

## RIMS again in trouble water: Ugly truth reveals nepotism and favouritism in selecting senior most Professors

IT News  
Imphal, Jan 29:

Perhaps an intentional negligence or may be a step motherly treatment from the side of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Imphal which is directly administered by the Ministry even though affiliated to the Manipur University has many times put in trouble water.

Since 2015, none from the Ministry has ever taken interest in the final approval of the seniority list of professors and doctors even after the Executive Council of the RIMS had prepared a tentative inter-se-seniority list, but even after 7 years, the authorities at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare still is not taking up the issues and kept pending due to which instability at RIMS once more occurred.

After premature repatriation of Dr. A. Santa from the post of Director, RIMS on 12 October, 2022, to his parent institution – North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institution of Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGRIMS), the authority of RIMS entrusted additional charge for the post of Director to Dr. L. Ranjit Singh on the same day until a regular Director is appointed. The appointment of a new regular director of RIMS is pending as of now even though process for the selection has been partially completed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

On 19 December, 2022, Manipur High Court has



directed the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India to appoint the senior most professor as in-charge director of the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Imphal. The ruling of the Manipur High Court came following a petition filed by one Dr. Hemam Priyosakhi Devi, Head of Department of ENT, RIMS challenging the legitimacy of the appointment of one Dr. L. Ranjit Singh (Prof. Obst & Gynaec) on the ground that Dr. L. Ranjit is not the senior most professor as per the tentative inter-se-seniority list of professors.

After hearing the argument of both the Counsels, the single bench of Justice Abanthen Bimol Singh of the Manipur High Court quashed the order of the RIMS authority (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India) that entrusted additional charge of Director RIMS to Prof. L. Ranjit Singh. The Manipur High Court further ordered to make fresh in-charge arrangement to fill the vacant post of Director, RIMS, Imphal strictly in terms of the provisions of Rule 12(1)(iii) of

the Rules and Regulations of RIMS. Provisions of Rule 12(1)(iii) of Regulations of RIMS says that "the officer to whom the additional charge is assigned is the senior most officer in the next lower grade and is clear from vigilance angle."

The Manipur High Court order, however stands justified as it stated that the tentative inter-se-seniority list of Professors (RIMS) submitted to the court by the petitioner's counsel has not been questioned or challenged by anybody. Thus, the Court accepted the tentative inter-se-senior list.

The order of the Manipur High Court dated 19 December last said to fill up the post on in charge basis to the most senior Professor. But the question arises here is how authentic is the tentative inter-se-seniority list of Professors (RIMS).

As per document submitted the Manipur High Court has delivered its order. But as the inter-se-seniority list that the petitioner claimed to have acquired through RTI has not been challenged it is pertinent to once more to get verified on who is the senior most Professor of RIMS.

### Who is the most senior Professor at RIMS, Imphal? Is there an approved and authentic seniority list of Professors at RIMS?

The last time that the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences issued a notice on inter-se-seniority list of Professors of RIMS, Imphal was on July 27, 2015. The notice was issued by the then Director of RIMS Professor S. Rita Devi. The notice of the inter-se-seniority list of Professors was issued after thorough scrutiny by a committee constituted with three eminent officials under the chairmanship of Prof. W. Gyaneshwar Singh, former director RIMS. However, resolution adopted on the 46th meeting of the Executive Council Society of RIMS, Imphal held on October 20, 2015 at around 2.30 pm in the first floor Committee Room of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, Nirman Bhavan, New Delhi under the chairmanship of the Secretary (H&FW) has resolved that 'the inter-se-seniority list of the faculty members was considered and observed that Executive Council cannot decide on the issue at this stage. The executive meeting also resolved that Ministry should examine it separately as it required a detailed examination, with reference to Rules and Regulations.

On 3 January, 2023, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (North East section) signed by Jitendra Kumar Jangid, Under Secy., Government of India wrote a letter to the Director RIMS in connection with the High Court order of December 19, 2022 to take immediate steps for finalizing the Seniority list of professors in RIMS, Imphal at the earliest. Earlier on 1 December, 2022, the same under secretary had written a letter to the Director to take immediate steps to finalize the Seniority list of Professors in RIMS, Imphal.

Following the intimation from the Ministry, final seniority list of the Professors at RIMS was prepared by a four member senior officials including one from outside the RIMS under the Chairmanship of Prof. L. Deban Singh, HoD, Anaesthesiology, RIMS. The other two members are Dr. Y. Gopal Krishna Singh, Additional Director, Manipur Health Services, Govt. of Manipur and Prof. Sarada Ningthoujam, Deptt. of Physiology, RIMS Imphal. Prof. Dr. AK Joy Singh, HoD of PMR, RIMS was the convenor. The committee after thorough study of the joining of the Professors as per official documents available

with the RIMS prepared the Seniority list on January 9, 2023. As per the findings of the four-member committee Prof. L. Ranjit Singh of Obst. & Gynaec was listed as the senior most professor of RIMS. His date of birth is 1 September, 1958. He was appointed to the post of Assistant Professor at the RIMS on February 1, 1997. Later he was promoted to Associate Professor on 1 February, 2005 and then promoted to the rank of Professor on February 1, 2009. Dr. Deban, Prof. and Head of the Anaesthesiology is listed as the second senior most professor. His date of birth is 1 Jan., 1962 and was appointed as the Assistant Professor, Associate professor and later Professor on the same date with Prof. Ranjit.

The third senior most professor is listed as Dr. M. Birkumar of the Surgery Department, RIMS. His date of birth is 1 March, 1960. He was appointed as Assistant professor at RIMS on 1 February, 1998, but promoted to associate Prof. and later to Professor on the same date with the above.

The fourth senior most professor is listed as Dr. AK Joy Singh, Head of PMR, RIMS. His date of birth is 1 Jan., 1962. He was appointed as Assistant Professor, RIMS

on 1 March, 1998 and promoted to Associate professor on the same day with the former professors mentioned above.

The fifth senior most professor of RIMS is listed as Dr. Priyosakhi Devi of ENT Deptt., RIMS. Her date of Birth is recorded as 5 June, 1960. She was appointed as Assistant Professor in February 1999. However, she was also promoted to Associate Prof. and later to the rank of Prof. on the same date with the four other senior professors.

As per the directives of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the seniority list prepared was sent to the Joint Secretary (NE), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India on 9 January, 2023 by the RIMS authority supported by documents.

Without going into the details or perhaps by side lining the seniority list submitted to the Ministry for approval by the RIMS panel, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare all of a sudden entrusted additional charge of RIMS Director to Prof. Priyosakhi by an order dated 16 January, 2023.

It is likely that the functioning of RIMS is likely to put on hold with another case challenging the seniority list coming at the Law Court.

on 1 March, 1998 and promoted to Associate professor on the same day with the former professors mentioned above.

The fifth senior most professor of RIMS is listed as Dr. Priyosakhi Devi of ENT Deptt., RIMS. Her date of Birth is recorded as 5 June, 1960. She was appointed as Assistant Professor in February 1999. However, she was also promoted to Associate Prof. and later to the rank of Prof. on the same date with the four other senior professors.

As per the directives of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the seniority list prepared was sent to the Joint Secretary (NE), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India on 9 January, 2023 by the RIMS authority supported by documents.

Without going into the details or perhaps by side lining the seniority list submitted to the Ministry for approval by the RIMS panel, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare all of a sudden entrusted additional charge of RIMS Director to Prof. Priyosakhi by an order dated 16 January, 2023.

It is likely that the functioning of RIMS is likely to put on hold with another case challenging the seniority list coming at the Law Court.

### Traffic diversion announced on Martyrs' Day

IT News  
Imphal, Jan 29:

There will be traffic diversion in Imphal on account of Martyrs' Day observation on January 30. The programme will be held at GM Hall.

A notification issued by Traffic Control Police Wing said that the traffic diversion will begin from 10 am and it will be followed till the function is over. As per the notification, all

vehicles coming from Singjamei towards Moirangkhom will be diverted from Singh & Co at Moirangkhom and proceed toward Keishamthong Bridge where those coming from Mayai Lambi and Kwakeithel will be diverted toward Wahengbam Leikai from Keishamthong Junction.

Vehicles coming from North AOC toward LIC Crossing will be diverted from the latter area toward Khoyathong, it said

and added that vehicles coming from Imphal East toward Sanjenthong Bridge will be diverted toward Loklaobung Bridge while vehicles coming toward Minuthong Bridge will be diverted toward Lamlong Bridge. All vehicles coming toward Western Gate of Kangla from Uripok side, on the other hand, will be diverted toward Nagamapal, the notification read.

### RTI activist Joykumar arrested

IT News  
Imphal, Jan 29:

Advocate Wahengbam Joykumar, 52, the son of Late W. Birbabu, was arrested by a team of Thoubal police from his residence in Wangkhlei, Hijam Imphal East District at around 8.30 p.m. yesterday. Joykumar is also an RTI activist.

According to the source, he was arrested under the supervision of the Thoubal police SDPO W



Ibomcha team in connection with the death of Laishram Rameshor on January 24.

The police issued an arrest memo in which a fir no. 17(1)2023 was issued under sections 307, 326, 342, and 302 IPC and 25(1-B) arms act.

### 'Let us protect and preserve Marjing Polo Statue'

IT News  
Imphal, Jan 29:

Director of Tourism W. Iboh Singh today called on the people of Heingang area to protect and preserve the 'Polo Statue' and its surrounding.

Speaking on the first foundation day of the Heingang Awang Development Committee Iboh said that the Polo Statue and its complex at Ibudhou Marjing Hill was constructed with an

estimated cost of around Rs. 36 crore and today it has become tourist destination of the world. He said that as per the directives of the Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, a session of the G-20 meet will be held at the Ibudhou Marjing Polo Complex in February.

The first foundation day was also attended by Pradhan, K. Jayenta, S. Tondang and Committee President, W. Lokendro.

## Statehood Demands in Nagaland and Tripura Likely to Queer Pitch for BJP in Forthcoming Assembly Elections in The Two States

By - Raj Kumar Bobichand

Amidst the statehood demands in Nagaland and Tripura by the Eastern Nagas and Tipraha indigenous people respectively, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaves no stone unturned to retain power in both the states.

Even as the elections to the State Assemblies of Nagaland and Tripura are scheduled, the demands for Frontier Nagaland and Greater Tipraland are

getting momentums and will have a significant impact this time. The political dynamics which prevailed in 2018 elections in both the states are very different. The ruling BJP's Government of India and the BJP cannot convince Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) and Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance (TIPRA) also known as Tipra Motha) which are spearheading statehood demands in Nagaland and

Tripura respectively.

In the 2018 elections to the state assemblies of both the states, the BJP managed to win the hearts and minds of the Eastern Nagas and indigenous peoples of Tripura by promising to fulfill their aspirations if BJP comes to the power.

However, the BJP cannot fulfill the aspirations of the statehood demanding peoples in both states though the BJP is in power both in Nagaland as a partner of Nagaland Democratic

Progressive Party (NDPP) while in Tripura securing 36 seats in the 60-seat state assembly and their ally Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) has eight seats.

Now, even as the Election Commission of India has scheduled Nagaland Assembly election on February 27 and all the political parties in the state gear up for the polls, the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) expressed its determination to abstain from

participating in the forthcoming elections until talks with the Government of India reached a logical conclusion.

According to reports, the decision to abstain was reaffirmed on January 26, the second day of the joint consultative meeting held at Konyak Morung in Dimapur. The ENPO president Tsapikur Sangtam said the joint consultative meet was attended by leaders of seven eastern tribal bodies, Eastern Nagaland

Women's Organisation (ENWO), Eastern Nagaland Students' Federation (ENSF) and the Talk Team. He also mentioned that the meeting discussed the proposal of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), adding that a delegation of the ENPO would be meeting the MHA constituted committee soon. The ENPO president reiterated that the August 26, 2022 resolution to abstain from the assembly election

still stands until talks between the MHA team and ENPO reach a logical conclusion. It may be mentioned that the decision of ENPO is fully backed by seven tribal bodies, who have also declared to abstain from election till the demand for 'Frontier Nagaland' is met, even as Eastern Nagaland Legislators' Union (ENLU) has declared its decision to participate in the election.

# Woman entitled to termination of pregnancy in rape cases: Delhi HC

By - Sanjeev Sirohi, Advocate

While speaking most vocally, most forthrightly, most commendably and most courageously, the Delhi High Court in a most laudable, learned, landmark and latest oral judgment titled *Minor R Thir Mother H vs State NCT of Delhi & Anr in W.P.(Cr) 221/2023* pronounced as recently as on January 25, 2023 has observed that denying a woman the right to medical termination of pregnancy in sexual assault cases and imposing the responsibility of motherhood on her, would amount to "denying her the human right to live with dignity" as she has a right in relation to her body including the right to say "yes or no" to being a mother. It must be noted that the Single Judge Bench of Hon'ble Ms Swarana Kanta Sharma said that to force the victim to give birth to the child of a man who sexually assaulted her would result in "unexplainable miseries". There can be just no denying or disputing what the Bench has held so elegantly, eloquently and effectively in this leading case!

At the very outset, this brilliant, best, balanced and boldest judgment authored by the single Judge Bench comprising of Hon'ble Ms Swarana Kanta Sharma sets the ball in motion by first and foremost putting forth in para 1 that, "The petitioner, a minor, has approached this Court through her mother under Article 226 of Constitution of India, praying for issuance of directions by virtue of writ of Mandamus to the Respondents to conduct medical termination of her pregnancy under Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, as amended in 2021 (hereinafter 'MTP Act')."

To put things in perspective, the Bench envisages in para 2 that, "Facts and circumstances compelling the petitioner to file the instant petition are that in the month of September 2022, the minor child R, i.e. petitioner, who is aged around 14 years, was sexually assaulted and raped by the accused named in

the FIR. Initially, though the petitioner missed her period for four months, she did not inform her mother about the same as she was scared. However, after her mother H noticed the physical changes in her, she had disclosed to her mother about the sexual assault. At the instance of petitioner/victim R, an FIR bearing no. 76/2023 was registered at Police Station Shalimar Bagh under Sections 376/328 of Indian Penal Code, 1860, and Section 4 of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012."

As it turned out, the Bench then discloses in para 3 that, "Thereafter, the petitioner was taken to BJRM Hospital for her MLC and her UPT was conducted which was found to be positive. On 19.01.2023, when she underwent a Medical Test/USG from a Diagnostic and Imaging Centre, she was found to be 24 weeks and 5 days pregnant. The Investigating Officer on 20.01.2023 approached the Child Welfare Committee-X, District-Outer North & North West Delhi, Alipur and the petitioner along with her mother were produced before the Board, whereby they stated that they do not wish to continue with the pregnancy of the petitioner and that she wishes to continue her education. However, on perusing the case of the petitioner, it was found that she was beyond the permissible gestational age limit under the MTP Act, 1971, hence she was directed to approach this Court and seek judicial intervention."

To be sure, the Bench then states in para 7.1 that, "The statutory law, under Section 3 of MTP Act provides that termination of pregnancy of a woman where it exceeds 20 weeks but does not exceed 24 weeks can only be allowed in special categories, and where the medical practitioners are of the opinion that continuance of such pregnancy would either involve a risk to the life of the woman or cause grave injury to her physical health or grave injury to her mental health. The categories under which pregnancy can be

terminated where pregnancy is between 20 to 24 weeks has been prescribed by the Central Government under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy, Rules 2003 [as amended by Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Rules, 2021], wherein seven categories have been provided which are as under: -

3B. Women eligible for termination of pregnancy up to twenty-four weeks.— The following categories of women shall be considered eligible for termination of pregnancy under clause (b) of sub-section (2) Section 3 of the Act, for a period of up to twenty-four weeks, namely:—

- (a) survivors of sexual assault or rape or incest;
- (b) minors;
- (c) change of marital status during the ongoing pregnancy (widowhood and divorce);
- (d) women with physical disabilities [major disability as per criteria laid down under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (49 of 2016)];
- (e) mentally ill women including mental retardation;
- (f) the foetal malformation that has substantial risk of being incompatible with life or if the child is born it may suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities to be seriously handicapped; and
- (g) women with pregnancy in humanitarian settings or disaster or emergency situations as may be declared by the Government. (Emphasis supplied)."

Quite ostensibly, the Bench points out in para 7.2 that, "A perusal of the aforesaid Rule reveals that clause (a) relates to victims of sexual assault, rape or incest and clause (b) relates to minors. In the present case, the victim falls under both, i.e. clause (a) and (b) as she is a minor aged around 14 years, who is alleged to have been raped. Therefore, the victim would fall under the special categories as enumerated by the Central Government under the rules notified as per the mandate of section 3(2)(b)

of MTP Act."

Quite naturally, the Bench then states succinctly in para 7.3 that, "Furthermore, Explanation 2 to the aforesaid provision explicitly provides that where pregnancy is alleged to have been caused by an act of rape, the anguish caused by such a pregnancy shall be presumed to constitute grave injury to the mental health of pregnant woman as required under Section 3(2)(i) of MTP Act. Therefore, it is not in dispute that in case of a minor victim who is alleged to be sexually assaulted or raped and as a consequence of which she has conceived, the injury that is caused to her mental health is presumed even statutorily."

Be it noted, the Bench observes in para 8 that, "Mother of the victim child is also present in the Court and since the petitioner is carrying pregnancy beyond the permissible limit of 24 weeks as per amended act, the consent of the guardian of the minor child is required. On 24.01.2023, when the petition had come up for hearing, considering the urgency in this matter, and the fact that after the last medical examination of victim child on 19.01.2023 when she was found to be about 24 weeks and 05 days pregnant, one more week had already passed, this Court had deemed it appropriate to ask the mother of the victim child in Court itself as to whether she has consent for the medical termination of pregnancy to take place in this case, in a hospital which has a board so constituted for this purpose. The statement of the mother H of victim child R was accordingly recorded by this Court."

Do also note, the Bench lays bare in para 10 that, "Under similar circumstances, the Hon'ble Apex Court in *Venkatalakshmi v. State of Karnataka*, Civil Appeal 15378/2017, dated 21.09.2017, as well as Co-ordinated Benches of this Court in *Ms X through Her Legal Guardian v. Government of NCT of Delhi & Anr*, 2022 SCC Online Del 2642 and in *Surekha Gautam Khobragade v.*

State of NCT of Delhi Through Department of Health and Family Welfare, W.P. (Cr) 69/2021, dated 18.01.2021 had also allowed termination of pregnancies of more than 24 weeks in cases of rape victims."

Most forthrightly, the Bench states in para 12 that, "In the case of sexual assault, denying a woman right to say no to medical termination of pregnancy and fasten her with responsibility of motherhood would amount to denying her human right to live with dignity as she has a right in relation to her body which includes saying Yes or No to being a mother. Section 3(2) of the MTP Act reiterates that right of a woman. To force the victim to give birth to child of a man who sexually assaulted would result in unexplainable miseries. One will shudder to think what a victim who is carrying such fetus in her womb must be going through each day, being reminded constantly of the sexual assault that she has undergone. Cases where sexual assault results into pregnancy of the victim are even more traumatic as the shadow of such tragic moment lingers on each day with the victim. It is this mental agony which has been taken into account by the MTP Act which lays emphasis on not only grave physical injury but also mental health of a pregnant woman. It therefore provides under Section 3(2)(i) that if the continuance of pregnancy would involve grave injury to the mental health of a pregnant woman, she can legitimately seek to terminate the same. In furtherance of the same intent, Section 3(2) Explanation 2 of the MTP Act provides that -

"Explanation 2.- Where any pregnancy occurs as a result of failure of any device or method used by any married woman or her husband for the purpose of limiting the number of children, the anguish caused by such unwanted pregnancy may be presumed to constitute a grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman."

The present case stands covered under this explanation."

Quite unambiguously, we see that the Bench notes in para 13 that, "In this context, it is not in dispute that a female invariably has a right to make reproductive choices and decisions which are concerned with her bodily integrity and autonomy. Reliance in this regard can be placed upon the decision of the Hon'ble Apex Court in *X v. The Principal Secretary Health and Family Welfare Department & Anr*, SLP (C) No(s).12612/2022 dated 21.07.2022, and *Suchita Srivastava v. Chandigarh Administration* (2009) 9 SCC 1. The Hon'ble Apex Court in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) and Anr v. Union of India and Ors.* (2017) 10 SCC 1, has also observed that the choice regarding procreation is an integral part of right to dignity enshrined under Article 21 of Indian Constitution."

Most remarkably, the Bench holds in para 14 that, "This Court takes note of the fact that Article 21 of the Constitution of India dealing with right to life invariably includes a life lived with dignity. The child herein is a victim of rape. Termination of pregnancy in cases, like present one, cannot be reduced merely to be defined as right of a woman sexually assaulted, but also to be recognized as a human right, as it affects dignified existence of a victim if the same is not permitted. It is not the privacy of the rape victim which is invaded by sexual assault, but her body is wounded and her soul is scared. It would not be appropriate to expect the minor victim who is a rape victim to take the burden of giving birth and raising a child, especially in a situation where she herself is passing through the age of adolescence. Doing so, will amount to asking a child to give birth and raise another child. Given the social, financial, and other factors that are immediately associated with the pregnancy, an unwanted pregnancy would surely have an impact on victim's mental health."

## Dream as a Vision for an inclusive future

By - Samuel Ragland Kavahing M

The most magnificent places with idyllic sceneries where sunlight did not scorch its land or enervate the inhabitants of their vitality. These places are often traversed through meandering roads that embrace the jagged mountains. The sweet summer, with torrential downpours, and piercing winters gambol among these states. A tale of the North Eastern states of India: the lands of tribes, the lands of growth. It is forgotten by most Indians but, nevertheless, contributes to the nation, India.

From within these states came a child; to pursue his education, to compete against his generation: so that he'd meet the modern standards, and to contribute to the nation. His father was born in 1979; then, by 2000, he married a woman and begot a son; it was their pride, his family's joy. And, the father, prudent in actions, wanted to give his son the best of the best education available; so, he sent the son far away. Far from where they lived. As the father's work compelled him to move often.

Oh! But desires don't meet their heights. Quite contrary to what the father desired for his son: happiness; unity and cultural understanding. This he wanted for his son to comprehend and assimilate, but alas, it was not the

case. Instead, this was what happened, and his son narrated: "My father, what is this? As I've grown older, I have heard such absurdity, such foolishness—not from friends for they know me well—but enquires from other students and people alike, they question me 'where are you from? Where do you live?' And, when I say, 'from Manipur, I come,' they blink. Again, I say, 'from the North Eastern States, I come'; they are not confirmed yet! They retort back, 'is it from China you come?' Or 'is it situated in China or Japan?' Their confounding behavior! when they see me, their expression is not amiable or welcoming, but it is of inexplicable hatred. Is it because of how we look? Or, is it because we are better in what we do, father? Yet let my tale not appall you for I have more to say. An incident much worse than mine.

I shall not complain and argue about what I've experienced—wait till you've heard my compeer's abuses. He has experienced insults far worse than mine. Sadly, one of my friends, without any examination or interrogation, although he speaks the language, was mocked for how he looked. And those people knew where he was from, and so they asked him to go away.

They said, 'go sell Momos,' and 'work in a restaurant as a bus boy.' They taunted him with scorn and

disdain. He did not seek respect, father. For who is he? He only wanted companions, and he wanted to survive by working his way through school. Furthermore, like me, he wanted to excel in what he did, and to improve his standards; but above all, to constitute his ability for the nation where he lived in. But the poor boy was maimed. Now, even after police protection and care, he limps!" The son perorated his speech with bitter and despondent tears.

The father, then, pondered for a while on what the son said. He added more to what his son had told him. He had heard of such news, such brutality! And so, he replied, "yes, son, it is true. What you have said is right. What did our people do! Not *our* people but the nation's. All of them had one thing in common: none committed a crime. No one was wrong, and not one bothered the other, did they? All they did was to contribute to the nation. They only did what was said, and what was essential. Did not the prime minister himself say to create employment—to fight unemployment? To improve the economy, unemployment needs to be managed, so what did we do? We did what we knew! What was best for the nation and for us! You were sent far away for your education; I wanted you to become civil servant: I wished for you to serve the people of the nation. The people who do not know where we come from! We are Indians!"

"When we say India, as every individual is cognizant of "Unity in

diversity." "A land of cultures " Et al., all citizens are proud of such diversity and harmony. However, son, if that is not practiced, then let us, the victims, practice that. Let us stir that latent potentiality to contribute. Those who contribute to the nation, yet hold prejudices, are superficial and pernicious to the nation's vision. It is similar to constructing a building then tearing it down; not immediately but brick by brick. *Morality is the complement of a contribution*, be it for the vision or for their benefit. Either way their deeds affect them, positively or negatively, pertaining to what they've done. Son, have you talked back or have you had malice while you encountered such an event?"

"No," he answered immediately. "Did that pitiful friend of yours fight back?"

The son said, "no, father." "Neither did the boy who was almost beaten to death," his father added; "then, son, this *is* the vision: not practicing violence."

"Basically, this is how it should be perceived: if the colors of the rainbow were one, would there be such admiration, such excitement to look at one; if the nature was only trees and nothing else, will there be any trees left? Then, if it is only one race or lineage of people, what is so great about that? What kind of pride is harnessed when such people have behaved like tyrants and despots: with such parochial and foolish mind sets. No, son, that is not right! That is not what one should follow; so, from now on

teach this, explain and stand up for this. To those who abuse, and to those who are nescient of the North Eastern states and *others*. Let us attain pride in doing so; don't argue but explain, and strive for this kind of a vision."

The son was confused, "others?" "Yes, son, *others*. I speak of all minorities. Oh! All of us face such oppressions." And then, he added, "so does every individual in life, yet some have the basic necessities: a monthly income, a home, and an education. But for the minorities, they were repressed from the earlier days till today. Our fathers lacked education but not a heart or the governing principles of traditions. They were deprived of rights as if they weren't humans at all! If they worked in the fields, grazed herd of cows, and expected a plentiful harvest, how will the get an education? then, how will they get a job? *The world has changed! The society too! Yet the mindset hasn't.*"

The son nodded with inexplicable joy—it is the truth! The reality of a nation. "So, the minorities contribute to the economy like the others, except the ones who hold or suppress the minorities because they hamper the growth of the economy. Thus, we need this vision that blends all genders regardless of caste and creed. Without malice and prejudices. We need to teach and help (like some others who stand for the same cause too). This is how we are contributing to the vision." The son paused to take a breath and continued.

*"Also, most importantly, one should never stop what education entitles them to do; by education we serve the nation, and by a peaceful stand against violence we, like others who do the same, contribute to a vision, father. Am I right?"*

The father grimly stood without an answer; suddenly his cast out his emotions through tears that resembled all minorities, their pain, woe and abuses, everything conglomerated in his act.

This is the truth! This is how the reality should be consolidated. The son stood there, in front of his lachrymose dad, almost as if he were the father, he felt his father's tears. Then, he felt that he could scale any taunting hills and mountains that he would come across in life. For there were many who had lost their lives during the journey, but fears will not hamper his path: he will tread as long as he has breath. All this the son was determined to follow yet there was no tears in his eyes. The son had cried but he will no more; he will shed tears of joy when his mission is accomplished. His father tears waned and transitioned into filial love towards his son. The father hugged his son, he knew his son will adhere to what he has learnt from the conversation. His son will be a blessing not only to the nation but to him as well; to his family and people too. The son will work diligently for this type of a vision.

(The writer can be reached at [Samuelraglandkavahing@gmail.com](mailto:Samuelraglandkavahing@gmail.com))

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times'

can be sent to our e-mail: [imphaltimes@gmail.com](mailto:imphaltimes@gmail.com).

For advertisement kindly contact: - 0385-3590336 (O). For time being readers can reach the office at Cell Phone No. 9862860745 for any purpose.

# French Navy Ship "Marne" Visits Mumbai The other ships of the Carrier Strike Group are berthed at Goa



By Raju Vernekar  
Mumbai, January 29

French Navy Ship "Marne" which is part of the Carrier Strike Group (CSG) of the French nuclear-propelled aircraft carrier "Charles de Gaulle" (CDG) recently visited Mumbai during which its officers interacted with their Indian counterparts.

The ship was on a goodwill visit to Mumbai from January 21 to January 28. She is under the command of Commander Pierre-Alban Pancrazi.

While CDG and other ships of the CSG, French Naval Ships "Forbin" and "Provence", are berthed at Goa, the fleet tanker "Marne" was anchored off Mumbai.

At Mumbai, Commander Pancrazi called on Vice

Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, Chief of Staff, Western Naval Command (WNC) and discussed subjects of mutual interest. During the ship's stay at the port, the crew visited various places of interest.

Over the decades, defence engagement between India and France has grown significantly. The current CSG visit to Mumbai and Goa provided excellent training value and enhanced interoperability in the maritime domain. With common interest in bolstering regional peace and stability, the two navies remain committed to working together, an official statement read.

Marne is a Durance class command and replenishment

tanker of the French Navy. In addition to its primary duty as a fleet tanker, Marne is configured as a flagship and has served as such in the Indian Ocean.

In French service, the fleet three are (BCR, "command and replenishment ship"). In addition to their role as a fleet tanker, the three ships dubbed BCR can accommodate an entire general staff and thus supervise naval operations as a command ship. The three ships of the class designated BCRs, "Var", "Marne" and "Somme" all have superstructures that were extended aft by 8 m (26 ft) to accommodate the additional staff requirements. The BCRs have one crane positioned along the centreline.

# 9 SCO Film Festival 2023 opens in Mumbai I&B Minister Anurag Thakur calls for forging cinematic partnership among SCO nations

IT News  
Mumbai, Jan 29:

The five day SCO Film Festival opened in Mumbai Friday evening in a glittering ceremony with the Union Minister Shri Anurag Thakur and Minister of State Ms. Meenakshi Lekhi lighting the lamp along with other dignitaries.

The Guest of Honour at the opening ceremony Ms. Hema Malini and other eminent film personalities like Akshay Kumar, Tiger Shroff, Sajid Nadiadwala, Esha Gupta, Poonam Dhillon, Eli Avram, Hrishita Bhatt and Jacky Bhagnani were felicitated on the occasion.

"Indian movies are a rage across SCO countries and have played a great role in people-to-people connections," said the Minister of Information & Broadcasting, Shri Anurag Singh Thakur adding that showcasing the diversity of films and styles of film making from SCO region is a major goal of the film festival. Shri Thakur further said this festival provides an incredible opportunity to forge cinematic

partnership between the countries of this region.

The SCO Film Festival screens a total of 57 films and 14 Films have been nominated in the Competition Section of the Film Festival. These include PanNalin's Oscar short listed Gujarati Film 'ChheloShow' and Nikhil Mahajan's award winning Marathi Film 'Godavari'.

The SCO Film Festival is being held during India's Presidency of the International

Cooperation Organization. It also coincides with the celebration of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

**'Bharat Hai Hum' animation series promo released**

On this occasion, the Promo of the animation series "Bharat Hai Hum" was released. The 52 part series being produced by the Central Bureau of Communication in collaboration with Graphiti Multi Media on behalf of the

Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, tells the story of known and unknown freedom fighters to our most precious audience - the Children. The series under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav banner is being anchored by the affable cartoon characters Krish, Trish and Baltiboy created by Munjal Shroff and Tilak Shetty. Veteran playback singer Sudesh Bhosale has given the voice over.

# Prof. Yunus will grace Bodoland International Knowledge Festival

By a correspondent  
Guwahati, Jan 29:

Bangladesh's lone Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus is expected to grace the forthcoming Bodoland International Knowledge Festival at Kokrajhar in western Assam scheduled for 27 February to 2 March next. Widely acclaimed as a banker to the poor, Prof Yunus is going to address the inaugural function of the unique festival, organized for the first time by the Bodoland Territorial Region, a territorial autonomous council in Assam, in Bodoland University.

Thematic areas of the four-day festival, to be held in Bodoland University of northeast India, include Science & Technology, Livelihood, Indigenous Knowledge System, Gender Empowerment, Child Rights & Protection, Peace Building, Good Governance, Human Rights, Sustainable Agriculture, Youth Entrepreneurship, Intellectual



Professor Muhammad Yunus

Property Rights, Quality Education, Climate Justice & Action, Health & Wellbeing, Art & Culture, Communication & Media, etc. Prof Yunus, who was honoured with the Nobel peace prize (along with the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh in 2006), conceptualized the small loans to women borrowers without any collateral a few decades back. The soft-spoken gentleman is recognised as a revolutionary economist turned a successful banker,

social entrepreneur turned a civil society leader. Once a professor in Chittagong University, Dr Yunus has penned some valuable books and been awarded with several other national and international honours including the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Pramod Boro, chief of Bodoland Territorial Council, stated that the unique festival has been initiated with the goal to create, foster and promote knowledge exchange and solution sharing. "It seeks to provide a platform for thought leaders, educators, researchers and practitioners to engage with constituents of higher education institutions in BTR through participation in interactive and collaborative workspace, discussions and presentations", said Boro adding that a plethora of sessions aiming to encourage spontaneous and informal exchange of ideas and discussions for deepening ties and partnerships will be key features of the festival.

Contd. from Page 2

# Woman entitled to termination of .....

It is worth noting that the Bench notes in para 15 that, "The Child Welfare Committee report, annexed with the instant petition, regarding interaction with the child is on record. Perusal of the same as well as interaction with the child and the mother with this Court, disclosed that the child has studied upto 5th standard and after return from the village, she has not been able to continue her studies, though she wants to study further. Having no permanent place to stay, the mother and the victim child are the victims of circumstances and misfortune which has befallen the young lady of tender years. Sexually assaulted in absence of her mother who had gone to work, she was too scared to seek help or to even inform her mother about sexual assault fearing the consequences. Unfortunately, she was not aware due to her tender age that non-disclosure of this fact may further invite a more miserable situation which may be difficult to fix."

What's more, the Bench then mandates in para 16 that, "In these circumstances, this Court is inclined to direct as under:

i. The petitioner/victim shall make herself available at 11:00 AM on 27th January, 2023 before the competent authority of Ram Manohar Lohiya Hospital, New Delhi for the purpose of medical termination of her pregnancy;

ii. The Superintendent, Ram Manohar Lohiya Hospital, New Delhi and the Medical Board will ensure that the termination of pregnancy of the minor victim/petitioner is undertaken by competent doctors in accordance with the provisions of the MTP Act, its

rules and all other rules, regulations and guidelines prescribed for the purpose;

iii. A complete record of the procedure which will be performed on the petitioner for termination of her pregnancy shall be maintained by the Medical Board;

iv. The doctors concerned shall also preserve the tissue of the foetus as the same may be necessary for DNA identification and other purposes, in reference to the criminal case which is registered against the accused by the petitioner/victim;

v. The State shall bear all the expenses necessary for the termination of the pregnancy of the petitioner, her medicines, food etc.;

vi. If the child is born alive, despite the attempts at medical termination of the pregnancy, the doctors concerned shall ensure that everything, which is reasonably possible and feasible in the circumstances and in contemplation of the law prescribed for the purpose, is offered to such child so that he/she develops into a healthy child."

It cannot be glossed over that the Bench notes in para 24 that, "It is also pertinent to note that the victim child was carrying pregnancy of 25 weeks when she was produced before this Court. Due to financial constraints, they were able to file a writ petition only through Delhi High Court Legal Services Committee. In these circumstances, this Court feels that crucial time is lost in the process of passing orders for medical examination of victim by a board in case of 24 weeks or above of pregnancy due to

sexual assault which further endangers her life.

24.1. Considering the same, this Court passes the following guidelines to be followed by the investigating officers, in cases where pregnancy exceeds 24 weeks, which will be circulated through the Commissioner of Police to all investigating officers concerned:

i. At the time of medical examination of a victim of sexual assault, it will be mandatory to conduct a Urine Pregnancy Test, as in many cases, this Court has noticed that such test is not conducted.

ii. Upon the victim being found pregnant due to sexual assault, and in case the victim is major gives her consent and expresses her desire for conducting medical termination of pregnancy, the concerned investigating officer will ensure that on the same day, the victim will be produced before such Medical Board envisaged under Section 3 of MTP Act, which this Court has been informed is constituted in following four hospitals in Delhi: (i) All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, (ii) Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, New Delhi, (iii) Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi, and (iv) Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, New Delhi.

iii. In case a minor victim of sexual assault is carrying pregnancy, upon the consent of her legal guardian and desire of such legal guardian for termination of pregnancy, the victim will be produced before such Board.

iv. In case a minor victim is examined by such Board, appropriate report will be placed before concerned

authorities, so that if an order is being sought regarding termination of pregnancy from the Courts, the Court concerned does not lose any more time and is in a position to pass an order on the same expeditiously.

v. As per Section 3(2C) and 3(2D) of MTP Act, it is mandated that the State Government or Union Territory has to ensure that the Medical Boards are to be constituted in the hospitals. The Court is informed that such boards are not available in hospitals in each district, causing inconvenience to the Investigating Officers as well as to the victim at times who has to be taken for MTP and for further examination. Thus, State Government/Union Territory should ensure that such mandate of Section 3(2C) and 3(2D) of MTP Act, are complied with and such Boards are constituted in all Government Hospitals which have proper MTP Centres and it should be mandatory to have such Boards constituted before hand.

24.2. The Ministry of Health Affairs, Government of NCT of Delhi and Union Ministry for Health Affairs will share the compliance of the aforesaid guidelines/ directions with this Court within two months."

In conclusion, we thus see for ourselves that the Delhi High Court has laid down so very commendably, cogently and convincingly in this notable case that a woman is entitled to termination of pregnancy in rape cases. It is also made absolutely clear by Hon'ble Ms Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma that she has the right to say 'yes' or 'no' to being a mother! Very rightly so!

# Integrated Fire Power and Manoeuvre Exercise- 2022-23

IT Correspondent  
Mumbai, January 29:

In an impressive display of capabilities of mechanised warfare platforms in the arsenal of Indian Mechanised Forces, the Integrated Fire Power and Manoeuvre Exercise-2022-23 (IFPME) being held at Kharajna Khare (KK) Ranges in Ahmednagar in Maharashtra was concluded on Saturday.

The exercise showcased effective man-machine integration as part of conventional assured response strategy in an integrated and networked battlefield. The exercise included all tracked platforms, viz T-90 Bhisma, T-72 Ajeya, MBT Arjun, BMP-II, Carrier Mortar Tracked, Attack and Utility Helicopters, fixed wing assets of the Air Force and Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance platforms, an official statement read.

Most modern equipment in the inventory of the army fired with precision in cohesion with each other, with the main attraction being T-90 tanks.

The spectators were enthralled by the sight of tanks charging on to them, supported by covering fire and bombardment by Artillery and Air Force Fighter Aircrafts. On termination of this manoeuvre, spectators had an opportunity to see the Tanks, Infantry Combat Vehicles (ICVs), different weapon platforms and ammunition from close quarters and assess their capability.

The spectacular demonstration of fire power and manoeuvre showcased Mechanised Forces capabilities, proficiency and operational preparedness. The ear-deafening thunder of Tanks and Infantry Combat Vehicles (ICVs), which unleashed their lethal and accurate fire power left the viewers awestruck.

The exercise was witnessed by officers undergoing Defence Services Staff Course, Defence Service Technical Staff Courses and an officers' delegation from Nepal Army.

The exercise was organised

under the aegis of the Armoured Corps Centre and School (ACC&S) and the Mechanised Infantry Regimental Centre (MIRC). These institutions, besides training the personnel of our Armoured Forces, also train students from friendly foreign countries in Mechanised Warfare and Technical Training on Armoured Fighting Vehicles.

The innovative manoeuvres in a simulated battlefield environment by composite combat entities capable of leveraging new age technologies were showcased by these centres, which are premier training institutions of the Indian Army.

These institutions, besides training the personnel of our Armoured Forces, also train students from friendly foreign countries in Mechanised Warfare and Technical Training on Armoured Fighting Vehicles. They train students in the two streams of Tactics and Operational Art along with Mechanised Warfare Technology.



# AR foils smuggling of brown sugar

IT News  
Imphal, Jan 29:

Tengnoupal Battalion under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) foiled Cross border smuggling of Brown Sugar at Village Khudengthabi, Tengnoupal on Saturday. On the previous day Modi Battalion of Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) also apprehended one individual with 2.918kg Brown sugar worth Rupees 5.83 Crore.

A statement by AR said that a team of AR launched operation in Village Khudengthabi area after getting information of smuggling of Contraband items. During the Operation, 525 grams of Brown Sugar Drugs in 12 Packets was recovered. The seized Narcotics Drugs were assessed to be worth Rs 1.05 Crores.



The recovered Narcotic Drugs were handed over to Moreh Police for further legal proceedings.

On the other hand Modi Battalion along with team of Tengnoupal Police Station

seized of 2.918 Kg of brown sugar in 70 soap cases and apprehension of one person by a Mobile Vehicle Check Post in Larong Khunao village, Tengnoupal district. The contraband was hidden in the

fuel tank of Eco car No TEMPL A92553.

The apprehended individual along with brown sugar and vehicle were handed over to Tengnoupal PS for further legal proceedings.

## Mann ki Baat programme: PM Modi describes India as mother of democracy

Agency  
New Delhi, Jan 29:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today called India the Mother of Democracy saying that democracy is in the veins and culture of the Indian people. Addressing the nation in the 97th episode of his Mann Ki Baat programme on All India Radio, Mr Modi highlighted that India is the largest democracy in the world and has a democratic society by nature.

The Prime Minister said that Dr. BR Ambedkar had compared the Buddhist monks' union to the Indian Parliament. He described it as an institution where there were many rules for Motions, Resolutions, Quorum, Voting, and counting of votes. Mr. Modi stated that Babasaheb believed that Lord Buddha must have taken inspiration from the political systems of that time.

Mr. Modi mentioned a book, India - The Mother of Democracy, which contains many excellent essays on India's culture of democracy. He spoke about a small but famous village in Tamil Nadu - Uthiramerur. The village has an inscription belonging to 1100 to 1200 years ago. This rock edict is like a mini-constitution. The inscription has a detailed explanation of how the Gram Sabha should be conducted and the procedure for the selection of its members.

The Prime Minister said Anubhav Mandapam of Lord Basaveshwara of the 12th century is another example of democratic values in the history of India. Free debate and discussion were encouraged in Anubhav Mandapam. He noted with surprise that Anubhav Mandapam was even before the Magna Carta. Mr. Modi said the republican traditions of the Kakatiya dynasty kings of Warangal were also very famous.

He added that the Bhakti movement furthered the culture of democracy in western India. He also spoke about the democratic spirit of the Sikh Panth which throws light on the decisions taken by the consensus of Guru Nanak Dev. The Prime Minister also

mentioned community-driven and consensus-driven decision-making in the Oraon and Munda tribes of Central India. He highlighted that the spirit of democracy has been flowing in every part of the country for centuries. He stressed that the people of India should think deeply about this topic, discuss it and inform the world about this aspect. He said, this will further strengthen the spirit of democracy in the country.

The Prime Minister exuded pride that the United Nations took the decision of observing both International Yoga Day and International Year of Millets after India's proposal. He pointed out another commonality between the two by saying that both yoga and millet are related to health. He said that public participation in both campaigns is another commonality. He was happy to note that people are adopting millets on a large scale and making millets a part of their diet. He said, this has a huge and visible impact on small farmers who traditionally produced millet. He also hailed the fact that Farmer Producer Organisations and entrepreneurs have started efforts to market millets and make them available to people. Mr. Modi spoke about KB Rama Subba Reddy who is a resident of the Nandyal district of Andhra Pradesh. Mr. Reddy left a well-paying job and started a millet processing unit in his village. The Prime Minister also mentioned Shamila Oswal, a resident of Kenad village near Alibaug in Maharashtra who has been contributing to millet production in a unique way for the last 20 years. She is imparting training in smart agriculture to farmers and her efforts have not only increased the yield of millets but also increased the income of the farmers, he added.

The Prime Minister urged listeners to visit Millets Cafe when they visit Raigarh in Chhattisgarh. Items like Chilla, Dosa, Momos, Pizza and Manchurian are becoming very popular in this Millets Cafe, he mentioned. Mr. Modi also praised the Milletspreneurs of Odisha who are in the limelight these days.

He noted that a Self Help Group of about 1500 women in the tribal district Sundergarh is associated with the Odisha Millets Mission. He also mentioned the Aland Bhootai Millets Farmers Producer Company which began work last year under the supervision of the Indian Institute of Millets Research in Kalaburgi of Karnataka.

The Prime Minister also hailed women in Karnataka's Bidar district, who are associated with the Hulsor Millet Producer Company. They are cultivating millet as well as prepare their flour. The Prime Minister also took note of the good work of farmers from 12 States who joined the FPO of Chhattisgarh's Sandeep Sharma. This FPO of Bilaspur makes eight types of millet flour and their dishes, said Mr. Modi.

The Prime Minister expressed happiness that nutritious and tasty dishes made from millet are being served wherever G-20 summit events are being held in the country. Dishes like Bajra-khichdi, poha, kheer and roti, as well as Ragi-based payasam, puri and dosa are being served there.

Mr. Modi said, health drinks, cereals and noodles made from millet were showcased in the Millets Exhibitions at all G-20 Venues. He said, Indian Missions around the world are also making a lot of efforts to increase their popularity. Mr. Modi stated that this increasing demand for millet in the world is going to give strength to small farmers. He congratulated the listeners of 'Mann Ki Baat' for such a wonderful start to the International Year of Millets and for relentlessly taking it forward.

Speaking about the Padma Awards announced recently, Mr. Modi noted that there has been a good representation of the tribal community and people associated with tribal life this time. He said that many great personalities who have worked on tribal languages like Toto, Ho, Kui, Kuvi and Manda have received Padma Awards. He expressed delight that the entire nation has become familiar with Dhanu Ram Toto, Janum Singh Soy and B. Ramakrishna Reddy. He added

that people working with tribals like Siddhi, Jarawa and Onge have also been honoured this time. They include Hirabai Lobi, Ratan Chandra Kar and Ishwar Chandra Verma. Prime Minister said, tribal communities have been an integral part of India's land and heritage.

Mr. Modi said, this year, the echoes of the Padma Awards are being heard even in those areas which used to be Naxal affected. He informed that people who show the right path to misguided youth in Naxalite-affected areas have been honoured with Padma awards. Ajay Kumar Mandavi, who does wood carving in Kanker, and Parshuram Komaji Khune, associated with the famous Jharipatti Ranghoomi of Gadchiroli, have also received this honour.

The Prime Minister expressed happiness that nutritious and tasty dishes made from millet are being served wherever G-20 summit events are being held in the country. Dishes like Bajra-khichdi, poha, kheer and roti, as well as Ragi-based payasam, puri and dosa are being served there. Mr. Modi said, health drinks, cereals and noodles made from millet were showcased in the Millets Exhibitions at all G-20 Venues. He said, Indian Missions around the world are also making a lot of efforts to increase their popularity. Mr. Modi stated that this increasing demand for millet in the world is going to give strength to small farmers. He congratulated the listeners of 'Mann Ki Baat' for such a wonderful start to the International Year of Millets and for relentlessly taking it forward.

Speaking about the Padma Awards announced recently, Mr. Modi noted that there has been a good representation of the tribal community and people associated with tribal life this time. He said that many great personalities who have worked on tribal languages like Toto, Ho, Kui, Kuvi and Manda have received Padma Awards. He expressed delight that the entire nation has become familiar with Dhanu Ram Toto, Janum Singh Soy and B. Ramakrishna Reddy. He added

Contd. from Page 1

## Statehood Demands in Nagaland and Tripura Likely to Queer Pitch

Though the ENPO does not divulge the details of the meeting, reports said that the meeting has centred on a "blueprint" planned by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs outlining the Government of India's proposal to the ENPO demand for statehood.

Reports said the so-called "blueprint," the content of which remains highly confidential, contains a number of proposals from the GoI. The ENPO was reportedly at variance on two points, one of which relates to the offer of greater financial and legislative autonomy over land, resources and development funding to the districts in Eastern Nagaland dominated by the Chang, Konyak, Khiamnungan, Phom, Sangtam, Yimkhiong and Tikhir.

The other relates to the Naga political issue or, in other words, the impact of a separate state for Eastern Nagaland would have on the ongoing political negotiations and the imagined outcome of the talks of the GoI with NNPG and NSCN (IM).

However, the ENPO has maintained that their demand should not be mixed up with the Naga political issue, while reiterating that it is wholly related to development and lack thereof in the Eastern Nagaland districts; and their demand and the Nagaland political issue should be kept separate. And the ENPO reportedly wants their demand fulfilled by January 30 after which elections should take place.

Notably, the six eastern districts of Nagaland - Tuensang, Mon, Longleng, Kiphire, Noklak, and Shamator, which are home to the state's seven tribes who are demanding for a separate state of Frontier Nagaland, have 20 assembly constituencies.

On the other hand, in Tripura, the indigenous Tipraha people's party TIPRA also known as Tipra Motha chief Pradyot Manikya Debbarma on January 27 announced that his party will not be allying with any formation in absence of a written assurance accepting their demand of Greater Tipraland, ahead of the Tripura assembly elections scheduled on February 16, 2023.

It may be mentioned that Pradyot's father Kirit Bikram Manikya, though a minor at the time, was the king of Tripura when the independent kingdom merged with India on October 15, 1949. Pradyot himself has served as the working president of the Congress party in Tripura before resigning in September 2019. After leaving the Tripura Congress he leads TIPRA for Tipraland to protect the rights and culture of the indigenous Tipraha people.

According to Pradyot, 'Greater Tipraland' will be a separate state carved out of

the existing state of Tripura, which is India's third-smallest state in terms of area. The Greater Tipraland includes the region under Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous district Council (TTAACDC) and 36 villages out of it within the Tripura state boundaries.

The new ethnic homeland will primarily be for indigenous communities of the region which have been reduced to a numerical minority due to the influx of displaced Bengalis from East Bengal during Partition.

Another wave of Bengali migrants took refuge in Tripura during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. According to the 2011 Census, Bengali was the mother tongue of 24.14 lakh people in Tripura. This represents two-thirds of the 36.74 lakh population then, and nearly three times the 8.87 lakh who speak Kokborok — a language of the Tibeto-Burman family and the mother tongue of the largest tribal group.

Unlike before, in the political context of Tripura, this time TIPRA or Tipra Motha has emerged as an insurmountable political force. Tipra Motha, which has had a meteoric rise since winning 18 of 28 seats in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACDC) in 2021, has once again brought the demand of Greater Tipraland state to the fore.

Meanwhile, the IPFT is currently in talks with Pradyot for a merger with TIPRA. Since 2021, three IPFT MLAs and one BJP MLA have joined TIPRA. Therefore, both the ruling BJP and the alliance of Left led by CPI (M) and Congress were keen on having Tipra Motha on board. The Tipra Motha also negotiated with both sides, including a dialogue with Home Minister Amit Shah and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Delhi.

TIPRA chief Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debarman said that he has received intimation from the Ministry of Home Affairs that they would like to talk to us on party's demand for a constitutional solution to demand of Greater Tipraland.

Pradyot met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on January 25. He also met convenor of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) and Assam Chief Minister and BJP's acclaimed trouble shooter in the Northeast, Himanta Biswa Sarma. On January 26 there was a meeting of Tipra Motha leaders and BJP leaders in New Delhi.

However, "Contrary to rumours there has been NO talk of seat sharing as reported with any party! We have received intimation from the ministry of home affairs that they would like to talk to us on our demand for a constitutional solution to our demand of Greater Tipraland. We have repeatedly said UNTIL we don't get a written assurance from GOI on the

constitutional solution of our demand we will not go in for any alliance leave alone seat sharing. Please don't jump the gun and relax - we know how to negotiate for our people to the maximum," Pradyot said on a Facebook post.

"There will be no compromise on our demand. I can't betray our cause and our people," Pradyot said in a video message posted on his social media platform on January 27. He said, the only reason he and his party officials went to Delhi was to hear the Government of India's stand. "They didn't give us anything in writing. So let me state this unequivocally there will be no alliance in this election," Tipra Motha chief Pradyot added.

Pradyot also said that Tipra wants to elevate Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACDC) as a separate state for the tribals. Currently, the TTACDC receives two percent of the state budget while it has 40% of the state's population. The demand is non-negotiable for any alliance.

Further, Tipra Motha chief Pradyot added that many doubted him, though it is only natural since in the last 46-years many regional parties from Tripura had made trips to Delhi returning with some sort of agreement ahead of the elections but after the elections Tripura got nothing. "We shall fight this election to defeat those who are against our demand. Be ready, we may win or lose, but we shall have one last fight," Pradyot asserted.

Meanwhile, the Left led by CPI (M) is amenable to the demand of Tipra Motha, though their ally the Congress was uncomfortable with it arguing that it will trigger similar demands in several states and thus the Left-Congress alliance also fails to bring TIPRA or Tipra Motha on board.

It may be mentioned that the 60 assembly constituencies in Tripura, as many as 20 are reserved for Scheduled Tribes, the indigenous Tipraha people. In 2018, eight of these seats were bagged by the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), 10 by the BJP, and two by the CPI (M).

Even as the Union Home Minister Amit Shah along with the experts in the Government of India's Ministry of Home Affairs and the BJP's acclaimed trouble shooter of the Northeast Himanta Biswa Sarma cannot convince the ENPO and TIPRA as of now, the BJP wants to retain power in both the states of Nagaland and Tripura.

However, in the current political dynamics in Nagaland and Tripura, the BJP may not win the 2023 elections as easily as it did in 2018 in both the states.

(RajKumar Bobichand is the Senior Editor of Imphal Review of Arts and Politics)