

## Prof. Amar Yumnam clarifies

"During the last three days, I have been visited by Sapamcha Jadumani and the Office Bearers of the Maheiroi Lup 6 in connection with a content in a book written by Brig S K Sharma. As far as the Thesis written by Brig Sharma, I have given the printed copies of relevant portions contained in the Thesis and in which the issue being raised is not there; I have shown the whole Thesis in my computer to the Maheiroi Lup 6. As regards the book, which has been mentioned by the Maheiroi Lup 6, I would say that my relationship is with the Thesis and not with the Book. Secondly, in so far as the statements given in the Thesis, the scholar has given references aplenty and all these are mostly published books which have been in the market for more than a decade. In such cases, I strongly feel that the challenge should rather be addressed to the already published source materials and referred by the scholar", Prof. Amar Yumnam.

## Essay Competition result out

IT News  
Imphal, June 16:

Result of the state level online essay competition for College and University students conducted under the topic - "Only One Earth - Living sustainably in harmony with nature", organised by Department of Zoology, Manipur University Biodiversity, Ecology & Environment Network, Manipur and Pole Star College, Hiyanglam, Wabagai has been declared.

Jodhachandra Laishram, DIT, Community College, Manipur University begs the First Position, Pangambam Thanganbi Chanu, DM College of SC, DM University begs Second Position while Laishram Nillapriya, Dept of Zoology, Manipur University begs Third Position.

Contenders with consolation prizes are Athokpam Vanika Devi, Manipur College, Pangambam Menaka Devi, WM Girls' College, Alicia Sharronmawi Hmar, Dept of Zoology, MU, G. Kachangailu, Dept of Lib & Inf. Sc, MU, Naorem Roshibina Devi, Pole Star College, Goldy Oinam, Shree Shree Gourgobind Girls' College, Moirangthem Kishan, Dept of Zoology, MU, Sagolshem Karosini Chanu, GP Women College, Leishangthem Haripriya Devi, GP Women College, Mangal Thangjam.

Date and Venue of Prize distribution shall be communicated individually to the Prize winners, a statement by Prof. N. Mohilal Meitei, Head of department, Zoology, MU said.

## Congress workers Gherao at Raj Bhavan; confronts with State police



IT News  
Imphal, June 16:

Large number of Congress workers including the MPCC president K. Meghachandra and MLA Th. Lokeswar, other office bearers and members of the frontal bodies today Gherao in front of the Raj Bhavan Gate at Nityapat Chuthek protesting the alleged misuse of ED by BJP in harassing the Congress leader - Rahul Gandhi.

The Congress workers

were driven out from the area by a team of state police. While returning from the Raj Bhavan the Congress workers shouted slogans against the misuse of ED to harass Rahul Gandhi. Placards denouncing the act and decrying the BJP government were used by the congress workers. Police team while trying to snatch the placards had confronted with the workers. The police told the congress workers to disperse on the ground that they didn't have

any permission to hold the protest.

MPCC President, K. Meghachandra, speaking at the protest site said that the congress workers are protesting against the humiliation of their party leaders by misusing Enforcement Directorate by the Modi led government.

Earlier K. Meghachandra, denounced the serving of summon notices to Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi by Enforcement Directorate (ED) for question-

ing in a money laundering case, Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC).

The MPCC president said that the Congress party condemns misuse of government agencies like ED as private agencies of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi led government.

While appealing to ED to remain neutral and treat every case equally, Meghachandra said that utilisation of government agencies and conducting enquiry only against Congress and Opposition parties demean the essence democracy.

He alleged that ED is being used wrongly in a case which is not related with it at all.

He further appealed to ED not to succumb under the BJP's dictatorship, and added that the country will regress as long as BJP exist.

He then exhorted people to join hands in eliminating BJP from the country.

Congress MLA Th Lokeswar, who also took part in the brief protest, said that the protest was staged to save democracy and Constitution and there will be no democracy and Constitution till eliminating misrule of BJP.

## Assam Rifles apprehends one UG



IT News  
Imphal, June 16:

Keithelmanbi Battalion of Assam Rifles under the aegis of IGAR (South) in a joint operation with Manipur Police apprehended an insurgent of proscribed group in Bishnupur district, Manipur

on June 14, 2022.

Based on specific input, troops of Assam Rifles along with Manipur Police launched the operation which led to the apprehension.

The apprehended insurgent was handed over to Nambol Police Station for further investigation.

## AR foils smuggling of illegal liquor



IT News  
Imphal, June 16:

Somsai Battalion under the aegis of IGAR (S) foiled liquor smuggling from Somra near Tusum village, Ukhrul District on Jun 15, 2022.

The Assam Rifles troops intercepted one Bolero pick up

vehicle carrying illegal foreign liquor near Tusum village, Ukhrul. The seized liquor assessed to be worth Rs 4.38 lakhs.

The seized liquor along with apprehended smugglers and vehicles were handed over to Jessami Police Station for further legal action.

## June 15 meet of Opposition parties is a positive step towards 2024 Lok Sabha polls

By: Nitya Chakraborty  
New Delhi, June 16:

The meeting of the seventeen opposition parties of the country on June 15 at the instance of the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to decide on nominee for Presidential elections due on July 18, has been a big success considering the problems which the regional parties were having with the Congress in the recent months.

What was significant that all the political parties present agreed to have a common candidate and after rejection by the NCP supreme Sharad Pawar of his candidature, the opposition conclave empowered Mallikarjun Kharge, Sharad

Pawar and Mamata Banerjee to decide on a common name before June 21. The last date for nomination is June 29. That way, the leaders have got time to agree on a common opposition candidate. If the BJP is serious in opting for a consensus, the process will show results by next week. The opposition will accordingly frame its strategy.

Two names were discussed at the meeting after Pawar declined to be the candidate - former West Bengal Governor Gopal Krishna Gandhi, the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi having an impeccable record for fighting for secularism and constitutional values. The second candidate is Dr. Farooq Abdullah who has a long political record with strong faith in

Indian democracy. If the consensus bid fails, the opposition can very well choose its own candidate for the final battle on July 18.

As of now, as per the electoral college for Presidential elections, the NDA headed by the BJP is ahead of the common opposition candidate by around two percentage votes. One calculation says that NDA just needs 13,000 electoral college votes to ensure the victory of its candidate. That is possible easily through the support of the BJD led by Navin Patnaik and the party YSRCP led by Andhra Pradesh chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy. BJD has got about 31, 000 electoral votes, so for the BJP led NDA, just a fraction of

BJD votes is adequate to secure BJP candidate's victory if there is a contest. Patnaik has already talked with the senior BJP leaders including PM and it seems that BJP is counting on his party BJD's support.

But the significance of the June 15 meet lies much beyond the Presidential elections. The show of unity of the 17 opposition parties on the eve of the Presidential elections, is a guarantee that a solid united front of the opposition parties is possible including both the Congress and the regional parties to challenge the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. This was not thought possible after the Chintan Shivir of the Congress in Udaipur last month when Rahul Gandhi commented

that the Congress can only fight the BJP, the regional parties can not. This created furore and the regional parties strongly resented the remarks of Rahul Gandhi.

That way, it was good that the Congress on its own did not organize the opposition meet. Many parties which attended the June 15 meeting would have not attended, if invited by the Congress. Mamata might have made some procedural mistakes in calling the meeting, but at the end, it has been a positive development for opposition unity. Sonia Gandhi is in hospital, Rahul Gandhi is spending his time in ED office. Mallikarjun Kharge on his own could not organize such big attendance.

Now what next? The anti-BJP unity shown at the June 15 conclave has to be taken forward and there Sharad Pawar and Mamata Banerjee along with M K Stalin have to play the main role. It is clear that Narendra Modi and Amit Shah have targeted Rahul Gandhi and for next few months, the Congress leader will be tied up with his ED questioning regarding the National Herald issue. Notwithstanding the legality of the NH issue, the fact remains that Rahul has given written statements covering many tricky issues of shares transfer and these will be further followed up making it difficult for Rahul to focus on the coming assembly elections.

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## Irabot Foundation Manipur observes its 26th Foundation day Needs for self-reliant food production stressed



IT News  
Imphal, June 16:

Irabot Foundation Manipur observes its 26th Foundation day at the auditorium of Manipur Dramatic Union Hall under the theme "Responsible Consumption and production" here in Imphal.

Vice Chancellor of DM University N. Rajmuhon Singh, President of Irabot Foundation Manipur and Founder of the Standard Roberth Hr. Sec. School, Ph. Landhoni grace the occasion as dignitaries on the dais.

Irabot Foundation Manipur was established on this day of 1996 under the leadership of late Thounaojam Iboya, who has been honoured as father of Social Worker. The Foundation was established with mission to assured self-reliant food production so that no person remain hunger in the state. Since its inception the Irabot Foundation Manipur has been indulging in various campaign like "Greening Manipur, grow more food, Protection and preservation of Agricultural Land in Manipur, Know your Schemes etc. the Foundation had also conducted seminars and workshops from time to time for the welfare of the farmers communities of the state and the recommendations of the seminars and the work-

shops had been submitted to the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Manipur for timely considerations.

General Secretary of Irabot Foundation Manipur,

Kh. Ajit, in his key note address elaborated on the various activities of the foundation that have been taken up for the welfare of the farmers of the state and for ensuring food for all for the people of the state.

Besides, the Foundation other related campaign for Agro forestry Management and also the impact of Climate change and its challenges have also been discussed by inviting experts and scientist from time to time. Ajit said that the condition faced by the farmers in the post Covid-19 pandemic have also been discussed to make sure that farmers don't suffer due to the impact of the Covid 19.

The main theme for the 26th foundation day observance of the Irabot Foundation Manipur is to understand the goal No. 12 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - i.e Responsible Consumption and productivity. SDG is a development that meets the needs of current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

N. Rajmuhon Singh, VC of DM University in his speech elaborated the series of works needed to be taken up for assuring the Responsible Consumption and productivity. He said that state farmers should use modern technologies to produce more crop to make sure that every people are ensured food by the products that the farmers in the state produced.

# ★ Editorial

## Oil Palm tree – Most Manipur land may dry up after 25 years

“If our farmers from the North Eastern India shift to oil palm cultivation, it will benefit the nation, farmers as well as North Eastern region” – this was what Prime Minister Narendra Modi had stated while launching the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEOP), a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme with a special focus on the North east region and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. When the world stood against oil palm tree plantation, one wonder on why the oil palm tree plantation is being encouraged by approving a huge amount of financial assistance by the central government.

As per official information, a financial outlay of Rs.11,040 crore has been made for the scheme, out of which Rs.8,844 crore is the Government of India share and Rs.2,196 crore is State share and this includes the viability gap funding also.

Under this scheme, it is proposed to cover an additional area of 6.5 lakh hectare (ha.) for oil palm till the year 2025-26 and thereby reaching the target of 10 lakh hectares ultimately.

It is clear that, farmers opting the palm tree plantation are going to be provided huge amount of subsidies plus other monetary benefits to attract them in the palm tree plantation.

But what the people of the state including those in the government should know is that Prime Narendra Modi or the Chief Minister of Manipur N. Biren Singh might have political reason for the encouragement of the palm tree plantation but when one look 25 years from today, the state will turn as barren, dry land. And as happen in country like Indonesia and Malaysia, future generation will leave with no choice but to blame this generation for the devastations of the land.

In the move to take up the palm tree plantations in the state, the authorities of the state including the Chief Minister and the Forest and Agriculture Minister have been misleading the people, without giving any factual account about the impact of the oil palm tree plantations.

One M.S. Khaidem, a Consultant of the Oil Palm Mission, Manipur had stated about the benefits of oil plant plantations saying that it will only do good for the farmers and the state. During his speech at City Convention on May 30 on the one Day people convention as well as during a panel discussion at IMPACT TV, Mr. Khaidem had said that varieties of crops can be cultivated in-between the palm trees as the gap between each plantation is 30 feet. This is a shrewd statement to attract the farmers as there are scientific evidences that cultivation of crops like potatoes, garlic, tomatoes etc. is not successful in the space available between palm trees.

Scientific findings said that a palm tree consume not less than 200 liters to 300 liters of water per day. It is also a fact that after the plantation of Palm tree it takes five years to yield palm fruits which can produce oil. Within these five years, the center has assured incentives to the farmers and thus farmers with no idea about the impact in the later days are attracted. But the life span of the palm tree is 25 years as it bears no fruit for oil production and become useless. Then the farmers definitely have to uproot the palm trees and again wait for another five years to yield the seeds that produce oil. Here again, with the completion of the life of the palm tree the soil become barren and dry. So there are possibilities that companies may started funding to farmers encouraging them to cultivate at other fertile area where trees are seen grown in plenty. This happened in other part of the world. And as a result, mass deforestations are reported at other part of the world.

On the other hand, when one look deeper into Mizoram experience, there is no reason on why the government of Manipur should encourage palm tree plantation. The condition there is bizarre. The water shed development authority gives money to divert water from streams to irrigate oil palm tree. For that people are provided money to set up water tank to divert water from streams to feed the palm tree. And what has been witness is that almost all streams dried up.

One thing that need to be remembered is that we cannot seduce something which we don't have natural conditions. And these oil palm tree, at which India is the second largest importers in the world is an alien crops which is not fit for the soil of Manipur.

## Infrastructure and Construction are key propellers of economic growth

By: General (Dr) V K Singh

Infrastructure is the backbone of our country and along with the construction sector plays a crucial role in accelerating India's overall development, hence acts as a key propeller of economic growth. The Indian infrastructure sector has always shown remarkable resilience despite disruptions and covid limitations which had brought a complete halt to the construction activities. However, we all observed that post these disruptions, Infrastructure and construction emerged as the first economic activities to resume. With an aim to renew and explore further prospects in the Indian Construction sector, I would reflect on the overall Infrastructure landscape as it is largely responsible for propelling India's overall development and enjoys intense focus from Government for initiating policies that would ensure time-bound creation of world class infrastructure in the country and make India more competitive.

Our government has already undertaken numerous pathbreaking initiatives in the recent past to push infrastructure investment in the country. The recent announcements in the Budget further reflect our government's renewed commitment with its continued investment in strengthening the country's infrastructure. The launch of National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) to invest 111 lakh crore on infrastructure projects by 2024-25; Launch of 6 lakh crore Asset Monetization programme to attract private sector participation and investment in brownfield infrastructure assets are landmark steps in this direction.

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## Vidhan Parishads: A Heterogeneous Chamber



By: Er. Prabhat Kishore

Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council is the upper house in some states of the Indian Republic, which have a bicameral legislature with Vidhan Sabha as the lower house. Article 169 of the Constitution of India deals the abolition & creation of this permanent House. The composition of Vidhan Parishad is multilayered. As per Article 171, one-third of its member are elected by the State Vidhan Sabha, one-third are elected by the state's local bodies, one-twelfth are elected by the registered graduates and one-twelfth are elected by the teachers; whereas remaining one-sixth members are nominated by the Governor.

Presently, out of 28 states of India, only six states, namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh, have a Vidhan Parishad. Earlier existing Vidhan Parishads have been abolished in some states like Assam (in 1969), Madhya Pradesh (in 1969), Punjab (in 1969), Tamilnadu (in 1986), West Bengal (in 1969) and Jammu & Kashmir (in 2019). The Andhra Pradesh Vidhan Parishad was abolished in 1985 during N.T. Ramarao led TDP Government regime, but was revived in 2007 during T.R.S. Reddy led Congress government regime. The Andhra Pradesh Vidhan

Sabha has again passed a resolution in January 2020 to abolish the existing Vidhan Parishad, but withdraw the resolution in November 2021. It has also been discontinued in the newly carved out states like Jharkhand and Uttarakhand, whose parent states still own it. A resolution to create Vidhan Parishad in Assam, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamilnadu and West Bengal have been passed by their Vidhan Sabha.

The Vidhan Parishads are criticized for being unnecessary and considered a burden on the state budget. After considering 100 years of its functioning and other aspects, it is argued that Vidhan Parishad has no relevance in Indian democracy. It cannot be said that the six states, which own Vidhan Parishad, have progressed more in comparison to the other states. Obviously, the Vidhan Parishad has nothing to do with the development & well-being of any state and it has no special utility.

Secondly, the Vidhan Parishad is a passive house as it has been given nominal power. It can withhold a general bill for a maximum of 4 months (3 months for the first time and one month for the second time) and a finance bill for only 14 days. However, in the administrative field, it enjoys equal rights & importance with the Vidhan Sabha and its members (called MLC) become Chief Ministers and Ministers. They ask questions, raises public issues and participate in the debates of the House. Some argue that despite being a weak house, it can stall a dictatorial bill passed by the Vidhan Sabha for some time and compels the Vidhan Sabha to reconsider the bill. But this logic is applicable to those states where the opposition has a majority in the Vidhan

Parishad.

Thirdly, according to the constitution, there is a system of nomination of eminent persons in the fields of literature, art, science, cooperative, social service etc. in the Vidhan Parishad and some seats are reserved for them. But now-a-days in place of such personalities, politicians rejected by the people or handpicked men of political supremos are being frequently sent to this house. It is serving as refuse of those who are defeated in assembly elections. However, such nominations cannot be objected in the present circumstances, because today large-scale incidents of encroachment of polling booths are happening and democracy is turning into a 'criminal-system'. The more high-ranking the criminal is today, the more sure his victory is. As a result, the deserving person loses the election, despite being popular among the masses. If there is no arrangement for nomination, the people will be deprived of their services. In this way, the system of nomination is like a sword with a sharp edge at both ends, which strikes from both sides.

Fourthly, with the increasing influence of money power in society and politics, the entry of resourceful people into this "back door" house has become easier. It enables unpopular, rejected and ambitious politicians to occupy the post of CM, Minister or a member of the legislature. The emergence of supremacy in place of internal democracy in political parties has guaranteed the entry of outsiders into the House while denying grassroots activists. The expensive democratic elections have compelled the political parties, especially regional parties, to embrace the power-hungry money-holders, as they contribute towards

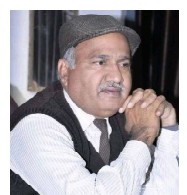
election expenditure.

Fifth, the most discussed topic about the Vidhan Parishad is its "economic aspect". The Vidhan Parishad is a white elephant, on which billions rupees of earnings of the people's blood and sweat are shed like water, who are not able to afford food even for two times despite day and night hard work. On functioning of Vidhan Parishad in a state an average expenditure of Rupees 600-800 Crore is done with no much purpose, curtailing the people's basic amenities. Today, there is a lot of debt on the government and various welfare schemes are not being implemented properly due to paucity of funds. According to a survey conducted some time ago, each member of the Vidhan Parishad spends on an average four-five lakh rupees as traveling allowance. Recently, their salary and other allowances have been increased and provision has also been made to give vehicle allowance. As a result, the cost per member will increase even more. They are also being paid lifelong pension on the lines of government employee. All these expenses will be recovered from the poor people in various forms.

The above analysis reveals that the people gain less and lose more from the Vidhan Parishad. In the present circumstances, Vidhan Sabha is sufficient to fulfill the will & wish of the people. The Vidhan Parishads are just a copy of the constitution of the rich & developed nation in which there is a second chamber for the elite. Overall, keeping in mind the interests of the people, the existing Vidhan Parishads are said to be irrelevant in Indian context and should be abolished in all states.

(Author is a technocrat & educationist.)

## Lack of quality in medical education



By: Vijay Garg

seats in medical science postgraduate courses is also the lack of interest of the students. In this context, in 2015-16, one hundred and four in surgery (heart), fifty-five in cardiology, eighty-seven in pediatrics, 58 in plastic surgery, forty-eight in neurology specialists and forty-eight seats in nervous system surgery are vacant. Was left Two reasons were cited for this decrease.

One is that sufficient number of qualified candidates were not found for the entrance examination of these courses and secondly that even the qualified students who got the post graduation, they refused to study in these courses. Now the absence of qualified students is said to be the reason behind the vacant seats of one thousand four hundred and fifty six. After all, what are the reasons that despite the increase in many facilities in medical education, the crisis of quality education is deepening?

Medical experts believe that today's students do not want to study in courses that take a long time to specialize. On the contrary, they want to acquire proficiency in such courses, where one can get the degree of specialization soon and there are opportunities to earn money. Kidney, nose, ear, tooth, throat diseases and various technical examinations specialists start surgery after reaching the age of thirty-five, whereas heart and nervous system specialists get this opportunity after the age of forty-five years. Is.

Clearly, the matter of heart and mind is very delicate, so long experience is also necessary in these. But if this problem persists, then in future there is bound to be a shortage of doctors related to the treatment of these diseases. Where is the deficiency in this system, finding it and then resolving it is the job of the government and the people associated with allopathy education. But at present, in the background of the reasons for this, whether the formation of a 'National Medical Council' by re-joining the Medical Council of India and medical education is becoming more and more expensive? NMC was formed in the year 2016.

### Such reforms should be seen in medical education

Its objective was to improve the deteriorating standard of medical education, to make the profession corruption-free and to break the unethical nexus of private medical colleges. But when NMC came in the form of law, there was a big flexibility in it that Ayurveda, Homeopathy and Unani doctors also get the right to do allopathic medicine legally by doing bridge courses at the government level. This process also went on across the country through voluntary organizations.

Twenty five thousand rupees for this course. Although still most of these doctors prescribe allopathic medicines without any hesitation, but this system is still illegal and runs on the malpractice of the government health department of the district. It is possible that from the point of view of eliminating this contradiction and making illegal treatment legal, it has been giving legality to allopathic medicine by facilitating bridge-course in this law? That is why the question arose whether an ordinary auto-taxi licensee driver could be allowed to operate an aeroplane after training for some time? In fact, every method of treatment is a scientific method and has been perfected by hundreds of years of experiments and training. Everyone's studies are different. The methods of knowing the symptoms of the disease are different and the medicines are also different. In such a situation, how can any alternative doctor become a doctor or specialist of allopathy after four-six months of different studies?

The entrance exam for MBBS and postgraduate courses in allied subjects is very tough. There are total sixty seven thousand two hundred and eighteen seats in MBBS. According to the set standard of the World Health Organization, there should be one doctor per thousand population, whereas in our case this ratio is 0.62. In 2015, the then Union Health Minister had told in the Rajya Sabha that there is a shortage of fourteen lakh allopathic doctors in the country. But now this figure has crossed 20 lakhs. Similarly, there is a shortage of four

million nurses in the country. From government district hospitals to all other health centers, the supply of technicians was not in proportion to the equipment.

If seen, there are many types of playing with MBBS education. According to the law, only those students who have been selected from the NEET exam according to the number of seats should get admission in the medical college. But the situation is that the students who are in the rank of more than two lakhs, they are also getting admission on the basis of money. This situation persists because the meritorious students who are not able to pay the fees of private colleges, they give up their seats out of compulsion. Later, the students ranked in the lower class get admission by purchasing this seat.

The cost of this seat ranges from sixty lakh to one crore. By the way, the fee for one year in government colleges of the country is only four lakhs, whereas in private universities and colleges the same fee is sixty four lakh rupees. The same rigging is being done with NRI and minority quota students. For admission in MD, in private institutions which have management jurisdiction and grant based seats, the amount of admission fee is two crore to five crore.

On the one hand, we scoff at caste-based qualifications and disqualifications in the name of reservation, while on the other hand, through this law, private colleges have been allowed to fill 60 percent seats at the discretion of the management. Now only forty percent of the seats will be filled through competitive examination. Clearly, the management will openly auction 60 percent of the seats under its jurisdiction. As a result the effect of this law is now clearly visible as PG seats remain vacant. This situation is a sign of jeopardizing the future healthcare of the country. In fact, such reforms should have been seen in medical education, which would have blocked the entry of money into it.

# 12,213 fresh Covid cases in India in highest daily surge since late Feb

Agency  
New Delhi, June 16:

In the highest daily surge since late February this year, India on Thursday reported 12,213 new cases, taking the overall cases to 43,257,730. Around 38.4 percent surge is witnessed as compared to a day before when 8,822 cases were logged. According to the health ministry data, the country's active caseload currently stands at 58,215 - accounting for 0.13 percent of the total cases.

Maharashtra and Kerala are the two states witnessing

the highest surge in the country. While Maharashtra recorded 4,024 new cases, Kerala saw 3,488 new infections. The two states also have the highest overall cases. Delhi too has been witnessing a worrying surge. The national capital's Covid-19 tally rose by more than 1,000 fresh infections for a second straight day on Wednesday, with as many as 1,375 people testing positive in 24 hours.

India's fresh Covid surge has sparked concerns of a fourth wave but experts have highlighted low

hospitalisations and death figures. A large population of the country is already vaccinated fully but states have been told to remain alert.

Across India, a total of 11 deaths have been recorded in the last 24 hours, taking the total deaths - recorded since the start of the pandemic - to 5,24,803. Meanwhile, the recovery rate currently stands at 98.65 percent.

The daily positivity rate stands at 2.35 percent, while the weekly positivity rate is at 2.38 percent. A total of 85.63 crore samples have been tested so far for

coronavirus, with 5,19,419 tests being conducted in the last 24 hours.

India's vaccine coverage has reached 195.67 crore doses. Over 3.54 crore first doses and over 2.02 crore second doses have been administered for the age group of 12 to 14. Over 5.99 crore first doses and more than 4.73 crore second doses have been given to the 15 to 18 age group. Meanwhile, over 3.64 crore precaution doses (booster shots) have been given to people above 60 years of age, healthcare workers, and frontline workers.

# Sharad Pawar Declines Offer to Contest Election of the President of India

NDA is Expected to Prefer a Tribal Candidate



The Opposition members at a meeting convened by WB CM Mamata Banerjee over Presidential polls.

IT Correspondent  
Mumbai, June 16:

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) Chief Sharad Pawar declined the offer to contest the election of the President of India, as a common Opposition candidate, in a meeting held in New Delhi on Wednesday.

"I sincerely appreciate the leaders of opposition parties for suggesting my name as a candidate for the election of the President of India, at the meeting held in Delhi. However, I like to state that I have humbly declined the proposal of my candidature" Pawar said in a tweet.

The tenure of current President Ram Nath Kovind is ending on July 24, and the election for the 16th President is scheduled to be held on July 18. The counting of votes, if needed, will be done and the result will be declared on July 21. Voting will not happen in the case of a consensus candidate. The election notification was issued on Wednesday.

The NDA may not re-nominate Ram Nath Kovind for the second term. Rajendra Prasad was the only President to get two full terms as president. Both the opposition and ruling party have not been able to name their candidates yet.

On Wednesday in a meeting called by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Pawar declined the offer. Then Banerjee, proposed the names of National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah and Mahatma Gandhi's grandson Gopal Krishna Gandhi as nominees for the July election.

tions. Gandhi is also the Left's suggestion. However, Farooq Abdullah's son Omar Abdullah asked not to discuss the names for the Presidential polls. A second meeting of the opposition parties is expected to be convened by Sharad Pawar on June 20 or June 21.

Leaders of 16 parties - Congress, CPI (M), CPIML, RSP, Shiv Sena, NCP, RJD, SP, National Conference, PDP, JD(S), DMK, RLD, IUML, and JMM - participated in the meeting called by Banerjee, over presidential polls. They included Akhilesh Yadav, Mehbooba Mufti, Sharad Pawar, Mallikarjun Kharge, TR Baalu, and Subhash Desai (Shiv Sena).

As against this, the NDA may consider Kerala Governor Mohammad Arif Khan, former Jharkhand Governor and tribal leader from Odisha Draupadi Murmu, Chhattisgarh Governor and tribal leader Anusuya

Uikey, Telangana Governor Tamsilasi Soundararajan, Karnataka Governor and Dalit leader Thawar Chand Gehlot, former Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan, and Odisha's tribal leader Jai Oram as its candidate. However as per indications, the NDA may consider a tribal candidate this time.

The President of India is elected by the elected members of both Houses of Parliament and elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of all states and the National Capital Territory of Delhi and the Union Territory of Puducherry. For the selection process, 50 MPs must propose the candidate, followed by another 50 seconding for the candidature. The election for the President is generally held by secret ballot and a single transferable vote is used per the system of proportional representation.

# When repeated FIRs lodged against an IAS officer

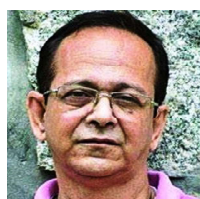
IT Correspondent  
Guwahati, June 16:

Another first information report (FIR) has been lodged against the former State coordinator of National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the system integrator, sub-contractors with other persons alleging corruption and money laundering while updating the NRC in Assam that began in 2014 under supervision of the Supreme Court of India.

The petitioner Hitesh Dev Sarma, present NRC State coordinator, has filed the case against Prateek Hajela, an IAS officer currently posted in his home State of Madhya Pradesh, in the State vigilance & anti-corruption department on 13 June 2022. Dev Sarma, also an IAS officer, claims in the complaint that a huge corruption and money laundering suspectedly took place during the tenure of Hajela in the process of NRC updation.

For conducting the updation of NRC program, the system integrator (WIPRO) was given the task of supplying data entry operators (DEOs). The system integrator was not permitted to subcontract any activities related to system design and development, deployment and enhancement of NRC software solution, data centre operation, etc. However, it engaged one sub-contractor for providing data entry operators without any prior approval from the concerned authority.

"From office record, it was found that the then State coordinator was aware of the fact that



Hitesh Dev Sarma



Prateek Hajela

a sub-contractor was being used to provide DEOs' though he did not officially approve the particular proposal. The system integrator was paid Rupees 14,500 to 17,500 per month per DEO by the NRC authority, but 'the DEOs got only Rs 5,500 to 9,100 per month' only during the years (2015 to 2019). Dev Sarma in his complaint wrote that the DEOs were denied the minimum wage as per the country's Minimum Wages Act.

The State Accountant General in a provisional audit report observed that 'the difference of margin ranged from 45.59 to 64.27 percent was exorbitant and audit assessed that undue benefit of Rs 155.83 crore was allowed to SI/labour contractor after allowing 10 percent reasonable profit margin to the contractor', added the complaint. Narrating about the undue benefit to the tune of Rs 155.83 crore, Dev Sarma asserted that it's a huge amount and it is reasonable to suspect that kickbacks and money laundering must have occurred in the process. He also mentioned that during his investigation it came to light that one Proloy Seal worked as a middleman in the whole process.

cess.

"He (Proloy Seal) was neither an employee of the office of the State coordinator nor was he a contractor engaged by the office. But his presence was always seen in the office. It is suspected that he was the key person in managing all the kickbacks and money laundering. A detailed investigation into the transactions, accounts/balance sheets of the persons involved is likely to prove corruption and money laundering as suspected," stated in the FIR.

The provisional audit report also identified an 'avoidable expenditure to the tune of Rs 10.73 crore' in connection with the engagement of third-party monitoring consultants. As per the amended delegation of financial power rules, for the expenditure of more than Rs 5 crore, the then State coordinator should have obtained an approval from the empowered committee, headed by the chief secretary, or from the Registrar General of India.

But the then State coordinator engaged the consultants without taking approval from the concerned authority, added it. Citing the same audit report,

where it observed that 'entire expenditure of Rs 10.73 crore made against the engagement of consultants was unjustified and avoidable which resulted extra burden to the government exchequer and undue benefit to the SI to that extent', Dev Sarma claimed that a large volume of government money was siphoned off in a fraudulent manner.

Unconfirmed reports indicate that a few editor-journalists were also beneficiaries to the financial irregularities. Those media persons, precisely from news channels, took sub-contracts to supply DEOs and got a sizable percentage of money which is mentioned in Dev Sarma's complaint. It is understood that the share of due money to the DEOs were fraudulently grabbed by those television anchor-journalists. The people of Assam may remember how some television-show presenters at that time projected Hajela as a superman.

Mentionable is that Dev Sarma, earlier lodged a complaint with the criminal investigation department of Assam Police against his predecessor Hajela for deceitfully including names of suspected individuals (read Bangladeshi nationals) in the NRC. He termed it as criminal and anti-national activities where Hajela deliberately used the software designed to avoid quality checks in the NRC updating exercise for Assam. The supplementary NRC list, which was released on 31 August 2019 excluded 19,06,657 applicants because of lack of adequate citizenship papers.

Contd. from Page 2

# Infrastructure and Construction are key propellers.....

With a well-developed framework for PPP's in the highway sector, India is already moving fast on its ambitious target of expanding the National Highway network by 25,000 kms over the fiscal year. The Bharatmala Pariyojana, aims to build about 65,000 km of national and economic corridors, border and coastal roads and expressways to optimize the efficiency of already built highway infrastructure. The programme will provide 4-lane connectivity to 550 districts and develop 50 economic corridors and attract opportunities for the construction equipment players as well. Already, there is a 100% FDI allowed in roads and highways under the automatic route. This will boost the economy.

Similarly, the aviation sector will witness expansion of the airport infrastructure with an investment to the tune of US\$ 1.83 billion along with the navigation services by 2026. This would further provide ample of opportunities for the construction industry. Parallely, according to a recent report, the construction industry in India is expected to reach \$1.4 Tn by 2025 and is expected to emerge as the third largest globally. Rapidly evolving technology is also redefining how the construction business is conducted and managed in India. The construction industry market in India works across 250 sub-sectors with linkages across various sectors and offering opportunities for the construction equipment players.

Technology and sustainability will play a significant role in the construction sector. Focus on digitalization to automate pro-cs across design, construction and operations would ensure cost-effective and timely completion of large projects. Clean energy and green initiatives for infrastructure development have given a much-needed push to this sector's growth. Furthermore, the integration of the latest technology and movement would also help towards contributing to futuristic infrastructure developments in the country.

Road Transport is considered to be one of the most cost effective and preferred mode of

transport, both for freight and passengers, keeping in view its level of penetration into populated areas. Thus, it is vital for economic development and social integration of the country. Road Transport has emerged as the dominant segment in India's transportation sector. The Road Transport Sector accounts for about 87% of passenger traffic and 60% of freight traffic movement in the country. Easy availability, adaptability to individual needs and the cost savings are some of the factors which go in favour of road transport. Road transport also acts as a feeder service to railway, shipping and air traffic. The growth in this sector with better road infra will give a positive bounce to economy.

The Indian Construction sector offers quite an attractive proposition for foreign developers. The roadmap to India's infrastructure landscape seems to be a promising one with the plethora of opportunities for all types of construction equipment providers. India's growth story has a strong linkage to infrastructure development. There is a need to keep up to the laid down targets to ensure this. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is committed to write fresh chapters of growth and economic development. This positivity will infuse all growth sectors.

(The writer is a Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways and Ministry of Civil Aviation)

# Violent protests against 'Agnipath' scheme in Bihar; road, rail traffic disrupted

Agency  
Jehanabad/Buxar/Nawada (Bihar), June 16:

Protests against the Centre's 'Agnipath' scheme for hiring jawans on a short-term contractual basis continued across Bihar for the second consecutive day on Thursday as aspirants preparing for jobs in defence forces disrupted railway and road traffic in Jehanabad, Buxar and Nawada districts.

Protesters blocked the movement of trains on Patna-Gaya and Patna-Buxar routes by lying down on the railway tracks in Jehanabad and Buxar districts. However, Bihar Police along with their railway counterparts immediately removed the protesters from the tracks.

Hundreds of agitators blocked National Highway 83 in Jehanabad and burned

ties demanding the scrapping of the scheme. Angry protesters took out processions in the three districts and other parts of the state.

Protesters had disrupted railway and road traffic in various parts of the state also on Wednesday.

Under the 'Agnipath' scheme, around 45,000 people aged between 17.5 and 21 years will be inducted into the armed forces for a four-year period, following which most of them will have to take compulsory retirement sans pension or gratuity benefits although some will be retained.

Of the total annual recruits, only 25 per cent will be allowed to continue for another 15 years under permanent commission.

The Union cabinet has approved the "transformative" scheme on Tuesday.

# Admit Card Lost

I have lost my original Admit Card for BA 3rd Semester Examination (Arts Stream), bearing Roll No. C2010483 of 2022, issued by the Dhanamanjuri University, Manipur around College campus on June 3, 2022.

Finders are requested to hand over it to the undersigned.

Sd/-

Thokchom Sanathoi Singh  
Kakching Makha Leikai  
Contact No. 8258987037

# Music album 'Let's Talk About It' launched by Reckitt and Plan India in collaboration with Manipur Education Department

IT Correspondent  
Imphal, June 16:

The Birds and Bees Talk (TBBT) programme led by Reckitt, the global leader in consumer healthcare marks its entry into year three by unveiling India's first music album on growing up 'Let's Talk About It'. The music album is launched under the thought leadership of Reckitt and Plan India in collaboration with Department of Education, Government of Manipur. The album is conceptualized with an aim to expand the programme's reach to a large audience to create the necessary awareness about sexual and reproductive health amongst the youth and adolescents. The programme aspires to reach 4 million children in year three across the six states of North-East India and arm the youth between the age group of 10-19 years with necessary life skills and address their concerns with regards to growing up.

The aim of the album is to channelize the energy of youth in direction that builds empathy, helps in taking positive and informed decisions and to reach out confidently.



Th. Basanta Singh, Education Minister, Government of Manipur said, "I appreciate The Birds and Bees Talk Project which aims at youths of North East India through an animated and interactive curriculum building on core principles of inclusion, awareness, consent, protection and equity along with supporting rich art, music and cultural heritage. TBBT has very innovatively incorporated music in their project to influence youth and young children. Music often is successful in helping adolescents engage in a process with minimum resistance as they relate to it. I wish

all the best to TBBT on its 3rd year launch with a first of a kind song album on growing up for youth."

Gaurav Jain, Senior Vice President, Reckitt - South Asia said, "Extraordinary circumstances pushes one to try extraordinary things. 'The Birds and the Bees Talk' is an initiative that has been put in place to adapt to the changing world and help shape the newer generations. We want the children/youth of today, to be better and stronger versions of their own selves. Our five pillars- Consent, Protection, Awareness, Equity and

Inclusion will enable and empower Gen Zs and be helpful to the curious Gen Alpha generation.

In the campaign's 3rd phase, we are extremely delighted to partner with Population Foundation of India. Through this association we are looking to enable teachers to have a better understanding on adolescent health and wellbeing in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Delhi. We are confident that addressing children, teachers and parents through this program will help children lead happier and healthier lives."

## Elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha from Tamil Nadu, Congress leader P Chidambaram resigns from Maharashtra seat

New Delhi, June 16:

Senior Congress leader and former home minister P Chidambaram on Thursday tendered his resignation from the Rajya Sabha seat of Maharashtra, as he has been elected to the Upper House from

Tamil Nadu.

The 76-year-old leader took to Twitter to announce his resignation. "Following my election to the Rajya Sabha from the state of Tamil Nadu, I am required to resign my seat from the state of Maharashtra. Accordingly, today I tendered my

resignation from the seat from the state of Maharashtra," he said.

"The Hon'ble Chairman of the Rajya Sabha has accepted my resignation," he said in another tweet.

The former finance minister further said that he was

"honoured" to represent Maharashtra and wished "peace and prosperity" for the people of the state.

"I was honoured to represent the state of Maharashtra. I wish the people of Maharashtra the very best in the future, peace and prosperity," he added.

## Contd. from Page 1 June 15 meet of Opposition parties is a positive step towards 2024....

That is the tragedy of the Congress and the opposition also. In the next round of state assembly elections, polling will take place in Himachal and Gujarat by year end. BJP has virtually completed all the preparations and the BJP war room sources say that the saffrons will bring the Congress strength below 50 this time as against 77 in 2017 polls. Many seasoned observers of Gujarat politics are saying that it is free turf for BJP in Gujarat. The Gujarat PCC is paralysed. Hardik Patel has joined BJP and there is no direction from the Congress high command. In Himachal, the situation is no better. If the Congress does badly in these two states, its immediate impact will be felt on the assembly elections in the other states in 2023, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka.

The Congress is the largest opposition party in the country in the anti-BJP camp. Nobody disagrees to that, but the ground reality is that in the last eight years since Narendra Modi took over as the prime minister, the Congress strength has declined steeply, while the regional parties have emerged stronger. Different political parties have varying ideologies, but these parties have fought BJP and defeated them, while the Congress has been defeated in most of the direct fights with the BJP. Only recently, the Congress lost its sure seat from Haryana in Rajya Sabha elections and in Karnataka, the BJP got an extra seat due to poor understanding between the Congress and the Janata Dal(S).

Let us look at the facts. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections,

the Congress and the BJP were contestants in 374 seats the Congress lost in 92 per cent of the seats where it fought the BJP. As against the Congress, other regional parties did much better by fighting the BJP in their respective states. As of now, the Congress runs the state governments on its own in two — Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh — and is a partner in the ruling coalition in three states, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Jharkhand. The party lost Punjab to AAP in the latest assembly elections and witnessed its worst performance ever in the crucial Uttar Pradesh assembly polls getting only two seats out of the total of 403.

Rahul Gandhi may feel that only the Congress has the ideology to fight BJP, but in all the states which went to polls in the last two years, the regional parties fared much better in defeating the BJP compared to the 'ideology-driven' Congress. In Bengal, in the 2021 assembly elections, the BJP mobilised all its muscle power and huge financial resources to dethrone the Trinamool government, but it faced its worst defeat. Trinamool got more seats — 213 out of the total of 294 — while the BJP got only 77 seats. The Congress could not secure a single seat.

In 2019 Lok Sabha polls, there were 250 direct fights between the Congress and the BJP, and the Congress won just six seats. This itself tells the real story of the preparedness of the Congress in taking on the BJP. In Uttar Pradesh, out of 80 Lok Sabha seats, the Congress got only one in direct fight against the BJP; in Bihar, the party got one out of 40; in

Madhya Pradesh, one out of 28; in Chhattisgarh, it got two out of 11; and one in Jharkhand out of 14. In other states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi and Himachal, the party got zero seats in 2019 elections. However, last year, the Congress got one Lok Sabha seat in Himachal in by-election.

An analysis of the Congress seats in Lok Sabha now shows that out of its 53 members, 28 are from southern states alone. 15 are from Kerala, 8 from Tamil Nadu, three from Telangana and one each from Karnataka and Puducherry. In two states, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the Congress got seats due to combined strength of its alliance partners; otherwise, the 2019 tally would have been much lower. This stark reality that the Congress is not the natural party of governance anymore and it has to treat its alliance partners, especially the powerful regional parties with respect, should be recognized by Rahul Gandhi if he really means to work with the regional parties to take on the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

After the Presidential elections, the Congress has to focus fully on the assembly elections in 2022 end and 2023. There are states where the Congress is the only major rival against the BJP. The Congress has to improve its performance in the interests of boosting opposition challenge to BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The Congress has to put its own house in order and emerge as a fighting machine to take on battle ready BJP. That is the only way, the grand old party can get back its position and power in the opposition block. (IPA Service)

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