

Beneficiaries of PMAY mostly affected people in the flood – MLA Joykishan

IT News
Imphal, May 23:

MLA Khumukcham Joykishan today said that the beneficiaries of the Prime Minister Awaz Yozna have become the mostly affected people by the flood caused due to the incessant rains, while appealing the government to release the fund for construction of the houses under the Housing for All scheme. The MLA also said that most of the works sanctioned under the MAHUD department of the government of Manipur have not been taken up by respective agencies even



as funds have already been sanctioned.

Speaking to reporters at his Thangmeiband residence, MLA Khumukcham Joykishan said that beneficiaries of the

PMAY are entitled a sum of Rs. 1 lakh 60 thousands each for construction of their respective houses. The government sanctioned half the amount of the total amount to some and as per guidelines the beneficiaries have to complete the construction of the foundations for sanctioning of the remaining portion. Some beneficiaries have started constructions of the foundation by borrowing money without getting the first instalment. However, as the second instalment has not been released till date the beneficiaries are not able to complete their houses and thus taking refuge at relatives or at rent houses. The

MLA said that during this flood cause by the incessant rains these people suffered most and are not noticed by the government as well as the media and the society.

MLA Joykishan appealed the government to release the remaining fund under the PMAY at the earliest possible time. If in case the center is yet to release the fund, the MLA urged the state government to make it clear to the people.

On the other hand, MLA Joykishan said that works sanctioned for construction and repairing of drains, children's playground among others under the MAHUD of the government of Manipur have not been taken up till today. He said that funds of the works sanctioned has also been already released however, for reason best known to the implanting agencies, none of the works has been taken up in the Imphal Municipality Corporation area.

"I have taken up this matter with the MAHUD Minister and he also assured me that the works be taken up and complete soon, however, after a month of the assurance no works are seen taken up", Joykishan said.

Manipur villagers rescue Sangai deer that escaped during flash floods; treated and released back to forest



Courtesy: Times Now
Imphal, May 23:

Landslides, triggered by heavy rainfall, have disrupted road and rail connectivity to vital areas of Tripura, Mizoram, and Manipur since May 15.

The flood situation in Manipur was alarming as the water level in almost all the major rivers were above the danger mark last Thursday after incessant rain for over a



week.

Low-lying areas were submerged and landslides were reported in many districts.

Amid the challenging situation, a heartwarming tale of rescue has surfaced online.

Manipur minister Thongam Biswajit Singh shared a clip showing villagers rescuing a Sangai deer that escaped from flash floods in the area.

The minister informed that the endangered animal ran

away to a village from its habitat to escape the deluge of flash floods. Luckily, it was spotted and rescued by villagers.

"#Sangai deer, an endangered species of Manipur ran away to a village from its habitat in order to escape from flash floods in the forest areas. Making a wise decision, the villagers safely captured him and alerted the Forest Department," Biswajit Singh tweeted.

The exhausted deer is seen lying down while a man pats its head and body.

Reports said the villagers informed the forest department, after which officials were directed by Singh to release the deer into the forest.

A follow-up clip shared by Singh shows villagers releasing the deer into a lush green field.

"Immediately responding to the incident, I directed the forest officials to take cognizance on this matter and the deer was safely released back to the forest," wrote Singh.

CPPKT and KSO sorts out misunderstanding



IT News
Imphal, May 23:

Misunderstanding between the Committee on Protection and Preservation of Historical Rights of Koubru and Thangjing Hill ranges (CPPKT) and Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO), Henglep have sorted out the misunder-

standing between in regarding the Thangjing Hill range.

The differences was settled today after a meeting between the two initiated by the DGP of Manipur at his office chamber.

In the release, the misunderstandings between the Committee on Protection and Preservation of the Historical Rights of the Koubru and Thangjing Hill

Ranges (CPPKT) and the Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO), Henglep have agreed to withdraw all kind of imposition at Thangjing Hill range by both parties.

According to the press release by CPPKT, any activities involving tree planting or religious rites are permitted on the Hill ranges.

School Committee alleged headmaster for stealing mid-day meal rice

IT News
Jiribam, May 23:

The school committee of Rashidpur Upper Primary School, Jiribam District appealed to the concern authority to transfer the headmaster of the school, they also cautious if the authority fail to act on them, they will shut down the school.

Speaking with the media person, in a press meet held at Rashidpur Upper Primary School Md. Nazir Ahmed, member of Rashidpur Upper Primary School committee alleged that few days ago the



headmaster of the school Md. Makram Ali had collected money from the students with a hope to provide scholarship.

"He is also involved in the case of stealing and sold the mid day meals rice of the school as well as misused the

school development funds sanction from the government", Nazir Ahmed added.

He also stated that in connection with the controversies of headmaster, the guardian of the school put up a complaint to the Z.E.O, Jiribam.

The Zonal Education Officer promptly took up the action and transfer the teacher from Rashidpur Upper Primary School. However, the said teacher was again reinstated to the school with an order from Manipur Education Director on the 18th May, 2022.

The School Committee of Rashidpur Upper Primary School, Guardian and local club members hysterically appealed to the concern authority to transfer the alleged headmaster from the school at earliest, unless they will shut down the school.

Bharat Bandh on May 25 over demand of caste-based census

Agency
New Delhi, May 23:

The All India Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation (BAMCEF) has called for a Bharat Bandh on Wednesday (May 25) over the Centre not conducting a caste-based census for the Other Backward Classes (OBC), Neeraj Dhiman, the Saharanpur District President of the Bahujan Mukti Party (BMP) said.

In addition to the demand of the caste-based census, the federation is also protesting against the use of EVMS during elections and the issue of reservations for the SC/ST/OBC in private sectors. Apart from the BAMCEF, the federation has also garnered support of the Bahujan Mukti Party, whose acting state president DP Singh has urged the people to make it successful. Waman Meshram, the National convener of Bahujan Kranti

Morcha, has also extended his support to the Bharat Bandh on May 25.

According to the national convener of the Bhartiya Yuva Morcha, their demands include:

1. Stopping use of EVMS in elections
2. Caste-based census
3. SC/ST/OBC reservations in the private sector
4. Law guaranteeing MSP to farmers

contd. on page 4

Outreach Programme on Income Tax

IT News
Senapati, May 23:

The District Administration, Senapati in collaboration with the Additional Commissioner of Income Tax Range- Imphal organised an outreach programme today on Income Tax under the aegis of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and North Eastern Region Conferences at DRDA Conference Hall, Senapati.

Speaking on today's programme, Mahesh Chaudhari, IAS, Deputy Commissioner, Senapati said that the entrepre-

neurs of Senapati should come together and have a consultative meeting with the district administration once in a month to discuss about employment generation and various activities that can be taken up in the district. He also appealed the member present to have knowledge about the importance of income taxes for better co-ordination.

Laishram Ramcharan Singh, Income Tax Officer, Ward-1, Imphal presented the Importance of Paying Taxes and Ease of Tax Compliance through power point presentation and followed by interactive session.

The entrepreneurs of the Senapati district were also facilitated for their outstanding achievement.

The programme was attended by Moirangthem Joychandra Singh, IRS, Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax, Circle – Imphal, Mahesh Hiralal Chaudhari, IAS, Deputy Commissioner, Senapati, H.L. Jain, MCS, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Senapati, Income Tax Department officials, SDO's, DLO's, Contractors, Entrepreneurs, Traders and interested individuals and organisation.

SEED, Manipur organised a webinar on the day of "International Day for Biological Diversity 2022"

IT News
Imphal, May 23:

SEED (Society for Environmental Education and Development), Manipur organised a webinar as part of the celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity 2022 under the slogan "Building a shared future for all life" yesterday.

In the Webinar, Dr R.K. Imosana, Secretary, SEED, delivered introductory speech elaborating the importance of biodiversity and global initiatives towards its conservation. N. Ganesh, DFO, Forest Department, Govt of Manipur was the Chief Guest and Resource person for the webinar. He talked at length about Ac-

cess and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) elaborating on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT). He said that ABS can contribute to further research and development contributing to human well-being through the use of genetic resources in pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, agriculture and many other sectors. He also referred to key provisions of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and Rules, 2004, Procedural Provisions under the ABS Mechanism, Provisions of ABS relating to the State Biodiversity Boards, Exemption from the Act of biodiversity on normally traded commodities, Legal

Actions and Penalty Provisions.

The topic aroused a lot of interest in the local participants and generated good interaction. Prof Asha Gupta, President, SEED and Convenor, Manipur Shakti, in her Presidential speech, mentioned about the rich floristic components of NE-India, ecosystem services, significance of DIVERSITAS, an international programme initiated by UNESCO on biodiversity and Green India mission. She said that Convention on Biological Diversity provides the basic tenet for meeting the sustainable development goals as biodiversity conservation is the answer to several challenges like climate change,

sustainable livelihood, food, health and environmental security.

While talking of rich cultural diversity and traditions of Manipur, she mentioned about the Conservation roles of sacred groves of Manipur especially with reference to protection of important germplasm. She concluded that the cultural aspect of management of sacred grove is to be linked with the scientific management of the whole range of biodiversity. Dr. Daisy Angom, Vice President, Manipur Shakti, Dr. L. Usharani, Jt. Secretary, SEED and Santosh Nahakpam, Programme Officer, SEED worked towards a successful organisation of the webinar.

Physital banks: RBI says leave cash go digital

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked all commercial banks to provide the facility of withdrawing money without debit or credit cards at ATMs. State

Bank of India (SBI) is already giving this facility through its YONO app. RBI says that the absence of a card will reduce the incidents of fraud like card cloning and device tampering. In the new system, customers will be able to withdraw money using the UPI PIN. Banks will not be able to charge ATM fees for this service. This will be a great facility for all citizens and it will not be necessary to carry the cards with you. The trend of digital banking is increasing in India. More than 20 crore Indians are currently taking advantage of digital banking. RBI wants to increase the number. A large section of society has not yet gone digital. In order to make the benefits of digital banking services accessible to all, RBI has asked banks to open digital banking units. The Indian Banking Association says that digital banking units will start in 75 districts of the country in July.

In the digital banking units, all the work you do with internet banking i.e. net banking could be done. There will be no cash transaction here. Excluding cash transactions, these branches will deal in all other services like savings accounts, current accounts, FD, RD, internet banking, debit card, credit card, bank loan, BHIM QR codes, etc. Digital banking units will be opened even in the towns. Commercial banks had already given the option of net banking, but now they will be running digital bank units, called Physital, blending digital experiences with physical ones. By visiting these physital units, you will be able to understand your digital banking needs and also get help from the bank. Cashless payments have already been encouraged by UPI (Unified Payments Interface), which is making digital payments popular. In retail digital payments, the share of UPI has more than doubled in the last four years. In the financial year 2020-21, the share of UPI in digital payments made at shops and business establishments was 28 percent, which has increased to 42 percent this year i.e. 2021-22.

Meanwhile, the digital rupee is also making news. It will be like a banknote, except it will not require any ATM. Its users will be able to transact in the form of tokens online from their savings accounts through smartphone wallets. The Reserve Bank of India will guarantee a digital rupee. Since the central bank is directly involved in this project, people will not be at risk of any loss like it had been done in the case of commercial banks. In the last few years, customers were barred from withdrawing their money from 21 banks due to their own banking malpractices. However, the digital rupee also has some risks. Imagine if the digital rupee becomes more popular than banks will find it challenging to maintain small accounts because everyone can switch to electronic cash. Finance experts believe that there is no special need for a digital rupee in India right now, as there is enough cash in the country.

India's declaration of 'Opening to export wheat to South Asian neighbours despite ban': reflection of 'Neighbourhood First Policy'?

By: John Rozario

South Asian neighbors, and that the policy was only temporary.

According to media reports, BVR Subrahmanyam, India's Commerce Secretary, told that there was no wheat shortage in the country and that the decision was to keep domestic wheat and wheat flour prices under control.

He also stated that India is dedicated to addressing the food security of its neighbors and vulnerable nations.

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"We've left the window open for the sake of (our) neighbors." We've also left the door open for a significant number of vulnerable countries to make such requests if their governments do so... He went on to say, "The order is to divert trade to the needy, poor, and vulnerable countries," without mentioning any of them.

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Wheat prices hit a new high on Monday after India opted to halt exports due to a heat wave that hampered output. As the European market opened, the price increased to 435 Euros (\$453) per tonne.

Since Russia's February invasion of agricultural powerhouse Ukraine, which previously accounted for 12%

of global exports, global wheat prices have risen due to supply concerns.

After the hottest March on record, India, the world's second-largest wheat producer, announced a restriction on exports on Saturday. New Delhi expressed concern over the food security of its 1.4 billion people, citing reasons such as decreased supply and dramatically increased world prices.

To understand, in the case of Bangladesh (for example), following the commencement of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, India became Bangladesh's primary wheat importer. India, on the other hand, has stopped exporting wheat since Friday. The price of wheat in Bangladesh was already expensive, and this move has driven costs much higher.

Bangladesh's second most important crop is wheat. 30 million (3 crore) tonnes of rice and 7.5 million (75 lakh) tonnes of wheat are required annually in the country.

Bangladesh's imports from the two countries came to a halt near the end of February, following Russia's invasion on Ukraine. Traders in Bangladesh began importing wheat from India after that.

According to the website of India's commerce ministry, the country exported roughly 6.6 million (66 lakh) tonnes of wheat in the first 11 months of the fiscal year 2021-22. Bangladesh was the final destination for 57% of this wheat.

According to Bangladeshi media outlets, prices were spiralled as news broke out in Bangladesh. As wheat has been quite inexpensive. The news of increasing prices of wheat has left people bewildered.

Neighbouring countries including Bangladesh were saddened by the news that India has stopped exporting wheat. Bangladesh is the single largest importer of Indian wheat. Besides, wheat is the second most used food grain in Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi economists and importers have expressed concern after India announced a halt to wheat exports. Meanwhile, the government is holding one meeting after another on how to import wheat in an alternative way.

The country's wheat importers are in trouble as India announced a sudden halt to wheat exports last Friday. After the start of the war in Ukraine, Bangladeshi importers chose India to import more wheat than before.

However, neighboring countries of India see a glimmer of hope in an assurance from India's Commerce Secretary amid the sanctions. He said the sanctions would benefit neighboring and poorer countries.

It is the successful implementation of India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy'. India's neighbors should be thankful and grateful to India. It proves that India deserves to be regional responsible country. India's neighbours must recognize that 'India is a really South Asian leader because India deserves it. However, India should help its neighbours in such way in their needy moment. India should remind that it is the responsible country in the region. India's Neighbourhood First Policy, a key component of the country's foreign policy, emphasizes peaceful relations and collaborative synergistic co-development with its South Asian neighbors. Thus, India's declaration is timely for implementing its 'Neighbourhood first policy'.

The Modi administration recognizes the importance of cultivating and maintaining relationships with its neighbors. The Modi government has emphasized the

"Neighbourhood First" policy as a key component of Indian foreign policy since taking office in 2014. The strategy aims to foster friendly and cooperative connections with its South Asian neighbors in a variety of fields, including the economy, science and technology, research, and education.

Vaccine diplomacy has been viewed as a pragmatic response to the global epidemic and a means of enhancing the country's image as a responsible leader at both the regional and global levels. Notably, Indian diplomacy, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, resulted in India being recognized on the international scale as a harbinger of hope, delivering critical assistance to needy nations and people around the world. Vaccine diplomacy (Vaccine Maitri) was used by India as part of its Neighbourhood First strategy to assist numerous countries throughout the world including neighboring countries during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Operation Ganga was conducted to rescue Indian nationals stranded in war-torn Ukraine. So far, thousands of Indian nationals have been repatriated under the scheme. Significantly, the Indian government has rescued citizens of several other countries besides Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal through this operation.

It is India that stood by Bangladesh always. Even during the Ukraine crisis, India helped Bangladesh to evacuate Bangladeshi people. India's helping hand to Bangladesh is time-tested. A friend in need is a friend indeed. According to the media reports, 9 Bangladeshi nationals have been rescued from Ukraine recently under Operation Ganga. Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina has already thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for rescuing the citizens of Bangladesh.

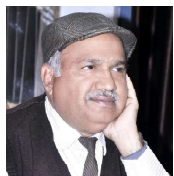
India's vital assistance to South Asian countries by prioritizing neighbouring countries in its pursuit of foreign policy objectives, particularly by offering assistance to Sri Lanka and Afghanistan during their crises, demonstrates India's commitment to its Neighbourhood First policy.

Now, declaration of 'Indian wheat export ban not to affect South Asian neighbours' is obviously a reflection of 'Neighbourhood First Policy'.

There are more reasons in the future to support the Neighbourhood First policy: First, persistent interaction with neighboring countries will aid in the creation of a friendly atmosphere in the region, which has long been a barrier to the region's stability, trust, and progress. Stability will allow India to pursue its foreign policy objectives while also allowing other South Asian countries to flourish and prosper. Second, by providing the essential assistance like Declaration of 'Indian wheat export ban not to affect South Asian neighbours', India can improve its position in the area and gain economic and strategic depth in relation to China. As a result, there is a stronger need for ongoing involvement with its neighbors. Third, for long-term cordiality and stability, people-to-people interactions and strong cultural affinities should be prioritized. Furthermore, quick delivery should be prioritized.

(The writer is based in Karnataka, India, and has completed a master's degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University in International Relations. He is a researcher, Bangladeshi studies, strategic and international affairs analyst. He can be reached at johnrozarioju@gmail.com)

Inflation and weather both heavy on Indian people



By: Vijay Garg

In India, both the heat and the inflation rate are increasing, with the worst effect on the poor and middle class. In contrast, the rich don't mind because their houses are air conditioned and have money in their pockets. According to the data of the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Government of India, there has been an unprecedented increase in the consumer price index based retail inflation since the year 2014 to 7.79 percent in the month of April. Similarly, according to the Meteorological Department, India's monthly and daily highest temperatures rose to 31.35 and 35.30 degrees centigrade respectively last month. This is a double and horrific hit on the poor, which will further weaken them. Maybe nature may still have mercy and give some relief to the poor from the havoc of the heat through the south-west monsoon, but it seems that for the last few years, the prices of common goods and inflation for the 500 million poor sections of India are rising. It has become a new trend every day.

According to the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the United Nations Development Program's Multi-Dimensional Index-2021, about 22.5 percent of the people in India are extremely poor and

live on less than \$2 a day and need some way of sustaining their existence. are striving. Further, the reality is that multidimensional poverty is more prevalent in their health, education and livelihood than this income based poverty shown in the data. Over the years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment and high inflation, a large number of Indians have fallen into the net of absolute poverty. Retail and wholesale inflation, measured on the basis of the Consumer Price Index, has risen steadily over the past few months. This year, the consumer price index reached 7.79 percent in January (6.01), in February (6.07), in March (6.95) and in April. At the same time, according to sources in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Wholesale Price Index, which was 13.68 percent in January, rose to 14.5 percent in March. Although the Russo-Ukraine war has fueled global inflation for some time now, India's pre-existing inflation driven by rising fuel and food prices and government efforts to stabilize prices has been in vain.

India's rural poor are the worst hit by inflation as the consumer food price in rural areas, which was 3.94 percent in March 2021, has gone up to 7.66 percent in April 2022. If we talk about food items in the Consumer Price Index, the increase in the price of edible oil and ghee was 24.7 percent, fuel oil, light transport and communication sector grew by 11 percent. Although the price of crude oil rose to \$110 a barrel in the international market, but due to the taxation of 55 percent on petrol and 50 percent on diesel by the central and state governments on the fuel in India, the domestic prices are very high. The main reason behind higher cost of production and selling price of the commodity

is high food and fuel inflation rate, which further leads to increase in wholesale inflation.

The core inflation rate, which does not include the daily fluctuations in the price of food and fuel, has crossed the official limit and monetary policies may fail to deliver quick results in these situations. Further, monetary policies by themselves are not a guarantee to contain retail inflation unless the government reduces the prices of everyday commodities by cutting its share in fuel tax on the one hand and bringing down the price of food items through imports on the other. In fact, monetary policy can only be successful in bringing down the wholesale price index if economic activity does not result in a reduction in retail inflation. The hike in the repo rate from 4 percent to 4.4 percent by the Reserve Bank, instead of reducing the retail price, will result in a reduction in economic activity as a result of increase in the interest rate of loans taken from banks. An increase in the repo rate will slow down India's economic growth.

World Bank President David Malpass, in his speech titled 'Challenge to Progress, Security and Sustainability', said: 'Inflation continues to rise, reducing the real income of households around the world, especially the poor. Every one percent increase in food prices pushes a further 10 million people into extreme poverty. The rich can bear the sudden price hike in food items but the poor cannot. This is expected to increase malnutrition and its irreparable damage will be most likely to the health of children.'

India's nearly 500 million people are poor from socially and economically weaker sections in rural areas and living in urban slums, rising inflation rate will further drive them into extreme poverty. Declining wages, the COVID-19 pandemic, high rural unemployment rates, income inequality and high food inflation will have far-reaching adverse ef-

fects on poverty alleviation efforts in India. The poor, who are still in the process of recovering from the devastating impact of COVID-19, will be further adversely impacted by inflation. The average price of diesel and petrol has increased by Rs 53 and Rs 66 respectively in the year 2015 to Rs 96 and 110 respectively in May 2022, while the price of domestic gas cylinder is Rs 600 to Rs 1000, the rate of edible oil is Rs 125. 200, then 50 percent increase in the prices of pulses, vegetables, fruits, milk, eggs, fish, meat and other commodities has made the livelihood of the common man miserable. However, according to the Reserve Bank of India report, the average rural laborer's daily wage during this period has increased from Rs 224 in 2015 to Rs 286 in 2020.

In the seven years between 2015 and 2022, the prices of essential commodities have increased by 50 percent, while the real income rate has increased by only 22 percent. These figures show that inflation has hit the incomes of the poor and has made life difficult for the poor as food and drink constitute a major part of their total expenditure. The overall fate of this will be that the income of the poor will decrease and he will also have to take loans to maintain a minimum lifestyle. According to the NSSO report, in the last few years, people in rural India have had to cut their food expenses drastically. The impact of rising inflation going forward will continue to affect the health and nutritional quality of children, women and the poor as their daily caloric needs will not be met. Therefore, sensitive government intervention is necessary to curb food and fuel inflation, increase employment in rural areas, reduce income inequality, help the poor, strengthen public distribution of essential commodities and increase the average daily wage. These policy measures can significantly reduce the cost of living and the impact of inflation on the poor.

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PM Narendra Modi congratulates ASHA workers honoured by WHO, hails them for 'ensuring a healthy India'

Agency
New Delhi, May 23:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday congratulated all ASHA workers for bagging World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General's Global Health Leaders' Award, saying they are at the "forefront of ensuring a healthy India".

PM Modi, who is in Japan's Tokyo for a two-day visit to attend the Quad summit, took to Twitter to applaud the one million all-women ASHA workforce that has been honoured by the WHO. "Delighted that the entire team of ASHA workers have been conferred the WHO Director-

General's Global Health Leaders' Award. Congratulations to all ASHA workers. They are at the forefront of ensuring a healthy India. Their dedication and determination is admirable," the prime minister tweeted.

India's one million all-women ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers were honoured by the WHO on Sunday for their 'crucial role' in providing direct access to primary healthcare facilities in rural areas during the coronavirus pandemic in the country.

"The Accredited Social Health Activist Workers (ASHA) are more than 1 mil-

lion female volunteers in #India, honored for their crucial role in linking the community with the health system and ensuring that those living in rural poverty can access primary health care services," the WHO tweeted.

ASHA (which means hope in Hindi) volunteers are the Indian government's affiliated health workers who are the first point of contact in rural India.

"These health workers provide maternal care and immunization for children against vaccine-preventable diseases; community health care; treatment for hypertension and tuberculosis and core areas of health promotion

for nutrition, sanitation and healthy living," the healthcare body said in another tweet.

The six awards to recognise outstanding contributions to advancing global health, demonstrated leadership and commitment to regional health issues were announced by WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Sunday.

Tedros Tedros decides the awardees for the WHO Director-General's Global Health Leaders Awards.

Among the other notable awardees were the team of polio vaccination workers from Afghanistan, who were killed by armed gunmen in February this year.

Assam floods kill 24, affect 7.19 lakh; rescue, relief operations continue despite marginal improvement in situation



Agency
Guwahati, May 23:

Six more individuals succumbed to floods in Assam on May 23, taking its overall death toll to 24. The situation across the northeastern state, however, has seen a marginal improvement over the weekend.

According to Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) officials, the new deaths on Sunday were reported from Nagaon (4), Cachar and Hojai districts. And of the 24 total deaths, 19 occurred due to floods and five lost their lives in different landslide events.

Further, more than 7.19 lakh people have been affected in 2,095 villages from 22 of the state's 34 districts. Of these 7,19,425, some 1,41,050 happen to be children.

On a district level, some 3,45,838 individuals have been impacted in the Nagaon district alone, followed by 2,29,275 people in Cachar, 58,393 in Hojai, 38,538 in Morigaon, 28,001 in Darrang district and 16,382 in Karimganj district.

The floods have also caused damage to over 95,473 hectares of crops.

Rescue and relief operations continue

Meanwhile, the Army, the National Disaster Response Force, the State Disaster Response Force, the Assam Rifles and the district adminis-

trations continue to work round the clock to rescue stranded people and provide relief to the marooned groups.

Thus far, a total of 24,749 stranded people have been evacuated with the help of disaster response forces and volunteers. In all, 269 relief camps and 152 relief distribution centres have been opened in all the affected areas, with the former housing close to 91,518 people at present.

Several Ministers, including Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Jogen Mohan, Health Minister Keshab Mahanta, Water Resources Minister Pijush Hazarika, and Environment and Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya, are camping in the flood-ravaged areas to supervise the rescue and relief operations.

The UNICEF has also deployed 7 teams of technical specialists and consultants to support the DDMA's of Cachar, Hojai, Darrang, Biswanath, Nagaon, Morigaon and Dima Hasao in monitoring the flood relief camps in accordance with the relief camp management SOPs, assessing ground situation and needs, and supporting relevant stakeholders in strengthening the response activities.

Up to 2,000 litres of diesel and 12 megatonnes (MT) of food items have also been transported via air from Jorhat to three remote places Laisong,

Khepre and Mazidisa of the Dima Hasao district on Sunday, the ASDMA release added.

The situation in the hill section of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) in the Dima Hasao district remained serious on Sunday, as intermittent rain continued to batter the area. The Lumding-Badarpur single line railway route, which connects Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur and the southern part of Assam to the rest of the country, remains affected.

According to NFR's Chief Public Relations Officer, Subyashachi De, train services in the Lumding Division have either been cancelled or partially cancelled and short terminated or short originated.

The rainfall activity across Northeast India went down in terms of intensity on Sunday, effectively bringing some much-needed respite, especially in the flood-affected areas.

For Monday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted fairly widespread to widespread showers of light to moderate intensity across Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim, with the latter two also likely to experience isolated heavy rains.

However, the overall rainfall intensity across the region is expected to decrease even further on Tuesday.

India records 2,022 new Covid cases, 46 deaths in last 24 hours

Agency
New Delhi, May 23:

India on Monday registered nine per cent fewer cases than Sunday's tally, registering 2,022 new infections, the ministry of health data revealed. The country reported 46 new deaths due to the contagious virus.

With the latest tally, the total number of Covid-19 cases

in the country stand at 4,31,38,393. The total death count in India is 5,24,459. India on Sunday had reported 2,226 infections while 65 people had succumbed to the virus.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 0.69 per cent and the weekly positivity rate at 0.49 per cent, according to the ministry.

The number of people who

have recuperated from the disease surged to 4,25,99,102, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.22 per cent.

The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive has exceeded 192.38 crore.

The dip in infections comes amid the The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) confirm-

ing the omicron subvariants of BA.4 and BA.5 of the coronavirus in the country, the first being reported in Tamil Nadu and the other in Telangana.

Last week, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control had designated these two variants and had expressed concerns that they could fuel surge in infections.

Defence Minister Takes Stock of Defence Production Activities in Nagpur

By Raju Vernekar
Mumbai, May 23:

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh interacted with different stakeholders and urged them to boost the production of defence equipment indigenously as part of "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India) in Nagpur in Maharashtra on Sunday.

On arrival he was received by Air Marshal Shashiker Chaudhary, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C) Maintenance Command of the Indian Air Force, and other dignitaries from Civil and military departments.

During the meeting with industry leaders and Defence officials, Singh was briefed about the various activities undertaken by Defence establishments, including Army, IAF, and Defence Public Sector Undertakings in and around Nagpur.

Singh in his address advised all stakeholders to focus on "Atma Nirbhar" in defence technology while keeping pace with technology outside. He also asked Commanders to follow the correct maintenance and operational practices with the safety of personnel in mind.

Nagpur is gradually emerging as a hub for defence industries. In addition to larger players, there are small and mid-sized industries catering to the sector as ancillaries. Following the corporatization of the ordnance factories, Nagpur is also a headquarter for "Yantra India Limited", the public sector undertaking which manufactures shells and other hard-



Air Marshal Shashiker Chaudhary, AOC-in-C, Maintenance Command, and others receiving Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at Nagpur airport.

ware. Besides, there are Aerospace companies and Solar Group, India's largest private ammunition manufacturer located in Nagpur. The Vidarbha Defence Hub & Industrial Cluster (VDHIC) is another upcoming ambitious project located at Mihan in Nagpur.

Executive Development Programme at NADP

In another development, the National Academy of Defence Production (NADP) located at Ambajhari on the outskirts of Nagpur city, completed the 4-week 'Executive Development Programme for Defence Industries' on Saturday.

Thirty-Five participants from several defence industries like Ordnance Factories, Mazagon Dock & Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL), Mumbai, Tata Advanced Systems Ltd, Mihan, Nagpur participated in

the program. Eminent and renowned faculty members were drawn from the Ministry of Defence, Govt. of India, Ordnance Factories, PSUs, and premier academic institutions like IITs and IIMs, Wing Commander Ratnakar Singh said.

D.C. Srivastava, Indian Ordnance Factories Service (IOFS), General Manager, NADP addressed the valedictory function and gave away certificates to the participating officers.

The program was completed in hybrid mode for middle-management level Executives in Indian defence industries. This course drew on cutting-edge research, functional experience in management, and the latest advancements in modern technology to impart a profound understanding of the modern-day defence manufacturing industry and defence business.

The program was aimed at expanding the business acumen of participants in key areas such as defence acquisition, marketing, and exports, innovation in defence, emerging technologies, operational and financial aspects of management in defence industries.

Seminar on modern technologies for quality inspection

In the meanwhile, a seminar on the use of modern technologies and processes for quality inspections and shop-floor repairs was organized by Naval Dockyard (Mumbai) on Friday.

The seminar saw a live demonstration of new technologies like drone-based inspections, laser surface cleaners, laser-based aggregate alignment, and ceramic liquid insulators that aim to optimize time, cost, and resources and provide highly accurate and digitized results.

Assam Rifles observes Anti Terrorism Day



IT News
Imphal, May 23:

Chassad Battalion under the aegis of IGAR(South) observed National Anti-Terrorism Day by conducting an awareness programme at Aishi village, Kamjong district.

The awareness programme was organised for youths and

locals of Aishi, Kultuk and Molvailup villages. Over 65 students, youths and locals incl women and children attended the event.

As part of the lecture, the audience were given insight on the effects of terrorism and violence on people, society and Nation as a whole. The locals were also reminded of the sacrifices made by thou-

sands of soldiers who have fought against terrorism.

The locals took a pledge to have abiding faith in the country's tradition of peace, non-violence and oppose all forms of terrorism and violence. The lecture was followed by an interactive session during which various queries of the locals were answered.

Prime Minister Chairs Business Roundtable in Tokyo

PIB
New Delhi, May 23:

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi chaired a roundtable with Japanese business leaders on 23 May 2022 in Tokyo.

Top executives and CEOs of 34 Japanese companies participated in the event. Majority of these companies have investments and operations in India. The companies represented diverse sectors including automobiles, electronics, semiconductors, steel, technology, trading and

banking & finance. Key business bodies and organizations from India and Japan such as Keidanren, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), Japan-India Business Consultative Committee (JIBCC) and Invest India also participated in the event.

Stressing that India and Japan are natural partners, Prime Minister lauded the business community as brand ambassadors of the immense

potential of India-Japan ties. Prime Minister said that during the visit of Prime Minister Kishida to India in March 2022, both countries had set an ambitious target of investment of Japanese Yen 5 trillion over the next 5 years. Prime Minister highlighted recent developments in economic ties, such as India-Japan Industrial Competitiveness Partnership (IJCIP) and Clean Energy Partnership, among others. He talked about initiatives such as National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), Production Linked In-

centive (PLI) scheme, and semiconductor policy and highlighted the robust startup ecosystem of India.

Prime Minister noted that despite the slowdown in global FDI, India has attracted record FDI of USD 84 billion in the previous financial year. He termed this a vote of confidence of India's economic potential. He invited greater participation by Japanese companies in India and proposed celebrating Japan's contribution to India's development journey in the form of a 'Japan Week'.

India-Japan key pillars of stable, secure Indo-Pacific region: Modi op-ed

Agency
Tokyo, May 23:

India and Japan are key pillars of a stable and secure Indo-Pacific region and their partnership is for peace, stability and prosperity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in an op-ed published in a leading Japanese language newspaper on Monday.

Penned an op-ed on the vibrant relations between India and Japan, Prime Minister Modi, who is in Japan on a two-day visit to attend a summit of the Quad leaders, said on Twitter.

Ours is a partnership for peace, stability and prosperity. I trace the journey of our special friendship which completes 70 glorious years. @Yomiuri Online, he said in a tweet.

Closer India-Japan cooperation is vital in the post-COVID world, Modi said.

Our nations are firmly committed to democratic values. Together, we are key pillars of a stable and secure Indo-Pacific region. I am equally glad



that we are working closely in various multilateral forums as well, he said in another tweet.

I have had the opportunity of regularly interacting with the Japanese people since my days as Gujarat CM, Modi said.

Japan's developmental strides have always been admirable, he said, adding that Japan is partnering with India in key sectors including infrastructure, technology, innovation, start-ups and more.

The op-ed published in the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper on Monday.

Prime Minister Modi is vis-

iting Tokyo at the invitation of his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida.

He will attend the summit of the Quad leaders which is aimed at further bolstering cooperation among the member nations of the influential grouping and discussing developments in the strategic Indo-Pacific region.

Besides Modi, the Quad summit in Tokyo on May 24 will be attended by US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Australian prime minister-elect Anthony Albanese.

The Quad or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue comprises India, the US, Japan and Australia.

Modi will hold separate bilateral meetings with Biden, Kishida and Albanese on the sidelines of the summit.

He had hosted Kishida for the 14th India-Japan Annual Summit in March 2022.

He said economic cooperation between India and Japan is an important aspect of their Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

Modi also said that he is looking forward to a bilateral meeting with newly-elected Australian Prime Minister Albanese during which the multifaceted cooperation between the two countries under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and regional and global issues of mutual interest will be discussed.

Noting that Japan is home to nearly 40,000 members of the Indian diaspora, who are an important anchor in India's relations with Japan, Modi said he looks forward to interacting with them.

Row between NSCN (IM) & Jamir will do more harm than good to Nagas: Ao Senden

Courtesy: NE Now
Dimapur, May 23:

The Ao Senden, the apex body of the Ao Naga tribe, on Sunday said the re-emergence of war of words between the NSCN (IM) and former Nagaland chief minister Dr SC Jamir in recent days is not healthy and will do more harm than good to the Nagas.

In a release, Ao Senden president Chubawati Longchar and general secretary Imtipokym said it will be more prudent on the part of all concerned to think wisely before going to the media with allegations and counter-allegations as it is only going to weaken the Naga case before the world, and at the same time create more division and discord among the Nagas.

Saying that it is well aware of the current Naga political predicament, the release said there is already too much animosity, distrust and cynicism weighing down the Naga society today. It said the blame game is not going to win us anything but weaken the Naga cause.

The Ao Senden also reiterated its earlier stand that the "competencies" that are being negotiated with the government of India on the basis of the Framework Agreement signed with the NSCN (IM) be made public



without any further delay.

"The Naga people are fatigued by the conflict and are growing more and more impatient with each passing day. Keeping the 'competencies' shrouded in secrecy is perhaps the reason why Naga people are losing faith in the ongoing negotiations," organisation said.

Jamir, at a meeting in Mokokchung on May 20, said neither the Framework Agreement nor the Agreed Position, signed with the working committee of the seven Naga National Political Groups, had any mention of Naga sovereignty, integration, flag and constitution.

He was reportedly called to Delhi by the government of India recently to discuss the Naga issue. He met Prime

Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah and put forth his views on the issue.

The NSCN (IM) appealed to the central government to avoid hobnobbing with Jamir, saying he no longer represented the Naga people.

It said Jamir had proved himself as a "cunning, scheming and devious man" by putting himself at the centre of the "show" in the past and was now desperately attempting to place himself in the same role that was rejected and condemned by the Naga people after he messed up with the Naga issue by bringing the 16-Point Agreement without consulting the stakeholders (national workers) who really mattered at that particular point of time.

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Bharat Bandh on May 25.....

5. Non implementation of NRC/CAA/NPR
6. Resumption of the old pension scheme
7. Separate electorates in OBC reservation in

- Panchayat elections in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh in the final in Dhaka.
8. No displacement of tribal people under the garb of environmental protection
9. Not making vaccination compulsory.

10. Protection against labour laws that were secretly made against workers during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Sports

Badminton Association of India awards cash prizes to Thomas Cup-winning contingent

IT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 23:

The Badminton Association of India (BAI) handed a cash prize to the triumphant Indian contingent from the Thomas Cup upon their arrival in the country, in a city hotel in New Delhi.

BAI President Himanta Biswa Sarma congratulated the Indian team on this historic achievement as BAI General Secretary Sanjay Mishra alongside other BAI officials and chief national coach Pullela Gopichand were present on the occasion. BAI also handed a cash prize of INR one crore to the Indian team and INR 20 lakh to the support staff.

Indian team clinched the Thomas Cup title for the first time in 73-year history of the world's most prestigious badminton men's team championship by thrashing 14-time champions Indonesia in Bangkok.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had invited the Indian contingent to his residence where he met all the players. "#ThomasUberCup2022



team had the honour of meeting Hon. PM Sh. @narendramodi at his residence, where they had a memorable time. Team was accompanied by Dronacharya Awardees #PullelaGopichand @vimalakumar u doubles coach @mathiasboe along with other coaches & support staff," BAI had tweeted.

Modi also shared a video from his interaction with the players with a tweet that read, "Interacted with our badminton champions, who shared their experiences from the Tho-

mas Cup and Uber Cup. The players talked about different aspects of their game, life beyond badminton and more. India is proud of their accomplishments."

On their way to the final, India defeated powerhouses in Malaysia and Denmark. The final was a thriller where Lakshya Sen gave India a 1-0 lead after which the doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty saved four match point before Kidambi Srikanth won the second

singles game to give India a sensation 3-0 win.

Sen gifted the PM Almor's famous 'bal mithai' after he expressed his interest about the sweets. "The PM asked for Almor's bal mithai and I got it for him. It is touching that he remembers small things about players," Sen said. We feel very motivated whenever you meet us, interact with us. I hope I keep winning medals for India, keep meeting you, and keep getting bal mithai for you," the youngster said while recalling his interaction.

Indian team needs to handle pressure in Asia Cup hockey opener against Pakistan today

Agency
Jakarta, May 23:

A second-string Indian men's hockey team will have to tactfully deal with the pressure when it opens its title defence against arch-rivals Pakistan in the Asia Cup here on Monday.

While Pakistan has fielded quite a few new faces in the tournament, India will be represented by its 'A' team under the leadership of veteran Birendra Lakra, who came out of retirement after the Tokyo Olympics.

For India, the Asia Cup provides a platform to test its bench strength ahead of a busy season, that includes the Birmingham Commonwealth Games and the FIH World Cup next year for which the Tokyo Olympic medallists have already qualified as the host nation.

Pakistan, on the other hand, is looking at the tournament to make the cut for the 2023 World Cup in Bhubaneswar. The top three teams in Asia will qualify directly for the January show-

piece.

Both India and Pakistan have won the Asia Cup thrice each.

India had won the last edition in 2017 by beating Malaysia in the final in Dhaka.

India's 20-member squad, to be coached by former captain Sardar Singh, was originally supposed to be led by Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Rupinder Pal Singh, who also came out of retirement but a wrist injury ruled him out of the tournament.

The Indian squad includes another veteran in SV Sunil, who too returned from retirement and is regarded as a livewire on the field.

Sunil, who had missed the Tokyo Olympics squad due to an injury, will serve as Lakra's deputy.

The Indian team has as many as 10 players who are set to make their senior India debuts, including Yashdeep Siwach, Abhishek Lakra, Manjeet, Vishnukant Singh and Uttam Singh. They were all part of the junior World Cup.

Besides, the side also has new players like Mareeswaren Sakthivel, Sheshe Gowda BM, Pawan Rajbhar, Abharan Sudev and S Karthi and it remains to be seen how Sardar gets the best out of these youngsters.

For India, Simranjeet Singh, who was part of the Tokyo Olympics squad, will make a comeback in the forwardline after a long injury lay-off.

But the onus would be on the handful of seniors to guide the youngsters in the clash.

With both the teams having youngsters, it remains to be seen how the players control their emotions and tempers on the turf.

After Pakistan, India will play Japan on Tuesday in the second Pool Amatch and hosts Indonesia on May 26.

Malaysia, Korea, Oman and Bangladesh are clubbed in Pool B.

In the other games on the opening day, Malaysia will play Oman and South Korea will take on Bangladesh in Pool B, while Japan will face Indonesia in Pool A.