

Supreme Court Notice to Centre, Manipur on plea against Inner Line Permit

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 3:

The Supreme Court has issued a notice to the Central government and Manipur government on a plea challenging the system of Inner Line Permit (ILP) in Manipur.

A Bench of Justices Abdul Nazeer and Krishna Murari sought response from the Centre and Manipur governments and posted the matter for hearing after four weeks.

The petition was filed by Amra Bangali, a Kolkata-based organisation with a unit in Assam, demanding re-

vocation of the ILP in Manipur.

The plea has challenged the permit system contending that it provides unbridled power to the State to restrict entry and exit of non-indigenous persons or those who are not permanent residents of Manipur.

The permit system was introduced by way of the Adaptation of Laws (Amendment) Order, 2019 which extends 140-year-old "colonial legislation" Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873 (BEFR).

The plea said that the BEFR was enacted by the

British to create a monopoly over the tea plantations in Assam (then part of Bengal) and to protect its commercial interests in the hilly areas from Indians. It prohibits Indians from engaging in trade with the tribal populace in the areas contained in the preamble of the BEFR.

By virtue of the 2019 order, the ILP system has effectively been made applicable to the States of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and districts of Nagaland which are notified from time to time.

The 2019 order violates

fundamental rights of citizens guaranteed under Articles 14, 15, 19 and 21 of the Indian Constitution since it grants unqualified power to the State for restricting the entry and exit of non-indigenous persons, the petition stated.

It added, "The draconian ILP system is fundamentally opposed to the policies of social integration, development and technological advancement in the area beyond the Inner Line, apart from hampering tourism within the state, which is a major source of revenue generation for these areas."

ZCOs Manipur Govt. to be tactful to the demand of ST by Meitei community

IT News
Imphal, Jan 3:

The Zeliangrong Civil Organizations (ZCOs) comprising of Zeliangrong Baudi, Zeliangrong Youth Front and Zeliangrong Students' Union being the civil body representing the interest and sentiment of the Zeliangrong community, which is the largest tribal group in the North Eastern Region of the country has appealed the Manipur State Govt. to be tactful regarding the Scheduled Tribe Demand Committee of Meitei community for inclusion of Meitei in the Scheduled Tribe list of India which, the ZCOs says that it is a matter of great concern for the tribal people of Manipur who have been deprived of their rights despite the fact of certain Constitutional protection and safeguards provided in the Constitution.

A statement by the Media and Publicity Cell of the Zeliangrong civil

organisations (ZCOs) said that in a State like Manipur where different communities have been settled for ages, it would be wise for every community to respect and honor the due shares of others. Trying to trample upon another by way of adopting dominant policy may lead to further spoil the already strain relationship between the tribal and the non tribal people of the State, the statement said.

It added that the State had formulated a 100 point roster reservation policy with 31 percent reservation for tribal people at the time of job recruitment under the State Govt. But the successive govt. failed to implement as per the reservation policy thereby rendered the tribal people less representation in different departments. While this is one of the discontentment feelings of the tribal people of the State, the Scheduled Tribe Demand Committee spearheaded by

highly educated, influenced and economically much advanced group for inclusion of Meitei in the Scheduled Tribe category can be considered as an attempt to render the tribal people more suffering and more deprivation in the days to come. There are various social and political issues of different groups of Manipur which has been lying unsolved for decades, therefore, social unrest cannot be ruled out if recommendation is made by the State Govt. for the Meitei community who are in all respects highly advanced group of Manipur State for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe list. The State Govt. without considering the sentiment of the people of the entire State of Manipur but if succumbs to the pressure of the dominant group may lead to chaos and social unrest in the State. The tribal people have been silently observing the situation hence time may come where different groups of the State

may resorted to any available means in order to make their discontentment heard.

The only assets of the tribal people of Manipur State are their ancestral land and the representation of the tribal people in the employment sector is only through Scheduled Tribe reservation policy. But their land is now threatened and their representation in the employment is going to be deprived therefore apprehension and insecurity feeling is high on their minds due to Meitei community started demanding for inclusion of Meitei community in the Scheduled tribe category. Meitei community of Manipur enjoys different reservation categories such as SC, OBC and treated the unreserved category as their exclusive quota in most cases. The presence of tribal people in the employment sector is seen only because of the Scheduled Tribe reservation policy.

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One-day Certified Medical First Responder & Basic Life Support Training held

IT News
Imphal, Jan 3:

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Manipur in collaboration with the Directorate of Health, Manipur organised a One Day Certified Medical First Responder and Basic Life Support (BLS) Training for Medical Officers of Rapid Response Teams (RRT) (Health) for first batch in connection with the upcoming State Assembly Election, 2022, today at Indian Medical Association Hall (IMA), Lamphelpat conducted by St. John Ambulance (India), Manipur State Centre.

Priorities of First Aid & Incident Management, Basic Life Support (including CPR & Recovery Position), Choking & Drowning, Bleeding Wounds, Shock, Dressings & Bandages, Burns & Scalds,



Musculo-Skeletal injuries including head injuries, Heart Attack & Angina, Poisoning, Animal Bites & Stings, Transportation of a Casualty were among the topics discussed with PowerPoint Presentation by the Health Experts (Doctors) during the training.

Additional Chief Electoral Officer, Naorem Praveen Singh while delivering the in-

augural speech said that the training programme is being conducted in compliance with the instructions laid down by the Election Commission of India regarding Health Emergency to be followed during Election, the medical facilities to be provided to polling personnel and to enable timely response in case of medical emergen-

cies.

He said that to ensure a systematic and planned manner of response in case of any emergency; various facilities have been prepared in consultation with the State Nodal Officer, Health, Dr. Tomcha and related health experts.

N. Praveen, sharing his experience of Medical urgency during Election duty of poll personnel, highlighted the plan of introducing cashless treatment for Polling Personnel and other health facilities including the stocking of medicines, 24/7 medical services and RRT arrangements for the upcoming Election.

Training and motivation, he added, is also essential for Health officials on duty. Preparedness for Election in view of Health facilities are being carried out under the supervision of SNO, Health.

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CM Biren launches COVID-19 vaccination of 15-18 years



IT News
Imphal, Jan 3:

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Monday launched the COVID-19 vaccination drive for children aged 15-18 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) in Imphal. Launching the vaccina-

tion drive the chief minister urged all eligible children to receive the vaccine at earliest.

"The entire Nation is thankful to Hon' PM Shri @narendramodi Ji for initiating the vaccination drive for children aged 15-18. I'm pleased to have launched Manipur's Covid vaccination drive for children at

JNIMS today. I urge all eligible children to take the vaccines at earliest," CM Biren tweeted.

India began the vaccination for the age-group 15-18 years on Monday. It may be mentioned that only 'Covaxin' will be administered in this population category.

Orientation Programme for Journalists on MGNREGS held



IT News
Imphal, Jan 3:

A one day State level Orientation programme for Journalist on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)

and its Implementation was held today Manipur Press Club, Majorkhul, Imphal.

The programme was organized by department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj.

Addressing the gathering

Additional Secretary of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Kengoo Zuringla, IAS Stated that the main aim of organizing the programme is to sensitize the media fraternity regarding the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. She stated that since the inception and implementation of the scheme, MGNREGS has become one of the greatest force of the social security for the rural poor in our country.

MGNREGS was initiative with the objective of advancing livelihood, security in rural areas to atleast to provide 100 days job guarantee to those who are 18 years and above.

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UCM presented gifts to elders of Wairangba Village on Annual Traditional and Cultural Day

IT News
Imphal, Jan 3:

Members of the United Committee Manipur (UCM) have presented gifts to the elders of the Wairangbam Village in Tamenglong Village while attending the Annual Traditional and Cultural Day on January 2.

President of the UCM Joychandra Konthoujam attended the cultural programme as Chief Guest while Vice Chairman of the Wairangba Village Authority presided over the function. Secretary General of the UCM Ng. Deba also graced the occasion as



Guest of Honour.

Leaders of the UCM expressed happiness towards the villagers for their kind gesture and for inviting the UCM to attend the joyous moments.

Joychandra Konthoujam while speaking on the occasion said that such a traditional cultural day is the need of the of the hour as it protect one's identity.

Animal Rights groups should be formed at Mohalla level

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



We have been listening a lot about human rights, but what about the rights of animals, birds, trees and rivers? Some time ago, the Uttarakhand High Court had issued an order to treat rivers

as a living entity and ordered the state government that the rights of the river should be taken care of in the same way as the rights of a human being are protected. In one of its important verdicts, the Supreme Court had talked about the right to life of homeless animals living in the vicinity of human settlements. The court said that the homeless dogs living in the human colonies, localities and housing societies should be given the status of "Community Dogs". In ancient times, humans domesticated wild dogs for guarding their properties and took them along for hunting also. This relationship of friendship and fellowship has been going on for centuries. But, today the human being immersed in the luxuries of amenities is ignoring and disrespecting these old companions. Even without eating anything and without getting any praise from the locals, these friendly animals innocently protect the houses and properties by guarding the streets and localities for free at night. But many bad elements keep hurting and driving them away. What a shame.

In a Twitter chat, several experts from across the country shared their views on the rights and needs of homeless community animals, especially the community dogs. An important piece of advice emerged that animal lovers and compassionate people across the country should form small groups of like-minded people at the mohalla and residential society level. These small groups can at least take care of their street and neighbourhood animals for protection, medical care, sterilisation, safe living conditions, food, water and their rights. Together they can also make efforts to improve their lives. Three or four kind hearted people and animal lovers can definitely be found in every street or locality in all cities and towns. They should keep in touch with each other and help the community animals with the support of each other. There is power in unity. Therefore, animal haters will not dare to cast their evil eyes on these voiceless animals. My daughter herself got three female dogs sterilised giving them a new life. When a single child can do this, imagine what a group of four or five people could do.

How to help the dogs in the neighbourhood in winter and in the rainy season? I noticed that three kind hearted people in my neighbourhood have put old mattresses outside their garages for street dogs to sleep on and they protect them from haters also. Haters not only spoil their own 'karma', they also make the whole environment toxic and negative. In such a situation, animal lovers should stay united and keep adding more and more volunteers in their group. There was also a good suggestion that homeless dogs should not be given jackets or sweaters, as they can cause the death of the animal by getting stuck in a vehicle. Instead, care should be taken of the food and drink of the animals, so that they remain healthy and friendly. More and more people need to be kind and compassionate.

The Politics of Climate Change

By: Sauro Dasgupta

Climate change refers to change in the global climate pattern, in particular beginning from the 20th century and which is mainly caused by the use of fossil fuels and nonrenewable energy sources.

In the past few months we observe that here the climatic conditions of Delhi have suffered a very horrible blow and it has been seen that the conditions have worsened after Diwali. The burning of Crop stubble by the farmers has lead to more air pollution in Delhi. Unfortunately due to the vote bank politics this issue has not been given more importance.

Due to rising air pollution and various climatic changes in many parts of the world we observe mechanism to reduce climate change have not been effective. Sadly politicians often call the climate change a hoax and accuse India and China for the same, especially in case of some US politicians.

In Delhi we observed that the number of air purifiers is the number of air purifiers is the highest in the Prime Minister's office and in the Rashtrapati Bhavan, while people are suffocating in the horrible atmospheric conditions of Delhi. Unfortunately many politicians are ignoring this, saying that they don't have time for mitigating the crisis. Accusations by parties at one another are worsening the matter and no relief is being provided to the people.

It's gratifying to note that all is not bad in India. In West Bengal, the government has made it mandatory for people to travel in electric vehicles from 2030 and has banned the plying of other vehicles from that date. The concept of 'Green Cities' in West Bengal, i.e. balancing greenery with urban development gas has benefited us all. Pollution has reduced and the environment is becoming better day by day.

These developments lead us to believe that everything is fortunately not bad. Steps been taken to ensure that the climate changes not affect the Indian people and we have also. Odisha, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan are doing a lot in this regard. Sadhguru's Isha Foundation has started a programme called Cauvery Calling wherein they are planning to plant 1.3 crore trees along the Cauvery basin so that the water does not dry up and that the environment remains unaffected. Many more initiatives by the politicians, the community leaders, NGOs and ordinary citizens must take place. We must come forward to do something for the environment otherwise it will be too late.

(The writer is a PG student, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University)

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Each One Teach One in India



By: Vijay GarG

children. There are also some who are just negligent about the need for education. Many factors work for their situation does not give time for the education at school. One of the reasons can be attributed to the economic backwardness.

There are also a lot of children who leave their school even before completing their basic schooling. There is no doubt that India is developing at quite a fast pace, and this is a fact that there are still millions of people in the country who don't want to send their children to the schools. There is no doubt that the government is taking many initiatives to ensure basic education for all the children, but the major limitation is public awareness, these initiatives also don't seem to become fruitful because of lack of public consciousness as well as awareness.

Role of Youth in the Cause
Youth has an important role to play in the developmental process of a nation. Youth can lead a nation towards some really high achievement levels. If youth take their interest in these activities, they can really help out in achieving some really surprising results and also can help in creating a lot of awareness among the people. Apart from the plans initiated by the government or collaborative efforts made by some non-government organizations, the educated young people of our society should take a keen interest and contribute by spreading awareness about the need for education and practicing simple phenomena like 'each one teach one'. Students and young professionals can help out in a lot of ways. You need not be a scholar, but still, your basics can even prove out to be really useful knowledge for someone else.

If different groups of students

from colleges decide to take up the challenge they can spread awareness about the need for being educated. Apart from this they can organize classes in a group for the needy children or may also organize regular weekend camps in some nearby rural areas which may also prove out to be a good fun trip with the friends. This can also prove out to be really motivating for others who are really concerned about the education level of our country and are also equipped with the talent to provide a lot to society, but cannot work for the cause due to family constraints or due to lack of motivation and support. Watching other groups doing this can also be a motivating force to join them and help out in the cause.

Advantages of the Concept Each One Teach One

Each one, teach one is a concept that brings with it a lot of mental satisfaction if you are involved in teaching someone or even if you are promoting the concept of spreading the awareness. The idea of working for a social cause gives you an immense sense of satisfaction and peace of mind. It is a really noble cause that may change the whole life of an individual being taught. Apart from mental satisfaction, the progress of the country is also directly related to the education level of the country that further determines the crime rate of a country as well. Some other advantages related to the concept are:

Help your housemaid, watchman, garbage collector, a vegetable vendor and those underprivileged people to learn; read and write, and these people help make your life better and easier.

You can also offer to teach others or bring people who want to learn. You can motivate some others who have the skills to do this but just need a boost.

You can also contribute materials or space for teaching which also gives a great sense of satisfaction towards a noble cause.

proper education level in the country with the help of various plans, projects and schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan, Mid-Day Meal and different education laws like the Right to Education Act to promote as well as ease the access to education in India. The main aim is the social development of the nation. At the same time there is also need for the citizens, especially the youth of India to actually become dedicated towards the cause of making education accessible to all the children of India, and also make their contribution towards the cause as much as possible.

Government is really concerned on the issue of education and is constantly coming up with various educational schemes and is also spending a plenty of funds, but lack the people who can make these schemes work effectively and judiciously. There is a lack of motivation and desire as well. Hence there is a need that young people should come up with innovative ideas and also make groups help out as much number of people as they can. There are a lot of student groups who are giving free education to needy children in the form of free tuition or teaching them some basic knowledge during evening time.

Need for the Concept Each One Teach One

Education is like a flame of fire that needs just a medium to be spread, a small spark can ignite a whole flame. Even in this 21st century also, there are millions of people in our country who are still ignorant of the world of knowledge. There also a lot of people who clearly understand the need and benefits of the education but still either do not enroll their children in education or do not have sufficient resource to manage education for their

Foundations of Vernacular Innovation Program

By: Chintan Vaishnav and PV Madhusudhan Rao

In India, as in most parts of the world today, an innovator needs proficiency in English to fully participate in the mainstream innovation ecosystem.

A vernacular innovator, someone who does not know English, will likely struggle to raise investments as easily as may an English speaker, no matter how creative is their solution. Why should it be so? Is creative expression dependent on the language of transaction? Of course not! We have seen plenty of evidence for this in the fields art where some of our most creative artists do not know English.

It is therefore time to create a Vernacular Innovation Program (VIP) that systematically decouples creative expression and language of transaction. Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), the flagship program of the Government of India housed in the NITI Aayog, is on the cusp of launching one such movement.

As per the 2011 census, only 10.4% of Indians spoke English, most as their second, third, or fourth language. Not surprisingly, only 0.02% of Indians spoke English as their first language. Ten years later these numbers are not likely to be very different. Why shouldn't we then create equal opportunity for the vernacular innovators who represent the staggering 90% of our population. After all, we know for sure that this excluded population, no matter which Indian language they speak, is at least as creative as the rest.

What does it mean to create a Vernacular Innovation Program? At one level, it means creating an innovation ecosystem where a vernacular innovator can (a) learn the modern subjects of design thinking and entrepreneurship, (b) access global markets, and (c) attract investments. To be sure, this is not about mitigating altogether the multitude of risks associated with innovation and entrepreneurship; it is

just about lowering the language barrier. For India, this means creating such ecosystems for the 22 scheduled languages.

The first step of making design thinking and entrepreneurship accessible to vernacular innovators requires adapting these modern subjects in local languages, but more importantly in local cultures. As such, translation of subjects from one language to another has been done for ages. The Bhagavad Gita gets translated in more international languages with every passing year as compared to any other text, so the idea of simple translation is not new.

What has not been done so far is to adapt these subjects into local cultures; meaning, a schematic for such adaptation does not exist and it is necessary to have one. After all, a Punjabi business person is not a Tamil business person, even though they are both following business principals. Similarly, a Bangaliconsumer is not a Gujarati consumer. There are subtle differences in their cultures that we all know exist, yet we have not had the need to systematically articulate them. So, how to do it? Let us think about it as a system.

Learning of any subject has two primary dimensions: *content* and *pedagogy*. Content, at the highest level, requires learning theory and its application. For example, a doctor learns the theory of how the mind and body functions and applies it in their medical practice. The theory further breaks down into *concepts* and their *interconnections*.

Pedagogy is a way to teach and learn the content. While the content remains the same for a given subject and is also accessible worldwide today with the Internet revolution, it is the pedagogy that separates an effective teacher from a not so effective one. Pedagogy, at the highest level, has three parts: creating learning objectives, using effective methods of teaching and

learning the content, and assessing whether learning is taking place and, if not, adapting the pedagogy appropriately. The crises today is that, while the content spreads easily the pedagogy does not.

A vernacular innovation program need two additional dimensions: *language* and *culture*. Based on the above discussion, adaptation of a subject in another language requires translating the concepts, their interconnections, and examples. When we will translate the concepts and interconnections from English to the 22 Indian languages, we would have created a compendium that allows anyone bilingual person to go from their native language to another.

Selecting appropriate examples is where the language dimension meets the culture dimension. The idea of culture is vast. We must therefore boil it down to what we need here. Consider the following two dimensions of culture: the *entrepreneurial culture* and *consumer culture*. These differ from region to region. The entrepreneurial culture, at the highest level, manifests itself in the assumptions, beliefs, risk appetite, capability, and ambitions of people of the region. Similarly, the consumer culture manifests itself in the needs, wants, customs and dreams of the people of that region. If we could articulate these aspects through rich examples, we would have succeeded in adapting a subject to a culture.

With more than seventy thousand registered startups in India, there are many contemporary examples to talk of an entrepreneurial culture. These however may stifle the vernacular innovators. We must therefore rely on the regional experience and literature. For example, *Munshi Premchand's* work has depicted various facets of life and people's deeply seated hopes and aspirations that amount to describing the underlying

drivers of the entrepreneurial and consumer culture of a region that it is today. In other languages too, such classics have carefully captured what we may consider examples to learn from. We must usher this depth of culture into our innovation ecosystem through the examples we select.

To build the necessary capacity for such a program, Atal Innovation Mission has partnered with the Department of Design at IIT Delhi to identify and train a Language Task Force in each of the 22 scheduled languages of India. Each task force comprises of vernacular language teachers, design thinking experts, technical writers, and the leadership of regional Atal Incubation Centers. Furthermore, industry mentors have joined hands to lend design thinking expertise, and CSR sponsors have agreed to generously joined the movement. Upon training the task force over the period of December 2021 to April 2022, the ecosystem will be opened to vernacular innovators.

India may be the first nation in the world to launch such an initiative, where an innovation ecosystem catering to twenty two languages plus English is being built. Of course, providing access to learning design thinking and entrepreneurship in one's language and culture is merely the beginning. Our work is not done until we also build other ecosystem services such as access to mentors, markets, investors and policymakers. When we succeed, we would have unshackled the creative expression from a language of transaction to serve those who are our true VIPs.

(About the authors: Dr. Chintan Vaishnav is the Mission Director of Atal Innovation Mission and Prof. PV Madhusudhan Rao is a Professor of Mechanical Engineering and the Head of Design Department, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi)

COVID-19 vaccination for children aged 15-18 years begins

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 3:

New Delhi: The vaccination of children between 15 to 18 years of age against COVID-19 began on Monday at various hospitals and inoculation centres across the country. Bharat Biotech's Covaxin is the only COVID-19 vaccine that will be administered to children in the age group of 15-18 years, according to guidelines issued by Union Health Ministry.

"For all those aged 15 years or more, option for vaccination would only be available for Covaxin as this is the only vaccine with Emergency Use Listing (EUL) for the age-group 15-17," the ministry had said in its guidelines.

While making the announcement on December 25, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said this will reduce the worries of children going to schools and colleges and their parents, and boost the fight against the pandemic, adding



that the move is also likely to aid in normalisation of teaching in schools.

The estimated population to be covered in this category is seven to eight crores.

All those aged 15 years or more can register themselves for vaccination on Co-WIN

portal. Beneficiaries can self-register online through an existing account on Co-WIN or can also register by creating a new account through a unique mobile number.

The beneficiaries can also be registered onsite by the verifier/vaccinator in facili-

tated registration mode, the guidelines read. Appointments can be booked online or onsite (walk-in).

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Saturday requested people to register eligible children in their families for the vaccination.

India's Omicron tally rises to 1,700; 33,750 new COVID-19 cases logged

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 3:

A total of 1,700 cases of Omicron variant of coronavirus have been detected across 23 states and Union Territories so far, out of which 639 have recovered or migrated, according to the Union health ministry's data updated on Monday.

Maharashtra has recorded the maximum number of 510 cases, followed by Delhi (351), Kerala (156), Gujarat (136), Tamil Nadu (121) and Rajasthan (120).

India's Covid tally rose to 3,49,22,882 with 33,750 fresh cases, while the active cases increased to 1,45,582, according to the data updated at 8 am.

The death toll climbed to 4,81,893 with 123 more fatalities, the data showed.

The active cases have increased to 1,45,582 comprising 0.42 per cent of the total infections, while the national

COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 98.20 per cent, the health ministry said.

An increase of 22,781 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 3.84 per cent while the weekly positivity rate was recorded at 1.68 per cent, according to the health ministry.

The number of people who have recovered from the disease surged to 3,42,95,407, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.38 per cent.

The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive has exceeded 145.68 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, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

India crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4 and three crore on June 23.

The 123 new fatalities include 78 from Kerala and nine from Maharashtra.

A total of 4,81,893 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 1,41,542 from Maharashtra, 48,113 from Kerala, 38,346 from Karnataka, 36,790 from Tamil Nadu, 25,109 from Delhi, 22,916 from Uttar Pradesh and 19,781 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 the state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

Omicron effect: India's COVID-19 surge faster than second wave; massive spike in Maharashtra, Delhi

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 3:

In recent days India has seen a massive surge in COVID-19 cases some cities almost doubling their tally overnight or reporting thousands of fresh infections. Delhi on Sunday reported its highest single-day spike since May 20, even as the positivity rate rose to 4.59%. The recent spike in cases is being recorded amid a significant jump in cases belonging to the new Omicron variant.

Official data indicates that the numbers reported in just two days of 2022 are higher than the cumulative cases reported between August and November last year. As per a *CNN-News18* analysis of the daily COVID-19 updates, the national capital had reported a total of 4,669 cases in these three months.

Over the last seven days, Delhi's daily caseload has gone from 331 cases last Monday (December 27) to 3194 fresh cases on Sunday (January 2). 496 fresh cases were reported on Tuesday, followed by 923 on Wednesday, 1,313 on Thursday, 1,796 cases were reported on Friday, while the number rose to 2,716 on Saturday. As of yesterday evening, the national capital has 8397 active cases.

The surge is not limited to the national capital. Several other cities including Mumbai have seen their cases multiply by several thousand over the last few days. From 108 fresh cases on December 1, Mumbai reported 809 new cases last Monday. The week ended with 8063 fresh cases on Sunday (January 2) and an active caseload of 29,819. Led by its capital city, Maharashtra on Sunday reported 11,877

fresh COVID-19 cases - 2,707 more than the day before - and 50 Omicron infections.

According to analysis of the Health Ministry data by *Hindustan Times*, the Omicron-led 'third wave' appears to be progressing far more rapidly than its predecessor. Going by the seven day average of cases, such a rapid rise in India's tally had not been seen even during the Delta-led second wave. As per official data, there are now 1,22,801 active cases in the country.

While the Arvind Kejriwal-led government has implemented a 'yellow' alert under the Delhi Disaster Management Authority-approved Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), the city might soon become eligible for more stringent curbs. If a case positivity rate of 5% is reported for two consecutive days, it would trigger a 'red alert'.

Even as cases rise exponentially, however, the Delhi government has urged people to not panic, insisting that the situation was not quite as grim as the deadly second wave seen in mid-2021. Recently, the administration had also refrained from putting the 'amber alert' in place after the positivity rate crossed the relevant marker. "As of now, only 82 oxygen beds in hospitals are occupied. Delhi government is prepared with 37,000 beds. I just want to tell you that all new cases are with mild symptoms, asymptomatic, so there is no need to panic," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal assured on Sunday evening.

Drawing a comparison with last year, he said that there were around 6600 active COVID-19 cases in Delhi on March 27. "145 patients were on ventilators, as compared to 5 now," he added.

Assam: Pro-talks ULFA doubts Centre's 'sincerity' over peace talks

Agency
Dibrugarh, Jan 3:

The pro-talks faction of ULFA has expressed doubts over the Centre's "sincerity" in taking forward the decade-long peace parleys with it, claiming that no dialogue has been held in the last two years and there was no government interlocutor at present to take the process forward.

The faction alleged that there has been "not much progress" in the peace talks with it since the Narendra Modi government came to power, though the negotiations had reached the final stages during former prime minister Manmohan Singh's tenure.

It also maintained that the hardliner ULFA(I) chief Paresh Barua is unlikely to come forward for negotiations until the parleys with the pro-talks faction are completed.

The allegations come at a time when Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is trying to bring Barua to the negotiating table for a settlement with all factions of the group.

Talking to PTI, former self-styled general secretary of ULFA and pro-talks faction leader Anup Chetia said, "The last round of talks with the government was held in January 2020. The term of the government interlocutor had ended in March that year."

"After that, there has been no contact with us. Still, we are waiting with hope that our issues will be addressed and resolved by the government," he said.

Maintaining that the government is "more responsible" for taking forward the peace talks than the militant group, Chetia added, "There are reasons for us to doubt the sincerity of the government."

Another senior pro-talks ULFA leader Mrinal Hazarika said, "Sincerity of the govern-

ment seems to be lacking. Discussions were almost over and in the final stages during Manmohan Singh's tenure. But there has not been much progress after Narendra Modi's government came to power."

He also maintained that the government was indulging in "delaying tactics" in resolving the ULFA pro-talks faction's demands, which were broadly based on ensuring economic, cultural, political and linguistic safeguards for the indigenous people of Assam.

"The BJP supports 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' (one India, greatest India) policy, through which they want to paint everyone with the same brush. That's why they are trying to delay granting our safeguards," Hazarika said.

On the government's overtures to Paresh Barua to come for talks, Chetia said, "I have heard Barua tell media that he wants the government to complete the negotiations with us first."

"He also perhaps fears that his condition will be like ours and no progress will be made towards an actual resolution of all issues," he added.

Hazarika also spoke on similar lines and added, "It won't be possible for the Paresh Barua group and our faction to be clubbed together for the talks. Our demands are a reflection of aspirations of the civil society, while his is a one-point agenda of sovereignty."

A top Assam Police officer privy to the ULFA-government talks, speaking to PTI on condition of anonymity, accepted that there has been some "stagnancy" in the process.

"The interlocutor is yet to be appointed. Yes, there has been some stagnancy, but various factors contribute to it," he said.

The officer added that change in government and top positions also lead to delay in

such peace talks.

As per Hazarika, there are over 1,000 pro-talks ULFA cadres, staying in nine camps as well as outside, living off the stipend provided by the government.

Hazarika added that the first lot of ULFA cadres and leaders, including himself, had come forward for talks in 2008, while extradition of top leaders of the outfit, including its self-styled 'chairman' Arabinda Rajkhowa, from Bangladesh, where they were imprisoned, had started in 2010.

The formal peace talks with the pro-talks faction had commenced in 2011.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had on January 1 said that bringing ULFA(I) to the negotiation table is the "last hurdle" in bringing peace to the state.

Sarma said he has learnt from his personal interactions with the people who are directly or indirectly in touch with ULFA(I) chief Barua that the militant wants a negotiated settlement with the government.

"The stumbling block is 'sovereignty'. The ULFA(I) will want a discussion over it, which we cannot hold. We are working on breaking the deadlock," Sarma said.

The chief minister, after taking oath on May 10, had appealed to the ULFA(I) to come forward for peace talks and resolve the 42-year old insurgency problem in the state.

The hardliner faction of the outfit had responded with a declaration of unilateral ceasefire the same month for three months, which it has been extending since.

While terming the unilateral ceasefire a "positive step", Sarma said that the government has also reciprocated the gesture by not engaging in any "direct conflict" with the outfit in the last eight months.

Amid global surge WHO chief says, we can end Covid-19 pandemic in 2022 if....

Agency
New Delhi, Jan 3:

With coronavirus cases on the rise again globally, and the Omicron variant slowly seeping in almost every country, the World Health Organisation (WHO) chief is hopeful that the pandemic can end in 2022. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the global health body said, "if we end inequity, we end the pandemic."

Hitting on countries over vaccine hoarding amid rising cases, the WHO chief said that narrow nationalism and vaccine hoarding have undermined equity, and created the ideal conditions for the emergence of the Omicron variant. "The longer inequity continues, the higher the risks of this virus evolving in ways we can't prevent or predict," Ghebreyesus said.



In a statement issued as the world welcomed 2022, the UN health body chief said as the world enters the third year of this pandemic, "I'm confident that this will be the year we end it but only if we do it together." Call it a threat to decades of progress made in healthcare, he said "Millions of people have missed out on routine vaccination, services for family planning, treatment for communicable and non-communicable diseases, and more."

The head of the World Health Organization has expressed worry over the new cases that he's worried about the omicron and delta variants of COVID-19 producing a "tsunami" of cases between them. First reported last month in southern Africa, it is already the dominant variant in the United States and parts of Europe.

"I'm highly concerned that omicron being more transmissible (and) circulating at the same time as delta, is leading to a tsunami of cases," Tedros said at an online news conference. That, he said, will put "immense pressure on exhausted health workers and health systems on the brink of collapse."

He maintained that Covid-19 is not the only health threat the world's people will face in 2022. WHO will continue to work around the world to protect

and promote the health of everyone, everywhere.

"A new year brings new resolutions. Here is mine, for the world. First, we must end the pandemic. To do that, we need all countries to work together to reach the global target of vaccinating 70 per cent of people in all countries by the middle of 2022," the WHO chief said, advocating the need to build a stronger global framework for global health security.

He further urged all countries to invest in stronger primary healthcare saying, "Covid-19 has demonstrated that when health is at risk, everything is at risk."

As the WHO chief hopes of a better tomorrow, India on Monday reached the 1700 Omicron case tally. Maharashtra has reported 510 cases so far while Delhi has reported 351 patients.

States demand extension of GST compensation for another 5 years

IT Correspondent
Mumbai, Jan 3:

Many states have demanded that the GST compensation cess regime be extended for another five years and the share of the Union government in the centrally-sponsored schemes be raised as the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their revenues.

As per a statement issued by Sangeeta Jain, Senior Director, All India Association of Industries, the GST compensation to states for revenue short-fall resulting from subsuming of local taxes such as VAT in the uniform national tax Goods and Services Tax (GST) will end in June this year.

The Centre has not made arrangements to compensate the loss of revenue of about Rs 5,000 crore to the state in the coming year, so the GST compensation grant should be continued for the next five years after June 2022, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said.

"Many states have asked for this. We have also asked to extend GST compensation. If it is not extended, the finances of many states will be in a bad shape," Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said after pre-Budget consultation

of finance ministers of states with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chaired the 46th meeting of the Goods and Service Tax Council meeting in New Delhi on December 31. The agenda of the meeting was to discuss the inverted duty structure of certain sectors and debarment on the reports of the two Groups of Ministers that were set up during the last Council meeting in September last year.

As reported earlier, after rectifying the inverted duty structures in footwear and textiles, the all-powerful GST Council may take up the issue for some other sectors, including a few pharmaceutical products. The problem of inverted duty structure arises when the finished product is at a lower tax bracket compared to the input raw materials. However, this usually leads to the rise in rates of the finished products, and the rate increase in textiles and footwear has led to criticism from the central government's political opposition.

Govt extends FY21 GST annual return filing deadline till February 28

The government has extended by two months till Feb-

ruary 28 the deadline for businesses to file GST annual returns for 2020-21 fiscal ended March 2021. "The due date for furnishing annual return in form GSTR-9 and self-certified reconciliation statement in form GSTR-9C for the financial year 2020-21 has been extended from till February 28, "the Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) said in a late-night tweet on Wednesday.

GSTR 9 is an annual return to be filed yearly by taxpayers registered under the Goods and Services Tax (GST). It consists of details regarding the outward and inward supplies made or received under different tax heads. GSTR-9C is a statement of reconciliation between GSTR-9 and the audited annual financial statement.

Benefit of reduced performance security extended till March 2023

The centre has also extended till March 2023 the benefit of reduced performance security in government contracts. According to the rules, a successful bidder awarded a government contract has to deposit a performance security of 5-10 % of the value of the contract with the government. To help commercial entities and contractors tide over the liquidity crunch post the first wave

of the COVID pandemic, the finance ministry had in November 2020 reduced this performance security to 3% for all tenders or contracts issued or concluded till December 31, 2021. The finance ministry on Thursday said that the government of India has decided to extend the benefit of reduced performance security of 3 % up to March 31, 2023, for all central government tenders/contracts issued/concluded till March 31, 2023.

Centre notifies new rules for consumer commissions

The Centre has notified the Consumer Protection (Jurisdiction of the District Commission, the State Commission and the National Commission) Rules, 2021, revising the pecuniary jurisdiction of the district, State and national commissions. According to the notification, district commissions will have jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of the goods or services paid does not exceed Rs.50 lakh. State commissions can handle complaints in the range of Rs.50 lakh-Rs.2 crore. "The National Commission shall have jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of the goods or services paid as consideration exceeds Rs.2 crore," it added.

JFA urges media persons to abandon security cover

IT Correspondent
Guwahati, Jan 3:

Journalists' Forum Assam (JFA), while appreciating the State government's decision to judiciously use the government sponsored security cover to individuals, urges the concerned media persons to abandon the same voluntarily so that those personnel

can be engaged in proper channels.

It may be mentioned that Assam government in a recent resolution decided to allot personal security officers (PSOs) rationally so that it does not become a status symbol for politicians (also other individuals). State chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, also in charge of home portfolio, an-

nounced himself about the decision.

He even declared that allotment of government accommodation and security cover to former State chief ministers will also be curtailed to a greater extent. Sarma finally revealed that, hereafter PSOs would be made available to those in constitutional posts or in positions that require security cover sub-

ject to screening by a review committee.

"We know some editor-journalists are presently enjoying the government security cover and we would expect them also to decide to voluntarily abandon the PSOs at the earliest," said a JFA statement endorsed by its president Rupam Barua and secretary Nava Thakuria.

Contd. from Page 1

Orientation Programme for Journalists on....

Kengoo Zuringla also informed that the orientation programme will ensure how the scheme is being carried out and implemented is very well understood by the journalist, as they are going to provide right information to the public domain.

Addressing the gathering as Guest of Honour, Dr. A. Ibomcha Sharma, IIS, Head of Office, Regional Outreach Bureau, Imphal, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, government said that MGNREGS is the biggest job guarantee Scheme and the Scheme is implementing

smoothly in the State. He asserted that the scheme should focus on creating national asset, State asset, Community asset.

President of Editor Guilds Manipur, Khogendro Khomdrum stated that the MGNREGS is a very good scheme for the welfare and benefits of the rural areas. He also urges the journalists to report the smooth functioning of the Scheme efficiently.

Addressing the gathering Editor of Poknapam, Aribam Robindro Sharma said that the orientation programme is an important event for the jour-

nalists. As they will understand carefully about the MGNREGS, which will help in reporting about the scheme efficiently.

As part of the orientation, officials of RD & PR highlighted about the initiatives and achievements of the MGNREGS for the last five years. And they also held an interactive session with the journalists.

The programme was attended by journalists from various media firm and officials of the Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Department among others.

ZCOs Manipur Govt. to be tactful...

If the Scheduled Tribe reservation policy is diluted by way of granting Scheduled

Tribe category to Meitei community who are highly educated, highly influenced and economically advanced group, the chance of tribal people participation and their representation in the employment sector may be on exceptional case and even the reservation Assembly Constitu-

ency seats of the hills districts may be contested by Meitei candidates.

The present arrangement of Manipur State which laid parameter and categorized between the tribal and non tribal people in terms of land holding ownerships and reservation in employment sector has put together the different communities to live together thus far.

The Zeliangrong Civil Organizations in the interest of the people of the State urged the State Govt. not to take any hasty decision regarding the Scheduled Tribe demands issue just to please the interest of the single group without taking into account the view and opinion of every community who are the stake holders of the issue.

One-day Certified Medical First Responder & Basic Life....

He said that once the Model Code of Conduct is enforced in the state COVID19 protocol/SOP guidelines of EC will be strictly followed during election meetings, rallies, door-to-door election campaign, nomination process and other poll related activities and procedures.

State Nodal Officer (Health) Dr. L. Tomcha Khuman informed that a dedicated 24/7 State Command Centre under his supervision to promptly respond to the casualty/incident is in place.

District Command Centres under the supervision of District CMOs and Assembly Constituency Level Rapid Response Teams (RRT) have been set up for all the 60 ACs with 1 Medical Officer and support staff. Two Helicopter RRTs service will be utilized for emergency casualties for far flung areas.

During the training, demonstrations and movies related to Basic Life Support (BLS) were displayed.

State Nodal Officer (Media), W. Phajatombi Devi, Pro-

fessor & Head of Community Medicine Department, RIMS, Dr. Brogen Singh, Health Officials of 14 Assembly Constituencies - Andro, Keirao, Thongiu, Kshetrigao, Yaikul, Wangkhei, Khurai, Heingang, Lamai, Khundrakpam, Ukhrul, Chingai, Phungyar, Tengnoupal and Chandel, and concerned officials of CEO attended the training.

A booklet on First Aid by St. John Ambulance (India), Manipur State Centre was also released during the programme.

Sports

ISL : FC Goa cancel out Luna's wondergoal, hold Kerala Blasters to 2-2 draw

Agency
Vasco da Gama (Goa), Jan 3:

Adrian Luna's stunning goal could not ensure Kerala Blasters FC a win as FC Goa fought back in a rip-roaring Hero Indian Super League game which ended 2-2 at the Tilak Maidan Stadium here on Sunday.

Jeakson Singh (10th) opened the scoring for the Blasters with Luna scoring a wondergoal in the 20th minute. Kerala looked on top before Goa came back to first make it 2-1 riding a Jorge Ortiz (24th) strike before Edu Bedia scored from the corner in the 38th minute. Kerala are now third in the points table with 14 points from nine games while Goa remain ninth having nine points from nine outings.

Kerala were off to a perfect start, nosing ahead in just 10 minutes after Luna swung in a delectable corner for Jeakson to head home. The yellow shirts dominated proceedings thereafter with Glan Martins smashing a volley from long just over, against the run of the play.



Kerala went 2-0 soon after, Luna showing his brilliance this time. The Uruguayan was given space on the left inside channel and the 29-year old made merry, getting the ball to dip past the keeper from 30 yards out. The ball hit the post and went in leaving Dheeraj Moirangthem with no chance to keep it out.

Pegged back twice in quick succession, Goa picked them-

selves up riding Ortiz's strike. The Spaniard received a ball from Saviour Gama, turned sharply and fired home past Prabhsukhan Singh Gill who was beaten at his near post.

Kerala came close to making it 3-1 near the halftime whistle when Sahal Abdul Samad shot over the bar from a Alvaro Vazquez cross. Goa drew level from the next attack, and it was Edu Bedia who got in the act curling in an exquis-

ite corner that went in leaving Gill high and dry.

A frantic first half came to an end with both sides level at 2-2. In the second period, both teams showed caution as chances were few and far between. Three times to the final whistle, Edu Bedia's effort from a free-kick came off the crossbar much to Goa's dismay as the match ended as it started with both teams sharing the spoils

Premier League round up: Manchester City's 'title to lose' after Chelsea, Liverpool fall on their swords

Agency
London, Jan 3:

Even after a weekend in which Manchester City produced the worst performance of the Premier League's top four, the champions streaked further clear towards a fourth title in five years. City manager Pep Guardiola admitted his side were second best despite coming from behind to beat 10-man Arsenal 2-1 with a 93rd minute winner that secured an 11th consecutive league win.

As Guardiola's men have hit their stride, Chelsea and Liverpool have run out of steam to turn a tight three-hour race, into a procession. Struck down by coronavirus outbreaks and injuries, the two challengers for City's crown threw themselves into a titanic battle at Stamford Bridge on Sunday, but a 2-2 draw did little for either side's hopes of reeling in the leaders.

City's advantage now stands at 10 points from Chelsea, with Liverpool a further point back with a game in

hand. "It's a big gap, so they have the title maybe to lose at the moment," said Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk, one of those forced into a swift return to action after testing positive for Covid-19.

"We just have to get results, play good football and win games. It sounds pretty easy but it's tough." Rather than cutting the gap, there is a likelihood it could grow in the coming weeks as Chelsea and Liverpool tackle their own issues.

Both are involved in two-legged League Cup semi-finals over the next two midweeks despite calls from managers for the ties to be switched to one-off games.

Chelsea's record signing Romelu Lukaku was dropped for Sunday's crucial clash after an explosive interview with Italian media in which he revealed his displeasure with how his first season back at the Bridge is going.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp was also absent due to a Covid infection, along with

Alisson Becker, Roberto Firmino and Joel Matip.

And the Reds now have to cope without their top goalscorers, Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane, for up to a month due to their international commitments at the Africa Cup of Nations. Chelsea will also lose goalkeeper Edouard Mendy to the AFCON, while first choice wing-backs Reece James and Ben Chilwell face months out injured.

"How should we compete in a title race?" Blues boss Thomas Tuchel complained earlier this week after his side were forced to fulfil all of their December fixtures, while 18 other Premier League games were called off due to Covid outbreaks.

Even if Tuchel and Klopp's men recovered their early season form, City's relentless consistency shows no signs of offering a ray of hope.

They have averaged a total of 95 points in each of Guardiola's three title-winning seasons in England and are on course to hit that mark again.