

Bomb gifted to AXIS Bank manager

IT News
Moreh, Jan 20:

Unknown miscreants gifted a box containing a hand grenade to the manager of AXIS Bank, Moreh Branch today.

As per report, some unknown persons came to the residence of a grade IV employee of the AXIS bank and handed him a cartoon box for giving it to the manager of the AXIS bank where he work at Moreh at around 7 am today. The Grade-IV employee having no idea of what is inside the box gave the box to the manager. However, when opened found a grenade inside it.

Following that, the bank staff informed about the matter at Moreh police and the Moreh police which rush the spot collected the grenade. An FIR has been taken up in connection with the bomb threat.

Report also added the AXIS bank shut down following the incident and as of now, no information about how long the bank will remain close is not known.

No individual or groups have claimed responsibility for the bomb threat.

SOREPA calls total shut down on Republic Day

IT News
Imphal, Jan 20:

Armed rebel group Socialist Revolutionary Party (SOREPA), Kangleipak has banned the celebration of the Republic Day of India which falls on January 26.

A statement of the armed rebel group has said that on the day the outfit has called total shut down in the region from 1 am of January 26 till 5 pm of the day

WMLDC new office bearers appointed

IT News
Imphal, Jan 20:

New office bearers of the Wangdai Meetei Leikai Development Committee, Langol have been appointed. A release issued by Ksh Somorendro General Secretary WMLDC stated that the new office bearers will comprise of eleven executive committee.

H Ibotombi Khuman has been appointed President, Yumnam Dilip Kumar as Vice President, Ksh Somorendro as General Secretary, T Birjit as Organisation Secretary, and S Bideyananda as IPR secretary.

The general body also appointed three advisors Rk Sanahanbi, Y Leirik Leima and P. Labango Mangang, the release added.

India logs 3,17,532 new COVID-19 cases, 491 deaths

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 20:

India logged 3,17,532 new coronavirus infections, the highest in 249 days, taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,82,18,773, which includes 9,287 cases of the Omicron variant, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

The active cases rose to 19,24,051, the highest in 234 days, while the death toll climbed to 4,87,693 with 491 fresh fatalities, the data updated at 8 am stated.

There has been a 3.63 per cent increase in Omicron cases since Wednesday, the ministry said.

Experts said it is not possible to undertake genome sequencing of each and every sample but stressed that the current wave is largely being driven by Omicron.

The active cases comprise 5.03 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has decreased to 93.09 per cent, the ministry said.

An increase of 93,051 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The country had reported 3,11,170 cases in a single day on May 15 last year.

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.

World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus poured cold water on the theory that Omicron could mark the end of the Covid-19 pandemic and said "This pandemic is nowhere near over." Maharashtra is likely to open schools from January 24 and the cabinet will meet on Thursday at 3.30 PM to discuss it.

Omicron is continuing to infect the world at a startling speed, with more than 18 million cases reported last week alone, according to WHO. The number of Covid patients in the United States is at a record high and continues to climb, overwhelming hospitals. From Australia to Germany, infections are leaping to never-before-seen levels, putting a significant strain on health care systems.

Governor of Manipur greets people on 51st Statehood day of Manipur

IT News
Imphal, Jan 20:

Manipur governor La Ganesha today greets the people of the state on occasion of the 51st Statehood Day of Manipur.

Greetings to the people of the State on the auspicious occasion of the 51st Statehood Day the Governor of Manipur in his message said that shoulder to shoulder with their brethren elsewhere in the country, people of the State have been steadfastly marching towards the destined goals of all-round welfare, happiness and

society. This momentous occasion is significant because while we get an opportunity to reminisce about the past achievements, we also rededicate ourselves to greater efforts for the times ahead.

He further said that despite some vicissitudes and constraints, the State has made steady progress towards fulfilment of the identified objectives. Significant increase in literacy, spread of higher education and host of other welfare measures have distinguished the people's efforts during the past few decades. Every developing society faces

problems. Our State is no exception. Our optimism emanates from a strong determination, to overcome the obstacles, which characterises the people's endeavours.

"On this solemn Day, let us reiterate our resolve to reach new milestones in the years ahead. Since progress in isolation cannot be imagined, this is also an appropriate occasion to express our solidarity with the rest of the country for attaining the National objectives of development through harmony, peace and unstinted fellow-feeling", the Governor added.

Poll Preparedness: First round of EVM randomization held

IT News
Imphal, Jan 20:

First round of randomization of electronic voting machines (EVM) and voter verified paper audit trials (VVPAT) was held here yesterday in the presence of Additional District Election Officer Yumnam Nelson and representatives

from various political parties. About 519 Control Units, 519 Ballot Units and 558 VVPATs were randomized today in the strong box located at the Old DC's Office, Tuibong. On completion of the first round of randomization, the EVMs and VVPATs will be assigned/allocated among the six constituencies in Churachandpur

and Pherzawl districts.

Meanwhile, the first round of training for polling personnel, which was started yesterday, continues at Churachandpur Government College. In today's training programme, about 345 Polling Officer-2 (Male) and 345 Polling Officer-3 (Male) were trained by the Master Trainers.

Uttarakhand polls: BJP announces list of 59 candidates, drops 10 sitting MLAs

Agency
Dehradun, Jan 20:

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday announced the first list of candidates for the Uttarakhand assembly elections at party national headquarters in Delhi.

A day after the meeting of the BJP central election committee, the party declared candidates on 59 out of 70 assembly seats in the state, dropping 10 sitting MLAs.

It has made no changes in the seats of chief minister

Pushkar Singh Dhami, all 11 ministers and the party state president.

The first list, announced by Union minister and party election in-charge for Uttarakhand Prahlad Joshi, includes chief minister Dhami from Khatima constituency, party state president Madan Kaushik from Haridwar, cabinet ministers Dhan Singh Rawat from Srinagar, Subodh Uniyal from Narendra Nagar, Ganesh Joshi from Mussoorie, Swami Yatiswaranand from Haridwar (rural), Satpal Maharaj

from Chaubattkhal, Bishan Singh Chuphal from Didihat, Rekha Arya from Someshwar, Banshidhar Bhagat from Kaladhungi and Arvind Pandey from Gadarpur.

The other prominent names included in the list are sitting MLA Umesh Sharma Kaul from Raipur constituency and Speaker Premchand Aggarwal from Rishikesh constituency.

Joshi while addressing media persons also informed that the first list has five women candidates.

MLA Tongbram Robindro and Yengkhom Surchandra join BJP



IT News
Imphal, Jan 20:

Lone Trinamool Congress (TMC) MLA from Manipur

Tongbram Robindro and former Congress MLA Yengkhom Surchandra Singh have joined the BJP

Tongbram Robindro and Yengkhom Surchandra Singh formally joined the saffron party in Thambal Shanglein, Imphal today.

Robindro won the 2017 Manipur Assembly elections from Thanga constituency on TMC ticket. He later support the BJP led government. Speaking on the occasion Robindro said that he aspire

to join the BJP and wanted to contest the election as BJP candidate however, as he was not provided the BJP ticket he have opted the TMC and contested the election at which he won. Robindro said that he believed in the BJP leadership and he will continue to work for the BJP.

Yengkhom Surchandra Singh won the last election as Congress MLA until his election was declared null and void by the SC. BJP MLA Rameshwar who was defeated replaced him and already took oath as the MLA from Kakching Assembly constituency.

But again the verdict was challenged and again the court order rules Surchandra's disqualification as null and void. But the matter has not been an issue for reason best known.

Recently, Y Surchandra had tendered resignation from the Congress Primary membership.

Top BJP leaders from the Northeast were present in the joining ceremony.

Union minister and Tripura Lok Sabha MP — Pratima Bhoumik, Assam minister — Ashok Singhal and Manipur BJP president A Sharda Devi were present in the joining ceremony.

Training for Bishnupur Poll personnels begins



IT News
Imphal, Jan 20:

First round of training for personnels deputed for poll duty in Bishnupur district for the upcoming state assembly election commenced today at CI College, Bishnupur. 300 officials appointed as Presiding Officers and Polling Officers including women officials attended yesterday's training session.

Poll personnels were capacitated on theoretical aspects, handling of EVMs, Booth Apps, IT apps and Communications. The trainees also underwent Mock Polls for better familiarisation. During the course of the phase-wise training which will continue till 22 January, 300 polling personnels will undergo training each day under Assembly Level Master

Trainers, EVM Master Trainers and DIO (NIC).

District Election Officer of Bishnupur, Shri L. Bikram accompanied by Shri H. Bobby Sharma, ADC/MCC Nodal Officer Bishnupur, Shri RK Dayananda, CEO, ZP/District Nodal Officer (Training) inspected the training. Interacting with the trainees during the inspection, the DEO encouraged them to be well-prepared for efficient execution of poll duties. He also remarked that disciplinary action will be initiated against any polling official with undue negligence of duty. The DEO also informed that necessary precautionary measures like thermal screening and hand sanitization will be made mandatorily for everyone on poll duty. Responding to a query on poll duty exemption on ground

of not being fully vaccinated, the DEO urged every polling official to get fully vaccinated at the earliest.

Mentioned may be made that all the 6 assembly constituencies of Bishnupur with a combined strength of 181715 electors and 236 polling stations will go to poll in the first phase on 27 February.

Earlier, the DEO Bishnupur had notified for submission of request for exemption along with medical certificates and diagnosis details latest by 22nd January for consideration by Medical Board. It further notified that medical examination for exemption from election duty on medical grounds for Presiding Officers and Polling Officers will be held on 24th January, 2022 at District Hospital, Bishnupur from 11 AM onwards.

Corona hai ki manta nahi, but ray of hope is there

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



In view of the third wave of Covid pandemic, India has extended the period of ban on international flights to February 28. However, the costly and limited option with air bubbles will continue for 30 countries.

It may be recalled that international flights were first banned on March 23, 2020, when the cases of Covid had started surfacing and the lockdown came into force in the country. Before Omicron's knock, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had intended to allow foreign flights on December 15, 2021, but then this date had to be postponed indefinitely. Now the suspension of foreign flights till February 28 indicates that it may take a few more months for the hospitality and tourism industry to recover. The country's economy is also adversely affected due to the closure of foreign flights. But nothing could be done, since Corona hai ki manta nahi. For the same reason, this time again no foreign guest will be the chief guest in the Republic Day parade. Last year also, the parade was held without any foreign dignitary.

There is definitely a situation of concern in the country due to the third wave of Covid, but there is no need to panic. The Omicron variant spreads very fast, but the cases of death from it are not the same as last time. Most of the patients who have died are those who had some comorbidities. The virus of concern was first reported in South Africa. There, its cases started decreasing only after three weeks, and a similar situation is presently in India also. The cases of Omicron started increasing suddenly in big cities, but now the rate of infection is gradually coming down. Considering this trend, it seems that the rate of infection caused by the Omicron variant will subside in the next few weeks. If no new variants emerge, there is a possibility that life will start getting back on track. But this does not mean that the protocol of Covid should be taken lightly. Good days will return soon only when everyone will wear masks, wash hands and keep a safe distance from others. It is also expected to avoid travel if not necessary. Rather, do not venture out from houses.

Doctors say that the Covid patients are being treated as before. Whether its Delta or Omicron, the treatment is the same. The truth is that there is no exclusive and effective treatment for Covid so far, hence only the symptoms are treated. If there is a fever, then its medicine is given and if the Oxygen level goes down, then the patient is put on an Oxygen support system. Omicron cases are on the rise, but hospitalisation is not needed as it was with the Delta variant. The hospitals became full only after having half the number of cases of Covid last year. Thankfully, most of the cases are now coming from Omicron, not Delta. In the Covid ward of hospitals, over 80 percent of the beds have been lying vacant. That's why it is being said that the situation is critical but not worrisome.

On an average, 18 million hectares of forest i.e. one eighteenth of the size of India are destroyed every year which amounts to 5.5 billion trees. About 2,400 trees with the size of a Football ground of rich forests are cut down each minute. Deforestation is also ongoing in many of the conflict and post-conflict affected countries. The drivers are diverse, but we have a common lost, the loss to our environments.

In 2020, there was a sharp increase in forest loss in most conflict-affected countries, which in some can be tentatively linked to COVID-19, either through economic hardship or organised crime taking advantage of distracted institutions. In total, during this pandemic, across world's conflict-affected areas, the forest loss were increased by 10% to 3.2 million hectares with the woody biomass lost in tropical areas only amounts to approximately 1.1 mega tonnes of CO2.

Conflicts over natural resources are among the key peace and security challenges of the 21st century. With the right approach, cooperation in management of natural resources can offer these affected countries recovering from the fragility and conflict, an opportunity to achieve stability and trust while re-building the livelihoods and economies.

The Peace Forest Initiative (PFI) is a global initiative in fragile and conflict affected regions with objectives to promote peace, ecosystem restoration and build trust between neighboring countries through trans-boundary environ-

The Peace Forest Initiative



By: N. Munal Meitei

mental co-operation in sustainable land management, including the forests. This Initiative is also designed to promote cooperation between countries to rehabilitate degraded ecosystem in post-conflict locations while promoting peace and confidence.

The PFI was launched on 10 September 2019 during the 14th session of COP 14 of the UNCCD held in New Delhi. This could be a flagship plan for supporting outreach to the right audience through global campaigns, and communicating strong and compelling narratives on the linkages between ecosystem restoration, including sustainable land and forest management, and peace and security, with a view to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

The growing demand for natural resources – in particular to productive land and water – combined with environmental degradation and climate change, serves to intensify competition between countries and communities over resource access, ownership and use. Natural resources are set to become key drivers in a growing number of disputes, with significant consequences for international, regional and national peace and security.

However, integrating management of environmental resources with peace building activities can provide the pathway to lasting se-

curity and sustainable poverty reduction. Understanding risks and opportunities associated with access to natural resources can help decision makers manage natural resources in ways that create jobs, sustain livelihoods and contribute to economic

growth without creating new grievances or significant environmental degradation.

After the Korean War, the whole of mountain areas surrounding the cities were deforested and degraded. But more than 10 billion trees were planted in Korea since 1973 by the efforts of the numerous ordinary citizens through the strong leadership, people's willingness and participation that Korea Forest Service took the lead role in the economic growth.

The goals of the Peace Forest Initiative are Zero hunger through agro forestry, Well-being vide forest recreation, Clean water with watershed management, Green Energy with natural resources, Climate action with mitigation and adaptation and Conservation of Biodiversity. The goal also covers to offer countries recovering from violent conflict an opportunity to achieve stability and trust while re-building livelihoods and with shared natural resources while promoting peace and cooperation.

Peace Forest Initiative also aims at addressing the issue of land degradation in conflict-torn border areas and would go in alleviating ten-

sions and building trust between communities living there and between enemy countries in particular. This initiative also aims to create a number economic gains, such as increased production of non-timber products, food security and health, reduced soil erosion, disaster risk reduction, improved watershed management and carbon sequestration.

Our state Manipur is also a victim of environmental degradation for being in a conflict area. After the communal riots in 1992-93 and with the sporadic incidents, we have lost a lot of our rich forests and natural resources. Large scale poppy plantation and indiscriminate felling of trees in hills are spreading just like a pandemic all over the state. In every Band & Blockades, trees are the victims. The ongoing development Projects in the state have tarnished the greenery of the lofty hills. While the slogan for War against the Drugs is trying to move out of the tables and doors, the state has lost hundreds of square kilometers of our rich forests pulling us in an environmental dilemma and into the status of a Second Golden Triangle. Though, we proud of having 74.38% of our geographical areas as forest, the qualities and growing stock of our so called forests are very poor.

Therefore, let's learn anything that tends to save our Environment and Forests. Without our timely action and initiatives, we will not be able to protect our environment and wildlife for the future generations.

(The writer is a Environmentalist, email-nmunall@yahoo.in)

Themes of National Education Policy

Education is a fundamental requirement for the development of an egalitarian society. In this context, three National Education Policy (NEP), namely NEP 1968, NEP 1986 and NEP 2020 have been introduced in India so far. The new NEP 2020, adopted on 29th July 2020, aims to universalize education from pre-school to secondary level by 2030. It envisions an India-centric education system and provision of quality education and equitable access to all students in a sustainable manner. There are ten themes aligned with the policy objectives of the NEP 2020.

(1) Early Childhood Care and Education : The Foundation of learning - Early child development encompasses physical, socio-emotional and cognitive development between 0-8 years of age. The early years of the learners are critical, as it is the period of life when the brain develops most rapidly and has a high capacity for change, and the foundation is laid for health and well-being for life. The NEP states that, the overarching goal will be to ensure universal access to high quality Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) across the country. Special attention and priority will be given to the territories that are particularly socio-economically lagged behind. ECCE shall be delivered through a significantly expanded and strengthened system of early-childhood education institutions consisting of (a) stand-alone Anganwadis, (b) Anganwadis co-located with primary schools, (c) pre-primary schools/sections covering at least age 5 to 6 years co-located with existing primary schools, and (d) stand-alone pre-schools-all of which would recruit workers/teachers specially trained in the curriculum and pedagogy of ECCE.

(2) Foundational Literacy and

Numeracy : An Urgent & Necessary Prerequisite to Learning- The ability to read and write, and perform basic operations with numbers, is a necessary foundation and an indispensable prerequisite for all future schooling and lifelong learning. NEP 2020 accords top priority to the attainment of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy by all students upto Grade 3. It stresses the need to develop a robust system of continuous formative/adaptive assessment to track each student's learning. The early grade curriculum will be redesigned to have a renewed emphasis and teachers to be trained, encouraged, and supported to impart foundational literacy and numeracy.

(3) Curtailing Drop-out Rates and Ensuring Universal Access to Education at all levels- As per NEP 2020, two holistic initiatives will be taken to bring drop-out children back to school and to prevent further drop-out. The first initiative is to provide effective and sufficient infrastructure so that all students have access to safe and engaging school education at all levels from pre-primary school to Grade 12. Besides providing regular trained teachers at each stage, special care shall be taken to ensure that no school remains deficient in the infrastructure sector. The second initiative is to achieve universal participation in school by carefully tracking students as well as their learning levels in order to ensure that they (a) are enrolled in and attending school, and (b) have suitable opportunities to catch up and re-enter school in case they have fallen behind or dropped out. Suitable facilitating systems shall be put in place to provide equitable and quality education to all children from Foundation stage to Grade 12 till the age of 18 years.

(4) Curriculum and Pedagogy in Schools: Learning should be Holistic, Integrated, Engaging and

Enjoyable and Engaging- NEP 2020 mandates that the learning should be holistic, integrated, inclusive, enjoyable, and engaging. In order to minimize rote learning and to encourage holistic development and 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, scientific temper, communication, collaboration, multilingualism, problem solving, ethics, social responsibility, digital literacy, curriculum, textbooks, pedagogy and assessment shall be transformed by 2022. It stresses that in all stages; experimental learning will be adopted, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, story-telling-based pedagogy, among others, as standard pedagogy within each subject, and with explorations of relations among different subjects. To bridge the gap in achievement of learning outcomes, classroom transactions will shift towards competency-based learning and education.

(5) Teachers- Teachers are the frontline providers of quality education. They represent the key vehicle towards a progressive, just, educated, and prosperous society. It is known that inadequate quality of training, recruitment, service conditions and lack of empowerment of teachers affect their skill and motivation levels. NEP, 2020 has made several provisions to empower teachers and inspire the best individuals to enter the system to ensure the best possible future for our children and our nation. The primary goal of transforming the service environment and culture of schools will be to maximize teacher's ability to perform their jobs effectively and to ensure that they are part of vibrant, caring, and inclusive communities of teachers, students, parents, principals, and other support staff, all of



By: Er. Prabhat Kishore

whom share a common goal, to ensure that our children are learning.

(6) Equitable and Inclusive Education : Learning for All- Sustainable Development Goal 4.0 obliges India to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. In tune with SDG goal, NEP-2020 provides a renewed impetus to inclusive and equitable education. It re-focuses on the need to provide children with disabilities, and those belonging to disadvantaged groups and weaker sections the same opportunities of obtaining quality education as any other child. It is also in full synch with RPwD Act 2016 which mandates that students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities. By 2040, India should have an education system that is second to none, with equitable access to the highest-quality education for all learners, regardless of social or economic background. Many schools have already taken initiatives to promote inclusive classrooms. Innovative teaching pedagogy on the subject needs to focus on inclusive practices so that similar initiatives can be taken by other schools.

(7) Efficient Resourcing and Effective Governance through School Complexes/clusters- The establishment of school complexes/clusters and the sharing of resources across complexes will have a number of other benefits, such as improved support for children with disabilities, more topic-centered clubs and academic/sports/arts/crafts events across school complexes, better incorporation of art, music, language, vocational subjects, physical edu-

cation, and other subjects in the classroom through the sharing of teachers in these subjects including use of ICT tools to conduct virtual classes. Improved student support, enrollment, attendance, and performance through the sharing of social workers and counselors, and school complex Management committees (rather than only School Management Committees) for more robust and better governance, monitoring, oversight, innovations, and initiatives by local stakeholders. Building such larger communities of schools, school leaders, teachers, students, support staff, parents, and local citizens would energize and empower the schooling system, and in a resource-efficient manner.

(8) Standard Setting and Accreditation for School Education- The NEP, 2020 envisions an effective quality self-regulation or accreditation system for all stages of education, including pre-school education – private, public, and philanthropic – to ensure compliance with mandatory quality standards. To ensure that all schools adhere to certain minimum professional and quality standards, States/UTs will set up an independent, state-wide body called the State School Standards Authority (SSSA). In addition to the standard criterion for accreditation, to ensure academic quality, a separate School Quality Assessment and Accreditation Framework has to be developed by SCERTs. All schools, including private schools, will be assessed and accredited on the same criteria, benchmarks, and processes, with an emphasis on online and offline public disclosure and transparency. Educational outcomes and the transparent disclosure of all financial, academic, and operational matters will be given due importance and suitably incorporated in the evaluation of schools. By ensuring a uniform process of accreditation and quality framework for both public and private schools, the objective of reforming the public education system could be en-

sured.

(9) Technology in Education : NDEAR- The recent rise in epidemics and pandemics necessitates that we are ready with alternative modes of quality education, whenever and wherever traditional modes of education are not possible. In this regard, the NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of reaping the benefits of technology while acknowledging its potential risks and dangers. This calls for carefully designed and appropriately scaled pilot studies to determine how the benefits of online/digital education can be reaped while addressing or mitigating the downsides. National Digital Education Architecture is being envisioned as a digital infrastructure for education that will help not only the government at Centre, State and UTs but the entire education ecosystem including private sector, non-profit and technology players to enhance the quality of education in the country through innovation and experimentation. It is part of the "Digital India" initiative of the Government of India and it endeavors to make lives simpler for students, parents, teachers and administrators.

(10) Reimagining Vocational Education and Skill Building- NEP 2020 aims to overcome the perception of lower social status associated with vocational education and requires integration of vocational education programme into mainstream education in a phased manner. Beginning with vocational exposure in early ages in middle school, quality vocational education will be integrated smoothly into secondary and higher education. It will ensure that every child learns at least one vocation from class 9 onwards and is exposed to many more professions. It will emphasize the importance of skill building, dignity of labour and various professions associated with Indian art and craftsmanship.

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Expert panel recommends Covaxin, Covishield for market sale

IT Correspondent
Mumbai, Jan 20:

The subject expert committee of Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) on Covid-19 vaccines on Wednesday recommended to the CDSCO to grant Pune based Serum Institute of India's "Covishield" and Hyderabad based Bharat Biotech's "Covaxin" full market authorisation with conditions for the adult population. The recommendations will be evaluated and a decision will be taken, the CDSCO said.

Since January last year, Covishield and Covaxin are available under Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA). The EUA route, which in India is termed as restricted use in emergency situations, is invoked in public health emergencies like a pandemic, provided that the regulator, based on initial data from phase III of clinical trials, determines that potential benefits of the vaccine, when used to prevent Covid-19, outweigh its potential risks.



"The subject expert committee of CDSCO has recommended for upgrade of Covishield and Covaxin status from restricted use in emergency situations to grant of new drug permission with conditions in the adult population. Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) will evaluate the recommendations and give its decision," the CDSCO said in a tweet.

The expert committee

based its recommendation on the facts that over two third of the population has been vaccinated using these two vaccines and their efficacy has been proved in India and abroad.

In August last year, Pfizer's mRNA vaccine received the full FDA approval for individuals 16 years and older. The expert panel's recommendations are based on long-term followup data of Covishield and Covaxin, which show significant efficacy in preventing the severe infection as well as safety profile of the vaccines.

On Wednesday, CDSCO said the panel's recommendations are based on certain conditions. Therefore, the key question that remains unanswered is whether full licensure would result in the two manufacturers selling the vaccines in retail market.

Since vaccination certificates are generated after every dose, it is likely the government will continue to track these vaccines, even if they are available in open market. Therefore, it is unlikely that these two vaccines will be made available in over the counter purchase at the chemists. Second, beneficiaries of these vaccines are monitored by trained health professionals — and adverse events are captured on government's CoWin platform on real-time basis. The new conditions are likely to have more detailed recommendations of Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI) monitoring.

Assam Rifles foils cross border smuggling of contrabands



IT News
Imphal, Jan 20:

In two separate operations, Tengenoual Battalion Assam Rifles under the aegis of IGAR (S) foiled smuggling of illegal cash and contrabands in Khudengthabi and Kwatha villages, Tengenoual District on January 18 and 19 respectively.

During routine checking at Permanent Vehicle Check Post, Khudengthabi an individual travelling in a van was apprehended by troops of Assam Rifles with illegal cash of Rs 20.09 lakhs on 18 January.

In another operation during border domination patrol on 19 Jan, troops of Assam Rifles uncovered a large of packages concealed in thick

foliage in forest. On thorough search of the packages, illegal goods including liquor, cosmetics items and cigarettes were recovered. The recovered items are assessed to be of worth Rs 10.26 lakhs.

The recovered items and cash along with driver and vehicle were handed over to Moreh police and Custom Prevention Force, Pallel for further legal action.

Army activates hotline with PLA over 17-yr-old 'Abducted' from Arunachal Pradesh; Oppn seeks answers

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 20:

The Indian Army has activated the hotline with PLA over reports that the Chinese Army has kidnapped a 17-year-old boy from Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Siang district.

Sources in the defence establishment said: "Regarding the incident of the missing youth named Miram Taron from Arunachal Pradesh, it is informed that on receipt of the information, the Indian Army immediately contacted the PLA through established mechanism of hotline informing that an individual, who was collecting herbs and hunting, has lost his way and cannot be found. Assistance from PLA has been sought to locate the individual on their side and return him as per established protocol."

On Wednesday, BJP MP Tapir Gao said PLA had abducted a 17-year-old boy from inside Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh.

Taron's friend Johnny Yaing, who managed to escape, informed the authorities about the kidnapping by the PLA, Gao told PTI over phone from Ziro, the district headquarters of Lower Subansiri district. Both are local hunters and belong to Zido village. The MP said the incident took place near the place where Tsangpo river enters India in Arunachal Pradesh.

Tsangpo is called as Siang in Arunachal Pradesh and Brahmaputra in Assam.

Earlier, Gao tweeted: "Chinese #PLA has abducted Sh Miram Taron, 17 years of Zido vill, yesterday 18th Jan 2022 from inside Indian territory, Lungta Jor area (China built 3-4 kms

road inside India in 2018) under Siyungpa area (Bishing village) of Upper Siang dist, Arunachal Pradesh".

"His friend escaped from PLA and reported to the authorities. All the agencies of Govt of India are requested to step up for his early release," he said in another tweet and posted pictures of the abducted boy.

Gao also said that he has informed Union Minister of State for Home Nisith Pramanik about the incident and requested him to take necessary action in this regard. He tagged Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and the Indian Army in his tweets.

Former MP of Arunachal Nimong Ering said the developments were shocking and "Chinese intrusion in our land must be checked".

Speaking to News18, Ering said: "The border is extensive and not guarded at places. Abduction and incursion is on and needs to be taken up seriously. We should make China realise and be aware of us."

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted on the issue, saying India stood with the youth's family.

In September 2020, the PLA had abducted five youths from Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Subansiri district and released them after about a week.

The latest incident came at a time when the Indian army continues to be engaged in a stand-off with the PLA in eastern Ladakh since April 2020. India shares a 3,400 km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh.

Security Forces saved lives of two road accident victims

IT News
Imphal, Jan 20:

Jwalamukhi Battalion of Assam Rifles of Inspector General Assam Rifles (East) under Spear Corps provided emergency medical help to two road accident victims which saved their lives at

Battalion Headquarters Jwalamukhi, Manipur on 16 Jan. Two individuals on bike met with an accident on NH-2 near Battalion Headquarters main gate. Immediately, both of them were brought to the Battalion's Hospital where they were given necessary first aid and were

treated for their injuries by the doctor.

Both of them were kept under observation after the treatment and where discharged once they were out of danger. Both the patients and their family members thanked the Jwalamukhi Battalion for saving their lives.

Study says: By itself, Omicron does not boost immunity level

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 20:

In what could further underline the importance of vaccination, a new study shows that an infection with the Omicron variant of the Covid virus may not generate broad immunity in unvaccinated individuals that can protect against other variants.

However, the pre-print study from the US shows that in vaccinated individuals, an Omicron infection can boost existing immunity, thereby allowing the individual to fight off another infection better.

The study has been conducted by a team comprising Nobel Laureate Jennifer Doudna, researchers from the University of California, San Francisco; University of California, Berkeley; California Department of Public Health; and Covid-19 testing start-up Curative Inc.

According to the study, mice were infected with the virus-type first identified in the US in 2020, the Delta variant and the Omicron variant, and tested whether their sera (a blood component) could effectively neutralise or fight against the original virus, and the Alpha (first found in UK), Beta (first found in South Africa), Delta (first found in India), Omicron (first found in South Africa) variants of the virus.

The researchers found that mice infected with Delta developed the best protection against the other variants, except the Beta variant which is known to be highly immune evasive. In contrast, infection with Omicron was only effective in fighting off the Omicron variant but did not neutralise enough — meaning did

not effectively protect against — other variants, according to the study.

On the other hand, sera from mice infected with the original virus could effectively protect against another infection from the same virus, along with the Alpha and Delta variants. It could not protect effectively against Beta or Omicron infections.

Almost all the vaccines currently in use utilise modified spike proteins from the wild type of the virus to elicit immune response. This could be one of the reasons Omicron is causing a high proportion of breakthrough infections in completely vaccinated individuals.

The vaccines, however, remain effective against severe disease and death. Several countries, including India, have started administering a third booster jab to offer better protection to the most vulnerable people.

After the mice study, the researchers used sera from those who had a breakthrough infection during the Delta wave and Omicron wave to see how much protection they had against the wild type as well as all the other variants.

The sera from those who had a Delta breakthrough infection (infection after complete vaccination) could effectively neutralise all variants, although the neutralisation was low for Omicron.

But the researchers also realised that sera from confirmed Omicron breakthrough infection conferred good protection against all variants.

"These findings suggest that Omicron infection can effectively

boost existing immunity conferred by the vaccination against other variants, eliciting "hybrid immunity" that is effective against not only itself but also other variants," the researchers noted.

The researchers said that since Omicron infection on its own could not offer broad protection against all variants but could boost existing immunity and Delta could create broad immunity, multivalent vaccines using both Omicron and Delta could be developed in future.

Dr Anurag Agarwal, Director of Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, said, "Omicron is not nature's vaccine. Omicron infection does not give protection against infection by other variants, in unvaccinated people. Previously reported effects against Delta were due to enhancement of vaccine induced immune response that protects well against prior variants."

He has been saying that people must not mistake the virus that is known to cause milder upper respiratory tract symptoms in most patients as a natural vaccine because it may still cause severe disease and death in those with compromised immune systems.

K Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India and a member of the National Covid-19 Task Force, said, "This would mean that while Omicron itself has an immune evasion capacity due to 36 spike protein mutations, the limited immunity it evokes adds to the prior immunity against spike proteins and may result in sufficiently protective effect against severe disease."

Career Guidance

The importance of books in the life of a young person



By: Vijay Garg

Books are a royal treasure in which the thoughts and feelings of knowledge and wisdom are stored, not gold, silver or diamonds. In today's society where TV, radio, newspapers, computers etc. increase the knowledge of human beings, books cannot be left behind. "Reading books is not a waste of time," says one scholar. A good book is like a good friend. Reading a book not only enhances one's knowledge, but also widens one's perspective.

He comes out of the circle of narrow mindedness and adopts humanistic ideas. Large libraries have been built in our society. Libraries are no less than a boon for those who love to read books.

In today's age writers are writing books on new topics which not only enhance our knowledge but also provide proper guidance to life so that the mind can be free from subject disorders. Libraries cater to the common man's desire for knowledge.

Parents should inculcate the habit of reading books to young children and by teachers in the school so that their knowledge can be continuously enhanced. From the smallest to the largest book always increases our knowledge. The only requirement is when and how to acquire this knowledge. Books give us information about the past like wars of the past, wars, kings and emperors, martyrs,

sacrifices of patriots etc. Books tell us things we don't know about.

Political books play an important role in getting information related to politics. Literary books inculcate in the human being such knowledge which makes the human being aware, good thinking, good looks, contemporary and cultural aspects. Apart from these, books also impart knowledge of many other subjects to us. Good books have always played a constructive role in our lives. We should encourage children, students, youth and people of all ages to read books so that a better society can be built and the evils spreading in the society can be curbed.

Books have a very important place in our lives. But in today's age the tendency to read books has decreased a lot. Probably a factor as to why they're doing so poorly. Students find it more important to use the phone in their free time than to read, but the knowledge we need to get from books cannot be obtained from any other source.

While the knowledge of books can make a human being a good, smooth, fit and courageous human being, if they are misused, they can also give a human being the opposite. Therefore, good teachers can be used for good and competent knowledge. Not every knowledge can be qualified at every age so the acquisition of knowledge is fine with age.

Books play a vital role in shaping our character. We should befriend them, because a true friend is the right guide in life and books give us the right direction in life. Reading books is not a useless thing but we get a lot of information from them. So we need to understand their importance in our life and adopt them in our life.

Need a system with no place for discrimination, says PM Modi

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 20:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday kicked off the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav commemorating 75 years of India's Independence by stressing the need for "a system in which there is no place for discrimination and a society that stands firmly on the foundation of equality and social justice".

"Light a lamp in the heart of every citizen of the country - the lamp of duty. Together, we will take the country forward on the path of duty, then the evils prevailing in the society will also

be removed and the country will reach new heights," Modi said at an event of the Brahma Kumaris, a spiritual organisation.

He added in the last 75 years, the conversation has revolved around "rights, fighting for rights, fighting, wasting time". "Speaking of rights, to some extent, for some time, maybe true in any one circumstance but forgetting one's duties completely has played a huge role in keeping India weak," he said.

Modi hit out at those attempting to "tarnish the country's image" abroad by publishing "misinformation".

"We cannot get away from this by saying that this is just politics. This is not politics; this is the question of our country. Today, when we are celebrating the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, it is also our responsibility that the world should know India properly," he said.

The commemoration of 75 years of Independence will begin with the Republic Day celebrations. The celebrations will, from this year, start on January 23 instead of January 24 to include the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose as part of the government's "focus to commemorate impor-

tant aspects of our history and culture".

Modi paid tribute to the women, who played a key role in India's freedom struggle. "From Kittur's Rani Chennamma, Matangini Hazra, Rani Lakshmbai, Veerangana Jhalkari Bai to, in the social sphere, Ahilyabai Holkar and Savitribai Phule.... It is because of these women that today the country's daughter can join the armed forces," he said. "Even in the country's democratic setup, women are playing a bigger role. Women outvoted men in the 2019 polls. Now, society itself is guiding such change."

Too Early to Believe Delhi, Maharashtra Crossed Covid Third Wave Peak: Top ICMR Scientist

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 20:

It is premature to believe that Delhi, Maharashtra and other states have crossed the peak of Covid-19 third wave, Dr Samiran Panda, additional director general at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), told News18.com.

According to Panda, who is a trained tropical medicine specialist and a scientist, Covid-19 infections are progressing and declining at a different pace in some states and districts, therefore, it will be "incorrect" to say there will be a collective peak for the country.

"Different states in India are at different stages of Covid-19 infections, epidemiologically. The local data show different trends and we must

understand that India — as the overall country — will not reach its peak, rather the different states will reach the peak at different times," he said.

The head of the epidemiology and infectious diseases division at ICMR, Dr Panda says India should follow the "one-shoe-doesn't-fit-all" approach.

"Just replace 'shoe' with 'data'. Every state data is throwing a different trend. There are several pictures, which are emerging in India, state-wise, which show pandemics are in different states," he pointed out.

He added it will be incorrect to say India is reaching a peak or has crossed the peak as "the country as a whole is not throwing a common trend".

In states such as Delhi and Mumbai, the graph is coming

down.

On January 14, more than 89,000 Covid-19 cases were recorded in Maharashtra, which is the highest so far after the Omicron variant arrived in India. However, the cases are now plateauing with 39,000 daily infections reported on January 18.

Similarly, Delhi touched over 24,000 Covid-19 cases on January 14 but it saw a dip after it recorded 13,785 infections on January 19.

Dr Panda's says his analysis show that the trend could be a "temporary fluctuation" and a sustained trend for at least three weeks will throw exact conclusions.

"Drawing inference about a trend in rise in infection or fall by analysing the data over just a few days may suffer from fluctuations due to various in-

fluences such as weekend dips in the number of tests conducted. A sustained trend observed over a period of at least 3 weeks will help drawing better conclusions," he explained.

"We still don't know if the decline in reported number of infections that is being observed in Mumbai is a temporary fluctuation or a permanent trend and we can't conclude if the peak of the wave has surpassed," Dr Panda stressed.

He also stressed, "We still don't know if this is a temporary fluctuation or a permanent trend and we can't conclude if the wave has surpassed. Next week, we may see things changing again. We must wait for the data for successive three weeks. Starting from today, we can catch a trend after two weeks now to ensure that it's a sustained trend."

No evidence that healthy kids need Covid Boosters, says WHO Chief Scientist Soumya Swaminathan

Agency
Geneva, Jan 20:

Amid rising demands to vaccinate children against coronavirus infection, World Health Organisation (WHO) Chief Scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan has said that there is "no evidence at all" that healthy children need to receive Covid-19 boosters.

During a press briefing on Tuesday, she said, "The aim is to protect the most vulnerable, to protect those at high-risk of severe disease and dying, those are our elderly population, immunocompromised with underlying conditions and also health care workers."

"There is no evidence right now that healthy children or healthy adolescents need boosters. No evidence at all," Hindustan Times quoted her as saying.

She said more research needs to be done to ascertain who needs booster doses against coronavirus infection.

The statement comes at a time when several countries have started vaccinating booster doses to people in view of the waning immunity from the primary two shots and inoculating Covid vaccines to children and adolescents too. Getting vaccinated reduces the severity of the infection and less serious illnesses mean fewer deaths and less pressure on medical infrastructure.

The US has recently approved administering Covid booster doses to kids. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the use of a



third dose of the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine as a "booster" dose for children between 12 to 15 years of age.

Scientists warn that Omicrons whirlwind advance practically ensures it won't be the last version of the coronavirus to worry the world. Every infection provides a chance for the virus to mutate, and Omicron has an edge over its predecessors: It spreads way faster despite emerging on a planet with a stronger patchwork of immunity from vaccines and prior illness.

That means more people in whom the virus can further evolve. Experts don't know what the next variants will look like or how they might shape the pandemic, but they say there's no guarantee the sequels of Omicron will cause milder illness or that existing vaccines will work against them.

It's why they urge wider vaccination now, while today's shots still work. "The faster Omicron spreads, the more opportunities there are for mutation, potentially leading to more variants," Leonardo

Martinez, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Boston University, was quoted as saying by Associated Press.

The Covid-19 pandemic is far from over, the World Health Organization chief said Tuesday, cautioning against a narrative that the fast-spreading Omicron variant is risk-free. "This pandemic is nowhere near over," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters from WHO's headquarters in Geneva.

Tedros warned against dismissing as mild the coronavirus variant Omicron, which has spread like wildfire around the globe since it was first detected in southern Africa in November.

The Omicron variant of Covid-19 is much more contagious than previous strains but seems to cause less serious disease.

Tedros said there was an urgent need to remove the pressure building on health systems, especially in countries that still have low vaccination coverage. "Now is not the time to give up and wave the white flag," he said.

Sports

ISL: Naorem Mahesh brace propels East Bengal to their first win of the season

Agency
Bambolim, Jan 20:

Naorem Mahesh Singh scored two positive targets to assist SC East Bengal down a powerful FC Goa 2-1 and register its maiden win in an ISL-8 fixture at Bambolim on Wednesday. The new Spanish coach Mario Rivera proved fortunate for East Bengal which lastly tasted success after remaining winless for 11 matches. The win noticed SC EB, with 9 factors in 12 matches, transfer to the tenth spot and push NEUFC to the underside on purpose distinction.

The win also lifted SC East Bengal off the foot of the table as they moved ahead of NorthEast United FC on goal difference.

Like most matches, FC Goa started the match bossing possession but SC East Bengal who were stationed to pounce on any lapses by FC Goa made the most of one in the 9th minute when Naorem Singh pinched the ball from Edu Bedia before running at goal and finishing past the goalkeeper to put SC East Bengal in front.

The Gaurs upped the ante after falling behind and almost equalised in the 24th minute when Alexander Jesuraj fired over after being played in on



goal after an intricate passing move.

Three minutes later, Airam Cabrera missed another chance from a corner.

However, FC Goa made the pressure pay in the 37th minute when Bedia played in Noguera with an inch-perfect through ball as the former finished past the goalkeeper to make it 1-1.

However, SC East Bengal hit back instantly to regain their lead five minutes later when a poor pass across the face of the goal from FC Goa was intercepted by Naorem Singh inside the box. His shot then bounce in off the crossbar. It

was a good call from the linesman to award it as the ball bounced back out after crossing the line.

SC East Bengal had their noses in front at the break despite seeing much less of the ball than their opponents.

Rivera threw in Raju Gaikwad for the second half in place of Mohammad Rafique but SC East Bengal had to weather an early storm from FC Goa in the second half.

The Gaurs once again dominated possession, pushing the Red and Gold brigade deep in their own half but couldn't create too many chances.

Derrick Pereira brought on Redeem Tlang, Devendra Murgaonkar and Saviour Gama at different points in the second half as FC Goa chased an equaliser.

However, SC East Bengal, desperate for their first win of the season, gave it their all and saw the game through after seven testing stoppage time minutes.

As for SC East Bengal, their next assignment sees them take on Hyderabad FC on Monday. COVID-19 hit the match once more as Thursday's sport between ATK MB and Kerala Blasters was postponed.

Asian Cup: Moment of truth for Indian women's football

Agency
Kolkata, Jan 20:

Growing up in Thoubal, Manipur, Yumnam Kamala Devi didn't know there was such a thing called women's football.

She'd cut her hair short to be "one of the boys"; she'd sneak out of her house to avoid facing the wrath of her parents for playing a 'boys' game'; she'd humiliate other players with her body feints and dribbles, and score goals for fun, without ever knowing there was a professional set-up.

Kamala, who was All India Football Federation's Player of the Year in 2017, wasn't the only one to think so.

Save for the last couple of years, women's football has virtually been non-existent in the country. There has been no youth programme, more than half of the states don't have a tournament for senior players, the domestic league lasts for barely a couple of months and the last time the national team played an international tournament of some significance was the 2014 Asian Games.

In the total absence of a structure and with very limited opportunities to make a living from it, the only thing that kept Kamala and her teammates driven was — at the risk of sounding too cliché — their passion for the game.



In this context, the Asian Cup, which kicks off on Thursday in Mumbai, has the potential to become the turning point for women's football in India. The hosting of the continental showpiece event is in continuation of the AIFF's top-down approach, in which they bring big-ticket tournaments to the country and then build an ecosystem around it.

This was first tried with the under-17 men's World Cup in 2017, which was used to strengthen the grassroots. The jury is still out whether it brought any long-lasting change but that hasn't stopped the federation from taking a similar path for the women's game by bringing the Asian Cup and the under-17 World Cup, which will be held in October this year, to the country.

Name Correction

I, the undersigned Pukhrambam Bidaswori Devi, (age 38) wife of late Pukhrambam Ibohah Singh of Sagolband Tera Lukram Leirak, P.O. Imphal, P.S. Lamphel, Imphal West District do hereby declare that my name Pukhrambam Bidaswori Devi, is entered at both my Aadhar Card and voter card. However, my name has been recorded as Kshetrimayum Bidaswori Devi in all my documents. Both Pukhrambam Bidaswori Devi and Kshetrimayum Bidaswori Devi are the same person.

Sd/-

Pukhrambam Bidaswori Devi
Sagolband Tera Lukram Leirak