

## Chief Minister attends flag in ceremony of Organic Farming Tour

IT News  
Imphal, Feb 13:

Chief Minister N. Biren Singh attended a flag-in ceremony of Organic Farming Educational Tour at IGAR South, Mantripukhri today. The team comprising of 20 youth from Sajik Tampak area was flagged off on February 4 to Sikkim from Kakching for Skill Training.

Speaking as the Chief Guest of the function, N. Biren Singh expressed happiness on the Assam Rifles for such initiative of taking villagers from Sajik Tampak to Sikkim for skill training on organic farming.

He congratulated the Assam Rifles for taking up such a meaningful and effective measure to counter poppy plantation and illegal drugs in the State.

Further acknowledging the



contribution of the Assam Rifles mainly in counter insurgency operations and guarding the border, the Chief Minister also said that he is aware of the difficulties faced by the Assam Rifles in dealing with the insurgents and difficult terrains.

The Chief Minister said that he is very much thankful that the force has joined hands in the 'War on Drugs' campaign

and countering the illegal drugs. With the help of the Assam Rifles, we are able to nab many smugglers with huge quantities of illegal drugs and that the Assam Rifles is also involved in the destruction of poppy plantations in the hill areas.

He said the 'War on Drugs' is a campaign towards making a 'Nishamukt Bharat.'

The Chief Minister also explained rehabilitation or alternative plantations for poppy plantation which could be beneficial for the villagers.

The government cannot provide government jobs to each and every one, but there are schemes like the Manipur Start Up which can help the people, he added.

The 20 member team was led by Major Kunal Banerjee of the 15 Assam Rifles. During the tour, the team visited various organic farming institutes and interacted with many organic farmers and witnessed the techniques employed by them.

Major General Rajan Sherawat, IGAR (South) and other officers of Assam Rifles, villagers from Sajik Tampak and nearby areas also attended the function.

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## 73 airports operationalized under UDAN scheme

IT News  
Imphal, Feb 13:

Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched Regional Connectivity Scheme - UDAN (Ude Deshka Aam Nagrik) on October 21, 2016 to stimulate regional air connectivity and making air travel affordable to the masses. UDAN is a market driven scheme. Interested airlines based on their assessment of demand on particular routes, submit their proposals at the time of bidding under UDAN.

As on January 31, 2023, a total number of 73 unserved / underserved airports includ-

ing 9 Heliports & 2 water aerodromes have been operationalised, since 2017, under the UDAN scheme. UDAN is an ongoing scheme where bidding rounds are conducted from time to time for covering more destinations/stations and routes under the scheme.

UDAN is a self-financing scheme. VGF amount of around Rs. 2355 crore has been released to Selected Airline Operators as on January 31, 2023 for the operation of UDAN flights.

The Government has approved the 'Revival of unserved and under-served air-

ports' scheme for the revival and development of 100 unserved and under-served Airports, Heliports and Water Aerodromes by 2024. Under the UDAN scheme, the unserved & underserved airports/airstrips namely Ludhiana, Adampur, Bhatinda and Pathankot have been identified in the State of Punjab for operation of UDAN flights till the completion of four rounds of bidding. UDAN flight operation from the Ludhiana, Adampur, Bhatinda and Pathankot airports have been commenced by the Selected Airline Operators (SAOs).

## Protest held against gun firing at MPCC VP residence

IT News  
Imphal, Feb 13:

A sit-in protest against the recent gun firing into the residence of Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee Vice President was held today at Wangkhei Puja Lampak, organized by Yaikul Block Congress Committee.

Akham Bimolchandra Singh, President of Yaikul Block Congress Committee

speaking to media person said, "It is very unfortunate that several gun rounds were fired at the residence of PCC member and Vice President of Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee, Harehsar Goshwami by unknown miscreants. He has been active in many burning issues of the state like the Border Pillar issues and many others. There has been no record of threat or intimidation against him till now. Also, the gun

culture and act of goondaism which is on the rise in Manipur is very unfortunate.

Bimolchandra appealed to the government to look into the issue of Gun culture seriously and to take up measures to curb the issue. The government should ensure that those who are having a gun license, are not using the weapon in any form of criminal activities, he added.

## La. Ganesan wishes (L) Sushma Swaraj on 71st birth anniversary

IT News  
Imphal, Feb 13:

Governor of Manipur La. Ganesan extends his heartfelt greetings on the auspicious occasion of 71st birth anniversary of (L) Sushma Swaraj on 14th February.

She epitomized dignity, decency and unwavering commitment to public service. Firmly rooted in Indian values and ethos, she had great dreams for our nation. She was an outstanding Minister.

She was a disciplined karyakarta, a fierce orator and an outstanding Parliamentarian who never compromised on her ideals. She will always be remembered for her kind nature & helping the distressed in their trying times.

She helped numerous Indians in trouble who reached out to her during her tenure as the Foreign Minister on social media.

## Public awareness walkathon organized



IT News  
Imphal, Feb 13:

Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons of India, Manipur Chapter organized a walkathon today, under the theme "Saving Lives, Saving Faces". The Public Awareness initiative on wearing helmets and seatbelts was conducted with a purpose to popularize the role of Oral &

Maxillofacial Surgeon for the treatment of maxillofacial injuries.

The program was graced by MLA Thangjam Arunkumar and Dr. Praveen Reddy, Principal, Dental College, RIMS, Imphal along with a team of Doctors of Dental College, RIMS, Imphal.

The walkathon was flagged off from Kangla Western Gate to Konung Mamang

Traffic Island.

During the program, MLA Thangjam Arunkumar stressed on the need of such an awareness program given that in a state like Manipur people neglect the importance of wearing helmets and seatbelts. He further appeals the people to take responsibility of their safety and to help prevent maxillofacial injuries.

## Rajya Sabha adjourned till March 13 amid disruptions by Opposition MPs

Agency  
New Delhi, Feb 13:

The first part of the budget session of Rajya Sabha was adjourned till March 13 on Monday after continued disruptions by Opposition MPs who kept up their demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe into allegations against the Adani Group.

The House, which was briefly adjourned in the morning, will now meet at 11 am on March 13 after recess.

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, who spoke about deliberate obstruction of proceedings, adjourned the

House for the day after repeated appeals to bring order unheded and Opposition MPs raised slogans in support of their demand for a JPC and also revocation of the suspension of Congress MP Rajani Patil.

"The house stands adjourned, to meet on Monday, March 13, 2023 at 1100 hours," Dhankhar announced soon after the start of the question hour.

Soon after the listed papers were laid on the table of the House, Opposition MPs insisted that the Chair allow Leader of Opposition and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge to speak.

When Dhankhar permitted

Kharge to speak, several members from the treasury benches started raising slogans. However, Kharge's remarks were expunged by the chair.

Opposition MPs too kept raising slogans. Several of them trooped into the Well of the House.

Patil was suspended from the House for the remainder of the Budget session for circulating an unauthorised video of house proceedings.

Dhankhar said he was getting sleepless nights because of inputs he had been getting. "The entire world is watching... it is beyond my comprehension how members can behave like

this and attack the Constitution," he said earlier in the morning as the slogan shouting continued.

Asking the Opposition to maintain decorum and allow question hour to continue, he said, "Does the public expect us to be like this... It does not."

"I am constrained on account of persistent obstruction and I would go to the extent of saying deliberate obstruction..." He said previous time had been lost already. Before adjourning the House till next month, he warned, "Members, I am pleading with you for the last time. If the House is subjected to such kind of disturbance, disruption, violation of rules, I will be constrained to act as per expectations of the people." Earlier, Congress MP Pramod Tiwari urged the Chair to revoke Patil's suspension of Rajani Patil in the best tradition of the house and order a JPC probe.

However, Leader of the House Piyush Goyal asked Opposition MPs to first apologise for their behaviour during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech while replying to the Motion of Thanks. Only after that, he said, could the demand for revocation of suspension be considered. This led to more slogan shouting and uproar from Opposition benches, forcing the chair to adjourn the house.

## 3-Day Publicity Awareness Program on AKAM held

IT News  
Imphal, Feb 13:

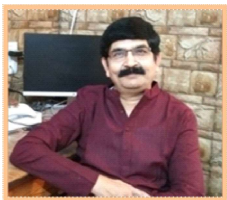
A 3-Day Publicity Awareness Program on AKAM, 8Saal Seva Sushasan and Garib Kalyan, G-20, IYM-2023 began yesterday at the closing event of 13th Late L. Rohinikumar Singh Memorial Cricket League 2023 at Multipurpose Sports Complex, Bidyanagar (Maheikhullen), Jiribam.

In the presence of celebrities Bony Sharma, Soma Laishram, Biju Ningombam,

Bonium Thokchom, E. Fimate Addl. SP, A. Bijoykumar, GM, PGCI, M. Bina Devi, President, BJP Mahila Morcha, R.K. Nobinsana Ex-Pradhan, Dibong GP, L. Samarendra Singh, Ex-Pradhan, Hilghat GP, Fou Ahmed Ex-Pradhan, Sonapur, Rajesh Darade, IFS DFO, Jiribam and other district level officers.

The Program will continue till February 14, 2023 tomorrow on 13th at community hall Gularthong (Shamupunbi) on 14 at Com. Hall Dibong.

# Love is the magician that pulls man out of his own heart



By: Vinod Chandrashekhar Dixit

Helen Keller has rightly said that "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart."

**Flowers** have a way of creating strong and lasting memories. I would only say that flowers may fade; but the memories and the emotions never vanish. I remember the first flower I ever received from my wife on my first Valentine's Day. I will always remember the comfort those flowers gave my family. Her beauty and energetic personality are forever linked to the purity and splendor of white flowers. There are so many ways to describe that intense emotion call love. Everybody has their own idea and explanation for love, like: - Love is a symbol of eternity. It wipes out all sense of time, destroying all memory of a beginning and all fear of an end. I feel love is the condition in which the happiness of another person is essential to your own.

**Romantic** thoughts emerge as Valentine's Day approaches and reminders of Valentine's Day lingers for months. It is also natural that we celebrate the occasion by giving our spouse a romantic Valentine's Day gift but we use the Valentine's Day holiday to discuss with our kids the nature of romantic love, and their feelings for their mother. We open up with them, and share our feelings deeply, so that they can see you as a complete person. This may seem sappy, but my relationship with my wife is the most important role model for romantic love and partnership as we grow up.

**Our life** is full of colors and I hope this Valentine day will add more colors in our life. My 30th Wedding Anniversary falls on Valentine Day. (Yes, it's really on Valentine's Day) I am trying to figure out what to do for my wife on this special day. As I thought about my wife this week, I was reminded of how wonderful she is. She is perfect for me; she puts me first, right after God. We never fight, and if we have a disagreement we always work things out without fighting, how perfect is that! She is not afraid to tell me she loves me many times each day. Sometimes I feel we are each others flesh and blood. We are each others essence, our souls are intertwined, and we are a caduceus united. We love each other, adore each other, and respect each other, know each other's limitations and help each other transcend it, and if we cannot, be the strength for each other when one falls.

**My Wedding Anniversary** that falls on Valentine day always reminds me that "Love is the magician that pulls man out of his own heart." and I can never forget the memories I share every year.



By: Er. Prabhat Kishore

The advent of spokesman in governmental circles came into existence after the Second World War. Before it, there was no such system of spokesman of any department in the government. In many countries reporters respect the desire of official to remain anonymous official, it is done by the reporter.

The editor or news editor only wants to be sure about the source in any way. Though the officials in most countries desire to remain anonymous, in USA the spokesman does not hide his identity and goes on to say whatever it might be on any particular issue. But sometimes it may happen that the spokesman cannot be present and in his place another high official of the (not the official spokesman) is present to brief the press. In such cases, the reporter will resort to the technique of 'a high official of the government' or 'an unimportant official source' etc. If the editor or news editor ask to reveal the source to them, the 'reporters do it for establishing the authenticity of the news source and to ensure the credibility of the paper.

It is advantageous for high officials or policy makers of the government to say everything to the reporters and asking them not to reveal the source, but to credit it to 'authoritative sources' etc. If the

# Reporter should not be overawed

public reaction is good they feel satisfied and elated. But if the reaction is bad or critical, these officials at once issue press-note contradicting what has appeared in the press. So, these are hazards in the life of a reporter. Therefore, he has to be extra cautious when he has to deal with officials of even anonymous spokesman of the government.

A reporter must always remember that so far as the public is concerned, the reporter is the press itself. The public do not know the function of the editor or news editor or sub-editors, because the editors etc. seldom stir out of office. They are tied to the desk; whereas a reporter has to move about to contact men high up in the society or lowest in the society. He always presumes at all important meetings, national or international conferences or gatherings or in trouble spots. The great power of the press is understood only through his writings.

Therefore, the reporter must establish his honesty, good reputation, absolute reliability, punctuality in keeping his appointments, careful about knowing the facts, fair in his comments and finally he should be efficient and prompt in submitting his copy. If a reporter observes these few essential rules, he is sure to rise in his profession within a short time.

There are several basics which must be followed by reporters. While reporting speeches delivered either in Parliament or in Vidhan Mandal, a reporter can, always without any risk, report whatever the legislator spoke. He has no much danger if the speeches are accurately reported. But on many occasions, the reporter has to meet the same politician for the reaction to various non-political, economic or social affairs. On such occasions there may arise controversial ques-

tions which the political may explain to the reader with the understanding that the reporter will not divulge the source. This is so because if it is known that the particular politician had given his opinion on controversial issue, which might harm the interest of the party, he will naturally be hauled up by party leader. Therefore, the reporter must observe the basic principle to respect the confidence respond on him. If he breaks this principle, the source of news will be dried up soon and he will find that he is not wanted anywhere.

A reporter during his routine work has to meet very important persons. Most of them will not like that whatever they might say should be in direct quotes. In that case what he reporter will do is to resort to a tactical way of reporting everything indirect way. He resorts in indirect way of reporting all that the important man has said. Reporter in such cases uses a 'sources close to important man' without naming him in any manner. In this way of reporting the reporter keep confidence of the important man as also his objective of reporting is also fulfilled.

Sometimes reporters obliged to take 'Casual Interviews'. These types of interviews are made in casual manners i.e. not giving much importance at the outset of the interview. But it may also happen that during the process of questioning or while listening to the answers, we may have chance to something quite interesting we had some vague knowledge. Then the casual interview may take a serious turn and we may find ultimately big news for our newspaper.

A reporter per chance hears something from a person in party, which arouses the curiosity of the reporter. He hears that the particular man was talking to his friend that he has been urgently sum-

moned by a top Party leader to come to Delhi. The reporter will then pursue the matter why the Party leader has summoned him to Delhi. Is there going to be a change in the political set-up? Will there be a change in leadership? The reporter, if he goes on digging he may find a big news awaits him. Perhaps the man himself will give him many more things before he leaves for Delhi.

A good reporter will always keep his eyes and ears open whenever he goes to attend a dinner or a tea-party. He must not be absorbed in more eating and drinking. His eyes and ears must be kept wide open to see and hear or over hear what others are saying or doing. He may land in getting even greatest scoop out of such casual observation. A reporter should always remember whenever he attends such parties that facts, dignity and common sense will pay rich dividend. He must be garrulous or over-bearing because that will make him cheap and nobody give him the respect which otherwise he could expect from others in the party.

A reporter must not be afraid or shy to put questions at all times in the press-conference or at the time when he is deputed to interview big personalities. It is his duty to put question without offending the party. All the time he must courteous and he will find that this approach is the best to derive all the benefits. Another interesting fact he will realize gradually that if the interview is well conducted for few minutes there will be spontaneous supplementary from the answers and he must go on asking for answers of those supplementary.

(Author is a technocrat and educationist. He studied Journalism and Mass Communication at Patna University)

# World needs to be prepared to manage any future health emergencies



By: Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya

The complex and evolving nature of today's healthcare challenges mean that in many cases a united response mounted by the world as a whole will be way more effective than reaction of sum of its parts—that is individual countries.

Our global experience in the pandemic proved that when a health emergency strikes, developing a vaccine for a new disease takes scientists, governments, private sector—large companies as well as start-ups, regulators, political leaders from different countries—to come together fast and work seamlessly as an integrated whole. It also proved that having enough vaccines doesn't mean that everyone everywhere will get access to those life-saving jabs.

In case a highly transmissible virus triggers a pandemic in a highly interconnected world, saving people in a few countries may delay the damage but not deter it. With that wisdom in the recent past, the world needs to rethink the healthcare model collectively.

What we need today is a strong and efficient global health architecture. It should be able to contain the

health outbreak in the region of origin without allowing it to assume the proportion of a pandemic. The global health system should also have a clear mandate, ability, and accountability to develop, manufacture and distribute vaccines, medicines, and diagnostic tests for the targeted disease based on the needs of the countries, not their prosperity levels, when the next health emergency strikes.

A Healthcare Accelerator Beyond Covid-19

At least in idea terms, we came close to a global solution when Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-Accelerator) coalition was conceptualised in 2020 and worked to create end-to-end solutions to the pandemic. As a platform, it brought together governments, scientists, businesses, not-for-profits and philanthropists to ensure that tests and treatments for Covid-19 are developed, produced, and equitably distributed to all who needed to access it.

It's time to reimagine the contours of the accelerator to cover more challenges and cover them better. Such an accelerator in healthcare, with a nimble global structure and well-oiled mechanisms for governance and public-private partnership is needed for a scope much beyond Covid-19, which is not the last pandemic.

Our next global emergency may be from amongst the health-threats we know of—antimicrobial resistance, another viral outbreak or something completely unforeseen. But having a defined framework globally, experience of mock-drills, as well as capacities to manage such health

threats at a regional level will give us valuable experience to fine-tune the global health architecture.

ACT-Accelerator with its four pillars covering diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines, and health systems is a good starting point for soul-searching on what worked, and what needs to improve. While there is broad-based consensus on how the first such global structure served with speed by bringing together diverse stakeholders, much of the action on its part was voluntary and lacked the force of a formal structure. What is clearly needed is to redefine the existing scope of global health accelerator and expand it to areas where the world's response needs to be in sync for it to be more effective based on the recent evaluation report of the accelerator.

An independent evaluation of the ACT-Accelerator in October 2022, showed that while representatives of middle and low-income countries found the mandate of the accelerator extremely relevant given their own deficiencies in developing, making and procuring vaccines, drugs, diagnostic kits, they felt their voices went unheard, and their inputs were not seriously considered into decision-making. That, the evaluation summed, compromised the effectiveness of the response to the health challenges at hand.

If a global health accelerator can have a more formal form, shape, and governance structure with clear accountability and complete transparency, it can respond much more effectively to the challenges of the next health emergency.

India, which has recently assumed the G-20 presidency will strive to build a consensus among member countries on the need for such a permanent institutional platform that and deliberate on how its new avatar can



have an expanded scope on healthcare along with much stronger governance and accountability.

The pandemic also made us realise that many low- and middle-income countries in the Global South were left to fend for themselves with very little means to protect their people. This experience has prompted us to re-think the need for innovative ways to build local-level capacities that can ensure that people there are able to access diagnostics, vaccines, and medicines days within the emergence of a health threat that can save lives and economies.

While imagining and drawing up the contours of the next global health architecture, we, the global community, must course-correct to ensure that needs and contexts of vulnerable low-income countries, who are equal end-users of these services are understood and factored in sufficiently so that the world is better equipped to manage future pandemics in a unified manner and the initiative needs to be owned by all.

Besides harnessing political will of the world leaders across countries for the initiative, there is a need to think big and bold in terms of Vac-

cine-Therapeutics-Diagnostics Networks spread across the globe to effectively address the next big health emergency? The idea behind investing in such regional research and manufacturing capabilities is critical for world to deliver collectively in case of any future health challenge.

During the last three years we witnessed that even when companies had the capacities, they couldn't always deliver essential products in other parts of world and sometimes even in their own countries. That's because at times the demand surge in some medical products was unpredictable or unanticipated; at other times, scaling up proved challenging; supply-chains were disrupted widely. Also the acute concentration of R&D and technological strengths as well as manufacturing in few countries of the world restricted timely delivery of essential medical products, particularly in low and middle-income countries.

The global leadership have a responsibility to ensure that once tests and treatments are developed with support of these networks, they reach all countries equitably within a defined short-time span and hence

the role of a global medical countermeasures coordination platform we should plan during India's G-20 presidency.

Global Political Will and Action  
Many healthcare challenges before the world today, be it antimicrobial resistance or new emerging strains of Covid-19 are too complex to be resolved by one country, no matter how powerful and resourceful it is. These challenges also cannot be addressed only by one sector, no matter how efficient it is. That needs us to develop models of partnerships—intercountry and multisectoral—to be led by the global leaders across countries and sectors.

Despite the unprecedented models of collaboration during Covid-19, there is scope for deepening the participation of existing players and bringing more into the umbrella. The future version of the health architecture should have models to bring different governments, international organisations, philanthropies, and private sector together, in ways that seamless functioning becomes the norm while leveraging the strength of each sector.

Infusing a new life into the idea of a global health accelerator coupled with research and manufacturing networks today may save us from reinventing the wheel and have solutions to manage the next health emergency. India will sow the seeds for breathing life into this global health framework during its G-20 presidency. How it grows, depends on whether the world can act in unison on this cause.

(The article was first published in we forum/agenda on 10 Feb 2023)  
(The author is a Minister of Health and Family Welfare; Chemicals and Fertilizers, Government of India)

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# Turkey-Syria quake death toll tops 34,000; rescue ops on

Agency  
Hatay (Turkey), Feb 13:

The United Nations denounced on Sunday a failure to get desperately needed aid to war-torn regions of Syria, while warning that the death toll of over 34,800 from an earthquake that also devastated Turkey could double. Rescuers on Sunday extricated more survivors, including a pregnant woman and two small children, six days after a pair of earthquakes collapsed thousands of buildings.

Meanwhile, a UN convoy with supplies for northwest Syria arrived via Turkey, but the agency's relief chief Martin Griffiths said much more was needed for millions whose homes were destroyed.

"We have so far failed the people in northwest Syria. They rightly feel abandoned. Looking for international help that hasn't arrived," Griffiths said on Twitter.

Supplies have been slow to arrive in Syria, where years of conflict have ravaged the healthcare system, and parts of the country remain under the control of rebels battling the government of President Bashar al-Assad, which is under Western sanctions.

The UN convoy of ten trucks crossed into northwest Syria via the Bab al-Hawa border crossing, according to an AFP correspondent, carrying shelter kits including plastic sheeting, ropes and screws and nails, as well as blankets, mat-



resses and carpets.

Assad on Sunday thanked the UAE for providing "huge relief and humanitarian aid" with pledges of tens of millions of dollars in aid as well.

But security concerns prompted the suspension of some rescue operations, and dozens of people have been arrested for looting or trying to defraud victims in the aftermath of the quake in Turkey, according to state media.

An Israeli emergency relief organisation said on Sunday it had suspended its earthquake rescue operation in Turkey and returned home because of a "significant" security threat to its staff.

The United Nations has warned that at least 870,000 people urgently need hot meals across Turkey and Syria.

Turkey's disaster agency said more than 32,000 people from Turkish organisations are working on search-and-rescue efforts, along with 8,294 international rescuers.

**Anger grows**  
Syria's transport ministry said 62 aid planes had landed in Syria this week with more on the way in coming days, in particular from Saudi Arabia. UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres has urged the Security Council to authorise the opening of new cross-border aid points between Turkey and Syria, with a meeting to discuss Syria possible in the coming days.

After days of grief and anguish, anger in Turkey has been growing over the poor quality of buildings as well as the government's response to the country's worst disaster in

nearly a century.

Officials say 12,141 buildings were either destroyed or seriously damaged in the earthquake. Turkish police reportedly detained 12 people on Saturday, including contractors, over collapsed buildings in the south-eastern provinces of Gaziantep and Sanliurfa.

**48 arrested**  
Turkish authorities have arrested 48 people for looting or trying to defraud victims, state media reported on Saturday. The suspects were held in eight different provinces as part of investigations into looting, news agency Anadolu said.

It later reported that 42 suspects were held for looting in southern Hatay province, while six were arrested over defrauding a victim in Gaziantep by telephone.

# India rejuvenated defence production sector in 8-9 years: PM Modi at Aero India

Agency  
New Delhi, Feb 13:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday showcased India as an attractive destination for investment in the defence manufacturing sector, and said the country will move towards becoming one of the leading exporters of military hardware globally backed by favourable economic policies.

After inaugurating the 14th edition of Aero India at the Yelahanka Air Force station complex on the outskirts of Bengaluru, he said India has "rejuvenated" its defence production sector in the last eight-nine years and is looking at increasing the export of military hardware from USD 1.5 billion (one billion = 100 crore) to USD five billion by 2024-25.

"The new India of the 21st century will neither miss any opportunity nor will it lack any effort. We are gearing up. We are bringing revolution in every sector on the path of reforms," Modi said.

"The country, which was the biggest defence importer for decades, is now exporting defence equipment to 75 countries of the world," he said.

Modi said India's defence exports have increased six times in the last five years and that it has crossed the figure of USD 1.5 billion in its exports.

The five-day aerospace exhibition, considered the largest in Asia, is being participated by over 700 Indian and foreign defence companies besides delegates from around 100 countries which included several defence ministers as well.

"You also know that defence is such an area in which technology, market and business are considered the most complicated. Despite this, India has rejuvenated its defence sector within the last 8-9 years. Therefore, we consider this to be just a start," Modi said.

"Our target is that by 2024-25, we will increase this export figure from 1.5 billion to 5 billion dollars," he said.

Modi also described Aero India as an example of India's growing potential.

"The presence of around 100 countries of the world shows how much the world's faith in India has increased. More than 700 exhibitors from India and abroad are participating in it. It has broken all old records till now," he said.

Modi said efforts made in the defence and aerospace sector, including at the Aero India, will act as a launch pad for India.

"Now from here India will move fast to join the world's largest defence manufacturing countries. And our private sector and investors are going to play an important role in this. Today I would call upon the private sector of India to invest in India's defence sector as much as possible," Modi said.

"Your every investment in the defence sector in India, apart from India, will in a way create new avenues for your trade-business in many countries of the world," he said.

The prime minister said the "deafening roar" of Aero India also has the echo of India's mantra of "Reform, Perform and Transform".

"Today, the kind of decisive government that India has, the kind of stable policies, the kind of clear intention in the policies, is unprecedented. Every investor should take full advantage of this supportive environment created in India," he said.

"Where there is demand, capability and experience, the natural principle says that there the industry will grow day by day. I assure you that the process of strengthening the de-

fence sector in India will move forward at an even faster pace," Modi said.

He said when a country moves forward with new thinking and new approach, then its systems also start changing according to the new thinking.

"This event of Aero India also reflects the new approach of New India today. There was a time when it was considered to be just a show or just a window to 'Sell to India' in a way. In the past years, this perception has also changed in the country," Modi said.

"Today Aero India is not just a show, it is also the strength of India. Today it also focuses on the scope of the Indian defence industry and also on self-confidence," he said.

He further added: "The sky of Bangalore is witnessing the potential of New India today. The sky of Bengaluru today is testifying that new heights are the reality of new India. Today, the country is touching new heights as well as crossing them."

Officials said around 250 business-to-business agreements are expected to be signed up at the Aero India which is estimated to unlock investment to the tune of around 75,000 crore.

A plethora of aircraft of the Indian Air Force displayed their aerial prowess in an air show at the event.

The theme of Aero India is "the runway to a billion opportunities" and is aimed at projecting India's growth and capabilities in the defence and aerospace sector.

# Law Minister Rijiju defends ex-SC judge's appointment as gov

Agency  
New Delhi, Feb 13:

In an apparent swipe at the Congress after it questioned the appointment of a retired Supreme Court judge as a governor, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said the "whole ecosystem" is once again in "full swing" over the issue.

They should better understand that they can no longer treat India as their "personal

fiefdom", the minister said on Sunday, without naming anyone.

The government on Sunday appointed six new faces as governors, including Justice S Abdul Nazeer (retired), who was part of the historic 2019 Ayodhya verdict, and four BJP leaders, besides carrying out a rejig of the gubernatorial posts in seven states.

Nazeer has been appointed as the governor of Andhra Pradesh.

The Congress attacked the government over Nazeer's appointment and called the move a "great threat" to the independence of the judiciary.

Taking to Twitter, Rijiju said India will be guided by the provisions of the Constitution.

"The Whole Eco-system is once again in full swing on the appointment of a Governor. They should better understand that, they can no more treat

India as their personal fiefdom. Now, India will be guided by the people of India as per the provisions of the Constitution of India," the minister tweeted.

Nazeer, who retired on January 4, was part of several path-breaking verdicts, including those on the politically sensitive Ayodhya land dispute, instant 'triple talaq' and the one that held the right to privacy to be a fundamental right.

# Academics blame lack of infrastructure and funds for limited reading and math skills



By: Vijay GarG

Only when the students are taught well at the foundation level, they will be able to understand the subjects better in the higher classes.

Academics blame lack of infrastructure and funds for limited reading and math skills.

The reading and arithmetic skills of students at government schools has seen a steady decline in the post pandemic period. Academics blame poor infrastructure, lack of funds and insufficient training of teachers as the major reason for the dip in basic

skills of children at government schools.

As per the ASER 2022 report, the basic reading ability of children in class III dipped by 6.8% points from 2018. The proportion of children in class III who could do at least subtraction fell to 25.9% in 2022.

**Education should not be politicised**

Highlighting the grim condition of public schools, a principal from a government school in Delhi on the condition of anonymity says, "While the condition of government schools was never up to the mark, situations became worse after the pandemic, as students were promoted to the next class without any proper evaluation. As per the rule, students in government schools are promoted till class VIII without much intervention. During the pandemic, these students were promoted till class X without much learning. Education should not be politicised and young children should not be favoured by

promoting them to the next class without learning."

**Limited training for teachers**

"Mathematics can be taught to students by linking the subject to daily life activities. This will not only result in easy understanding of the students but will also reduce its fear among them."

"Mathematics is easy but it is presented as a fearful subject to the students. Government schools should train the school teachers to teach Mathematics with an easy methodology and focus on concept clarification for the students. The teachers of private schools have better infrastructure and funding, hence, the students get better support as compared to the students of government schools."

**Focus should be on Major subjects**

On what measures can be taken to improve learning at the government schools, the Delhi government school principal

says, "We are currently facing extreme trouble as the students have reached class XI in government schools but have no basic knowledge in Hindi, Mathematics, English etc. With the support of the government and the NGOs, these students are passed to the next grade despite not having the required knowledge. Schools should help in developing strong command of these subjects."

"New initiatives such as the Happiness and Deshbhakti curriculum are not serving any purpose and should be replaced by main subjects such as Mathematics, English, Science etc. To improve the condition of the school, efforts should be made at the primary level. Only when these students are taught well at the foundation level, they will be able to understand things better in higher class."

**Building strong foundation among students**

The problem is rising as most teachers are not equipped

to handle the learning gap, thus teachers' training is important. "Unless students and teachers have a clear understanding of the foundation level knowledge, they will not be able to grasp the learning at the higher level. To achieve this, we ensure that our students and teachers have a strong understanding of the basic things. We, therefore, prepare our teachers and train them to impart quality education to the children."

"There are around 45,000 public schools in Andhra Pradesh and the government has launched various measures and policies to improve the status of these schools. We have introduced initiatives such as Teaching at Right Level (TRL), Learning Improvement Programme, Foundation Literary Numeracy among others with the help of NGOs and Community participation to help students develop strong knowledge from foundation to higher level,"

# NPP-led MDA govt ensured peace in Meghalaya, says CM Conrad Sangma

Agency  
Tura, Feb 13:

Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma has claimed that the NPP-led Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) government has been proactive and worked overtime to ensure peace in the state.

"Many might have thought that the state is prone to insurgency and will remain the same. However, we were committed to ensure that peace and tranquility prevails in the state. Our intelligence is always on alert to extortion and other anti-social activities, and we have been able to bust such cases to ensure that such activities do not occur," Meghalaya CM Conrad Sangma said.

Referring to the pressure groups-sponsored violence in Shillong – the capital of Meghalaya, CM Conrad Sangma, who is also the national

president of the NPP, said that the people of the state fear to walk in the streets of Shillong after certain instances.

"There have been many instances of law and order problems, but it doesn't mean that the government has been silent. Our police have worked overtime to overcome such problems to ensure that peace could be restored," the Meghalaya CM said.

Speaking about his government's vision to have Meghalaya among the top 10 states in the country, CM Conrad Sangma said, "Many ridiculed our vision. We have ensured that we have made Meghalaya proud in various sectors."

He added: "Our government worked on a mission mode with set targets to ensure that Meghalaya is put on a path of development on fast track mode."

# Name Change

I, the undersigned, Oinam Dilip Singh, S/o O. Chaoba Singh, residence of Thangmeiband Palem Leikai, Lamphelpat Sub-Division, Imphal West, Manipur - 795004 do hereby declare that I have relinquished, renounced and abandoned the use of my old name **Oinam Dilip Singh** as I have assumed my new name **Oinam Dilip Singh**.

Sd/-

**Oinam Dilip Singh**

Thangmeiband Palem Leikai, Lamphelpat Sub-Division, Imphal West, Manipur - 795004

# MGNREGA Budget cut is being protested across India

Reduced job guarantee makes rural workforce restive

By Dr. Gyan Pathak  
New Delhi, Feb 13:

Ever since the Union Budget 2023-24 was tabled in the Parliament of India, MGNREGA workers across the country has been protesting against substantial budget cut for the second year reducing the earlier employment guarantee making the rural workforce restive. The reduction in budget allocation would adversely affect 15.51 crore active rural workers enrolled under the scheme.

During 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the scheme was ramped up, and an allocation of Rs1.11 lakh crore were made. It provided critical livelihood support to 11 crore workers. However, despite rise of about 4.5 crore workers demanding work from this scheme the Union Budget 2023-24 has reduced allocation from Rs89,400 crore in the Revised Estimate to Rs60,000 crore. The MGNREGA Sangharsh Morcha says that this level of allocation can support only 20 days of work in a year as against the 100 days guaranteed under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005.

As per the rules, MGNREGA scheme is a demand-driven scheme aiming at enhancing the livelihood security of rural households. Hundred days of unskilled work every year was guaranteed for anyone who wanted it. This provisions have been exploited by the government by systematically creating an environment in which demand for work is kept as low as possible. The ways to do this included, but not limited to, non-payment of wages to workers for months, and non-

payment to the states their dues under this scheme. The wages were for a long time even kept below the minimum wages, and the process of getting work kept difficult and cumbersome.

It is contrary to the provision under the MGNREGA that says, if work is not provided within 15 days from when it is demanded, the worker has to be given a daily unemployment allowance. Additionally, the wages of unskilled workers also have to be paid within 15 days and in case of a delay, the Centre has to compensate them.

Against such tactics, in the Swaraj Abhiyan case judgement in 2016, the Supreme Court had ruled that delay in payment and non-payment of minimum wages was an abrogation of Article 23 of the Constitution of India, wherein NREGA workers were made to work, given late wages, workers have no choice but to work due to the severe constraints of economic circumstance — amounting to forced labour.

Despite all the problems created for the workforce so as to they don't demand work, many workers had no option but to demand even under such exploitative work environment. The record shows that about 8.55 crore households demanded MGNREGA work in 2020-21, followed by 8.5 crore in 2021-22, compared to a total of 6.16 crore households asking for work in the pre-pandemic year 2019-20. Economic Survey 2022-23 says that as on January 24, 2023, about 6.49 crore households had already demanded work under the scheme.

Nonetheless, it is demand-side figure, against 15.51 crore

active rural workers enrolled under the scheme. Moreover, as of January 20, 2023, the average days of employment provided per household is just 42 days, while it was 50 days in 2021-22, 52 days in 2020-21, 48 days in 2019-20 and 51 days in 2018-19, much less than guaranteed 100 days, against a demand for increasing it to 200 days.

Peoples' Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG) and the NREGA Sangharsh Morcha has said in a joint statement that if the government intends to provide legally guaranteed 100 days of work per household for at least those that worked in the scheme in the current financial year, that minimum budget for it in the upcoming financial year 2023-24 should be at least Rs2.72 lakh crore.

Modi government's Union Budget 2022-23 had reduced MGNREGA budget by 25 per cent to Rs73,000 crore which was lower than the revised estimate or Rs98,000 crore for the financial year 2021-22. The Economic Survey of 2021-22 had even admitted that the demand for work was still higher than the pre-pandemic level. For the financial year 2023-24, the MGNREGA budget has been reduced by about 33 per cent compared to the revised estimate for the current financial year.

MGNREGA workers have been protesting this attitude of Modi government for a long time. The year 2022 had also seen protests across the country. However, Modi government ignored all the protests and made a further cut in allocation in the budget of this year apart from not paying the states their share.

Union government has re-

cently told the Rajya Sabha that the Centre owes Rs6,157 crore to 14 states as on February 3, 2023. The payment is due under the material component head of the MGNREGA scheme that pays for wages and construction material for skilled labours. Out of these 8 are opposition ruled states, and West Bengal is the worst sufferer since amount unpaid is nearly Rs2,700 crore. Moreover, as per data released by the Centre, it owed Rs4,700 crore in wages to 18 States as of December 14, 2022. Modi government has taken a stand that the payments are stopped for various reasons, including violation of rules and widespread corruption, but then who will protect the interest of the rural workforce?

The People's Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG) had recent revealed that there has always been delay in payment by the Modi government. It the past five years, about 21 per cent of the budget was used to clear the arrears of the previous years. According to their estimates, the arrears in the current financial year is about 25 per cent of the budget outlay.

MGNREGS activist Nikhil Dey says, "Rs1.24 crore was required just to give assured 40 days of work to all those active job cardholders this year. As of today, there are pending liabilities of almost 17,000 crore. The amount given in the budget means in real terms only about 20 days of guarantee for those who go for work as of today."

NREGA Sangharsh Morcha has now brought the protest to Delhi, and is organising similar protest across the country. (IPA Service)

# Loktak Battalion imparted Pre-recruitment training & felicitation Ceremony of selected Agniveers



IT News  
Imphal, Feb 13:

In a bid to help the unemployed youth, to bring them into mainstream and keeping in mind the major problem of unemployment in the remote areas of the region, Loktak Battalion of Assam Rifles under the aegis of Headquarters Inspector General Assam Rifles (South) imparted pre-recruitment training to educated youth in the remote areas of Churachandpur and Bishnupur Districts.

The battalion has opened a doorway in the form of pre-recruitment training to assist local youth in obtaining entry in Indian Army in which potential youth candidates

from population was identified and pre-recruitment training program was provided which includes free registration, free tutorial classes, coaching for physical tests, free medical evaluation for fitness assessment from 25 October 2022 to 18 Jan 2023. In addition, trainees were also prepared for written test examination by well educated training team.

The unit had identified several youth in the region having potential and given them free pre-recruitment training to polish their skills. A total of 02 youth namely Mr Haokholet Haokip residence of Mongbung village of Churachandpur district and Mr Md Zamidur residence of

Kwakta village of Bishnupur District (Manipur) have successfully cracked the written exam and got selected into Indian Army as Agniveer. The selected individual will join EME Centre, Secunderabad (Telangana) and Assam Regt Centre, Shillong by this month. Both local youth along with parents were felicitated by Commandant of the Battalion at Battalion Headquarters, Kangvay.

The local youth and students of various schools have praised the initiative undertaken by Assam Rifles and appreciated the work done by Loktak Battalion of Assam Rifles to keep up the motto of Assam Rifles, "Friends of the NE People".

Contd. from Page 1

## Chief Minister attends flag in.....

Later in the day the Chief Minister also visited and inspected the ongoing work at the Sangai Ethnic Park at Moirang Khunou and said preparation for the upcoming G-20 events in the state are almost complete with the blessings of the people.

In an earnest appeal to the general public, the Chief Minister urged the people to

showcase their best hospitality towards the visiting international delegates and to ensure that there are no disturbances like bandhs, blockades. Let us all show calm, peaceful and developing State to the visiting delegates so that they may want to set up businesses, establishments in the State, he added.

During the inspection, the Chief Minister was accompanied by Tribal Affairs and Hills Minister Letpao Haokip, Education Minister Th. Basanta, MLA Moirang AC Thongam Shanti Singh, Chairman LDA M. Asnikumar, Chief Secretary, Administrative Secretaries, Head of Departments, DC and SP Bishnupur among others.

## Sports

### Santosh Trophy:

## Karnataka shock holders Kerala, Odisha demolish Goa, Punjab edge out Maharashtra in high scoring thriller

Agency  
Odisha, Feb 13:

A day of upsets at the 76th National Football Championship for the Hero Santosh Trophy saw Karnataka shock the holders Kerala in the first game of the day. In the evening kick-offs, Odisha ran riot at the Kalinga Stadium, scoring four goals in a thrilling win for the home team while Punjab edged out Maharashtra in a seven goal thriller.

The day's opener was a rematch of last year's semi-finals, one where Karnataka had been laid waste to by a rampant home team who put seven goals past them in front of a baying crowd. There was no goal spree like that today, with Karnataka keen to not just banish those memories but also laid a marker for Group A.

Ravi Babu Raju's wards were immediately dominant, pressing high without the ball and shifting flanks with ease when on it. Kerala, whose squad boasts of a mere three players from their title winning run looked a bit lost, missing simple passes and making un-



Karnataka scored the only goal of the match in the 20th minute as it beat defending champion Kerala.

characteristic errors in midfield.

In the 20th minute, Karnataka made them pay for their slow start, Powar slamming in from close range after some lovely build up play had set him free. They kept the pressure dialled to high, never easing up or allowing Kerala's youngsters a foothold in the game. Midhun V was called into action thrice in the first half, making crucial saves to ensure the scoreline didn't run away from the holders.

Kerala's play had been so dismal that PB Ramesh had effected two changes within the first half, and after the break two more followed suit. The latter set of changes saw OM Asif introduced to bring more speed to their wings, and for the most part it worked.

Asif, Riswanali and Nijo Gilbert were guilty of missing many chances in the second half, shooting over or tamely when a simpler finish would've seen them grab the points. In

the end, Karnataka had done enough to see it through.

"It was vital for us to win today," Raju said after the game. "This is a tight group, and we know that it will be won and lost by a mere point or two. These three points separate us from the pack now."

If there were any lingering doubts about Odisha's competency in this tournament and their generosity as hosts, they were banished at the Kalinga Stadium today. The hosts ran riot against a Goa side that has leaked seven goals in two games now.

Odisha opened the scoring in the 11th minute via Bikash Kumar Sahoo, and within half an hour were two up, and seemingly cruising to an easy win in front of a crowd that had gathered to watch them play. Right before halftime though, Goa struck, Mohammed Faheez converting a penalty to change Salim Pathan's halftime team talk.

Where caution and stout defending may have been advised, Odisha felt better to attack. They controlled the ball, with ease and speed, con-

stantly harried Goa and scored two more to ensure they cruised to an easy win.

In the most topsy-turvy game so far in the tournament, Punjab waited till injury time and a bit of luck to beat Maharashtra at the 7th Battalion ground today. Punjab opened the scoring in the 21st minute, only to be pegged back before halftime. Jaginder Singh struck eight minutes into the second half to give them the lead again, only for Himanshu Patil to equalise for Maharashtra, once more. The second equaliser rocked Punjab a bit and four minutes later Maharashtra had a third, and seemingly headed for a comeback win.

That lead lasted for less time than the celebrations it sparked. Rohit Sheikh's equaliser set up a perfect final ten minutes, with both teams going all guns blazing for the three points. Steven Dias' team had already led three points slip away in their opener and they let all the points slip away again today conceding a late penalty that downed them, and left them languishing in Group A.

## India eye bright start at Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships

Agency  
Dubai, Feb 13:

Spearheaded by a fit-again and rejuvenated PV Sindhu and HS Prannoy, India will fancy their chances against Kazakhstan in their opening Group B tie at the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships 2023, starting on Tuesday.

Two-time Olympic medalist and world No.7 Sindhu has recovered completely from a stress fracture that kept her out of action for five months last year and is gunning for success in the new season.

After winning the gold medal at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, the injury forced Sindhu to pull out of the World Championships and also missed the remainder of the last season.

Having made a scratchy start to the new season in the Malaysia Open and India Open at home, Sindhu is itching for success and would be going full throttle here.

Sindhu's back-up in the women's singles is 32nd-ranked Aakarshi Kashyap,

winner of the Bangladesh International Challenge last month.

The men's singles will be led by world No.8 Prannoy and will also have world No.10 Lakshya Sen.

In men's doubles, Chirag Shetty will partner Dhruv Kapila in the absence of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, who has pulled out of the event due to a hip injury.

The other Indian pair in the men's doubles is Krishna Prasad Garga and Vishnuvardhan Goud P.

In Satwik's absence, the men's doubles remains India's weakest link as it will be very difficult for Kapila to pair up with Shetty and deliver against the top men's combinations of other Asian countries.

Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand will be the lead pair in women's doubles and will also have Ashwini Bhat and Shikha Gautam as back-up. Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto will be the only Indian pair to shoulder the mixed doubles duties.