imdevimab (another monoclonal antibody treatment) in selected patients; and against the use of convalescent plasma, ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine in patients with covid-19 regardless of disease severity.

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To celebrate Azadi Ka Amrit....

VP Thakur Regional Director, office of DC Handicrafts, Government of India (North East Region) informed that the national level designers guided the artisans with new designs of kites and the artisans were

provided guidance about new kite designing trends.

Y. Jagdishwori Devi AD O/o DC Handicrafts, Government of India from Handicrafts Service Centre Imphal, Kongsam Ibomcha Singh (State

Awardee), Salam Premila Devi (Empanelled Designer, NER), Kh. Rajesh Singh (Master craftsman), Maibam Surjamala Devi Designer EPCH and 30 artisans were present on the occasion.

ISL 2021-22: Hyderabad FC share points with Chennaiyin after playing 1-1 draw

Agency
Chennai, Jan 14:

Hyderabad FC shared points with Chennaiyin FC after playing a 1-1 draw in the 2021-22 Indian Super League match at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, here on Thursday. Chennaiyin FC's aspirations of breaking into the top-four went up in smoke as they were held by Hyderabad FC in a tense game that ended in a 1-1 stalemate.

Chennaiyin went ahead through Mohd Sajid Dhot in the 13th minute but could not hold on to their slender lead till halftime as Javier Siverio (45th) continued his scoring spree with a goal on the cusp of halftime. There were no goals in the second period as Debjit Majumder made a string of saves in Chennaiyin goal and the home side put pressure in six minutes of added time for the winner but in the end, it ended all square.

Hyderabad missed talisman Bartholomew Ogbeche, lacking teeth upfront as the league's top-scorer served his suspension after picking up four yellow cards. The result means Hyderabad moved third in the table with 17 points from 11 games while Chennaiyin re-



maintained sixth having 15 points from 11 matches.

Chennaiyin nosed ahead early through an unlikely source when young defender Mohd Sajid Dhot headed in Anirudh Thapa's inch-perfect free-kick leaving Laxmikant Katimani with no chance.

Stung by the early goal, Hyderabad got their act together and started bossing possession, also creating chances in the final third. The industry paid off just before halftime as Siverio atoned for his miss just a minute before with a calm and composed finish after Asish Rai sent in a delightful cross inside the box

for Siverio to leap highest and head the ball in past Debjit Majumder.

Just after the restart, Debjit was forced into making two crucial saves to deny Siverio and Edu Garcia. Both teams made a flurry of chances to get that goal but clear-cut chances were few and far between before Ninthoinganba Meetei's thunderbolt of a shot ricocheted off the bar and his rebound was a meek one.

Chennaiyin upped the ante in the latter stages of the second half with the introduction of Rahim Ali injecting pace. But in the end, Hyderabad held firm to eke out a point.

Sports

AFC Asian Cup: After delay, Indian team arrives in Mumbai, follows Chinese Taipei

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 14:

The Indian football team arrived here for the AFC Women's Asian Cup on Thursday, hours after its scheduled flight from its training base Kochi got delayed.

Amid the concerns caused by the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese Taipei became the first team to arrive here for the continental tournament.

The delay in their flight from Kochi, the Indian team's base since its return from the tournament-cum-exposure tour of Brazil, also led to the postponement of the host nation's scheduled media session on Thursday evening.

Looking forward to the tournament, India head coach Thomas Dennerby said, "This is the moment we've been preparing for over the past six months. We've had over 200 sessions, a number of matches against quality opponents across four countries, and now it's time to implement all the things that we have been working on."

The 62-year-old Swede, who had also previously coached the Swedish and the Nigerian national teams, revealed that a pep talk with the players before departure to Mumbai, has helped put ev-



everyone in the correct mindset.

"We had a small meet with the players and we explained to them how important the coming few weeks are in their lives. I think this has really struck a few chords, and you can now see the determination in their eyes," he said.

The Indian team has been drawn against Iran (January 20), Chinese Taipei (January 23) and China (January 26) in Group A of the competition that consists of 12 teams.

It has also been learnt that all the teams playing in Pune will arrive in Mumbai and then commute to Pune by road.

"We are expecting the first team to be in Pune by 15th, which is Korea Republic. The teams (playing in Pune) will stay in two plush hotels in the city," a source in the know of developments said.

All teams will be staying inside a strict bio bubble and

everyone involved in the tournament including all players and officials will undergo regular COVID-19 tests.

"All the staff working in the hotel will also be in the bubble and will not physically interact with anyone outside the bubble. Same goes for the drivers who will be with the team and AFC. They have also been provided accommodation," the source added.

India is hosting the continent's highest competition for the first time since 1980 and at stake is a possible berth in the 2023 FIFA World Cup. One of the venues hosting matches is the Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex in Balewadi on the outskirts of Pune city. It has hosted a plethora of international events in the past including the Commonwealth Youth Games in 2008.

Built in the 1990s, the

Balewadi sports complex, as it is popularly known in sporting circles, had hosted the National Games too.

Be it tennis, rugby, football, boxing, athletics or basketball, the picturesque sports complex has witnessed many memorable sporting events.

From the 2008 CWG Youth Games, when the facilities at the stadium saw a revamp, till February 2020, the complex has hosted 36 international tournaments.

The most prominent among them is the Maharashtra Open ATP 250 WTA tennis tournament, where 50 international players participated.

In 2019, the ATP tennis tournament was hosted here and again this year the tennis courts are gearing up to host the marquee event.

In 2017, the stadium had hosted Davis Cup matches.