

Saubhagaya Scam: *Imphal Times* stands with its report; MSPDCL should tender apology for misleading people

IT Desk
Imphal, Oct 25:

Imphal Times still stands with its news report published on its October 21, 2022 issue in connection with the swindling of over Rs. 200 crores from the Saubhagaya scheme by the officials of the Manipur State Power Distribution Company Limited (MSPDCL). Since the time when reporter of Imphal Times started seeking information regarding the implementation of the Saubhagaya Scheme, the officials particularly the managing Director and the Executive Director of MSPDCL had tried to settle the matter using all means through the Editor of this newspaper. It took over 3 hearings at the Manipur Information Commission in procuring documents related to the implementation of the Saubhagaya Scheme in Manipur. Till now the MSPDCL is not providing some more important documents and another hearing is pending with the

Manipur Information Commission. It is not the **Imphal Times** that should clarify the report but it is rather the MSPDCL Managing Director to clarify his press clarification broadcasted at local TV channel for confusing and misleading the **Imphal Times** news report that were based on documents provided by the MSPDCL through the MIC.

In the press conference held yesterday at the office of the MSPDCL, Managing Director said that the project sanction cost for the scheme is Rs. 181.05 crore only and the project closure approval is Rs. 192.70 crore. If his statement stands officially correct then why the MSPDCL is awarding LOA / work orders to 4 (four) firms for implementing the schemes under SAUBHAGAYA at 9 districts of Manipur.

As mentioned in the earlier report a total of Rs. 203,86,62,219/- have been awarded to the four firms for implementation of the project on March 8, 2019.

However, the LOA for the Senapati District was amended on March 3, 2019 and the amount for implementation of the project for Senapati District was reduced to Rs. 40,21,74,033/-. Earlier, the total amount for the district was Rs. 42,87,16,187/-. After amendment of this LOA, total amount awarded to the four firms is Rs. 201,21,20,069/-. Which means it is still over Rs. 200 crores. All the work orders/ LOA for each district allotted to the four firms are procured from the MSPDCL through the Manipur Information Commission by the **Imphal Times** reporters. If the total amount sanction for the implementation of SAUBHAGAYA schemes in nine districts of Manipur is just Rs. 181.05 crore and the project closure approval is Rs. 192.70 crore then at what capacity the MSPDCL has been awarding work cost over Rs. 200 crores to the four firms.

In connection with the none disclosure of the Annexure-A of the LOA, the Managing Director of

the MSPDCL stated that the Annexure - A of the LOA was provided to the RTI appellant on 11/10/2021 in front of the office chamber of the State Chief Information Commissioner. He also stated that – “*if any document is missing, it may be intimidated to MSPDCL as there might be chances of document missing due to bonafide mistake...*”. When the LOA of the nine districts have been received from the MSPDCL officials, it was stated that Annexure -A has been attached, but on proper verification it was not found. So far the MSPDCL have not provided the so called Annexure-A. The one that the MD of the MSPDCL had stated was not the Annexure-A but a description of implementation of Saubhagaya. Nothing such as Annexure-A has been mention. Besides, what does the Managing Director means when he said that “there might be chances of document missing due to bonafide mistake”. Does the authority of the MSPDCL

not qualified enough for keeping or maintaining the documents. Or is it intentional to show that the MSPDCL have no respect for the RTI Act and the Manipur Information Commission. It is however true that Annexure-A for Senapati district only has been attached after amendment.

Regarding the missing of 261 poles, Imphal Times only reported as per documents furnished by the MSPDCL. Regarding invoice for supporting the transport challan with regards to Weasel Conductor and AB Cable, the MSPDCL provides no information to the RTI Appellant even as he had stated that all documents are with the MSPDCL.

In connection with the clarification on the records at Measurement Book (MB), documents provided by them showed many payments being done without passing at the MB, which is mandatory as per CPWD manuals. However it is alright doing payment

through Public Finance Management System (PFMS). However, how a corporate like MSPDCL could paid bill without reflecting it in the MB.

In another clarification, the MD, Subhachandra had given a self contradictory statement saying that no Bill amount has been neither claimed nor withdrawn by the firm implementing for Thoubal district. The bill amount which the Imphal had reported to have been awarded for Thoubal district was Rs. 11,53,07,738/-.

However, he also stated that the firm M/S Shyama Power India Limited had submitted bills amounting to Rs. 10,27,29,117/- and a sum of Rs. 9,51,58,087/- has been paid. That means MD of MSPDCL Subhachandra has been misleading the people as almost near amount of the bill has been withdrawn.

Imphal Times have also procured an approved survey report for the implementation of Saubhagaya scheme in Thoubal district. GPS coordinates have been

given and there are evidences of one MSPDCL officer complaining the Principal Secretary of the government of Manipur over non implementation of works under Saubhagaya at some villages. Above this Imphal Times staffs have visited and inspected the site where poles and transformers have been installed as per the GPS coordinates. Imphal Times is ready to provide photo documentary evidences of the site, the MSPDCL stated to have been implemented.

Before Imphal Times files the report about swindling of over Rs. 200 crore, the ED had sent a person known to the editor of Imphal Times along with a suspicious bag which was later confirmed to have contain some big amount of money. The ED and MD had earlier met the Editor of this newspaper at the MSPDCL office. Some video records and audio records of the conversation are still with the Editor. Those will also be exposed at appropriate time.

Cyclone Sitrang: 2 dead in Ukhrul, several homes damaged in Noney

IT News
Noney, Oct 25:

Along with Tripura, Manipur, especially the Noney district, has also faced the brunt of Cyclone Sitrang.

At least 20 households in the region were destroyed, and several villages, including Puichi (Oktan) and Pungmon (Chingchen) villages in the Haochoing subdivision, suffered extensive devastation.

As per locals, the cyclonic storm has ripped out rooftops of homes and granaries, causing huge inconveniences to the residents.

Moreover, the locals also reported extensive damage to standing crops, including agricultural and horticulture



crops due to heavy rainfall and gusty winds.

Two women were killed after they were reportedly washed away while returning



from paddy fields on Monday evening in the Ukhrul district.

The incident happened at around 4:50 pm when the two



women from Poi village were carried away while crossing the Tholiru stream near Challou river due to incessant rainfall.

WhatsApp services restored after hours of outage in India, several parts of globe

Agency
New Delhi, Oct 25:

A little past noon Tuesday, several WhatsApp users from India and several parts of the world reported issues with sending or receiving messages on the platform. The platform started running later in the day after several hours of the outage.

Meta Platforms, the parent company of WhatsApp, had issued a brief statement on the outage, saying that the company was trying to restore services.

“We’re aware that some people are currently having trouble sending messages and we’re working to restore WhatsApp for everyone as

quickly as possible,” a spokesperson for Meta Platforms said.

Several WhatsApp users had reported that texts seemed to be stuck at the loading wheel, and that WhatsApp web was not able to detect QR codes, among other issues.

According to *DownDetector*, a platform which tracks outages, the problem seemed to exist worldwide, with users in the US, parts of Europe, Canada and some parts of Asia like Malaysia, Japan and the Philippines, reporting issues with WhatsApp.

DownDetector also noted that close to 69 per cent people were facing the outage and more than 30,000 users from

several parts of India reported that they were unable to use WhatsApp. Around 25 per cent WhatsApp users also said they were having server issues.

DownDetector usually reports incidents “when the number of problem reports is significantly higher than the typical volume for that time of day”, according to its website.

Other social media platforms owned by Meta such as Instagram and Facebook, however, appeared to be functioning normally.

Soon after users reported about the WhatsApp outage, the hashtag #whatsappdown began trending on Twitter, with more than 1.09 lakh tweets.

Rishi Sunak appointed as Britain's first Indian-origin Prime Minister by King Charles III

Agency
London, Oct 25:

Rishi Sunak on Tuesday scripted history when he was appointed by King Charles III as Britain's first Indian-origin Prime Minister after being elected unopposed as the new leader of the governing Conservative Party on Diwali.

The 42-year-old former Chancellor of Exchequer, a devout Hindu, is the youngest British prime minister in 210 years. He is also the first Hindu Prime Minister of Indian heritage in the UK.



In his first address as Tory leader soon after the result was declared on Monday, Sunak said his priority would be to bring the country together and said he was “humbled and honoured” to get the “greatest privilege” of his life to give back to the country. “I owe so much”.

“The UK is a great country, but there is no doubt we face a profound economic challenge,” said Sunak, with reference to the economic turmoil he is inheriting following former prime minister Liz Truss's disastrous tax-cutting mini-budget last month.

contd. on page 4

Ukhrul Autumn Festival cancelled due to Cyclone Sitrang

IT News
Ukhrul, Oct 25:

The week-long first edition of the Northeast Autumn Festival (NEAF) 2022 in Manipur's Ukhrul district has been cancelled following Cyclone Sitrang wreaking havoc across the state.

The festival, which began on October 20 at Jorcheng, Lunghar village, was scheduled to conclude on October 26 (Wednesday).

Chiko Adventures, the organisers, said, “because

of unforeseen natural calamity ‘Cyclone Sitrang’ we have to cancel the last two days’ event,” adding that they tried their best to continue the festival.

The festival organisers also expressed their sadness at how the cyclone not just ended the festival, but also denied locals a chance to make some money. “We share this burden with the families who lost their loved ones, livelihood, crops and other resources,” said the organisers.

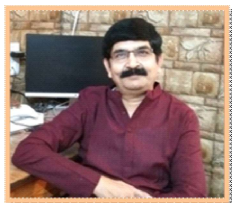
“We stand with the fami-

lies of the two missing persons in Poi village who were washed away by the torrent rain at Tholiru river. This is hard for all of us and we share the sorrow with the families,” it added.

The NEAF organisers said they were grateful to those who supported them, and hope to return again.

The NEAF was organised by Chiko Adventures and supported by the Manipur Tourism Department to attract tourists and unlock high-quality tourism in the northeast region.

Bhai Dooj - A brother is a friend given by Nature



By: Vinod Chandrashekhar Dixit

After Diwali, a few festivals are celebrated to mark the week of festivities and joy. They differ from region to region around the country. All festivals have their own historical benefits and Bhai Dooj is also celebrated on a special day. Bhai Dooj, one of the most awaited festivals of sisters. They eagerly wait for two occasions, one is Raksha Bandhan and the other one is Bhai Dooj. It is a festival of love, protection, and to strengthen the bondage of a brother and sister. Bhai Dooj or Bhaiya Dooj is a Hindu festival celebrating the unconditional love bond between a brother and a sister. Bhai Dooj defines the eternal love between siblings, dedicated to strengthening the bond between them. The occasion falls on the last day of the five day long celebrations of Diwali or Tihar festival. It is also celebrated as "Yama Dwititya" in the southern parts of India. There is a unique understanding between a brother and a sister. They are the best friends of each other, protectors of each other, admirers of each other, secret sharers of each other and has unconditional love for each other. The festival of Bhai Dooj has a literal meaning attached to it. 'Bhai' means brother and 'Dooj' means the second day after the new moon which is a day of celebration. The correct muhurat is very necessary for celebrating any occasion because it gives an accurate time for a special ceremony.

Bhai Dooj is celebrated in different parts of the country with different rituals and has various folklores associated with it. There are few Hindu mythological based stories related to the origin of this auspicious day. According to the one legend, Lord Krishna visited his sister, Subhadra after killing demon Narkasur. Her sister gave a warm welcome to him and made the occasion really special through flowers and sweets. Subhadra also applied the ceremonial "tilak" on the forehead of her brother, Krishna and hence the festival of "Bhai Dooj" was born from there.

Another legend revolves around the story of Yama, the God of Death and his sister Yamuna. It is believed that he met his beloved sister on Dwititya, the second day after the new moon and thus the occasion began to be celebrated as "Yamadwitheya" or "Yamadwitiya" across the country from that day.

On this day, the rituals comprise of bathing in the Yamuna and worshipping Yamaraja. Also, as per tradition, a brother visits the house of his sister and eats food cooked and served by her. On this day, the entire ceremony revolves around the siblings vowing to protect each other from all kinds of evil. In some parts of the country, the sister cooks a delicious meal for her brother and gets sweets for him as well. They also perform 'aarti' for them and place a 'tika' on their brother's forehead, to ward off evil and bless them with countless happiness. There are different festivals celebrated in India and each of them has its own importance. Some of them are for celebrating and some for strengthening the bonds.

Dissecting Assam NRC for better understanding

By: Nava Thakuria



Participating in a debate on satellite television or digital channels needs some home works to make the deliberations short and clear. Unless you face an arrogant anchor and unruly participants, the experience in talk shows normally emerges as an intriguing one. It happened to me, as I had recently participated in a digital media discussion on the pertinent issue of National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, where the prime guest was none other than the immediate past State NRC coordinator Hitesh Dev Sharma. The talk show host Dikshit Sharma put the questions in a clever way so that the issue comes alive and my part was just to interpret Dev Sharma's version for clarity to the valued audience of Time8.

Dev Sharma, recently retired as an Indian Administrative Services officer, lodged complaint against his predecessor Prateek Hajela, another IAS officer- presently in deputation to Madhya Pradesh, accusing him and the system integrator (Wipro Limited) of engaging in corruption and money laundering while updating the 1951 NRC in Assam. He clarified that the supplementary NRC list, which was released on 31 August 2019 excluding 19,06,657 applicants due to lack of papers, was asserted by Hajela as the final one (but the same is yet to be notified by Registrar General of India). As Hajela's three-year deputation term is almost completed, he is scheduled to return back to Assam by this year.

The issue of base year for NRC update in Assam also came to the discussion as the State had to obey 1971 as prescribed in the Assam Accord (unlike the national cut-off year of 1951). The people of Assam are expecting a final verdict on the cut-off year (to identify foreigners in the State) from the Supreme Court of India. Dev Sharma was asked about the implications of a verdict favouring 1951 as the base year for Assam too, where he stated that it would increase more work to the responsible officers and

employees, but the common people (except a few) would face no troubles. With stored documents in the NRC directorate, the issue would be resolved amicably, added Dev Sharma.

Speaking about the inclusion of thousands of suspected families in the NRC draft, Dev Sharma claimed that Hajela used a faulty software technology in the process with no cross-checking facility. The provision for checking family legacy dates (through family tree matching) was deliberately designed in such a way that no superior officers (except Hajela) could go for reverification. So it's a criminal and anti-national activity, asserted Dev Sharma. On another occasion, Hajela adopted the policy of DMIT (district magistrate investigation team) verification, which was not recommended by the apex court, but surprisingly he did not face any brickbats from the then SC chief justice, reasons best known to Ranjan Gogoi only.

Assam Public Works (original petitioner in the apex court with the demand to update the NRC in Assam) filed a number of police complaints against Hajela and his close aides alleging gross misappropriation of government funds in the process. Lately, APW chief

Aabhijeet Sharma lodged another complaint against information technology firm Wipro alleging the misappropriation of public money, where the influential civil rights group made the NRC directorate also a party. Quoting the Comptroller and Auditor General of India's interim report, it narrated in the FIR that a massive corruption had taken place in the Rs 1,600 crore exercise with the active role of the concerned top officials.

Dev Sharma, who also submitted an affidavit in the apex court, said that the accountant general observed that undue benefit of Rs 155.83 crore was allowed to SI/ labour contractor. It 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 rules, for expenditure of above Rs five crore, Hajela had to obtain an approval from the empowered committee, headed by the State chief secretary or from the RGI, but he did not do so.

In his formal complaint, Dev Sharma described the anomalies where the Wipro engaged one sub-contractor for providing data entry operators (DEOs) without any prior approval from the authority. It was found that the then

State coordinator was aware of the sub-contractor, but did not intervene. Wipro 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 during the years (2015 to 2019). Shockingly, more than 6000 DEOs were denied even the least amount as per the country's minimum wages act. Some DEOs even came to the streets demanding their due amounts. They also approached the State labour commissioner for their dues.

My final assertion was that the DEOs must get their legal dues irrespective of the fate of NRC, as they have nothing to do with it. A huge amount of money, meant for them, was grabbed by some individuals with corrupt practices. Unfortunately three Guwahati-based senior television journalists have also been named and shamed on social media as the beneficiaries of NRC scam. Thousands of social media users participated in the discourse and many urged those media persons to clarify their stand, but they have not made any public statement about the allegation, which is surprising and unusual compared to their smart & energetic personalities reflected in the television screen.

Centre's Hindi Push: A threat to the minorities

By: Jayanta Sharanthem

Contd. from yesterday

Even when a minority language speaker speaks the dominant language(s) with the accent of one's own native tongue, then also it is a matter of laughter and invites social sanction and hence social rejection of the minority language and its speaker. One of the consequences of poor education policies in education is that the child is far removed from his/her linguistic and cultural context and it may prove disastrous for the education of the children from linguistic minority communities such as tribal, border or even the so-called dominant indigenous linguistic groups. It must be borne in mind that the child's mother tongue education is crucial for successful early childhood experience. Denial of such educational experience through their mother tongue, as research shows, results in their poor response to the formal education, especially in the first few years of schooling. The purpose of language policies in education, therefore, is not to complicate this complex problem, but to address it convincingly without any further loss to the linguistic and cultural contexts of the linguistic minority children.

This new move will bring about

a power struggle between the national and regional, and in this, the minorities in their respective states will be stripped of their linguistic rights even further. They are the real scapegoats of this double power move in both the regional and the national space. Declaring a language official or compulsory is not a naïve or innocent act aimed at communication alone. It also means purging other languages and minorities of their freedom and rights. Such a move can only be one of domination - of assertion of power. The forceful way of imposition, which can also be captured in the language of Shah when he says "have to accept", is a serious threat to the autonomy and agency of people to choose language, let alone speak their mother tongue. When the linguistic element becomes secondary and the cultural element takes precedence, then the interplay between the national and sub-national is bound to have a fresh dynamic. The creation of an official language also created classes and social divides. First, a class of people who know that language and the rest who don't. In that specific sense, the point is not to kill other dialects and languages entirely but to make them subordinate and dependent on one

or the other dominant form. India is a deeply multicultural society and home to great linguistic diversity. The idea of promoting "unity in diversity" is one that has been continually reiterated as being in the best interests of a deeply diverse country. Scholars, too, have pointed out that efforts to accord primacy to Hindi over other languages effectively "threaten the diversity of federalism in India," and represent a monopolization of "faith, education and language" on the part of the union government.

The basic argument advanced in this is not to reject any language as irrelevant but to plead for meaningful language policies in education so that the minority languages survive, flourish, and grow rather than extinct in the shadow of one or the other dominant languages, as linguistic identity represents a unique ethno cultural diversity. One significant outcome of the dominance of a few languages is that the linguistic minorities are assimilated into one or the other of these few dominant linguistic groups, restricting the use of one's own tongue to the home. In some cases, the dominant street language pervades as the language of the home among the linguistic minorities, dethroning their own native tongue in due course of time. Subsequently, they are forced to turn into bilingual or trilingual in order to appropriate themselves within the he-

gemonic linguistic situation. The dominant linguistic groups, on the other hand, remain largely monolingual and look down upon the minority tongues as primitive or not proper or uncivilised. The lack of instruction in the mother tongue for the linguistic minority children in schools is often cited as one of the reasons for diminishing numbers of minority tongues. The linguistic minority communities had to opt for the language of the school, which is usually the dominant language of the area or the state in which the school is located. For instance, a gond in Andhra Pradesh gets education in Telugu and a gond in Chhattisgarh gets education in Hindi or those in Maharashtra in Marathi. Similarly, a Marathi-speaking child living on the Andhra Pradesh side of the border will have to learn Telugu and on the Karnataka side of the border will have to learn Kannada, despite having provisions for transacting education in Marathi for such border communities.

The situation is precarious for the tribal communities but are seldom taught in that language. It is this fact that reaffirms the threat to the minority languages in the country. This fact cannot be overlooked as linguistic identity is identified with ethnic and cultural identity, which then threatens the emotional, social, and group affiliations of a child growing up in a multilingual society. In education, the language of early child-

hood experiences is the most important factor as it has some relevance to the context in which the child is socialised. We have witnessed several debates over the language question and have even faced a serious threat to its very existence as a union. However, each of these debates centres around a few dominant languages, leaving aside the numerous other minority languages, such as those of tribal communities, forcing them to join one or the other larger linguistic community. The debate on national language had ignored to a large extent the presence of other regional tongues/vernaculars which are sizeable in number and strength, let alone the other minority tongues, spread across India. As a result, post-independence India witnessed massive disagreements over the imposition of a single national language, namely, Hindi, all over the country.

Linguistic diversity is part and parcel of the diversity of life in nature and culture. Any loss in linguistic diversity is a loss in the vitality and resilience of the whole web of life. Every time a language disappears, along with the cultural traditions and cultural knowledge it conveys, it's a piece of the planet's living fabric that gets torn off, leaving all of the living world more fragile, more vulnerable, and with fewer options for the future. This linguistic and cultural diversity has come under attack in different periods of his-

tory and has threatened the existence of many of the minority languages, mainly those which are numerically less represented and also those which are powerless or are of less utility in terms of social mobility. Instead, the government should try to promote and preserve regional languages in order to protect them from being mixed with other languages. We all hear our children calling mummy, daddy, instead of Ema, Epa, etc. We all speak Meiteilon with suffix and prefix of English. It seems, with due course of time, our Meiteilon language is imperfect without English. It means our pure Manipuri language is also diminished with time. We should take care of it. The changes and losses in the number of mother-tongue speakers are associated with shifts or being mixed in the use of a given language with others, as well as with a decline in the transmission of that regional language to new generations. The magnitude of the problem shows that there is a global crisis of linguistic language loss. So, we need to call our attention to the importance of maintaining of linguistic diversity for the conservation of biological diversity. There is a parallel connection between linguistic diversity and biological diversity as linguistic diversity evolves with the adoption of the geographical climatic diversity of biodiversity.

Concluded

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times' can be sent to our e-mail: imphaltimes@gmail.com. For advertisement kindly contact: - 0385-3590330 (O). For time being readers can reach the office at Cell Phone No. 9862860745 for any purpose.

At least 700 shops gutted as fire ravages Arunachal Pradesh's oldest market

Agency
Itanagar, Oct 25:

Around 700 shops were reduced to ashes in a massive fire that broke out at Naharlagun Daily Market near Itanagar on Tuesday morning, police said. There was no casualty in the fire that was first spotted around 4 am, they said.

The market, the oldest in the state, is situated near the fire station and Naharlagun police station, around 14 km from Arunachal Pradesh's capital Itanagar.

The fire is suspected to be caused by firecrackers or lamps lit for Diwali celebrations, police said.

Firefighters swung into action immediately but as the

shops were made of bamboo and timber with dry items stored in abundance in the market, the blaze spread fast, they claimed.

Panicked shopkeepers struggled to save anything they could as exploding LPG cylinders further added fuel to the fire.

Three fire tenders, one of which was brought in from Itanagar, fought for hours to bring the blaze under control, police said.

The exact damage caused by the fire is being assessed, but it is estimated to be in crores of rupees, they said.

Superintendent of Police (Capital) Jimmy Chiram said the exact cause of the fire would be known after the completion of the investigation by the fire

department.

Shopkeepers alleged that after spotting the blaze they rushed to the adjacent fire station but no personnel could be found. Further, when the fire services personnel arrived, the fire engines did not have water.

To refill the engines, the personnel had to travel a long distance, and they could come back with water only around 5 am, by which most of the market was already gutted, the shopkeepers alleged.

"The police also did not act. All of them should be terminated from service for failure to perform their duties," Naharlagun Bazar Welfare Committee president Kipa Nai said.

After speaking to the shop-

keepers, Arunachal Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACC&I) president Tarh Nachung demanded that all fire personnel on duty be suspended for negligence.

It was the failure of the government that it did not set up the minimum infrastructure required for fire fighting — such as water filling points, which should immediately be made available at different locations in the Capital Complex, he said.

"If this is the situation in the heart of the capital, what would be the situation in the districts," he questioned.

Itanagar MLA Techi Kaso told reporters that the market would be rebuilt by the state government in cooperation with ACC&I.

Daily Covid cases in country lowest in 196 days

Agency
New Delhi, Oct 25:

India logged 862 new coronavirus infections, the lowest in 196 days, taking the tally of COVID-19 cases to 4,46,44,938, while the active cases declined to 22,549, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

The death toll climbed to 5,28,980 with three fatalities which includes two deaths reconciled by Kerala, the data updated at 8 am stated. One death has been reported from Delhi in the last 24 hours.

The country had earlier reported low Covid cases on April 11 when 796 infections were logged.

The active cases comprise 0.05 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate increased to 98.76 per cent, the ministry said.

A decrease of 644 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 1.35 per cent while the weekly positivity rate was recorded at 1.02 per cent, according to the ministry.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 4,40,93,409, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.18 per cent.

According to the ministry, 219.56 crore doses of

Covid vaccine have been administered in the country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

The country crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4 and three crore on June 23 last year. It crossed the four-crore mark on January 25 this year.

Despite Hijab Controversy, an Inter-Faith Devotion Firmly in Its Place

The Muslim devotees offer prayers to Shri Swami Samarth Mutt in Mumbai

IT Correspondent
Mumbai, Oct 25:

While the hijab controversy has been hogging headlines, after the Karnataka Government banned the hijab in the classrooms, many examples proving that an inter-faith belief has no bounds are coming to the fore.

There are many examples of Lord Ganesh being worshipped by many non-Hindus, and Hindus attending mass in the church. There are also examples of the Ganeshotsav being celebrated jointly by Hindus and Muslims in certain parts of Maharashtra.

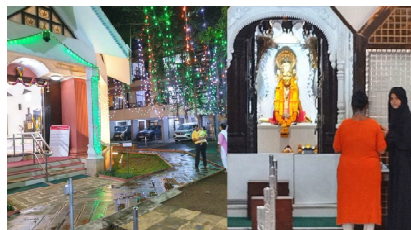
The educational institutes have the freedom to frame their guidelines about the dress code to maintain uniformity on campus. It is up to them whether or not to relax their regulations. If any school wants to maintain certain decorum it is its prerogative.

But over and above this controversy, there are ample ex-

amples to prove that in this spiritual land of India, inter-faith devotion goes on and the people participate in festivals without any reservation.

Usually, traditional religious signs like the hijab and burkha keep Muslim women away from the mainstream of society. But there are exceptions. For example, some burkha-clad Muslim women regularly visit Shri Swami Samarth Mutt located at Andheri West in North West Mumbai. The other devotees are curious but the management of the Mutt doesn't object.

A formal inquiry with visiting Muslim women revealed that they come to the Mutt because they find solace. They call the Mutt daily to seek the bliss. Speaking to the **Trans-continental times**, they said that when they were in trouble, they were advised by some people to offer prayers to Shri Swami Samarth. Initially, they



A burkha-clad Muslim devotee at Shri Swami Samarth Mutt in Andheri. (Photo: Raju Vernekar).

were hesitant anticipating a backlash from their community. But they mustered courage and came to the Mutt. They could overcome their difficulties and now it is a routine for them. "In any case, we are a liberal family and we believe that finally god is one and almighty cannot be kept in bounds," said Pinky Khan, a mother of two daughters—Shireen and Kashid.

Mahesh Natekar, the Manager and Head Priest of the

Mutt, said, "We do not object to anyone visiting the Mutt to offer prayers. However we insist that the women devotees should not come to Mutt wearing westernized clothes like short pants, jeans, etc. Besides, the devotees should wash their feet before entering the temple. We have also displayed a board communicating this at the entrance of the temple", he added.

The non-Hindus also visit Shri Swami Samarth Mutt lo-

cated at Akkalkot in Solapur district in Western Maharashtra. Some of the compendiums of Shri Swami Samarth mention about his Muslim devotees. Fanaticism encouraged by certain leaders vitiates the atmosphere. The common man is in no way interested in controversies. Progressive thinking is always good for society, Natekar said.

Advocate Suleiman Bhimani said that "Basically the god is 'Nirankari' (the formless). A human being cannot equate himself with god. 'Yajurved' (the prose mantras for worship rituals) and Quran preach the same thing. Article 21 of the Constitution protects every citizen's freedom. No one should interfere with personal faith and belief. Because of the adamant attitude of certain religious leaders, the controversies flare up damaging communal unity".

Another example is that of Mumbai police, who are the first to offer a "Chaddar" (a large piece of clothes adorned with flowers and silver zari thread) at Makhdom Shah Baba's tomb at Mahim in Central Mumbai during the 10-day

long annual "Urs" held in December. The tradition has been going on for the last over 100 years. It is said that Baba used to reside at the place where the Mahim police station is located at present. He used to assist the police in distress and desperate to nab the criminals. The police undertake a padayatra in accompaniment of music throughout Mahim before offering the chaddar to Makhdom Baba.

Similarly, people across the country visit the tomb of the Sufi saint Khwaja Mo'in-ud-din Chishti at Ajmer in Rajasthan. They include Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Nearly 500 chaddars are offered at the tomb. Besides, any political leader visiting Ajmer invariably visits the tomb. The Sufi sect was founded with the advent of Islam in India. Tolerance and universal brotherhood are some of the tenets of the Sufi sect. In a way, Ajmer's tomb is considered as a symbol of national unity.

In Gokhindi village in Sangali in Maharashtra, the Ganesh festival is being celebrated by Hindus and Muslims

jointly in a mosque for the last several years. When the Ganesh festival and Muharram coincide, the Ganesh idol and panjas (alams) are installed in the same pandal.

In Sacra Village (a locality in Panaji city) in Goa, the Hindus and Christians celebrate the Ganesh festival jointly. Most importantly during the festival, non-vegetarian food is not consumed by the devotees.

In St Michael's Church in Mahim in Mumbai, there is a heavy crowd of devotees comprising Hindus and Christians to attend Novena every Wednesday. Mount Mary festival at Bandra in North West Mumbai occurring in September is yet another example of inter-faith belief as evident from the strong congregation of people with a liberal mix of Christians and Hindus.

According to Prof Marcellus D Souza, one should worship the devotee in which he/she believes in. The people should not fall prey to the leaders' provocation. Finally, god is universal appearing in different forms, and Unity in diversity is our motto.

Career Guidance

Lessons from failures



By: Vijay GarG

Failure is not the same as a mistake. Knowing the difference and learning from it can bring us closer to success

What is failure? What is a mistake? Is there a difference between the two?

I've been driving the same car for the last 13 years. Compact and efficient, it is perfect for the Indian roads I drive on and takes me from point A to point B. Till the end of last year, it just needed its regular servicing every few months. There were no other complaints. Very recently, it started showing signs of ageing and has been making frequent trips to the workshop. It was only then that the sturdy car started failing. It was a failure brought on by

prolonged use and wearing off of parts. It was inevitable and not the result of mistakes I was making, or errors committed during the manufacturing stage. This brings me to the questions: What is failure? What is a mistake? Is there a difference between the two?

As children, we are often reminded how important it is to succeed. We are told stories of accomplishment and shown examples of how hard work and determination bring us rewards and success. Very rarely are we told tales of failure. Failure is portrayed as the opposite of success and so, naturally, nobody wants to fail. Consciously or unconsciously, a fear of failure is developed in our minds.

Acknowledge the risk

However, failing is an important part of our growth. In my view, recognising failure, learning from it and implementing that lesson invariably take us closer to success. Sometimes, despite giving our best and being fully committed to our goals, we may not achieve the desired results. That failure may be due to factors beyond our control. Like the car I've been

driving, the failure is brought on not because of a mistake, but due to extraneous elements.

A space mission, a large-scale company project, a complicated surgery — all are risky and can fail, in spite of the best skills and intent. The domain of invention, experimentation and creative innovation also come with the risk of failure. But failure here is part of the process. Designers, artists and writers grapple with failure all the time. Not all designs succeed. Not all words work their magic. A writer must abandon her work of art when it does not resonate with the readers. That failure cannot stop the creator from trying something new.

This tolerance for failure feeds not only our willingness to try something new and expand our horizons, but also helps us step outside our comfort zones. This is what will help in the workplace as well.

In an organisation, we must be open to new roles and taking up new responsibilities even if we have no experience in that. We must be willing to fail and not be

afraid of failure. The organisation and managers, in particular, must create an environment that does not penalise failure. Failures can be stepping stones to success only when employees feel safe and encouraged even after a project failure. Of course, during this process, it is also vital to understand that a mistake is not quite the same as a failure. A mistake can happen out of ignorance or wilful negligence while a failure can happen even when the best knowledge and skills are applied. A series of mistakes, when unintended, can lead to a failure.

An inevitable part of growing up is recognising the difference between a mistake and a failure. At a very superficial level, these words may seem synonymous. Both failures and mistakes make us who we are. But as we evolve, we slowly realise that failures are perhaps more significant than mistakes. This is because we have a lot to learn from them. So the next time you realise you have failed in something, celebrate it. It is a sign that you are evolving and that there's a valuable lesson to learn from it.

Rural areas should be made more aware of bank e-services – Professor R. K. Uppal

IT Correspondent
Bathinda (Punjab), Oct 25:

Dr. Rajinder Kumar Uppal, a prolific writer, an outstanding academician and the more ingenious guide has won accolades not only in the academic field but also in the genre of research. Presently, he is serving as a professor of economics at Baba Farid College of Management and Technology (Punjab) and Principal Investigator of a UGC-Funded Major Research Project on Indian Banking.

The doyen of economics who hails from educationally humble area of Punjab completed his post graduation and Ph.D from Punjab University, Patiala. He is considered as master of professional academic work. As a matter of fact, his research fervor and academic zeal primarily focuses upon banking and finance. His insatiable craving for research got stimulus under the aegis



of UGC and HRD. As many as seven major post-doctorate research projects were funded by UGC, ICSSR and HRD, New Delhi. He reciprocated successfully and harnessed his research skill with incredible finesse and ease.

An abstract of my D.Litt Thesis, "Managing Transformation in Indian Banks Through E-Delivery Channels: Challenges And Opportunities," has been published in a top-rated Research Journal, Finance India, which has been

indexed by Scopus, ABDC, JEL, Cabells, and UGC Care. Finance India Journal ranks third worldwide according to the American Statistical Association. In addition to exploring more expansion and awareness of e-banking services in rural areas of India, rural areas should be made more aware of bank e-services to reduce cybercrime. As part of the study, strategies are also suggested for creating effective awareness of e-services among rural people.

16 dead, million seek shelter as cyclone Sitrang hits Bangladesh



Agency
Kaukuta, Oct 25:

At least 16 people died after a cyclone slammed into Bangladesh, forcing the evacuation of about a million people from their homes, officials said Tuesday.

Around 10 million people were without power in 15 coastal districts, while schools were shut across southern and southwestern regions.

Cyclones — the equivalent of hurricanes in the Atlantic or typhoons in the Pacific — are a regular menace but scientists say climate change is likely making them more intense and frequent.

Cyclone Sitrang made landfall in southern Bangladesh late Monday but authorities managed to get about a million people to safety before the monster weather system hit.

Jebun Nahar, a government official, said 14 people died, mostly after they were hit by falling trees, and two died after a boat sank in squally weather in the Jamuna river in the north.

"We still have not got all the reports of damages," she told AFP.

People evacuated from low-lying regions such as remote is-

lands and river banks were moved to thousands of multi-storey cyclone shelters, Disaster Management Ministry secretary Kamrul Ahsan told AFP.

"They spent the night in cyclone shelters. And this morning many are heading back to their homes," he said.

In some cases police had to cajole villagers who were reluctant to abandon their homes, officials said.

Trees were uprooted as far away as the capital Dhaka, hundreds of kilometres (miles) from the epicentre of the storm.

Heavy rains lashed much of the country, flooding cities such as Dhaka, Khulna and Barisal — which witnessed 324 millimetres (13 inches) of rainfall on Monday.

About 33,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, controversially relocated from the mainland to a storm-prone island in the Bay of Bengal, were ordered to stay indoors and there were no reports of any casualties or damage, officials said.

A feared major storm surge did not materialise, however.

On the southern island of Maheshkhali, the cyclone uprooted many trees and created panic after power and telecoms

were cut.

"Such was the power of the wind we could not sleep in the night because of the fear that our homes will be destroyed. Snakes entered many homes. Water also inundated many homes," said Tahmidul Islam, 25, a resident of Maheshkhali.

In the worst-affected Barisal region, teeming rains and heavy winds wreaked havoc for vegetable farms, Aminul Ahsan, regional district administrator, told AFP.

In the neighbouring eastern Indian state of West Bengal, thousands of people were evacuated Monday to more than 100 relief centres, officials said, but there were no reports of damage and people were returning home on Tuesday.

Last year, more than a million people were evacuated along India's east coast before Cyclone Yaas battered the area with winds gusting up to 155 kilometres (96 miles) an hour — equivalent to a Category 2 hurricane.

Cyclone Amphan, the second "super cyclone" ever recorded over the Bay of Bengal, which hit in 2020, killed more than 100 people in Bangladesh and India, and affected millions.

Assam Rifles commemorates its Brave-hearts

IT News
Imphal, Oct 25:

Mantripukhari Battalion under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) org a wreath laying ceremony on 25 Oct 2022 for G/4419L Hav/GD (Late) TB Thapa, of 4 Assam Rifles who attained martyrdom during an attack on the ROP party near Mao-Tadubi — Imphal road (Manipur) on 25 Oct 1956. In retaliation to insurgent ambush indl sustained gunshot wounds and succumbed to his injuries, thereby laying down his life as supreme sacrifice for the nation.

Assam Rifles foils Narcotics Smuggling

IT News
Imphal, Oct 25:

Keithelmanbi Battalion of Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) foiled narcotics smuggling in Bishnupur district on 23 Oct.

Based on specific input from Assam Rifles, a joint operation with Bishnupur Police Commando was launched in which the jt team recovered 4.344 Kg of Opium concealed in 04 packets from a drug peddler in Bishnupur district. The seized narcotics were assessed to be worth approx 3.5 lakhs in International market.

The recovered items along with the peddler were handed over to Phougangchaolkhai Police Station for further investigation.



Contd. from Page 1

Rishi Sunak appointed as Britain's first....

Sunak, the second prime minister in as many months and the third this year in Britain, will be moving into 10, Downing Street at a time when Britain's economy is facing a triple whammy of slowing growth, high inflation triggered by spiralling energy prices in the wake of the Ukraine war and a budget shortfall that has eroded its financial credibility internationally.

His first task will be to restore Britain's international financial credibility after outgoing leader Truss's plan for unfunded tax cuts and a costly energy price guarantee spooked the bond market.

Sunak, who describes himself as a proud Hindu, is the UK's first Prime Minister of South Asian heritage and the youngest for more than 200 years at the age of 42. His vic-

tory on Diwali has resonated among the Indian diaspora groups across the UK, who have hailed it as a historic moment in British social history.

Rishi Sunak becoming the first British Indian Prime Minister is a historic moment. This simply would not have been possible even a decade or two ago, said Sunder Katwala, Director of the British Future think tank.

But we should not underestimate this important social change. When Sunak was born in Southampton in 1980, there had been no Asian or black MPs at all in the post-war era. There were still no black or Asian Conservative MPs when he graduated from university in 2001. That Rishi Sunak is set to be Prime Minister during the coronation of King Charles III next spring tells an important

story about our society, where we have come from and where we are going in the future, he said.

The Archbishop of Canterbury urged Britons to pray for Sunak as he enters No. 10 Downing Street at a turbulent time.

"At a time of great difficulty and uncertainty for this country, please join me in praying for Rishi Sunak as he takes on the responsibilities of leadership," Justin Welby wrote on Twitter.

"May he, and all leaders of all parties, work across divides to bring unity and offer stability for those who need it most," he said.

Sunak's victory in the Tory leadership race came at the end of a dramatic few days in Westminster since Truss resigned last Thursday in the

wake of a disastrous tax-cutting mini-budget and several policy U-turns. Former prime minister Boris Johnson ruling himself out from the contest over the weekend and Leader of the Commons Penny Mordaunt conceding defeat just moments before the shortlisting deadline on Monday paved the way for a remarkable political comeback for Sunak having lost the Tory membership vote to Truss just last month.

However, his popularity as the frontrunner among his party colleagues has been replicated yet again as more than half the Tory MPs came out publicly in his support. He now faces the enormous challenge of steering the UK economy through massive inflationary turbulence and also uniting the different wings of a divided Conservative Party.

Sports

French Open Badminton: Lakshya Sen, Srikanth Kidambi to clash in opening round

Agency
Paris, Oct 25:

India's top badminton players minus two-time Olympic bronze medallist P.V. Sindhu will be battling it out for top honours in a strong field in the French Open International badminton championship starting on Tuesday.

Sindhu, the 2021 semi-finalist, was scheduled to play in the event but withdrew from the tournament which will end on October 30.

Commonwealth Games gold medallist and World Championship bronze medallist Lakshya Sen will be hoping to improve upon his performance in the Denmark Open, in which he reached the quarterfinals, at this BWF World Tour Super 750 to be played at Stade Pierre de Coubertin here.

Besides Sen, the top-ranked Indian in the men's singles draw, the other Indians in the fray in the men's singles section of the event with a total prize fund of USD 675,000 are former French Open winner Kidambi Srikanth, Thomas Cup winner H.S. Prannoy and Sameer Verma.

However, the Indians have



Kidambi Srikanth and Lakshya Sen

a tough draw in men's singles with Lakshya Sen and Kidambi Srikanth running into each other in the first round itself. Prannoy starts against Daren Liew of the United States and is likely to run into Japan's fifth seed Kento Momota, who starts against China's Lu Guang Zu, in the second round. Sameer Verma takes on sixth seed Anthony Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia, the Tokyo Olympic Games bronze medallist.

In the women's section, former World No.1 Saina

Nehwal will start her campaign against Yvonne Li of Germany, who at 23 is ranked higher than the Indian (32).

In Men's doubles, India's top doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty is seeded 7th and will meet Bulgaria-born French siblings pair of Christo Popov and Toma Junior Popov.

M.R. Arjun and Dhruv Kapila, the second Indian pair in the men's doubles, will open their campaign against fifth-seeded Fajar Alfian and

Muhammad Rian Ardianto of Indonesia.

In women's doubles, Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand run into sixth-seeded Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai of Thailand in a first-round encounter.

In the mixed doubles, the Indian pair of Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto will start against the Japanese pair of Kyohei Yamashita and Naru Shinoya in the first round.

I am not retired, chances of return are very high, says Serena Williams

Agency
San Francisco, Oct 25:

The 23-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams on Monday said she has not retired from tennis yet and that the chances of her returning to the court are "very high" after she previously indicated that she would step away from the sport after the recently concluded US Open.

"I am not retired," Williams said at a conference in San Francisco while promoting her investment company.

"The chances (of a return) are very high. You can come to my house, I have a court,"



she added. Williams announced her retirement from tennis on August 9, saying she is "evolving away" from the sport.

The 40-year-old tennis star said that the best word to de-

scribe what she is up to is "evolution" and that she wants to grow her family.

"I have never liked the word retirement. It doesn't feel like a modern word to me. I've been thinking of this as a transition, but I want to be sensitive about how I use that word, which means something very specific and important to a community of people," Serena said in an article for Vogue magazine.

Serena has won 23 Grand Slam singles titles, the most by any player in the open era, and the second-most of all time, only behind Margaret Court's 24.

Online Essay Competition

Commemorating the 126th Birth Anniversary of Lamyamba Hijam Irabot, Team Imphal Times is organizing an Online Essay Competition. This is the 2nd time that the Team Imphal Times is organizing an Essay Competition. This year theme is — "Manipur's Socio-Economic Problems: System Failure or Individual Failure."

All submitted essays will be published in the Imphal Times newspaper and the name of the winners will also be published. The word count for the essay must be between 1000 and 1200 words.

1st prize Rs 5000, 2nd prize Rs 3000, and 3rd prize Rs 2000 with certificates

The competition is opened to all individuals and every submission must be accompanied by a photo/image of the candidate. The last date of submission will be 6 pm on October 30.

All participants should enclose details of their identity. Father's or Mother's name, Address, Qualification, Contact No. (Cell Phone or Landline) should be enclosed at the of submitting the write up. Language medium : English.

Participant can be sent by e-mail to: imphaltimesessaycompt@gmail.com

in MS Word or PDF format .

Team Imphal Times