

## BJP likely to go solo this time in Manipur elections

Courtesy: IANS  
Guwahati, Jan 17:

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which wrested power in Manipur for the first time in 2017 in alliance with two political parties and supported by independent MLAs, this time most probably fight alone, party leaders indicated.

Union Minister Pratima Bhowmik and Assam Minister Ashok Singhal, BJP's in-charges for the Manipur elections, separately indicated that the saffron party is keen to contest the elections on its own this time.

However, both Bhowmik and Singhal did not completely rule out the pre-poll alliance with the like-minded parties.

"We are in talks for a pre-poll alliance with the like-minded parties and allies," Singhal said in Guwahati without disclosing any details of the possible alliance.

Both the ministers however, claimed that the BJP on its own would secure the absolute majority.

While talking to IANS, Union Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Bhowmik said that this time BJP due to its good governance and excellent performance would get majority on its own.

"Our central leaders would soon announce the party candidates for the Manipur elections. Party leaders and workers in Manipur are very active in all respects to secure the BJP's victory in the forthcoming polls," said Bhowmik, a BJP leader from Tripura.

After 15 years, the Congress was ousted by the BJP-led alliance in the 2017 Assembly polls, despite emerging as the single-largest party with 28 seats.

But the saffron party, which had bagged 21 seats, stitched together a coalition government with the support of four National People's Party

(NPP) MLAs, four Naga People's Front (NPF) members, the lone Trinamool Congress MLA and an Independent member.

The NPP headed by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, however, already announced to contest the elections on its own this time and would field candidates in at least 40 seats.

The NPP, a national political party, which has political bases in different northeastern states, had contested nine seats in 2017 and won four.

Another ally of the BJP-led government, the Naga People's Front (NPF), is still undecided on a pre-poll alliance in Manipur.

The party has received applications from 40 prospective candidates, Newmai said.

The elections to the 60-member Manipur assembly would be held in two phases on February 27 and March 3.

The counting of votes will take place on March 10.

## Punjab elections postponed to Feb 20; Manipur Congress urges to differ poll date as Feb 27 is an important day for Christians

IT News/Agency  
Imphal, Jan 17:

The Election Commission on Monday postponed the next month's Assembly polls in Punjab by six days to February 20 in view of Guru Ravidas Jayanti. Elections in Punjab were earlier slated to be held in single phase on February 14. On the other hand, Working president of the Manipur Congress Committee has urged the ECI to differ the poll date of the first phase election as the day is Sunday and is an important day for the Christian community of the state.

Speaking to media persons at Congress Bhavan, K. Meghachandran said that Sunday is an important day for Christian community and the poll date be differ to any day other than Sunday.

The ECI earlier today held a meeting to discuss the request made by political leaders of several parties to defer the next month's Assembly polls in the state.

The commission said that it decided to defer the polls after taking inputs from the state government and the chief electoral officer of Punjab.

"Commission has received several representations from state government, political parties and other organizations drawing attention regarding movement of a large number of devotees from Punjab to Varanasi for participation in Sri Guru Ravidas Ji Jayanti celebrations, which is observed on 16th February 2022. They have also brought to the notice that a large number of devotees start moving for Varanasi around a week

before the day of celebration and keeping the poll day on 14th February 2022 will deprive large number of electors from voting. In view of this, they have requested to shift the poll date a few days after 16th February 2022," the EC said in a statement.

"...Now Commission has decided to reschedule the General Elections to Legislative Assembly of Punjab in the following manner: Date of Notification: 25th January 2022 (Tuesday). Last date of Nomination: 1st February 2022 (Tuesday). Date of Scrutiny: 2nd February 2022 (Wednesday). Date of Withdrawal: 4th February 2022 (Friday). Date of Poll: 20th February 2022 (Sunday)."

The counting of votes will be taken up on March 10.

## I am still a Congress man - Kh. Ratankumar

IT News  
Imphal, Jan. 17:

Former Minister Kh. Ratankumar today clarify that he is still a congressman and there is no question of leaving the Congress Party.

Talking to a group of reporters at congress Bhavan, Kh. Ratankumar said that it is unfortunate that some media are spreading false reports about him leaving the Congress party and preparing to join at some political party.

"This is not true, I only submitted to relieve me from various post Chairman of the media committee, Vice president Adm. Chairman Covid subcommittee member to the



President as I am occupied with my election work".

Ratan said that he is still a primary member of the Con-

gress party. He also said that there were some differences among the congress family and that has been sorted out.

## He was hospitalized and died due to Covid-19 infection; IDSP have records; government asks for proof certificate to grant ex-gratia

IT News  
Imphal, Jan 17:

Many Covid-19 victims who had succumbed to Covid-19 are reportedly denied of ex-gratia announced by the central and the state government in the state of Manipur after the victim families was asked to submit documents that are not under their possession. Even though the state government authority has an official record of those died due to Covid-19, the process for applying of the ex-gratia by the victim families was made so complicated that many victims were denied the ex-gratia announced by the State Disasters Management authority.

As per a report of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Project (IDSP), the total death cause by the Covid-19 in the state of Manipur is 2,015 persons as on January 16. It is on government record. Even after having the record, those family were asked to submit documents to prove that the person died of Covid-19 to get the ex-gratia.

One victim of the Covid-19 was Larenjam Bijen Singh (age

46) he worked as photojournalist at Imphal Times and succumbed to Covid 19 on 23/07/2021. He was hospitalized on July 18 after having some respiratory problem at RIMS. The RIMS authority confirmed him Covid-19 positive and admit immediately at Covid ward RIMS and on the following day he was shifted to Trauma Center RIMS, as his condition deteriorated.

A death certificate issued by the Resident/ Registrar of the RIMS stated the cause of his death as TYPE I RESPIRATORY FAILURE+ARDS +COVID 19 SEVERE PNEUMONIA +T2DM.

As every test was done at RIMS, the family did not collect the covid-19 positive certificate or was not handed over by the RIMS authority.

The dead body was cremated at a public crematorium near Minuthong, Imphal as he was covid-19 victim.

He was Imphal Times staff working as a photojournalist, but due to some personal reason, he did not apply for DIPR card. However, he prefer to become a member of the All Manipur Working Journalist

Union and was a member. Because, he didn't have a DIPR card he didn't get any facilities provided by the government, except some financial assistance from AMWJU.

Now, with the state government announcement of providing some financial assistance to the Covid-19 victim, by the Disasters Management authority his wife, L. Sangita applied for the same.

However, the authority had told her that she is not liable for getting the financial assistance of her deceased husband as she could not provide the Covid test report and as there is no mention of any Covid related cases as the cause of death.

Everyone knows L. Bijen died of Covid. He was treated at Covid ward and later at Trauma center and later succumbed to Covid-19. The Registrar or the Resident of the department of RIMS had also provided him a death certificate mentioning the cause of death as Covid-19. However, RIMS provided another death certificate where there is no mention of the cause of death.

The health department has

recorded late Bijen's death as Covid-19 dead. (as per your official release), the Press Emblem

Campaign (PEC), a global media safety and rights body, and the All Manipur Working Journalists Union, Editors' Guild Manipur have all acknowledged the cause of Bijen's death as due to Covid-19.

If late Bijen is not entitled to get the compensation for Covid-19 victims just because there are some documents left, How many Covid-19 victims will get? Or is it just another political gimmick??

And why the department is making it so complicated in applying for the compensation when they (The health department) have all records.

The same was with a person from Sagoltonba Sabal Leikai area. His mother, a widow still didn't get any facilities till now and is not in the position to apply for the ex-gratia as she didn't have any document to prove the cause of her son's death was Covid-19 even though state authority recorded and cremated him as Covid-19 victim.

## RPF/PLA condoles the demise of its cadres

Imphal, Jan 17:

The proscribed Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) has extended deepest condolences over the demise of People's Liberation Army (PLA) cadres, MC-369 Captain Bishwrajit (real name Chingmambam Koktummani) and MC-390 2nd Lieutenant Thoihenba (real name Khaidem Indrajit alias Inaocha) who were killed while countering the special forces para commandos of the Indian Army who attacked a camp of PLA located near the border of Chandel District and Myanmar on January 13.

In a statement issued by



Capt. Bishwrajit



2nd Lt. Thoihenba

its deputy secretary publicity Roben Khuman on Sunday, the outfit informed that during the attack on January 14 morning, PLA soldiers bravely fought against the 'terrorist'

Indian army, forcing the latter to flee with their injured personnel.

Unable to bear the counter attack of the outfit, the army left behind a lifeless body

along with one AK 47 and RT set.

Another body was recovered in a search operation carried out later in the day, from which one magazine-pouch, 3 magazines of AK-47, one Hand Grenade, three helmet torchlights with India-made Eveready battery and one packet of kani (opium) were recovered.

The opium indicates the foot soldiers of the Indian army are being drugged to fight without fear of death.

"The attack left 4 personnel injured including 4 army men of which two died on the spot.

contd. on page 4

## BJP spokesperson L. Veerjeet elaborates issues of Jiribam

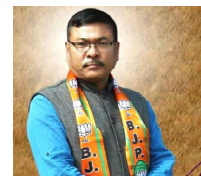
IT News  
Imphal, Jan 17:

The state of Manipur will go to the polls in two phases with elections of 38 constituencies in the first phase on February 27, 2022. The remaining 22 assembly constituencies will go to poll on March 3. The BJP Manipur Pradesh is fielding candidates in all the sixty constituencies however, the main opposition Congress party and others including the NPF, NPP, MPP, CPI, and others are likely to field candidates at only some assembly constituencies. Congress party expressed confidence in winning the majority number while NPP said that their party will be the major factor of whoever is forming government in the next state legislative assembly. Meanwhile, the BJP Manipur

Pradesh still stands with their words of winning more than 40 seats in this election.

In a tete-a-tete with Imphal Times, L. Veerjeet Singh, Spokesperson of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Manipur Pradesh talked about the BJP poll strategy and elaborated more about the Jiribam Assembly constituency in the ensuing 12th Manipur Legislative Assembly elections.

"Jiribam still remains as the most destitute constituency in the state with no proper facilities for education, transport, health, housing, livelihood etc. despite of being an advantageous town bordering with Assam. I have been participating in various social and political issues concerning the state since my days in college as State General Secretary of All Manipur Students' Union to



Spokesperson of BJP, Manipur Pradesh. Jiribam is at the core of my heart and my political journey is wholly a sacrifice for the betterment of the people of this most exploited assembly constituency. I have no other agenda than a sincere effort to serve the people of Jiribam and bring a paradigm change in the development of the overlooked constituency," Veerjeet, who is also the founder president of All Jiribam Working Journalists Union told his decision to contest for MLA from Jiribam.

L. Veerjeet said that at Jiribam maintaining communal harmony and ensuing peaceful co-existence is pivotal for all of us who are living in this cosmopolitan town. Besides improvement in healthcare with the up-gradation of the existing 50 bedded hospital to a full-fledged district hospital; improvement of education facilities on urgent basis with the establishment of a post-graduation level educational institute at the district headquarters of Jiribam; providing individual tap water connection to every household under Jal Jeevan Mission within 2022 and improvement of road connectivity were in his priority list of work to be taken place after being elected as representative of the constituency.

contd. on page 4

# Gratitude is the greatest miracle of human life

## Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



The pandemic has changed many people mentally, physically and spiritually. Most of the people were suffering from depression and physical ailments during and after the first and second waves of pandemic. People prayed to the Creator of this Universe to come out from this worst situation. They realised how important their life is. Everything we already have is so precious and we should be thankful for all that we have. This was understood better by those who lost someone dear during the pandemic. Those who survived, their spiritual thinking became stronger. Belief developed in the superpowers and the Creator who manages the world. I myself came back alive and safe from the shackles of death in the second wave. On recovery, when I thanked my senior doctor, he said that "You should be thankful to God; He saved you, not me." To some extent the doctor was right, because even today there is no treatment available for Covid. Many people lost their lives during the second wave in May last year. Not even doctors were sure who would die and who would survive. Everything was in the hands of the Almighty, and it also depended on the karma. Few left this world, few survived.

It is certain that the fruits of the actions will definitely be received. The karma of this birth and the karma of the previous birth, both are accounted for. Something must have been done wrong behind, the result of which has to be suffered today. In the same way, the good or bad deeds done in the present life, their result will definitely be felt in the next life if not here. The living beings who are suffering today without their visible fault, must have done something wrong in their past lives. This cycle goes on. Therefore, it is wise to live consciously all the time and keep doing good acts, indulge in charity, help others, so that the account of karma remains good and shining. One should be grateful to God, to people around for what s/he has. Start noticing the things that money cannot buy. Be grateful for all of these things. Maintain a gratitude journal and jot down all the things for which you are grateful to others. Be thankful, be grateful for the air we breathe, the food we eat, the comforts we enjoy.

Gratitude gives power. The kind and compassionate people who feed the homeless and hungry animals, help the poor, all of them get blessings. It does make a difference. Every living being has a soul, and every soul has equal power. It is just a game of actions that some are suffering and some are safe. Happy people should not ignore karma. If the deeds of their present birth are not good, then believe me, what kind of life they will live after death, they have no clue yet. One who remains grateful has no complaints about the present life, nor does s/he has any worries about the future. Gratitude is the state of ultimate bliss. Being grateful gives peace of mind and makes one feel closer to God. Read good literature, be in the company of good people, do good deeds, and be grateful to everyone.

Where is Manipur up to? Has she been dying? What does one see by looking at the ever-increasing socio-political-economic degeneration ranging from flourishing corruption to crime and violence, from crumbled education to deploring environment, from free-float drugs to abandoned economy?

If it is not the case of dying virtually, it is of drying literally. Drying of water at the source places after a prolonged destruction of natural environment and deteriorating the forests is what we have been witnessing.

Prime Minister Modi's palm-oil project in Manipur at his recent visit to Imphal pops up here. For the simple reason that water comes from forest where rain is absorbed by the plants then they release slowly in the spring holes. The drying of the springs and natural fountains in the hills and foothills around has been a reality bite for Manipur now. Modi's proposal will rub salt into the injury because the palm-oil plantation will accelerate drying up of the water-sources sooner than expected, pushing us to a water scarcity and a water stress zone. Modi is ignoring the already deteriorated environmental reality of Manipur, he has brought up palm-oil on the spotlight. This is a contrary to the cordial policy and work for fulfilling the water supply for irrigation and household needs.

### What is Palm-oil?

It comes from the fruit of a palm tree originated in Africa. Two types of oil can be produced; crude palm-oil comes from squeezing the fleshy fruit, and palm kernel oil which comes from crushing the stone in the middle of the fruit. Indonesia and Malaysia make up over 85% of global supply. Besides used as edible oil, palm-oil is

# Palm-oil in Manipur : Bad to Worse

By: Jinine Laishramcha  
Assistant Prof, The University of Suwon, S Korea



used increasingly in the cosmetic industry and sometimes used as bio-fuel across the world.

### India's interest:

India is at present the world's biggest importer of this oil. It brought in 7.2 million tons of crude and refined palm-oil worth \$5.1 billion in 2020, according to UN data. Of this, 93% was from Indonesia and Malaysia. On 15 August 2021, Narendra Modi announced a support of Rs 11,000 crore to incentivise palm-oil production. The government intends to bring an additional 6.5 lakh hectares under palm cultivation. Of this about 2.5 lakh hectares are from (north) eastern states.

### Adversities:

Palm cropping is a monoculture which only palm trees occupy a vast land, not allowed other plants to grow along. It never becomes a scientific and good agricultural undertaking for many reasons. According to experts and bad experience from Indonesia and

Malaysia, the plantation causes deforestation, long term soil deterioration, destroys water sources, terminates natural habitat, and increases greenhouse gas emissions. Since this monoculture yields questionable outcomes, an international body called the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil/ or RSPO was formed in 2004 in response to increasing concerns about the impacts palm-oil was having on the environment and society.

First: Where is the Environmental Impact Assessment Report? The first and foremost requirement is what the benefits and losses could be. As a common sense criterion for such plantation the government should display a white paper in public available for comments and consultations from the interested sections of people. It will determine the proposed work whether will be carried out or not. If the losses are bigger than the benefits, definitely it must not be executed. In order to go with fair regularity towards not to damage the environment and ecology, the government should not be blind to Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Report a requirement set by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Moreover, the government authority should extend UN human rights principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent - An Indigenous Peoples' right and a good practice for local communities which means public should be given fair opportunity to know well enough about the pros and cons of the projects and to voice their needs and to share their opinions.

Second: For whom is the project? A very loose response from the state authority may be, this monoculture will improve state economy. The response sounds irresponsible in the absence of substantial supports and evidence. For example, who will get the benefits, the local farmers and people or corporates from outside, or all of them. Then, how much the local community will get, how will they get it? For whom is the development? Answer is from what we learned in the past, from the Loktak Hydro Electric Project and Itai Itai Barrage.

Again, some ministers, contractors, bureaucrats and armed groups are to snatch unfair shares somehow in the process especially on negotiation. Then company namely, Godrej Agrovet Ltd, Ruchi Soya Industries Ltd of Patanjali group and 3F Oil Palm Agrotech Private Ltd will extract the maximum of the project.

In Mizoram, the lack of a collecting centre in the vicinity is a challenge for the farmers. If they want to sell palm-oil fruits, they have to drive 30 kilometres to West

Phaileng in Mamit district, incurring heavy transportation charges. Because of this, many farmers have given up the cultivation of palm-oil and switched to areca, pineapple and banana which are easier to sell. But for some, it is difficult to make the switch because they were so emotionally invested in this cropping.

Third: Mizoram has planted palm trees in about 29,000 hectares as the biggest producer in the Northeast. From our next door's experience it confirms that palm is a highly water-consuming crop with each plant needing about 300 litres of water per day, about 45000 litres of water per hectare every day. In addition to its impact on biodiversity, palm-oil is also a significant threat to soil fertility. According to C. Zohmingsangi, from Mizoram University, who is studying soil biology around palm-oil plantations in Mizoram - nutrients, enzymes and carbon are found in much lower percentage in the soil after palm cropping than other types of forests.

Manipur and other (north) eastern states are part of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot. They are home to some 8,000 flora species, 35% of which are endemic. There are nearly 2,200 species of fauna, of which 24% are endemic. The overwhelming consensus among environmentalists is that palm-oil is detrimental to such rich local ecology of (north) eastern India.

Fourth: If the foothills of Manipur are to be used for the palm-oil, the undertaken will be regretted for that matter sooner than later. The reason is that perfect residential colonies can be extended in and around such scenic surroundings;

To accomplish the crucial need of multi-communities residents in a communal harmony setting.

To restore the wetlands and waterbodies that people have occupied.

To allocate the agricultural paddy fields for meaningful purposes in the valley.

To design Manipur afresh avoiding the haywire and unplanned towns and the Leikais.

To avoid the frequent floods.

To align the beautiful landscape for tourist attraction.

Finally, there are a good bunch of eco-friendly projects that can be alternatives to such questionable palm-oil cropping. Integrated farming, horticulture, medicinal plants, bamboo, hemp so on and on can yield better than this toxic palm. Why on earth do the state and its agents failways to execute such? If they are sincere and committed, a green heaven on our native soil that economically viable, contributes to restore forests and water-sources is possible.

# The God of Science (Har Gobind Khorana)

January 9 marks the birth anniversary of Nobel laureate Har Gobind Khorana. Khorana was awarded the 1968 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine along with Robert W. Holley and Marshall W. Nirenberg "for their interpretation of the genetic code and its function in protein synthesis," the Nobel Prize Organisation said on its website. Their research helped show how the nucleotides in nucleic acids, which carry the genetic code of the cell, control the cell's synthesis of proteins.

## The Feat That Won Khorana The Nobel Prize

Khorana won the prestigious Nobel Prize for his work on the human genetic code. Though it was established in the 1950s that genetic information is transferred from DNA to RNA to protein and that one sequence of three nucleotides in DNA corresponds to a certain amino acid within a protein, it was not how this genetic code could be cracked.

Marshall Nirenberg had discovered the first piece of the puzzle, and in the years that followed, the remainder of the code was generally revealed. Khorana made important contributions to the field by building different RNA chains with the help of enzymes. He was able to produce proteins using these enzymes. The rest of the puzzle could be solved with the help of the amino acid sequences of these proteins.

Khorana, in the 1960s, confirmed Nirenberg's findings that

the way the four different types of nucleotides are arranged on the spiral "staircase" of the DNA molecule determines the chemical composition and function of a new cell, according to Britannica.

In order to produce the desired amino acid, a particular combination of nucleotides is read off along a strand of DNA. There are 64 possible combinations of nucleotides that serve as instructions for the production of amino acids, or the building blocks of proteins.

Details about which serial combinations of nucleotides from which specific amino acids were added by Khorana.

An important breakthrough was that Khorana proved that the nucleotide code is always transmitted to the cell in groups of three, called codons. He also determined that some of the codons prompt the cell to start or stop the manufacture of proteins.

## Khorana's Educational Background & Other Research Works

Born in a little village in Punjab, which is now part of eastern Pakistan, Khorana was the youngest of a family of one daughter and four sons. Khorana's family, though poor, was practically the only literate family in the village inhabited by around 100 people.



By: Vijay GarG

While he attended DAV High School in Multan, now West Punjab, he was greatly influenced by Ratan Lal, one of his teachers.

Later, at Punjab University, Khorana obtained an MSc degree, under the supervision of Mahan Singh, an accurate experimentalist.

In 1945, the award of a Government of India Fellowship made it possible for Khorana to go to England where he studied for a Ph.D. degree at the University of Liverpool. There, Roger J S Beer was his supervisor.

From 1948 to 1949, Khorana spent a postdoctoral year at the Eidgenössische Technische in Zurich with Professor Vladimir Prelog. Khorana's thought and philosophy towards science, work, and effort were significantly moulded due to his association with Professor Prelog.

In the fall of 1949, Khorana spent a brief period in India and returned to England. He started working with Dr GW Kenner and Professor Alexander Todd, who is now Lord Todd. From 1950 to 1952, Khorana stayed in Cambridge, which is when interest in both proteins and nucleic acids took root in him. Under Sir Alexander Todd, Khorana began research on nucleic acids during his fellowship at the University of Cambridge in 1951.

Khorana got a job offer in 1952 from Dr Gordon M Shrum of British Columbia and went to Vancouver.

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# Grand flypast planned for Republic Day celebrations; 75 aircraft, including Rafale, to fly over Rajpath

Agency  
New Delhi, Jan 17:

As many as 75 aircraft of Indian defence forces, including Rafale, will fly over the Rajpath as India plans a grand flypast for Republic Day celebrations.

"The grandest flypast ever will take place over Rajpath during the Republic Day parade with 75 aircraft including the planes from IAF, Army, and the Navy. This is in line with the Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav celebra-

tions," IAF PRO Wing Commander Indranil Nandi said.

The flypast is the most keenly awaited segment of the Republic Day parade. Among the aircraft that will display their might at the parade are Rafale, Indian Navy's MiG29K and P-8I surveillance aircraft, Jaguar fighter jets.

"Five Rafale will fly over the Rajpath in the Viraash formation. Navy's MiG29K and P-8I surveillance aircraft will fly in the Varuna formation. 17 Jaguar fighter aircraft

will fly in the shape of 75 to celebrate Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav," he added.

Every year on January 26, India showcases its military might, cultural diversity, social and economic progress during the Republic Day celebrations at the majestic Rajpath in New Delhi.

The Republic Day celebrations will now begin every year from January 23 instead of January 24 to include the birth anniversary of freedom fighter Netaji Subash Chandra Bose.

# AAP to announce its CM candidate for Punjab tomorrow, confirms Arvind Kejriwal

Agency  
New Delhi, Jan 17:

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will announce its chief ministerial candidate for the upcoming Punjab Assembly elections tomorrow, confirmed party's national convener Arvind Kejriwal. Amid speculation, Bhagwant Mann remains a heavy favourite to be declared the party's CM face in Punjab. Kejriwal had asked people on Thursday who should be the party's chief ministerial face for the Punjab polls, even as he had said that his own choice for the post is Bhagwant Mann.

It should be noted that the

Aam Aadmi Party is conducting a public survey to select the final candidate for CM face in Punjab. The "Janta Chunegi Apna CM" drive has received more than 15 lakh responses so far.

Kejriwal had ruled himself out of the race as the AAP launched the "Janta Chunegi Apna CM" drive and said the name of the candidate for the post will be announced after getting the feedback of people.

The mobile number - 7074870748 - was launched by the party on which people can give their opinion till 5 pm on Monday by recording their voice and sending text or

WhatsApp messages as to who should be the party's chief ministerial candidate.

Voting for Punjab's 117 assembly seats will be held in a single phase on February 14. The results will be declared on March 10.

In the 2017 assembly polls, the Congress had won an absolute majority in the state by winning 77 seats and ousted the Shiromani Akali Dal-Bharatiya Janata Party government after 10 years.

The AAP emerged as the second-largest party with 20 seats, followed by the SAD which managed victory on 15 seats. The BJP had secured three seats.

# Maharashtra Traffic Police net Rs 104 crore fine from traffic violators

IT Correspondent  
Mumbai, Jan 17:

After the notification amending Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, was issued by the Maharashtra Government, the state traffic police have issued e challans comprising a fine of Rs 104 crore to nearly 14 lakh vehicle owners, involved in violation of traffic norms.

The notification came into effect from December one and the police have issued challans after implementation of drive began from December 11, 2021 onwards. Out of Rs 104 crore, the offenders have paid the fine of Rs 11.67 crore and remaining amount is yet to be recovered.

Under one state, one challan system, the E challans have been sent to 14,27,515 vehicle owners. Of these 2,15,840 vehicle owners have responded and 12,11,675 vehicle owners are yet to pay the fine. Out of the total fine of Rs 104.69,13,100, the state has been able to recover only Rs 11,67,57,400.

Among violators, the number of those riding without helmets is maximum. Those who have been served with e challans include: 2,78,473 two wheeler riders without helmet, 1,67,489 riders over speeding, 1,46,685 dangerous/haphazard parking, 1,24,795-Breaking signal, 1,14,095-driving without license.

The Maharashtra Govern-

ment has notified the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, increasing compounding fines for different traffic offences. The notification has come into effect from December 1.

As per new rules the fine of Rs 200 has been increased up to Rs 500. Those riding without helmet as well as pillar riders without helmet are being fined Rs 1000 per offence. Besides their license can be suspended for three months.

For violating parking rules, not having Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificate, not being able to furnish documents, having dark film or advertisements on the glass, jumping signal and not wearing seat belt, one will have to pay Rs 500 as fine now for the first offence. For the second and consecutive offences, one will have to pay Rs 1,500. Earlier, one had to pay Rs 200 for each offence. Moreover, the fine for driving the vehicle without license has been increased from Rs 500 to Rs 5,000.

According to a new provision, a fine of Rs 1 lakh will have to be paid by the dealer, importer or manufacturer of vehicles who offers to sell or delivers vehicles that violate the rules under the Act. This includes whoever sells or allows sell of any part of the vehicle that has been notified as its critical safety component.

As per the notification issued by the government, a biker's driving license will be disqualified for three months if

both the rider and pillion are caught without helmet and riding in excess of the seating capacity. The driving licence will also be disqualified if any person drives or is driven in a vehicle in a public place in contravention to standards prescribed in relation to road safety, control of noise and air pollution. The fine for this has also increased.

The fine for racing on a public place has been increased from Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000 for the first offence and Rs 10,000 for every second and consecutive offence. For allowing an unauthorised person to drive a vehicle, the owner will be fined Rs 5,000. This was earlier Rs 500. The fine for driving without insurance has been increased from Rs 300 to Rs 2,000 for the first offence and Rs 4,000 for the second and consecutive offences.

"The current amendment has been done only in compoundable offences. The increase in fines will also help improve road safety for motorists and pedestrians. The increase and changes in the fines will discourage motorists from violating traffic rules and also help reduce road accidents and fatalities," an official said. The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 15, 2019. While it was passed and became an Act, Maharashtra did not implement it earlier.

# Asom Granthamela intrigued debates on future of books

IT Report  
Guwahati, Jan 17:

Amidst the threat of spreading novel coronavirus (precisely the Omicron variant) across India, Asom Granthamela (Assam Book Fair) came to a successful end in Guwahati, the virtual capital of Northeast. Organised jointly by Asom Prakashan Parishad (Publication Board Assam, the government sponsored literary institution) and All Assam Publishers & Book Sellers Association maintaining necessary Covid-19 precautions, the 12-day event genuinely paved ways for observation, debate and resolutions over the future of books.

Braving the cold wave, thousands of book-lovers from different parts of the region thronged at Assam Engineering Institute playground in Chandmari locality every day to celebrate the festival of reading, information and wisdom. Nearly 150 book-publishing groups and retailers comprising a few from neighbouring Bangladesh, as well as Delhi and Kolkata besides the local publication houses showcased their printing works. They were put in six rows in memory of renowned Assamese intellectuals namely Hemchandra Goswami, Padmanath Gohain Barua, Panindranath Gogoi, Giripada Devchoudhury, Rabin Devchoudhury and Samanta Tanti.

Inaugurating the book fair on 29 December 2021, State education minister Ranju Pegu emphasized on developing a culture of book reading and he insisted on translating various literary works in Assamese to different larger languages and also translating ethnic language works of the region into Assamese. He also honoured Nandita Devi with Prakashan Parishad literary award for her novel 'Bongol Bohu Door' along with its publisher Nagen Sarma of Jyoti Prakashan. Kuladhar Saikia, president of Asom Sahitya Sabha and Noni Gopal Mahanta, adviser to the State education department, also graced the pro-



gram.

State chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal visited the Granthamela separately, who were accompanied by Prakashan Parishad secretary Pramod Kalita, its vice-president Sumanta Chaliha, State publishers & book-sellers association's office-bearers namely Dhiraj Goswami, Imran Ahmed and Baharul Islam Choudhury, Assam children's literature trust secretary Hrishikesh Goswami etc. Kalita informed that books worth rupees five crore were sold in the fair.

The book fair witnessed the formal release of more than 50 new books in two halls named after distinguished Assamese authors Dr Lakshminandan Bora and Homen Borgohain. Prakashan Parishad itself released 16 books at the fair. It also showcased the digital channel, where Assamese folk-tales are recorded with the voice of celebrity performers. A number of literary discussions as well as children programs were organised. Every evening, cultural programs were inaugurated by celebrated personalities like Moloya Goswami, Pabitra Margherita, Surya Goswami, Aimi Barua, Gayatri Mahanta, Partha Sarathi Mahanta, etc.

Bangladesh assistant high commissioner, posted in Guwahati, Shah Mohammad Tanvir Mansur also graced the book fair to welcome representatives of three visiting

publication houses namely Murdhanya, Sarulipee and Joyotee from his country. In a brief meeting, attended by Mihir Deuri, editor of Prakash (published by Prakashan Parishad), author-journalist Rupam Barua, columnist Ranen Kr Goswami, academician Prasanta Chakrabarty, author Geetali Bora, poet-journalist Nabajyoti Pathak, Jintu Geethartha with a few others, the diplomat thanked India again for supporting their freedom movement.

Presence of many eminent Assamese authors and academicians including Govinda Prasad Sarma, Hiren Gohain, Shyama Prasad Sarma, Dhruvajyoti Bora, Gajendra Adhikari, Pranabjyoti Deka, Rita Choudhury, Anuradha Sarma Pujari, Rani Gohain, Bipul Deuri, Jogesh Kakati, Mira Thakur, Ankita Dutta, Raktim Patar, Ajanta Burhagohain, Ranju Hazarika, Jayanta Madhab Bora, Abhijit Bora, Phanindra Kumar Devchoudhury, Pranjit Bora, Nilim Kumar, Bandita Phukan, Apurba Saikia, Atanu Bhattacharya, Satyendra Narayan Goswami, etc were enjoyed by the young book-enthusiasts.

Similarly, notable personalities like Dinesh Goswami, Dayananda Pathak, DN Chakrabarty, Gangapada Devchoudhury, Narayan Talukder, Jagadish Patgiri, Paramananda Majumder, Mrinal Chandra Kalita, Khagen Saikia, Niranjan Kalita, Arindam Borkataky, Mayur Bora, Utpal Dutta, Debashish Sarma, Noni

Borpujari, Aminul Haque, Nilima Thakuria, Baharul Islam, Bhagirthi, Devajit Bora, Pabitra Gogoi, Subodhmalla Barua, Pranjal Sarma Vasistha Hyder Hussain, Bhaskar Sarma, Naba Talukder, etc visited the stalls adding colour to the festivity.

A session dedicated to Nilamoni Phukan, the third Assamese litterateur (after Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya and Mamoni Raisom Goswami) to receive Jyanyapeeth award recently was intriguing for the literary enthusiasts. The closing ceremony on 9 January 2022 was graced by Jyanyapeeth awardee Damodar Mauzo, an illustrious story writer, novelist and critic in Konkani language from Goa. Bodo Sahitya Sabha president Toren Boro was also present on the occasion.

An interactive session involving young writers was moderated by Nava Thakuria where the budding talents like Anindita Parag Saikia, Aparajita Pujari, Utpal Deka, Monika Das, Pranjal Talukder, Gitali Saikia, Srinjana Sarma, Diganta Nibir, Pranjal Barman, Manaswini Mahanta, Jayanta Dutta, Farhan Javed, Pranjal A Sarma, Ranjit Patgiri, Manoj M Neog, Mukutraj Sarma, Ankurita Phukan, Dwip H Borhi, Ratan Sadiyal, Shyamanta Payeng, Munidra Baishya, Nayanjyoti Sarma, etc participated. They were unanimous in their views that the medium (paper) may change in future, but the habit of reading will continue forever.

# Assam logs 2,709 fresh COVID-19 cases, five more deaths

Agency  
Guwahati, Jan 17:

Assam logged 2,709 new COVID-19 positive cases on Sunday, 681 fewer than the previous day, taking the overall caseload to 6,46,735, a National Health Mission (NHM) bulletin said.

Five persons lost their lives due to the disease during the day, taking the total number of deaths to 6,206. The fresh fatalities were reported from Jorhat, Kamrup Metropolitan, Morigaon, and Nalbari districts.

The death toll has increased to 6,206, while the number of COVID-19 patients dying due to reasons remained at 1,347.

# Assam Rifles apprehends KNF(P) insurgent



IT News  
Imphal, Jan 17:

Keithelamni Battalion of Assam Rifles under the aegis of IGAR (South) in a joint operation with Manipur Police apprehended an insur-

gent of proscribed group KNF(P) in Keithelamni Bazar, Imphal West district on January 14.

Based on specific input, troops of Assam Rifles along with Manipur Police launched an operation which

led to the apprehension of insurgent along with one 9mm Pistol.

The apprehended insurgent and recovered weapon were handed over to Patsoi Police Station for further investigation.



# Mirabai visits National War Memorial, urges every Indian to visit the epitome of sacrifice and valour

PIB  
New Delhi, Jan 17:

India's 'Silver Girl' Saikhom Mirabai Chanu visited the National War Memorial in New Delhi which has been built to honour the courage, valour and sacrifice of the Indian Armed Forces.

Speaking about her visit to the 40 acre open landscaped memorial Mirabai said, "My stays in Delhi have usually been for tournaments but this time I kept this visit on my itinerary as this place bestows the essence of pride, not only for the armed forces but for every Indian," said the Olympic Medalist.

Depicting the glorious war history of India since 1947, the



memorial is a gestation on the idea of rebirth of those unsung heroes through their stories, journey and struggles translated

as spatial expressions.

Walking through the semi open corridor and gallery holding the brave stories of signifi-

cant historic battles in Indian history of the Army, Navy and Air force, Mirabai said, "I am mesmerised with how the concept of building this memorial is inspired by the historic 'Chakravart' formation and the walls decorated with bronze murals depicting the battle scenes fought by the sons of our soil."

"After coming here, I deeply feel that every Indian should visit this place at least once in their life," added Mirabai.

The Indian Weightlifter also paid tribute to martyr Major Laishram Jyoti Singh, who is awarded with the highest peace time gallantry award Ashok Chakra and hailed from her native state Manipur.

## Contd. from Page 1 RPF/PLA condole the demise....

On the day of the attack, a photo of a dead CNA major dressed in the uniform of Special Forces para commandos was circulated on social media platforms with a condolence message.

The question at this state is how a Myanmar ethnic insurgent was present among the para commandos.

This poses a huge problem to the bond between the Myanmar ethnic groups and 'us' considering the communities on both sides are regarded to be close since time immemorial.

Thus, RPF believes that such double-edged acts should not be witnessed amongst the insurgent groups.

"The attack has proven India's support to the insurgent groups of Myanmar and attempts to portray the groups of WESEA region as enemies.

However, the Myanmar groups must realise that aside from causing intermittent killings amongst the groups, the government of India will not provide any assistance, as was seen during Bangladesh's freedom struggle wherein it saw to the destruction of MNF camp via the Special Frontier Force (SFF) formed by Tibetan refugees.

Unfortunately, the Tibetans failed to receive any help to their movement till date.

Thus, Myanmar ethnic insurgent groups and its people, along with those of WESEA region, should stay vigilant against such ploys', the outfit cautioned.

The statement said that Captain Bishowjit, s/o Inaobi Meetei and Ibecha of Nongpok Sekmai joined RPF/PLA on April 18, 2008. After completion of Basic Military Training, he was given

the rank of captain by War office on January 16, 2022. Bishowjit loved and yearned for a united Manipur.

Thoihenba s/o Khajdem Tomba and Rajmani of Tera Makhong Nambol joined the outfit on March 5, 2016 and was given the rank of 2nd Lieutenant by War office on January 16, 2022. He was a brave soldier who took part in many battles.

"Both the deceased were of calm mind, sincere, courteous and loved Manipur, its people and the party.

They both wanted to live life as a citizen of independent Manipur.

In respect of their sacrifice, all units, departments and stations of the party extended condolences," the outfit conveyed, while sharing the grief of the bereaved families.

## India records 2,58,089 new COVID-19 cases, 385 deaths; Omicron tally at 8,209

Agency  
New Delhi, Jan 17:

India saw a single-day rise of 2,58,089 new coronavirus infections taking the tally of cases to 3,73,80,253, which included 8,209 cases of the Omicron variant detected so far, according to data updated by the Union Health Ministry on Monday.

A total of 8,209 cases of the Omicron variant have been detected across 29 states and union territories, out of which 3,109 have recovered or migrated.

Maharashtra recorded the maximum 1,738 cases of the Omicron variant, followed by West Bengal 1,672, Rajasthan 1,276, Delhi 549, Karnataka 548 and Kerala 536 cases.

According to experts, it is not possible to undertake ge-

nome sequencing of each and every sample but this current wave is largely being driven by Omicron.

The number of active COVID-19 cases have increased to 16,56,341, the highest in around 230 days, while the death toll has climbed to 4,86,451 with 385 daily fatalities, the data updated at 8 am stated.

The active cases account for 4.43 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has decreased to 94.27 per cent, the ministry said.

An increase of 1,05,964 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 19.65 per cent, while the weekly positivity rate was 14.41 per cent, according

to the ministry.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,52,37,461, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.30 per cent.

The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive has exceeded 157.20 crore.

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; 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 infections on May 4 and three crore cases on

June 23.

The 385 new fatalities included 158 from Kerala and 36 from West Bengal.

A total of 4,86,451 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 1,41,808 from Maharashtra, 50,832 from Kerala, 38,431 from Karnataka, 36,989 from Tamil Nadu, 25,363 from Delhi, 22,963 from Uttar Pradesh and 20,088 from West Bengal.

The Health 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.

## Sports

### Lakshya Sen beats world champion to claim India Open title

Agency  
New Delhi, Jan 17:

As he claimed the India Open Super 500 at IG Stadium on Sunday, Lakshya Sen simultaneously beat Singaporean Loh Kean Yew and the tempting instinct to match the world champion's showboating.

For a pair of men in their early 20s, both equipped with an exuberant attack, the impulse to get into a 'who's faster, who's hitting harder' contest could have dragged the Almor man into peril at crucial junctures. But Sen displayed maturity and control, putting to shade the world champion who was crowned only last month. On his debut at the Delhi event, Sen, himself a bronze medalist in the world championships, became the first opponent to hand Kean Yew a defeat on the circuit, with a 24-22, 21-17 victory.

After the win, Sen admitted that he was feeling the nerves. "It feels nice to win. In the end I was a little anxious to win. But I'm happy I pulled off the win," he said.

In both the semis and finals, Sen was under the pump at the finishing stages. The confidence and momentum he carries in crunch situations make Sen the most anticipated main act of 2022 in Indian badminton.



The win — which came on a day the Indian men's doubles pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, 22, and Chirag Shetty, 25, beat thrice World Champions Hendra Setiawan and Mohammad Ahsan of Indonesia — was proof that the age of the well-honed Indian men's badminton player, who is not a one-off like Prakash Padukone and P Gopichand, was here.

Regular one-on-one conversations with Padukone have guided Sen into the most purple of patches on the international circuit.

Sen is an interesting case study in Indian sport. An example of early scouting by Padukone, handpicked at age 8, Sen has grown in the sport in the most ideal of conditions. He

was blessed with supportive parents — with his father being a certified coach — the best of facilities and technical expertise at the Padukone academy, where he had Vimal Kumar as coach. He was also flush with funds, thanks to sponsorship from the government and the Olympic Gold Quest micro-managing every training step he took. Years of sustained, pinpoint planning makes him a project that's gone right in the Indian ecosystem.

Padukone ensured that Sen got training spots under some of the biggest names — from Danish legend Peter Gade in France to most recently, Olympic champ Viktor Axelsen in Dubai — to add minor dimensions to his game, and keep

chiseling it over the years.

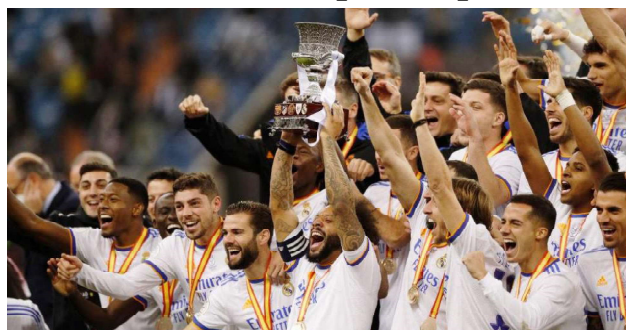
Sen has been on the international circuit more than any men's singles player in India, and has a line-up of quality sparring in Bangalore. The last missing piece was the incoming Korean coach, Sung Yoo Yong, who was shortlisted from amongst 15 options across Malaysia, Indonesia and Korea, over long Zoom interviews with the former Olympic medalist sitting in the USA.

Sen wasn't shy to toss the shuttle and bring the speed to braking levels even, in his effort to rob Loh of his speed oxygen.

A travelling physio, regular nutritional consults, and sleep monitoring — all done by experts — complete the package of elite performance.

It was the Korean coach who strategised along with Vimal Kumar to counter Kean Yew, a breakthrough young champion who had blitzed into fame with his shocking speed-game. But it took an incredibly sophisticated mind to pull off the classy simplicity of not going overboard and eschew fancy attacks, while the opponent was doing just that. Even when Sen led 16-12 and 20-17 on the brink of winning, he didn't ram down the gears, keeping his head to calmly win after sticking to his plan throughout.

### Real Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao 2-0 to claim Super Cup title



Agency  
Riyadh, Jan 17:

Real Madrid were crowned Spanish Super Cup champions after goals from Luka Modric and Karim Benzema earned them a 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao in Saudi Arabia on Sunday.

Real took the lead in the 38th minute after Rodrygo sprinted past two defenders before passing to Modric, who rifled a shot into the back of the net.

Benzema extended their lead in the second half with a penalty after the video assistant referee spotted a handball from Yeray Alvarez inside the area.

Real were reduced to 10

men three minutes from time after Eder Militao was sent off for a goalline handball.

Real goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois brilliantly stopped Raul Garcia's penalty kick with his left foot in the dying seconds.

After two exciting semi-finals, the final was a one-sided encounter, with Real Madrid completely dominating and never facing any real danger.

Real enjoyed the great majority of support from the 30,000 fans in the King Fahd Stadium, which was at 50% capacity due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

France striker Karim Benzema had the backing of the Saudi supporters, but it was Modric's night.

Carlo Ancelotti had said in the buildup to the game that his side were the very essence of a counter-attacking team and on Sunday Modric and forward Rodrygo made their coach proud, with a perfectly executed counter to open the scoring.

Benzema has made a habit of scoring against Athletic and doubled the advantage from the spot with his 18th goal in 26 games against the Basque side, the most he has scored against one team in his career.

It was the 12th time Real had won the Spanish Super Cup, having claimed both editions of the competition in Saudi Arabia. Last year's edition, won by Athletic, was held in Spain due to the pandemic.