

MIC issues show cause notice to Wangoi Municipal Council for failing to provide requested information under RTI Act

IT News
Imphal, June 15:

The Manipur Information Commission (MIC) issued show cause notice to Wangoi Municipal Council's Executive Officer over failure to provide information sought under RTI Act.

The said RTI was filed by one Th. Sanjit Singh on October 14, 2020 seeking information in seven queries. The appeal case was heard on 20-03-2021, 16-04-2021, 28-04-2021, 08-09-2021, 18-10-2021, 17-11-2021, 14-12-2021, 10-01-2022, 24-03-2022, 20-04-2022, 18-05-2022, and 07-06-2022 by the MIC.

During the hearings, the appellant claimed that he had received uncertified information in response to some questions but had not provided complete information.

After hearing the appellant's submission, the MIC ordered the Executive Officer, Wangoi Municipal Council to submit a written explanation for the delay in providing complete and certified information to the Appellant after the 30-day deadline. However, Wangoi Municipal Council's Executive Officer failed to submit a written explanation.

Following this, MIC issued a show cause notice to

the said SPIO, asking why a penalty of Rs. 250/- (Rupees two hundred and fifty) per day, with a maximum penalty of Rs. 25,000/- (Rupees twenty-five thousand), should not be imposed against him under sub-section (1) of Section 20 of the RTI Act, 2005 for his failure to furnish the information.

The SPIO was given adequate time to provide the missing information to the appellant, as well as to submit his written explanation, in decisions dated 24-03-2022, 20-04-2022, and 18-05-2022, but has yet to provide complete information to the appellant without explanation.

As a result, the SPIO is liable for a fine of Rs. 25,000/- (Rupees twenty-five thousand) under Section 20 (1) of the Act.

Furthermore, MIC ordered the Executive Officer of Wangoi Municipal Council to provide the Appellant with the left-out and certified copy of the information sought in his RTI application dated 14-10-2020 within 3 (three) weeks of receiving the Commission decision dated June 7, 2022, failing which the penalty for recommendation of disciplinary action as prescribed in section 20 (2) of the RTI Act, 2005 may be imposed.

CM lauds Andro for preservation of aged old culture, inaugurates Infrastructure Development Project

IT News
Imphal, June 15:

Chief Minister N. Biren Singh today inaugurated the Infrastructure Development for Preservation of Panam Ningthou Immortal Fire and different Historical Monuments in and around Andro.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister appreciated the people of Andro for preserving and protecting the aged old culture, tradition and valuable artifacts of the Meitei community, further adding that most communities in valley areas seem to neglect their own traditions and culture.

The Chief Minister stressed

on the need for all communities of the State to preserve and protect their own traditions and culture.

N. Biren Singh expressed happiness on seeing the lush green forest cover of the Nongmaiching, and further appreciated the people of Andro for protecting and preserving the forest cover. Showing his appreciation, the Chief Minister assured to construct a workshop for the Andro pottery at the earliest and asked the village chief to provide a site for the same.

Commenting on an inscribed stone erected by a Manipuri King during the catastrophic Seven years devastation at Andro, the Chief Minister said it

is a valuable artefact which needs proper preservation. N. Biren Singh also apprised officials of Art and Culture Department and Manipur Tribal Development Corporation Ltd to take up steps to preserve the same.

N. Biren Singh also asserted the need to renovate 'Shanglen' where the immortal fire of Andro burns. Further regarding the issue of non-inclusion of certain surnames due to misspellings of the surnames in the official gazette, the Chief Minister urged the village authorities to submit the details through the local MLA and said he will take up the issue with the concerned Ministry.

contd. on page 4

Notification for Presidential Election 2022 issued

New Delhi, June 15:

The notification for the 16th Presidential election of India has been issued today.

Reportedly, the poll will be held on July 18, 2022 and counting will take place on July 21.

The nomination filing began today and the last date for filing of nominations is on June 29.

Polling will be held in the Parliament House and the premises of the State Legislative Assemblies. The total number of electors will be 4,809 including 776 Members of Parliament and 4,033 Members of Legislative Assemblies. The total value of the votes will be 10 lakh 86 thousand 431, said sources.

President Ram Nath Kovind's term is coming to end on July 24.

The President of India is elected by the members of electoral college consisting of elected Members of Parliament and elected members of all the Assemblies. Nominated members are not eligible to vote.

CM Biren unveils Meidingu Narasingh statue, fetes State artistes



IT News
Imphal, June 15:

Chief Minister N. Biren Singh unveiled a statue of Meidingu Narasingh at Kangla Western Gate today and said as small as Manipur is, it is necessary for the present generation to remember and honour the sacrifices made by our forefathers in building the land and follow in their footsteps.

This is why today, the government is constructing memorials of our forefathers at different locations, the Chief Minister said, speaking at a function held at the Kangla Hall wherein artiste of the State were also fe-

licitated and distribution of assistance under Chief Minister's Artistisingi Tengbang (CMAT) Scheme 2022.

He further explained that earlier there was a statue of only Maharaj Gambhir Singh at Maharaj Gambhir Singh Samadhi Complex, Canchipur, but in remembrance of the Seven Years Devastation, statues of Meidingu Narasingh and Sana Herachandra were installed and honoured.

The Chief Minister also said that he has held meetings with Manipuri Filmmaker Romi Meetei and discussed to make films on the life of Maharaj Kullachandra to celebrate his

courageous spirit, and Seven years Devastation. We have to remember and celebrate our forefathers because without them we would not have existed, the Chief Minister said.

Regarding the implementation of the CMAT Scheme, the Chief Minister also said that we have neglected the State's artistes for long although we always say our art & culture and sports put us on the world map. The government has launched the CMAT and pension scheme to recognise the renowned artistes and encourage them, he added.

The Chief Minister also assured all possible assistance to the artistes of the State and said a society cannot have its identity without maintaining and preserving its culture and tradition.

The function was also attended by Ministers Thongam Biswajit Singh, Yumnam Khemchand, Govindas Konthoujam, Nemcha Kipgen, Kashim Vashum, L. Susindro Meitei, MP Rajya Sabha Maharaj Leishemba Sanajaoba, MLAs and artistes among others.

GOC-in-C Eastern Command visits Manipur, Calls on Governor and CM

IT News
Imphal, June 15:

Lieutenant General R P Kalita, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command visited Headquarter Inspector General Assam Rifles (South) today.

During the visit the Army Commander was briefed in detail by various Commanders on ground by the prevailing security situation and operational preparedness. The General Officer expressed his satisfaction on the security measures and operational preparedness of the security forces. He complimented the troops of the Assam Rifles for carrying out a commendable job with regards to efficiently managing the security situation in the State.

Earlier, the Eastern Army Commander accompanied by General Officer Commanding, Spear Corps and IG Assam Rifles (South) met the Gover-



nor and Chief Minister of Manipur on 15 Jun 22. The General Officer apprised the Hon'ble Governor and Chief Minister of the actions being taken by the security forces in coordination with other agencies, towards mainte-

nance of peace & security in the State. The Governor and Chief Minister appreciated the untiring efforts of the forces in difficult conditions and complimented them for carrying out people friendly operations.

Agnipath is our Prime Minister's seminal contribution to defence programme

The big rush of young unemployed will culminate in 2024 Lok Sabha polls

By Sushil Kuttu
New Delhi, June 15:

Agnipath and Madhusala! Two poems of Harivansh Rai Bachchan, actor Amitabh Bachchan's father. Agnipath is about 'hope', while Madhusala spells 'drunken despair'. But, with "Tu na thakega kabhi / Tu na rukega kabhi / Tu na mudega kabhi / Kar shapath, Kar shapath, Kar shapath / Agnipath agnipath agnipath", is the Modi Government fiddling dangerously with the fighting spirit of the Indian Armed Forces?

Again, what's already being hailed as Modi's seminal contribution to the Indian Army, Indian Navy, and the Indian Air Force, 'Agnipath' and

'Agniveer', must have sprung from Modi's fertile imagination, nurtured since his movie-going days. The Amitabh Bachchan starrer, 'Agnipath', must have been a favourite, with 'Agniveer' a start-up he introduced.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has, from the time he announced himself Prime Minister of India, gone on a disengagement from the time before May 26, 2014. To that extent, Modi rule is not about post-2014, but about ante-2014. Narendra Modi has been systematically disrobing India, and changing the character of India's institutions from what they were like before 2014.

What's disquieting is that it's still a work in progress. To

get into Modi's head will be a discovery of a shocking India, one that will hark back and forth, leaving in its wake a hotch-potch India hard to recognize. Whether it will be an idea of India the people would want to uphold would be hard to tell, suffice to say that the primary purpose of the discoveries would be to startle.

The Indian Army's history is of valour and victory. Post-Independence, it didn't need 'Agnipath', and 'Agniveer' to beat our enemies back. Right from the word go, India's fighting soldiers gladly embraced martyrdom. The Sikh Regiment, the Punjab Regiment, the Rajput regiment, to name just three, made bravery their motto.

And now there's news that

the Indian army will lose its competitive edge that it gets from regimental pride! The one overriding characteristic of living under a dictatorship is that everybody of consequence is afraid to stand up to the authoritarians' harebrained schemes. The Tughlaks always get their way.

To reiterate, doesn't it seem like there is more to the Modi government's armed forces recruitment plan than meets the eye? The Modi government has borrowed from 'poetry and picture', and then glossed over the rest. 'Agnipath' and 'Agniveer' will go hand in hand with the mission to create 10 million jobs in one-and-a-half-years!

One-and-a-half years will take us straight to the 2024 gen-

eral elections, and the BJP and Narendra Modi will be canvassing for a third straight term, and third consecutive victory! And there is enough unemployment in the country to put the army recruitment plan into action straightaway!

The plan is along the lines of Yogi Adityanath's free ration scheme. The economically weaker sections got their 35 kilos of paddy and grain and gladly voted BJP in the UP assembly elections. 'Agnipath' turns thousands of unemployed into soldiers and mid-2024, tens of thousands of 'Agniveers' in Delhi and elsewhere will vote Modi and BJP!

Dig deep, think hard and Agnipath is knee jerk. If 6-months can create an

'Agniveer', think of what a waste it will be to throw those "Universal Soldiers" back into the maelstrom, where they started from — unemployed again, with no pension to look forward to. The one-time cache of Rs 11 lakh will be gone before the ejected 'Agniveer' is inside the door of his mother's home.

Also, what's the guarantee the cast-aside Agniveer will land a civilian job? Study the Modi Government's employment policy, and what we have are hundreds of thousands of unambitious youth dragging handcars, selling pakoras and samosas.

A variant of 'Agnipath' and 'Agniveer' cannot be imposed on the Indian Railways. But dis-

ciplined soldiers will not raise a hue and cry when cast out every four years. The point is, what sort of jobs await them? Apart from crawling through undergrowth and thrusting a bayonet, what other things will an 'Agniveer' of 4-years' training know?

The government will save on pension, but every four years there will be a stark stock number of youth joining the ranks of the burgeoning unemployed, youth trained to use the firearm. A steady stream of army-trained unemployed is a different kind of the unemployed left loose on the roads. From Agnipath to Madhusala, from hope to drunken despair, is but a short four years. (IPAService)

★ **Editorial**

Oil Palm Tree project - Sincerity matters

Those in the government advocates the Oil Palm Plantation in North East region of India including Manipur. For the state of Manipur, the government has identified land areas measuring 66,652 hectares in six districts for plantation of Oil Palm trees. Even as the Oil Palm plantation project was virtually inaugurated on November 12, 2020, the project is officially taken up only at some portion of Jiribam area. According to MS Khaidem Consultant, Oil Palm Mission Manipur, 0.25 hectares has been allotted for palm tree plantation in Jiribam district. Plantation of Palm tree done in Jiribam district is on experimental basis. Plantation will be expanded on the result of the experiment. These are perhaps good news for the farmers of Manipur as incentives will also be provided to those cultivating the Palm Tree until the fruits are yields.

Talking during the inaugural function of a one-day National Workshop on promotion of oil palm tree in Manipur at Classic Hotel yesterday, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh had stated that Oil Palm Tree project which was virtually inaugurated on November 12, 2020 could not be expanded due to apprehension about the adverse effect on the environment. Now according to Oil Palm Mission Manipur, the plantation of palm tree was taken up on around October 2021 at Jiribam district. Now the question that this newspaper wants to raise is – If the oil Palm tree plantation is going to benefit the farmers as well the state, then why it took so long for the government to launch the plantation. And why the government organized a National Level workshop only yesterday even though the mission for mass plantation of oil palm tree in the state has been inaugurated 2 years back.

Perhaps there are lots to be discussed on the impact of the oil palm tree plantation to the environment in the state of Manipur. Simply advocating the plantation for political purposes will not make the mission successful if it really helps the people and places. These issues will be taken up one after another by this newspaper in the coming days. But as of now let us begin with the sincerity of those in the government in implementing any peoples'-oriented project or schemes.

We all know that a huge amount of money is being sanctioned for promotion of the palm tree plantation. Similar ways, the state had witnessed the exploitation of many places due to insincerity on the part of the government machineries earlier. For example, the infamous Japan funded project on Sericulture. It was never a successful project. It never benefited to any of the farmers in the state even though it enabled some officials in the sericulture department building bungalows and costly cars. People still remembered on how the 'tea' plantation at Jiribam wasted huge amount of government fund as well as labours of the farmers. None of the projects have been implemented in the state for the welfare of the people. However, almost all projects approved and implemented were for the personal gains of some vested interested officials and ministers in the government.

The oil palm tree plantation is no different. When this newspaper contacted sources at Jiribam in connection with the implementation of the palm tree plantation which the Consultant, Oil Palm Mission Manipur had stated to have been implemented, it is learnt that those in the mission are contacting farmers who can shared half the monetary benefit that the farmers are supposed to get as incentives from the centers. The project is stated to be on experimental basis. And when things like negotiating with the farmers for sharing of the monetary benefits begins from this stage, how on this earth the people are going to believe that the Palm Tree plantation is for the people and of the people. The intention of Oil Palm Tree is clear from the way that it is beginning at Jiribam. There are more to discuss on the reality of the Palm tree plantation and its impact to the environment.

Trash to Treasure

By: Sanjenbam Jugeshwor Singh
Asst. Prof. JCREE Global College, Babupara, Imphal

In just 30 years, the world's annual output of waste will reach an estimated 3.4 billion tons. According to the World Bank, Africa generates nearly 70 million tons of waste every year. This global tsunami of waste threatens our environment, our economy, even our relationships. To survive, we must not only contain it but do something with it. To turn the tide, innovative investors and inventors are building an economy that treats trash as a valued commodity and ever-renewing resource. **Trash to Treasure:** Exploring What It Takes to Build a Business from Waste follows the journeys of modern day pioneers making waves—and money—from waste. Waste production is a serious problem for all companies and industries around the world. The largest 5,589 publicly traded businesses in the United States sent 342 million metric tons of waste to landfills and incinerators in 2014. That is the equivalent of sending the weight of three Empire State Buildings to a landfill every day. Removing unwanted resources to landfills or incinerators is a costly proposition in the price of removal, in the value of the resources being destroyed, and in the social impacts of greater waste amounts. By not accurately estimating, measuring, and managing their waste streams, American companies are throwing away significant opportunities for profit and increased efficiency, and improved brand. Waste manifests itself before, during, and after the production process because production can be inefficient and wasted resources are not captured effectively. Waste affects all industries regardless of size and whether they are manufacturing products or offering services. A few smart entrepreneurs are turning the huge waste we produce every day into money-making products. It's such a brilliant idea that profits your pockets and the environment at the same time!

Waste is anything that people do not value anymore and would love to throw away. Waste is the empty box that contained the new television set you just got or the paper bag you used to carry the stuff you bought at the supermarket. These things are now waste because you have no further need for them and would like to dispose them. However, waste isn't entirely useless because there are people and businesses that'll pay to have them. Waste will remain a part of our lives for as long as we exist. While some people may produce more waste than others, everybody produces it every day as leftover food, dirty water or garbage. We shall only be considering the solid forms of waste because they appear to be more reusable than liquid waste. The most common types of solid waste are: domestic waste (garbage and rubbish produced by individuals and households), commercial waste (solid waste coming from business places such as stores, markets, office buildings, restaurants, shops, bars, etc.), and industrial waste (produced by factories and processing plants. Other forms of waste are agricultural waste, hazardous waste, health care waste and electronic waste.

Unlike in the past when most people found it easy and convenient to dump their garbage in authorized dumpsites which end up blocking drains and causing environmental hazards. Due to stronger health, hygiene and sanitation laws, the illegal dumping of refuse has become much harder for most people. More households are now willing to pay local waste collectors to get rid of their garbage. The key to success in the waste collection business is to get a lot of clients to sign up. Some easy targets include: Households, offices, bars, restaurants, hotels, workshops, construction sites, industries/factories, shops and markets. The waste collected can be dumped at approved landfills or waste processing facilities. Waste that cannot decay and be re-used by nature is considered inorganic. This includes plastics, rubber, glass, metal and textiles. Most of the domestic and commercial waste collected by garbage trucks is sent to a land fill (where they are buried in the ground) or to a waste processing facility. At these facilities, all the waste collected is sorted, cleaned, processed and recycled into some form of final or semi-final end product.

The most popular recyclable materials that are highly sought after by manufacturers and industrial processors include:

Paper – This usually makes up a large portion of the waste collected. Waste paper (like newspapers, magazines, cardboard and old books) can be used to make paper bags, cardboard and carton boxes for new electronic equipment. With many countries banning the use of plastic and nylon bags, recycled paper is becoming the top choice for producing biodegradable paper bags used for shopping. Potential buyers of processed waste paper are: pulp and paper mill, market vendors, paper dealers and middlemen.

Plastic – This is arguably one of the most common forms of waste. Waste plastic such as plastic bottles, used plastic tins and containers and shopping bags can be melted and formed into an amazing range of new and reusable products. Potential buyers of processed plastic include: plastic product manufacturers, industries, and middlemen.

Metal – Scrap metal, auto wrecks, aluminum (beverage) cans, used copper wires and used metal sheets can be melted to produce new metal products. Potential buyers of scrap metal include aluminum and metal industries, scrap dealers and foundries.

Rubber – Used tyres, old rubber shoes and other waste material made of rubber can be sold to home industries that make shoes, sandals, mats and carpets. Tyre making factories (like Dunlop), and industries that use boilers (like cement makers) are also top buyers of rubber waste.

Textiles – Old clothes can be recycled and used for the production of doormats, cushions, mattresses, children's underwear, homemade caps and duster coats, stuffing dolls and several other products. Textiles are also used in the production of high quality paper. While sorting and cleaning collected waste may require significant labor, processing the waste materials will require an investment in machines and processing equipment such as hoppers, extruders, aggregators and rollers. Most of these machines can be fabricated locally or imported from China or India.

Most of the waste collected from households, restaurants, bars and hotels are organic and biodegradable (can decay) such as kitchen waste and leftover food. Other forms of or-

ganic waste include: yard waste, vegetable market waste, grass, plants and animal waste. Composting is the natural process of converting organic waste into a stable product (compost) under controlled conditions. Compost is a natural product that is rich in several essential nutrients which makes it a great and widely popular organic fertilizer. It contains huge amounts of humus (the stuff that remains when organic things fully decay) which is great for growing plants. Compost is considered a much cheaper alternative to common but expensive inorganic fertilizer. Compost is also preferred by vegetable and flower farmers because it allows the soil to breathe (more air) and hold more water. This makes it a favorite in hot and humid climates (like Africa's) where the rate of decay can be really fast. The composting process takes between 21-28 days to complete during which a heap of organic waste is turned and wet with water every 5 days. As soon as the compost is mature, it can be packaged and sold as organic fertilizer. Most people in the compost business often use worms, heat and moisture regulators to speed up the process.

As resources like wood become scarcer and climate change remains a strong global challenge, we will need to reduce waste and recycle more. There is just something magical about giving things that are old and unwanted, a fresh new purpose. And when you can turn old junk into something that's both beautiful and useful, it's a real homerun. Some of this trash to treasure makeovers started out as literal trash, some were rescued from donation piles, and some were found at yard sales and thrift stores for super cheap. No matter where they were found, they were all cast off and unwanted. But not anymore! From furniture to storage to lighting and more, there is trash to treasure ideas here for every room in the house. Waste is everywhere; it only requires a bit of creativity and hard work to create wealth out of it. If you believe this type of business will work for you, start working on a business plan and take action as soon as possible.

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Decoding the Narrative 'there will be no Hindus left in Bangladesh in the next 30 years'

By: Samina Akhter

Bangladesh has recently been depicted by some in the international media saying 'there will be no Hindus left in Bangladesh in the next 30 years if the current rate of exodus continues' and 'Hindus are fleeing to India'. However, this understanding is completely incorrect. Bangladesh is being depicted unfairly and without evidence as a country that discriminates against its minorities, particularly Hindus. There is no doubt that Bangladesh has seen a steady outflow of Hindus since Partition. Minorities accounted for 23.1% of the population in 1951, but only 9.6% in 2011. A recently published book has predicted that there will be no Hindus left in Bangladesh in the next 30 years if the current rate of exodus continues. According to the book, 11.3 million Hindus were either forced to leave the country or migrated between 1964 and 2013. The author of the book, said the rate of exodus over the last 49 years paints a grim picture for the Hindu minority in Bangladesh where their population remains just 8.2 percent according to the last census.

The book, perhaps, is unable to make understand of the real situa-

tion in Bangladesh. The author has failed to depict the real scenario of Bangladesh. For example, Priya Saha a Hindu minor rights activist, participated in the Second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom held at the US Department of State in Washington, DC on July 16-18, 2019. In a video clip that went viral on social media, that Priya Saha was heard telling Trump: "Sir, I'm from Bangladesh ... 37 million Hindus, Buddhists and Christians are disappeared. Please help us - for the Bangladeshi minor people. We want to stay in our country. "In a video message, Priya Saha explained her position and tried to defend her remarks tagging Abul Barkat's research findings. Then the author said in 2019 Priya Saha has distorted his research findings by her comments during an interaction with US President Donald Trump that 37 million Hindus, Buddhists and Christians have disappeared in Bangladesh. However, the author's works sparked a controversy in Bangladesh. On the other hand, during the eruption of communal violence in Bangladesh against Hindu minorities in 2021, countless arrests and numerous criticisms had

been brought to light. Some claimed that Bangladesh has become quite a case of ethnic cleansing- subtly but forcefully ousting Hindu minorities across the border. Some even went further claiming that Bangladesh has failed to form a state where different religious and ethnic groups can coexist based on the principle of secularism- one of the four fundamental pillars of the liberation war in 1971. To cast evidence to those criticisms, most of them point fingers to the continuous decline of Hindu minority population in Bangladesh- a case drawn to demonstrate Bangladesh as a prolific ground of persecution against Hindu. But an objective discernment to those allegations, especially through comprehensive statistical appraisal, relative systemic endeavors and broader political landscape, makes them, in most part, lose their grounds.

Statistics and Apparent Assumptions

According to the BBS (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics) data, the percentage of Hindu community to total population was 13.5% in 1974, on Bangladesh's first population census, which, as of the latest census in 2011, stands at 8.5%, and again increases to 10.7% in 2015. Ostensibly, these statistical figures, continuous decline in per-

centage, seem to confer voice to predominant arguments about the decline of Hindu population. But mere percentage estimation tells only the half truth about the broader demographic landscape of Hindu minority in Bangladesh. If we take the increase in total number, other than mere percentage, over the years along with other factors that have contributed to decline, into account, it will substantially clarify the whole picture and weaken the predominant narratives about the decrease of the number and persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh.

Taking the total number into account, in 1974, the number of Hindu populations was 10.31 million which hit slightly above 12.7 million in 2011 and 17 million in 2015. It is seen that the total number has remained increasing whereas percentage to total Muslim population, due to relatively higher growth in the number of Muslim populations from 65.24 million in 1974 to 135.4 million in 2011, has kept decreasing. It is true that growth in numbers is a little slow among Hindu population and could hit 22 million by 2011 only if it increased linearly in terms of percentage as reported in 1974 (13.5%). But that is not because of any systematic persecution against the minority rather, in most part, of international economic migra-

tion, relatively lower birth and high mortality rate among Hindu population, higher rate of contraceptive use and particular political reality in the history of Bangladesh.

According to the study paper prepared by researchers from ICDDR, B's Health Systems and Population Studies Division and the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), studying the population data of 1989-2016 of Matlab Upazila in Chaddpur to find out why Hindus have lower population growth than Muslims, the birth rate of Hindu populace in every thousand falls short by 3 points comparing to Muslims. While the probability of having a child among the Muslim women is 35, it is 32 among Hindu women.

The study found that the tendency to late marriage and having not more than 2 children and relatively higher use of contraceptives also contribute to the low birth rate among Hindu populace. Even higher numbers of deaths, 4 more than that of Muslims in every ten thousand, can also be subscribed to the decrease in percentage. Finally, researchers concluded that 71 percent of low growth rate may be attributed to the low rates of fertility and 23 percent to the international out-migration by Hindus.

In the report, they also observed that, since 2006, more Hindus have

been opting for countries other than India for out-migration. Only 36 percent of the migrating Hindus of Matlab went to India between 2005 and 2012, but the bigger portion of them went to the states other than India for better living- a countervailing evidence against predominant propaganda that more Hindus have been leaving for India due to persecution.

Political upheaval and Systemic liability

To be true, the percentage of Hindu minority comparing with that of Muslim has declined over last 50 years. But this estimation has overlooked a subtle but solid point: a fundamental political upheaval and constitution of Bangladesh from 1975 to 1991. Just take the number into account, from 1974 to 1991, percentage of Hindu minority to total population came down from 13.5 to 10.5 in 16 years. But, after the end of anti-secularism fueled military rule in 1991 and installation of constitutional democracy, percentage decline got little slower- 10.5 in 1991 to 8.5 in 2011 within 20 years of time span. In 2011, after the 15th amendment of Bangladesh constitution, secularism was restored which especially which has contribution to increase of percentage of Hindu people to total populace to 10.7% point in 2015.

contd. on page 3

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India sees new high in daily Covid tally in 3 months with 8,822 new cases

Agency
New Delhi, June 15:

India on Wednesday saw a new high in around three months in the daily Covid tally with 8,822 new cases in the last 24 hours, taking the overall count to 4,32,45,517. According to the health ministry data, a total of 15 deaths have been reported since Tuesday - with the total fatalities due to the virus at 5,24,792.

The active cases currently stand at 53,637. The active cases account for 0.12 percent of the total caseload. The health ministry data mentioned that the recovery rate in the country is currently at 98.67 percent as 5,718 people recov-

ered in the last 24 hours. According to the data, the daily positivity rate is at 2 percent, while the weekly positivity rate is at 2.35 percent.

A total of 85.58 crore samples have been tested so far for coronavirus, with 4,40,278 tests being conducted in the last 24 hours.

India's vaccine coverage has reached 195.5 crore doses. Over 3.53 crore first doses and over 1.99 crore second doses have been administered for the age group of 12 to 14. Over 5.99 crore first doses and more than 4.72 crore second doses have been given to the 15 to 18 age group. Meanwhile, over 3.61 crore precaution doses (booster shots) have been

given to people above 60 years of age, healthcare workers, and frontline workers.

Meanwhile, Delhi is recording a surge in the daily cases and the national capital's daily tally breached the 1,000-mark again. The national capital recorded 1,118 fresh infections on Tuesday. Maharashtra has also been witnessing a huge spike over the last few days.

Maharashtra on Tuesday recorded 2,956 fresh cases of Covid-19, further adding to a surge that started a few weeks ago, and four new deaths linked to the infection, while the active tally crossed the 18,000-mark, the health department said. With these additions, the

state's Covid-19 tally reached 79,15,418, while the death toll increased to 1,47,875, the department said in a bulletin.

On Monday, the state had recorded 1,885 cases and one fatality. The bulletin said 2,165 patients recovered from the infection in the last 24 hours, taking their cumulative count to 77,49,276 and leaving the state with 18,267 active cases.

The coronavirus recovery rate in the state stood at 97.90 per cent. Nandurbar is the only district with no active case of Covid-19 as of now.

Two patients of BA.5 sub-variant (of Omicron strain) of SARS-CoV2, which causes Covid-19, were reported from Thane, the bulletin said.

PM Inaugurates Sant Tukaram Temple at Dehu in Pune The Temple Will Empower India's Cultural Heritage: PM



Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiling a plaque to mark the inauguration of Sant Tukaram Temple at Dehu. Maharashtra DCM Ajit Pawar, BJP leader Devendra Fadnis and others look on.

IT Correspondent
Mumbai, June 15:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Jagatguru Shrisant Tukaram Maharaj's Shila Mandir, at Dehu in Pune in Maharashtra in presence of a large number of members of Warkari Sampradaya on Tuesday.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, Nitin Maharaj More, the Chairman of the Jagadguru Sant Tukaram Maharaj Sansthan (JSTMS), Opposition leader in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Devendra Fadnis, and others were present.

Sant Tukaram Maharaj was a 17th-century Hindu saint and Marathi poet. He belonged to the "Warkari Sampradaya" and was known for Abhyanga devotional poetry and community-oriented worship through spiritual songs known as "kirtans".

Sant Tukaram lived in Dehu. A Shila Mandir (a rock covered by a silver cast with his image) was built after his demise, but it was not structured like a temple. This temple has been the starting point of Wari, the annual pilgrimage to the Lord Vitthoba shrine in

Pandharpur (Solapur district), for centuries.

In 2008, the silver mask of the temple was stolen and found on the banks of the river Indrayani after a few days. As such the Sansthan decided to replace the silver covering with an image of Sant Tukaram on the rock, with a temple housing both. Now the temple has been rebuilt in stone masonry with 36 peaks and carries an idol of Sant Tukaram.

In his speech Modi, he said that the one rarely gets a chance to mingle with the saints. If one gets the blessings of the saints, then self-realization is automatic. I am getting the feeling of heavenly bliss in this pious land of Dehu.

"A few months back I had an opportunity to lay the foundation of the work of widening the Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj Palkhi Marg. Under the plan, the national highway number 04 will be made a four-lane highway. The work of widening the Sant Dnyaneshwar Palkhi Marg will be completed in 5 phases, while the Sant Tukaram Palkhi Marg will be widened in four phases. The 350 km highways will be built for Rs 11000 crore".

"The Sant Tukaram temple is not only a centre of devotion but it also empowers India's cultural heritage. I compliment the trustees of Sant

Tukaram temple for the efforts made to renovate the temple and add to its glory".

India is the land of sages. Different saints took birth in this land to guide us. Today the country is celebrating the birth anniversary of Sant Kabir. Sant Tukaram composed "Abhangas" to inspire our generations. They instil energy in us. The abhangas connote compassion and a sense of service to mankind. The Abhang means the unbreakable thing. The Abhangas remain alive with the situation and do not get disintegrated.

Sant Tukaram propagated that to differentiate people as rich and poor was a sin. His preachings are important not only as "Bhagwat Shakti" but are also important to promote nationalism and socialism. Today the country is moving on the path of "Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, and Sabka Prayas" (with all, development for all, and everyone's trust). Today the benefits of Govt schemes are being given without any differentiation.

The saints like Sant Tukaram played an important role in moulding the career of national heroes like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. When Veer Savarkar was serving a jail term in Andaman, he was reciting the Abhangas of Sant Tukaram, Modi added.

Contd. from Page 2

Decoding the Narrative....

Unlike, its two bordering states- Myanmar and India, the former denying Muslim Rohingya minority of citizenship since 1982 out of pathological hatred and the latter rendering Muslims stateless through anti-Muslim laws, Bangladesh has never, particularly since 1991, intended to promote any discriminatory policy, be it in practice or by laws. Praiseworthy and prompt action taken by the Government of Bangladesh against the menace of recent Durga Puja incident, is a glaring example of this.

Minority is such a phenomenon which every country must possess, be it ethnic or linguistic or religious. But state sanctioned discriminatory policy, inherent

ethnic or religious tension or historical schism mobilized by for political score usually contribute to violence against minorities. However, in Bangladesh mostly politically cornered vested groups have played out on minority to stoke crisis and tame the situation to their end. Besides long cherished pluralistic sentiment in Bangladesh is, rather in times, menaced by 'spill-over effect' of politics and policies in proximate neighbors, of course by political fringe groups.

(The writer is a Dhaka-based freelance writer and women and human rights activist. He deeply interested in the foreign policies of Bangladesh and other South Asian countries)

Mark-sheet Lost

I, the undersigned, have lost my Mark-sheet for Class XII Examination (Science Stream), bearing Roll No. 31822 of 2021, issued by the Council of Higher Education, Manipur on the way between DM College to Moirangkhom on June 5, 2022.

Finders are requested to hand over it to the undersigned.

S/-

Alex Nameirakpam
Singamei Chingamakha Yanglem Leikai
Imphal West

IBSD organized Industry-Connect programme for exploring traditional medicines of North Eastern Region

IT News
Imphal, June 14:

Institute of Bioreources and Sustainable Development (IBSD), Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. of India organized Industry-Connect (I-Connect) programme under the theme "Exploring Traditional Medicines-Drugs from Nature & drugs from our Ancestors" with the leadership of Prof. Pulok K. Mukherjee, Director, IBSD, Imphal. Ministry of Science & Technology and Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India is organizing 75 I-Connect (Industry Connect) events from 12th May 2022 to 12th August 2022 to celebrate "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" and forge partnership(s) with industries. The S&T Ministry intends to draw upon the rich expertise and competence from

Government and Industry leaders who have significantly contributed to the economic growth of the Nation.

During the programme, Prof. Pulok K. Mukherjee, Director, IBSD highlighted various initiatives of IBSD for exploring traditional medicines, healer's knowledge & bioreources for the development of bioeconomy of this region. The programme was addressed by Dr. Ram Vishwakarma, Former Director, CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine, Jammu who highlighted the various initiatives for the scientific validation of traditional medicines of NER. Dr. Manish Diwan, Head, BIRAC, New Delhi appreciated the efforts of the Director, IBSD for promoting traditional medicines for the development of bioeconomy of the region. Dr. Tanuja Nesari, Chief Executive

Officer, National Medicinal Plants Board, New Delhi highlighted various programmes of NMPB especially for NER to promote medicinal plants of the region. During the event, Dr. Narendra Bhatt, Director, CRIA care Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai highlighted various opportunities with available bioreources for developing industrial linkages. Dr. Sayeed Ahmed, Professor, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi highlighted various bioreources of the region for development of products/ processes/ technologies. This programme was attended by several entrepreneurs specially women entrepreneurs of Manipur including Miss Bijiyanthi Tongbram, Miss Tuingam Louzhi, Miss Elizabeth Meitram, Ngangom Monalisa Chanu, Miss Zeinorin Stephan and interacted with experts from industries/ institutions on exploring natural resources for the development of bioeconomy. It is interesting to know that IBSD will be organizing International Bioreource Conclave & Ethnopharmacology Congress for the first time in North-eastern Region at Imphal, Manipur during February 2023, where scientists from more than 40 countries will be joining to share their ideas for the promotion of traditional medicines and bioreources at large.

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Gati Shakti-Giving new speed to New India

By: Sarbananda Sonowal

Gati Shakti, unprecedented Infra boom, multi-modal connectivity seamless integration of works is giving new speed to New India in the last 8 years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India has enhanced its engagement with South-East Asia for prosperity of all. As Prime Minister says, the destiny of the world will be shaped by the course of development in the Indo-Pacific.

With emphasis on Reform, Perform and Transform various interventions were made by the Ports for Ease of Doing Business. India's ranking in Trading Across Borders improved from 132 in 2014 to 68 in 2020. The cargo handling capacity of the Major Ports doubled to 1560 Million Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MMTPA) from 800 MMTPA in 2014. The cargo handling capacity of the Non-Major Ports also increased to 1000 Million Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MMTPA) from 689 MMTPA in 2014. Turn Around Time of Vessels (Container) reduced substantially to 26.58 Hrs in 2021 as compared to 43.44 Hrs in 2014. Average Draft in various ports also improved from 12.5 meters in 2014 to 14.5 meters in 2021. The plan is afoot to increase it to

18 meters by 2030 to enable the ports to handle Cape size and bigger vessels. The dredging cost per annum, which was Rs 2500 crore has been substantially reduced to Rs. 819 crore per annum due to several policy interventions for improving business practice and transparency in administration. Total Operational Income of the Major Ports also increased from Rs. 9,162 crore in 2014 to Rs. 14,690 crore in 2021. The number of cruise passengers also increased manifold since 2014 - from 1,07,267 in 2014 to 4,68,000 in 2020. All the Major Ports of India provided uninterrupted round the clock service during the pandemic times which ensured that Supply chains of goods and essential items were not disrupted. Signing on and signing off facilities to sea-farers were provided by Indian Ports while stopped all across the globe.

In various Reform initiatives, Major Port Authorities Act, 2021 replaced the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963. The legislation empowers the Major Ports to perform with greater efficiency on account of increased autonomy in decision making and by modernizing their institutional framework. Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 to be replaced by the proposed

Merchant Shipping Bill, 2016 aims to usher in significant reforms and promote ease of doing business, transparency and effective delivery of services, augment Indian tonnage. The Marine Aid to Navigation Bill, 2021 will benefit the contracting Parties and Members, other international organizations and their member States. With the aim to reduce arbitrations and litigation in the sector, new Model Concession Agreement (MCA) was launched on 21st November 2021.

In the area of Inland Waterways, the Government has enacted new Inland Vessels Act, 2021. The total number of Inland Waterways increased from 5 in 2014 to 111 in 2021. The inland water cargo increased manifold in these 8 years; From 16 MMT in 2013-14 to 105 MMT during 2021-22. Ports of call under the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route increased from 5 in 2014 to 13 in 2020.

A new milestone was achieved in regional connectivity when Pandu Port in Guwahati received MV Lal Bahadur Shastri, the cargo vessel carrying 200 metric tonnes of foodgrain from Patna, by traversing 2,350 km through the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) route. Another vessel MV Ram Prasad Bismil, with two

barges - Kalpana Chawla and APJ Abdul Kalam - successfully completed their voyage from Haldia with a consignment of 1,800 metric tonnes of steel from Haldia sailing through the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route to Pandu Port at Guwahati. In line with the "Act East" policy of Prime Minister we have taken up several infrastructure projects on National Waterways-1, Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route, and NW2, through the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI).

Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) on National Waterways (NW)-1 (Ganga - Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system) and Jal Marg Vikas Project -II (Arth Ganga) on NW1 with an investment of Rs. 4,634 crore (in collaboration with the World Bank) are being taken up for capacity augmentation.

Under PM Gati Shakti National Masterplan, 101 projects worth Rs. 62,627 Crore have been identified for implementation by 2024. Further, 6 projects worth Rs. 3,036 crore are already completed and 12 projects are targeted to be completed in 2022.

We celebrated Seven Years of Stupendous Success of Sagarmala the transformational Initiative on 25th March,

2022. Out of the 802 projects worth investment of Rs. 5.48 Lakh Crore for implementation by 2035, 194 projects with an estimated expenditure of Rs 99,000 Crore have already been completed and 217 projects worth Rs. 2.12 lakh Crore are under implementation.

Digital initiatives to transform Major ports into "Smart Ports" which will be data-driven, using automated devices, Internet of Things (IoT), and leverage analytical technologies for safer and more efficient management is being carried out.

The Paris Climate conference in 2015 (COP 21) has prescribed targets for lowering CO₂ and other emission limits within the Marine industry. Electric/hybrid vessels, Alternate fuels etc. will become the norm - especially for near-shore/ coastal/ inland water ways vessels. National Hydrogen Mission announced by our Prime Minister last year focuses on implementing hydrogen fuel in India which has a significant Maritime component also. Such initiatives are setting platforms for various alternative fuels and sustainable solutions across all sectors.

(The author is a Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways)

SC Ruling on Sex Workers throws spotlight on Govt's epic indifference

By Arun Kumar Shrivastava
New Delhi, June 15:

Delivering a historic ruling, the Supreme Court of India has recommended that sex work by consenting adults should be legal. Releasing a small set of guidelines on sex workers, the top court said prostitution is a profession and sex workers are entitled to equality, dignity, and protection from the law of the land, a demand sex workers have been pressing for a long time.

They should not be harassed or arrested during a police operation against illegal sex activities such as forced prostitution or trafficking. The child of a sex worker can't be separated from the mother, the apex court said in the guidelines, defining a sex worker as an adult "doing so subject to consent."

The top court observed, "It need not be gainsaid that notwithstanding the profession, every individual in this country has a right to a dignified life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India."

The Supreme Court issued these guidelines in exercise of its power under Article 142 of the Indian Constitution on May 19 and these are based on the recommendations of a panel appointed by the court in 2011 on the rehabilitation of sex workers.

The SC has asked for the

opinion of the Indian government and the next hearing is on July 27. Despite its hallowed judicial system distinguished by an extensive body of laws, India is yet to come up with a law on sex workers. In this light, the Indian government's opinion is keenly awaited.

Meanwhile, speaking at an event organised in the red light area of Pune's Budhwar Peth, Amruta Fadnavis, wife of former Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis, on June 12 demanded that the government should recognize sex work as a profession. She also asked the government to ensure the welfare of sex workers.

"Like other professionals, prostitutes should also get respect and be able to live with dignity. The government must accept it as a profession," she said.

The 43-year-old banker, singer, and social worker who describes herself as an "un-adulterated free spirit" on her Instagram status, Amruta Fadnavis has often shown her social side, something that is increasingly missing in other women from political families.

Recently, Amruta Fadnavis walked the Cannes 2022 Red Carpet in a stunning black and silver gown to raise awareness about food, health, and sustainability on behalf of the Better World Fund. She was accompanied by the likes of Hollywood star Sharon Stone, Kiera

Chaplin, granddaughter of Charlie Chaplin, Lebanese-Jordanian Princess Ghida Talal, and the First Lady of Ivory Coast Dominique Ouattara.

In February this year, she triggered a meme riot on social media by claiming that 3% of the divorce in Mumbai is due to potholes and traffic jams as people are not able to spend enough time with their spouses.

Reacting to Amruta Fadnavis' strange correlation between bad quality roads and the divorce rate in Mumbai, Shiv Sena's Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi, who had left the Congress alleging sexual harassment, said the best Illogical award should go to Amruta.

"Best (il)logic of the day award goes to the lady who claims 3 percent Mumbaiers are divorcing due to traffic on roads. Please take a holiday break rather than having a mind on brake. Bengaluru families please avoid reading this, this can prove fatal for your marriages," she tweeted.

At Pune's red light area, Amruta inaugurated a health check-up camp and distributed Sukanya Samridhi Yojana cards. She talked about safe sex practices and the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases, asking sex workers to go for regular health check-ups.

There is no official or updated data available on the

number of sex workers in India. A 2016 data says it's roughly 7.5 lakh while unofficial estimates show that the number could be anywhere between 3 million to 10 million.

In the Indian context, the government's indifference to the state of vulnerable women is appalling. Millions of them are living a life of vagabonds, begging on the streets and sleeping on the pavements while the conscience of the nation stands in tatters!

The entire nation gets into a frenzy when there is a talk of the temple or the prophet but none seem to be perturbed at the plight of the ordinary women. Uneducated and unskilled, they are unable to find employment, assert their rights, or access even basic health care.

Worldwide, there are about 40 million sex workers and many countries have clear regulations for the trade. By not having legal clarity on the matter, India is betraying its most vulnerable class of people – the women on the margins. For many of them, the line between hunger and hope is very thin.

(IPA Service)

Covaxin booster shot enhances efficacy against Delta, Omicron variants of COVID-19: Study

Agency
New Delhi, June 15:

A study showed that administration of Covaxin booster dose will enhance the vaccine effectiveness against the Delta variant infection and give protection against two Omicron variants of COVID-19.

The study by 'bioRxiv', an open-access preprint repository for the biological sciences, shared on Tuesday that its study shows that administration of Covaxin booster dose will enhance the vaccine effectiveness against the Delta variant infection and give protection against the Omicron variants BA.1.1 and BA.2.

The study analysed about the immunity acquired after natural infection or vaccination against SARS-CoV-2. Vaccine effectiveness also varies with the variant of infection, the study said.

The study compared the protective efficacy of Covaxin following the second and third dose immunizations against the Delta variant and also stud-

ied the efficacy of Covaxin against Omicron variants in a 'Syrian hamster model'.

"The antibody response, clinical observations, viral load reduction and lung disease severity after virus challenge were studied. The protective response in terms of the reduction in lung viral load and lung lesions were observed in both the second dose as well as third doses of Covaxin immunized group when compared to placebo group following the Delta variant challenge," the study said.

The study further read, "In spite of the comparable neutralizing antibody response against the homologous vaccine strain in both the second dose and third dose immunized groups, considerable reduction in the lung disease severity was observed in the third dose immunized group post-Delta variant challenge indicating the involvement of cell-mediated immune response also in protection."

"In the vaccine efficacy study against the Omicron variants i.e., BA.1 and BA.2, lesser virus shedding, lung viral load and lung disease severity were observed in the immunized groups in comparison to the placebo groups. The present study shows that administration of COVAXIN booster dose will enhance the vaccine effectiveness against the Delta variant infection and give protection against the Omicron variants BA.1.1 and BA.2," it concluded.

Phase 3 results of the Covaxin, developed by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in partnership with Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL), has shown an interim vaccine efficacy of 81 per cent in preventing Covid-19.

Covaxin is the first COVID-19 vaccine that has been developed completely in India. On January 16, 2021, India commenced its nationwide vaccination drive.

Contd. from Page 1

CM lauds Andro for...

Explaining the benefits of health related schemes, the Chief Minister stated that he would direct the Health Directorate to set up camp for two days at Andro to provide the benefit of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) and Chief Minister-gt Hakshelgi Tengbang (CMHT) by issuing card to eligible beneficiaries. He appealed to the people of Andro to avail the benefits of various people centric schemes of the Government. N. Biren Singh also assured construction of a new Ima Market in the area. He further stressed the need for opening a bank branch at Andro

for availing benefits under certain welfare schemes and assured to look into the matter.

The Chief Minister also expressed his desire to install statues of 'Maichou Taret' atop Nongmaiching Hill further expressing that it would attract a lot of tourists.

The inaugural function was also attended by Minister L. Susindro Meitei, MP Rajya Sabha Maharaj Leishemba Sanajaoba, MLAs Th. Shyamkumar Singh, Sapan Kunjakeswor Singh, Usham Deben Singh, Kh. Ibomcha, Thangam Shanti Singh, among others.

Assam Rifles conducts lecture on Anti Drug Awareness

IT News
Imphal, June 15:

Loktak Battalion Assam Rifles under the aegis of IGAR(S) organised a lecture on anti drug awareness to acquaint the local youths about the ill effects of drugs at Komklakhong village of Imphal West District, Manipur today.

During the event, 57 local youths including students of Moral Guidance English School, Komklakhong took the solemn oath to fight against drug abuse and get involved in nation-building activities. The local populace applauded the efforts made by Assam Rifles for organising such an event and requested to frequently conduct these kind of lecture so that the local youths and students can be benefited.

AR foils smuggling of timber

IT News
Imphal, June 15:

Somsai Battalion under aegis of IGAR(S) foiled Timber Smuggling in near Chhoithar Junction, Ukhrul District today.

The Assam Rifles troops intercepted six trucks loaded with illegal timber in near Chhoithar junction, Ukhrul. On enquiring, truck drivers could not produce legitimate documents of timber. The seized timber

is evaluated to be worth Rs 7.68 crores.

The seized timber along with apprehended smugglers and vehicles were handed over to Forest department, Ukhrul for further legal action.

Sports

India thrash Hong Kong 4-0, Qualify for AFC Asian Cup as Group winners

Agency
Kolkata, June 15:

For the first time in history, the Indian men's football team book their place in back-to-back AFC Asian Cup editions and that too before kicking a ball on the final match day of their qualifier group.

The Blue Tigers have qualified for the AFC Asian Cups in 2019, 2011, 1984, 1964 and now 2023.

But India head coach Igor Stimac decided to go all guns blazing with his team selection, making only two changes to the side that got a 2-1 victory over Afghanistan. Last games' heroes - Sahal Abdul Samad and Udanta Singh in for Manvir Singh and Liston Colaco.

It was Anwar Ali though, who struck in the opening minute of the night after some terrific build-up play from the likes of Ashique Kuruniyan, Sahal and Udanta. They earned a corner, which pinged around the Hong Kong penalty box, only for Anwar to blast it home for the lead.

At the 15th minute-mark, Yu Wai Lim and Huang Yang combined to take out Udanta. After



play resumed, Sahal sent in a ball into the middle for Ashique, who dinked it over the defence as the Hong Kong keeper rushed out to clear off Sunil Chhetri's head.

It was surely Plan B for Hong Kong, as they started to lay into their tackles. Huang Yang went into the referee's book after he crashed into Udanta to stop a counter-attack.

In the 26th minute, Jeakson with some sublime skill to get past three defenders, who kept

lunging at his feet, and released Roshan down the right.

His cross was missed as Sahal's thunderous strike rattled the crossbar after Chhetri miss-timed his run. Ashique on the rebound blazed over.

The winds had been howling for some time after the start of the game, but midway through the rain followed.

As India kept searching for the second, with the increasing ferocity of tackles from the Hong Kong players, the heav-

ens opened up.

In added time after the first 45 minutes, Jeakson flighted a ball to the right edge of the six-yard box, which Chhetri brought down from the sky with his right foot and slotted it past the keeper using his left. India were 2-0 up as the fans, though taking shelter from the rain, were delirious with joy. With that strike, Chhetri's goal tally went up to 84, levelling Hungary's Ferenc Puskas.

India were on the attack from the word go in the sec-

ond half as Chhetri tried his luck from distance even though he was bearing down on goal. His shot was parried away for a corner. Then again in the 58th minute, Chhetri's pull back into the middle was cleared only as far as Glan Martins, who had come on in place of Suresh at the start of the half, blazed over.

As the game dulled into a mid-field stalemate, the fans cheered harder from the stands. When a Chhetri was brought off in the 76th minute, the roar from the crowd drowned out the howl of the whistling winds.

In the 85th Manvir, who had been playing down the right for most of the tournament, found himself in the middle as the ball Brandon Fernandes' cross inched closer. He did not make a mistake, slotting it home past the hapless keeper to give India their third.

He was instrumental in the fourth too, rushing down the right to send in a pin-point pass at the feet of Ishan Pandita, who made no mistake.

With the win, India clinched the top spot of Group D, with 9 points from three games.

Sunil Chhetri bags 84th goal for India, draws level with legendary Ferenc Puskas in list of top-scorers



Agency
Kolkata, June 15:

Indian football legend Sunil Chhetri continues to be the light in shining armour for the Blue Tigers. The iconic striker bagged his 84th international goal for the country, going level with a world footballing great, Ferenc Puskas.

For the unversed, Chhetri is among the highest goalscorers in international football. In fact, as far as the list of active footballers goes, the Indian forward is only behind Cristiano Ronaldo and

Lionel Messi. Chhetri bagged the fourth goal of the AFC Asian Cup Qualifier against Hong Kong as India emerged triumphant 4-0. The victory also helped the Indian team boost their AFC Asian Cup qualification hopes, and the progression was sealed after Palestine's win over the Philippines.

After India's thumping 4-0 win, Chhetri said that he doesn't care much about records but just wants to enjoy himself in this final phase of his career.

"Feels Good, but you have to carry on. I genuinely don't care about records. I just want to enjoy myself as I move on to the last moments – just go out and enjoy on the pitch," he had said after the match.

Chhetri was denied a second goal against Hong Kong six minutes after the restart when Hong Kong goalkeeper Yapp Hung-fai pushed his shot wide following a mistake by Fung Hing-wa.