

Manipur High Court stays the service extension of MD and ED of MSPDCL

IT News
Imphal, Mar 2:

The High Court of Manipur has stayed the service reengagement of Manipur State Power Distribution Company Limited (MSPDCL) Managing Director (MD) Ng. Subhachandra and Executive Director (Tech)



H. Shantikumar. The service periods of both MD and ED were extended for another year by the Government of Manipur by

its order dated January 5, 2023.

Recently, a case of corruption was also filed against Ng. Subhachandra and Hijam Santikumar to Lokayukta Manipur for the misappropriation of funds during the time of implementation of the Saubhagya Scheme.

The stay order was

passed today by the bench of Justice MV Muralidaran after admitting a writ petition filed by one N. Jasobanta Singh and two other petitioners challenging the state government's decision.

The HC has fixed March 13 as the next date for hearing the case.

Assembly Election Results 2023:

BJP sweeps Tripura & Nagaland; CM Sangma's NPP short of Majority in Meghalaya

Agency
Agartala/Kohima/Shillong,
Mar 2:

The BJP on Thursday crossed the halfway mark in Tripura and Nagaland as the counting of votes began in the morning. Manik Saha, tipped to be Tripura's Chief Minister for a second term, defeated Congress's veteran leader Ashish Kumar Saha, by a margin of 1,257 votes from Town Bardowali despite detractors within his own party predicting a "tough time" for him in the prestigious constituency. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to address BJP workers and supporters today as the party retained power in Tripura on its own and with its senior ally Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) in Nagaland.

The Tripura elections 2023 was seen as a three-cornered high-octane battle with the ruling BJP facing off with the Left-Congress alliance and debutant Tipra Motha.

The Tripura thriller saw BJP's numbers declining in the scoreboard for a brief moment and Left+ picking up in the race, sparking speculation that this may lead to the emergence of ex-Royal Pradyot Manikya-led Tipra Motha's as the 'kingmaker'. However, the BJP later crossed the halfway mark and might not need any support.

TRIPURA						
2023 WIN/LEAD	60/60 (31 to Win)	BJP*	LEFT*	TMP	TMC	OTH
		33	14	13	0	0
NAGALAND						
2023 WIN/LEAD	60/60 (31 to Win)	BJP*	NPP	NPF	INC	OTH
		38	4	2	0	16
MEGHALAYA						
2023 WIN/LEAD	59/59 (30 to Win)	NPP	INC	TMC	BJP	OTH
		27	5	5	2	20

Counting of votes for the assembly election to the 60 constituencies in Tripura began at 8 am with tight security arrangements. According to election officials, there will be around five to eight rounds of counting, while the trends are expected to be clear by noon.

Tripura had recorded a turnout of 89.98 per cent in the assembly election which most exit polls had given a clean sweep to BJP, but some predicted a hung house in the state, where new party Tipra Motha was seen as an emerging 'kingmaker'.

Among the top contenders in Tripura are Manik Saha, who contested from Town Bardowali. A Congressman, Saha joined BJP in 2016 and was made the party's state president in 2021. Saha, who became a Rajya Sabha MP last year, replaced Biplob Deb who was asked to resign from the chief minister's post last year.

Congress's Sudip Roy Barman, a six-time MLA from Agartala who joined the BJP in 2018 but returned to the Congress soon after, is also in the running. Till now, he has never been elected.

The royal descendant of Tripura, Pradyot Manikya, was with the Congress for several years till he cut ties and formed the Tipra Motha. Though he is not in the fray, all eyes are on how the kingmaker's party performs in the elections.

From CPI(M), Manik Sarkar, the former chief minister of Tripura who served the state for over 20 years, is a strong face, however, this is the first time he will not be in the electoral fray but has been canvassing across the state to win support for his colleagues.

Some other top names in the race are, Pratima Bhowmik: BJP's Union minister from Dhanpur constituency; Jishnu Dev Burman: Tripura's deputy

chief minister represents the Charilam constituency; Jitendra Choudhury: A strong tribal leader, Birajit Sinha: State Congress president Sinha who is contesting from Kailasahar.

Exit polls had given BJP a clean sweep in Tripura. According to Axis My India, the BJP alliance was predicted to win 36-45 of the 60 seats, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) alliance 6-11 and the Tipra Motha Party (TMP) 9-16.

Matrize, meanwhile, predicted 29-36 seats for BJP+, 13-21 for CPM+, 11-16 for TMP and three for others. Jan Ki Baat predicted 29-40 seats for BJP+, 9-16 for CPM+, 10-14 for TMP and one for others. ETG-Times Now poll, however, predicted that BJP would remain the largest party but with a substantial drawdown from its earlier tally of 36 to just 24 seats, while Left-Congress would get 21 seats with Tipra Motha snatching 14 seats in the tribal areas.

District Skill Mela at Senapati

IT News
Imphal, Mar 2:

The District Skill Mela was organised today by the District Skill Committee, Senapati under the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Senapati District, Government of Manipur at Multipurpose Hall, Opp. DC Office, Mini-Secretariat Complex.

Speaking on today's occasion, Mahesh Chaudhari, IAS, Deputy Commissioner, Senapati expressed immense gratitude to the District Skill Committee and all the partner of today's event. He stated that the important of skill development has been the concern of Prime Minister and Chief Minister, Manipur. He mentioned that Skill Development Orientation Programme that was held last year has been fruitful

and benefitted the people of Senapati as 6 persons on the start to 45 persons now have got the placement in different sectors after attending the said programme. He further stated that the foundation stones which has been laid by Manipur CM for District Skill and Entrepreneur Centre at Maram Khunouis on full-swing with the building construction. He also appealed to the students and young entrepreneurs present to take maximum advantages and inputs from the expert.

M. Kapajit Singh, MCS, ADM Mao addressing on the welcome note said that skill has become a very important part in today's youth life as it empowered and build ones confident for future career ahead. Appealing to the young entrepreneurs

and students of Senapati, he urged them to get many valued information as possible from today's mela. He also applauded the District Administration and the organisers for the programme.

In today's event, Dr. Navanath Sharma from IIIT Senapati, Manipur present PPT on the awareness on application of Drone Technology and Educational Opportunities at IIIT Senapati, Manipur.

NIELIT Senapati Extension Centre also demonstrated the Internet of Things (IoT).

A career guidance in Defense Sector was briefed by Major Nikhil Bishnoi, 33AR.

Testimonies were also shared by Leshini Krecheha, Adakho Kaisa Maheo and Kehrii Mariaphro on the career

opportunity within India and Overseas on different sectors.

EYE project by MANEDA on loan assistance for entrepreneurs was also introduced.

Later, there was an active interaction session followed by stalls inspection.

In total, 18 stalls consisting of IIIT Senapati, CAU, JACEEX, CIPET, NIELIT, GoAviator, KVK Senapati, KVK Imphal East, OZONE, JCRE, Entrepreneurs Associate, Skill Traders, MANEDA, AMYANGGO, 33 Assam Rifles, VDVKS, Emporio, Times PRO ICICI Bank, Agriculture Department were opened and also they were today's Mela Partners.

The programme was attended by SDO's, DLO's, NGO's, Young Entrepreneurs, Youth and Students.

12th Manipur Legislative Assembly Saikhom Mirabai Fitness Centre to be constructed: Chief Minister

IT News
Imphal, Mar 2:

On the ninth day of the ensuing 3rd session of the 12th Manipur Legislative Assembly, replying to a question raised by MLA Th. Lokeshwar Singh, Water Resource Minister Awangbow Newmai stated that the work programme has been formulated but the constituency work programme has not been taken up so far.

Responding to the question raised by MLA K. Meghachandra Singh, Education Minister Th. Basanta Singh said that government has provisions for employment of deserving meritorious sports person in class III and IV posts not exceeding 5% of the total vacancies as per the

Department's notification and has been implementing the same.

On the question raised by MLA Th. Lokeshwar Singh, Horticulture and Soil Conservation Minister Letpao Haokip said that under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), vegetables seeds and spices seeds are provided to the people as an alternative to Poppy cultivation in hill areas.

Replying to the question raised by MLA Paolienal Haokip, Forest, Environment & Climate Change Minister Th. Biswajit Singh said that Forest Department, Manipur is taking up afforestation programmes in degraded forest lands including the barren lands affected by the Poppy plantations. He added that a

project proposal 'Alternate Livelihood for Poppy farmers with permanent (Terrace) cultivation on Jhum lands through Integrated Approach in the Hill Districts of Manipur' has been submitted by Horticulture & Soil Conservation Department which includes plantation of high value crops/fruits over 10,000 acres of poppy affected areas as an alternative livelihood to Poppy farmers.

The House acknowledged the achievements of Saikhom Mirabai Chanu on her being awarded 'the Sportstar of the Year (female) Award' 2022. Leader of the House and Chief Minister N. Biren Singh assured that Saikhom Mirabai Fitness Centre will be constructed at Nongpok Kakching to compliment her achievements.

District Level Neighbourhood Youth Parliament & Y20 Talks at SEMCO College



IT News
Imphal, Mar 2:

As an engagement of youths and awareness program on Indias G20 Presidency, Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK) Chandel and IQAC Cell, Dept of Political Science, South East Manipur College (SEMCO) Komlathabi jointly organised Neighbourhood Youth Parliament at district level for Chandel District Manipur, on the G20 theme of "Vasudeva Kutumbakam" focussing on G20 & Y20 Summit, Mission LiFE with emphasis on Y20 theme: Shared Future: Youths in Democracy & Government and Catch the Rain Campaign on 2nd March 2023 at Seminar Hall, SEMCO Komlathabi.

The District Youth Parliament and Launching of Catch the Rain Project Phase III of NYK Chandel was attended by Dr. L.

Khiloni Principal SEMCO Komlathabi, Mothel Saka SDC HQ as representative of DC office Chandel and Michael Thangminlien Mate DYO NYK Chandel as President, Chief Guest and Guest of Honour respectively. The program was moderated by Dr Miranda Bemben Mutuwa, IQAC & Asst Prof SEMCO. After a welcome address by Shri Sorkhaibam Hardidas Singh, Head of Dept of Political Science SEMCO, the dignitaries gave sport speeches exhorting the youths on leadership, volunteerism, engagement etc with Shri Michael Mate in his keynote address deliberating on salient features of National Young Leaders Program (NLYP), Neighbourhood Youth Parliament (NYP) and Catch The Rain project of National Water Mission. The Chief Guest of the program Mothel Saka SDC also led

the youths in a Water Pledge and Officially Launched the Catch The Rain Project for Chandel.

In the second session, 10 selected students- 5 from SEMCO and 5 from United College Chandel gave short talks on various topics of Y20 Summit followed by the 2 Resource persons- Smt Sweet Roel, Asst Professor, Dept of Pol Sc, SEMCO who spoke on the topic Shared future and Youth in Democracy & Government and Miss Celine Roel Ringriih Asst Prof. Dept of Zoology SEMCO who spoke about Mission LiFE with emphasis on Catch The Rain. These was followed with a short speech on weeklong celebration of International Womens Day 2023 cum Vote of Thanks by Mercy Haokip, National Youth Volunteer NYK Chandel. The program was closed with a short prayer by Dr. L. Khiloni Principal SEMCO.

AR foils cross border smuggling of gold biscuits

IT News
Imphal, Mar 2:

Tengnoupal Battalion of Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) foiled cross-border smuggling of Gold Biscuits at PVC, Khudengthabi today.

During routine checking

at PVC, Khudengthabi, the troops of Assam Rifles recovered 10 suspected Gold Biscuits from an EECO Van. The Gold Biscuits were well-concealed in the vehicle's Central Arm Rest. The individual was travelling from Moreh to Imphal. The recovered Gold

Biscuits weighed approximately 1660 gms and were assessed to be worth Rs 93.19 lakhs.

The seized Gold Biscuits, along with the apprehended individual, were handed over to Customs Department, Moreh for further investigation.

Own Shade of Colours



By: Vijay GarG

(Light and colours are closely related like Holi and Diwali) Colours have their own hue. Colours give us variety. Colour identifies a person, object, situation. Colours are connected to our soul no matter what we do. If they can fascinate us, they also fill us with disgust. Where white is used as a symbol of peace, then black has been made a symbol of protest and mourning. In course of time, religion also got associated with colour. It is the variety of colours that break the monotony of life, make life taste tasteless. Prevent it from happening. Nature has given us colours too.

All kinds of colorful fruits-flowers-plants, blue sky, multi-colored rainbow, sun with golden aura, animals and birds with different colours. This is where we would have taken the colour from. And decorate these colors on their clothes, take them off in Vandanwars, Rangoli, Mandans. Even science has not stayed away from colours. It is said that when passing through a prism, the colour gets divided into seven parts. It is even said that around a hundred colours come out of it, but our eyes see only seven of them. Can see.

Means there are colors beyond colors. Many animals cannot see color at all. They are blind to colours i.e. color blind. These animals are cat, dog, ox and rabbit. But bees, birds, snakes etc. can see and identify colours. Light and colors are closely related like Holi and Diwali. There is no existence of colours without light. There is no color in anything in this world. Water, air, space and the whole universe itself is colourless. Even the things you see are colourless. colour light only Happens in Colour is not what it sees, but what it emits.

Whatever colour you spread, that will be your colour. What you keep with you will not be your colour. In the same way, whatever you give in life, that becomes your quality. If you give joy, people will say that you are a joyful person. The amount of food that a person eats in the physical form is his, the rest he does only for others. We wear clothes for ourselves, but they are meant for others. no matter how hard Everything we do is either for the family or for the society, for the country. The whole nature is made only for giving.

Nature has only the colour of giving. No matter how we are, whether good or bad, she accepts everyone, like the same sky that never turns anyone away. The color of acceptance is wonderful in itself. The presence of colours in religion has a special purpose. Understanding the science of colours, our sages have included colours in religion. Making Rangoli at the place of worship with artistry in colours Also shows psychology. Five colours as kumkum, haldi, abeer, gulal, henna are included in every puja.

The colours of religious flags, the colours of Tilak, the colours of God's clothes are also kept special, so that we can be inspired by them at the time of religious work and the qualities of those colours can imbibe in us. Qualities are actually tangible even though they are intangible, in the form of these colours. That's why when we see a work or a person full of colours and qualities, it spontaneously comes out of the mouth, wow! This joy stitches our lives And prepares us again for the new dawn. Every color has its role and every person has his own colour which is of his own choice. We even have the science to paint your character based on your choice of colours. There is also a biology of color therapy.

Methods of treatment ranging from colors to ragas are prevalent in psychology. Use water bottles of different colors for treatment, because colours have a special effect on you. Every character on this giant stage of the world Happy with your colour. Where saints and sages wear saffron, saffron or white clothes, social workers wear white, actors want to look spectacular by wearing colourful clothes, different colors of schools, offices, different Colours of police, army, villages even the clown has his own colour while entertaining throughout. This universe is buzzing only with Colours. If there are colours then their colour will also be there and it will be so fine that it will weave the fabric of this life of ours. Life rests in this fabric, the fabric of its existence It happens. That's why maybe a festival like Holi was created, so that we can live the colour in its physical form as well.

Railways – The Engine of New Growth and Development in North-East India



By: G Kishan Reddy

In 1882, the first locomotive of the Dibru-Sadiya Railway connected the distant tea gardens with the Brahmaputra so that the commodity could eventually reach Kolkata. Over the decades since then, the Railways has helped reduce travel time from Dibrugarh to Kolkata from 15 days to 24 hours. However, even till 2014, the footprint of the Railways in the North East remained primarily restricted to current day Assam. In the last 8 years, stellar work has been done to ensure that this footprint expands across the North Eastern region and the sheer grit and perseverance in realising this dream needs to be told.

A New Dawn - Transforming North East

Rapid strides in surface transportation are key to the accelerated development of any region and Indian Railways is playing a pivotal role in the North East. Overcoming decades of neglect and under development, the Government has given an unprecedented impetus to connectivity in the region. Spearheading the efforts, Indian Railways, in the last 9 years has spent over Rs 50,000 Crores in the region on building new railway lines, bridges, tunnels etc. and has sanctioned new projects close to Rs 80,000 Crores.

This focus on Capital Expenditure has ensured that the Capital Connectivity Project that aims to connect all the North-East State Capitals is a reality now. As part of this, India is building the Jiribam – Imphal rail line which has the

world's tallest pier bridge at a height of 141 metres. To ensure timely completion of these projects, the Government of India has provided its complete support and resources. In comparison to the expenditure of Rs 2,122 Crores per year between 2009 and 2014, there has been a 370% increase in average annual budget allocation which now stands at Rs 9,970 Crores for the financial year 2022-23.

The topography of North East has always provided the toughest challenge in the region for any infrastructure development. However, a mix of strong political will and the use of state-of-the-art technologies has ensured that even the farthest corners of the region are being covered. 121 new tunnels are currently being constructed and this include the 10.28 Kms long Tunnel Number 12 which is the second longest tunnel in the country.

Creating Jobs – Empowering the Youth

In an effort to promote local businesses and economy, the North-East Frontier Railway operated the first parcel cargo express train between Assam and Goa in 2022. Rani Gaidinli is a much-revered spiritual leader of Nagaland and Manipur. It was a fitting tribute that the first ever freight train chugged into the Rani Gaidinli Railway Station in Tamenglong district of Manipur.

Those who have visited the Northeast would vouch for the tremendous tourism potential that the region possesses. Across the Northeast the captivating scenery, the wildlife and the intangible heritage in the form of its culture and festivals has been a big draw. In an attempt to allow tourists to savour North East India's breath-taking natural beauty, the North East Frontier Railways has introduced several state-of-the-art Vista dome coaches. This is expected to increase tourist footfalls which will further increase employment opportunities especially for women and disadvantaged communities such as tribals.

Railways has also been instrumental in creating employment opportunities for the youth in the region. In the last 3 financial years

alone, Railways has engaged more than twenty thousand unskilled workers and generated vacancies for skilled work thereby contributing to the changing socio-economic landscape of the region.

Over a period of time, allowing local communities to find employment opportunities closer to their homes will arrest migration to other parts of the country protecting the region's culture, identity and propagating it for future generations. A socially and financially empowered youth will be an asset to the region and to the nation.

North East - Gateway to India's Act East Policy

The 21st Century is often referred to as the Asian Century because of the rise of Asia as a global epicentre of economy, trade and power. India is the engine of this rise.

In 2014, India's "Look East Policy" that focussed on forging better economic relations with India's Eastern neighbours was transformed into a more robust, result oriented and geo strategically important "Act East Policy". In various for a Prime Minister Narendra Modi has mentioned that the Northeast Region would be the gateway to implementing a vibrant Act East Policy.

A glowing example of this policy is the landmark Agartala – Akhaura rail link being built between India and Bangladesh with a cost of more than Rs 1,100 Crores. It will not only establish historical rail links with our eastern neighbour but will also usher in a new era of growth and prosperity in the region. The Ministry for Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER) and Ministry of External Affairs are co-funding this project. Similarly, the Imphal Railway line will be extended till Moreh and from there, it will connect to Myanmar Railways at Kalay, forming a Trans-Asian Railway.

Furthermore, identifying the geo-strategic importance of the region for national security, the government has decided to build a rail-road corridor which will connect Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. This will include building India's first ever underwater rail tunnel under the Brahmaputra River. The

rail - road connectivity being built, will ensure that there is connectivity right up to India's north eastern borders and would give us the ability to act with speed and alacrity while responding to national security issues.

In the same vein, in 2017, the vitally strategic Dhola – Sadiya Bridge which connects Northern Assam and eastern Arunachal Pradesh was opened for traffic. It is the longest bridge built over water in India and can support the weight of India's battle tanks and facilitate quick movement of troops to India's north eastern borders.

The Indian Railways has employed modern, state-of-the-art technologies to expand its network in the region. In 2018, Asia's second longest rail-cum-road bridge, the Bogibeel Bridge over the Brahmaputra River in Assam, was inaugurated. The bridge will cut down the travel distance between Assam and Arunachal by 80 % and will also provide logistical support to Indian Defence Forces. The bridge is designed to withstand earthquakes of magnitudes up to 7.0 on the Richter scale and can also be used for landing fighter jets.

Railways-Driving the Naya North East

Traditionally, the majestic Himalayas and the mighty Brahmaputra have influenced the life of nearly every citizen in North East. Now Railways has joined that list as it spreads its operations to different corners of the region. Growth and development in the region will contribute towards the goal of India becoming a US\$5 trillion economy.

Prime Minister Modi had said that if India had to be prosperous, then development of North-East will need to be a priority and Railways is definitely one of the engines spurring this economic growth. Nine years later, the vision of the Prime Minister has been converted into a reality in the North-East region and Indian Railways is playing a pre-eminent role in this journey of transformation.

(The author is a Union Minister of DoNER, Tourism, and Culture)

National Security at Heart of Agnipath Scheme, Fitter Force Needed Against Border Skirmishes : Delhi HC

By: Sanjeev Sirohi, Advocate

While fully, firmly and finally upholding the Union Government's Agnipath scheme for the Armed Forces, the Delhi High Court in a most laudable, learned, landmark and latest judgment titled Harsh Ajay Singh vs Union of India and Ors in W.P.(C) 11011/2022 & CM APPL. 32617/2022 and Ors and cited in Neutral Citation Number: 2023/DHC/001414 that was finally pronounced on February 27, 2023 has said that it can conclusively state that the scheme was made in national interest to ensure that armed forces are better equipped. It must be noted that while referring to the frequent skirmishes on the borders as we see specially with the Chinese and Pakistani forces, the Division Bench of Hon'ble The Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Hon'ble Mr Justice Subramonium Prasad minced just no words to observe that such transgressions exacerbate the need to have a leaner and fitter Armed Force which is capable of handling the mental and physical distress that accompanies service in the

Armed Forces. It deserves mentioning here that the Division Bench called the scheme a well thought out policy decision by the Union Government and said rather than focusing on the "alleged political motives" of the scheme, it is necessary to focus on the benefits that are being provided by it. It also said that policy decisions, particularly those which have wide-ranging implications on the nation's health and security, should be decided by bodies best suited to do so.

At the very outset, this brief, brilliant, bold and balanced judgment authored by Hon'ble The Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma for a Division Bench of the Delhi High Court comprising of himself and Hon'ble Mr Justice Subramonium Prasad sets the ball in motion by first and foremost putting forth in para 1 that, "A batch of twenty-one writ Petitions being, W.P.(C) Nos. 10023/2022, 10231/2022, 10386/2022, 10422/2022, 10748/2022, 10856/2022, 10887/2022, 11011/2022, 11012/2022, 11013/2022, 11014/2022, 11904/2022, 12034/2022, 13910/

2022, 13911/2022, 13912/2022, 13913/2022, 14596/2022, 15171/2022, 15174/2022 and 15319/2022 were heard analogously and were reserved on 15.12.2022. Thereafter, W.P.(C) 17302/2022 came up for hearing on 19.12.2022 and was heard and reserved for judgment. W.P.(C) 16695/2022 was received on transfer from the High Court of Kerala at Ernakulam and came up for hearing on 19.12.2022 on which date there was no appearance on behalf of the Petitioner and the matter was adjourned to 17.02.2023. On 17.02.2023 the matter was heard and reserved for judgment."

Interestingly enough, we find that the Division Bench then discloses in para 2 stating, "While some Writ Petitions challenge the constitutional validity of the Agnipath Scheme (hereinafter referred to as 'the Impugned Scheme'), in others, the grievance of the Petitioners is that they went through the recruitment process for the Armed Forces that was prevalent prior to the Impugned Scheme. It is stated that they have been shortlisted but have not been appointed because of the Impugned Scheme and, thereby, have been prejudiced. Some Writ Petitioners

have challenged both - the Scheme and the prejudice caused to them by the introduction of the Impugned Scheme. This judgment is, therefore, divided into two parts - Part A deals with the validity of the Impugned Scheme and Part B deals with the grievances of the Petitioners that the Impugned Scheme has taken away their rights insofar as they have participated in the recruitment process and many of them have been shortlisted but have not been appointed due to the Impugned Scheme."

To put things in perspective, the Division Bench envisages in para 3 that, "The Ministry of Defence, Union of India came up with a scheme for recruitment of personnel below the rank of commissioned officers for the Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Indian Navy (hereinafter referred to as the "Indian Armed Forces") for a period of four years. The recruited soldiers have been titled as 'Agniveers'. As per the scheme, individuals aged between 17.5 years to 21 years are eligible to apply for recruitment as Agniveers. Upon being recruited, such individuals would get trained for a period of 6 months and will

be in active service for a period of 3.5 years and post that 25% of such Agniveers will be retained as soldiers under the permanent commission and the rest of the Agniveers will be permitted to return to the civilian life. As per the scheme, Agniveers are given a salary of about Rs. 4.76 lacs per year to begin with, which can be increased to about Rs. 6.92 lacs by their fourth year in service. The Agniveers, in case of a mishapening or an accident, are liable to receive a non-contributory life insurance cover of about Rs. 48 lacs, additional ex-gratia of Rs. 44 Lacs for death attributable to service, and salary for the unserved portion of the four year service. At the end of the four year tenure, each Agniveer will leave the service with a corpus of about Rs. 11 lacs. Many of the Agniveers who are not retained in the army will be absorbed in the paramilitary forces. The Agniveers who are not retained will also be given certificates of experience of the nature of work rendered by them which will facilitate them to get jobs in private sector."

Most forthrightly, the Division Bench mandates in para 74 that, "There is another irreconcilable

factor weighing against the Petitioners: public interest. As has already been stated, a recruitment process can be changed by the State midway, if the same is in public interest. The Agnipath Scheme seems to adequately pass this test as well. The stated objective of the scheme is to reduce the age of the Armed Forces; this will make the forces leaner, agile and will be greatly beneficial for border security. It has also been stated that the Impugned Scheme, by reducing the average age of soldiers, will bring our Armed Forces at par with other nations, as the average age of Armed Forces across the world is 26 years. The stated objective of the Impugned Scheme is to have a blend of young Jawans, Sailors or Airmen between the age of 18-25 years as Agniveers, supervised by an experienced regular cadre having the age of 26 years. To achieve this goal, the State has also been consistently decreasing the age bracket of officers. As dealt with in the first part of this judgment, such stated objectives of the Government cannot be said to be arbitrary, whimsical or mala fide; they serve a definite public interest."

contd. on page 3

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Election Commission appointments: PM, leader of Opposition and CJI to advise president, SC rules

Agency
New Delhi, Mar 2:

A committee comprising the prime minister, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India will advise the president on the appointment of the chief election commissioner and election commissioners, the Supreme Court ruled on Thursday, *Live Law* reported.

A Constitution bench of Justices KM Joseph, Ajay Rastogi, Aniruddha Bose, Hrishikesh Roy and CT Ravikumar said the practice will continue till Parliament makes a law for these appointments.

In the absence of a Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, the leader of the single largest Opposition party will be in the committee to appoint the chief election commissioner and election commissioners, the court said.

"Democracy can succeed only if all stakeholders work on it to maintain the purity of the election process," the bench remarked.

The bench was hearing a batch of petitions seeking an independent mechanism for appointing election commissioners. Opposition leaders have often questioned the independence of the Election Commission, with former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's party

last month saying the ECI is "Entirely Compromised Institution of India".

According to Article 324(2) of the Constitution, election commissioners are to be appointed by the president.

Since the president is bound by the advice of the prime minister and council of ministers, the appointment of the election commissioners is a solely executive decision, the petitioners argued. This "gives ample room for the ruling party to choose someone whose loyalty is to [be] ensured and thereby renders the selection process vulnerable to manipulation and partisanship", one of the petitions stated.

At Thursday's hearing, the Supreme Court said that the poll panel has to be aloof from all kinds of subjugation from the executive. "One of the ways it can interfere is cutting of financial support," the judges said. "A vulnerable Election Commission would result in an insidious situation and detract from its efficient functioning."

The bench said that the Election Commission must have a separate secretariat, rule-making powers as well as an independent budget so that it is not dependent on the government.

Justice Rastogi said that the process of removal of

the election commissioners should be on par with CEC, who can be removed only through an impeachment process - like a judge of a constitutional court.

Senior advocate Prashant Bhushan, who appeared for two petitioners in the case, said that the court's decision was historic, NDTV reported. "We saw how the Election Commission had been dancing to the government's tune," he said. "This was because the government appointed whoever it wanted [to the poll panel]."

During the hearings in the case, senior advocates Gopal Sankaranarayanan and Prashant Bhushan, had complained that Parliament has not framed legislation for the appointment of election commissioners despite a mandate under Article 324(2).

The court had lamented that successive governments have "completely destroyed" the independence of the Election Commission by ensuring no chief election commissioner gets the full six-year term to head the poll panel since 1996. It had also stated that the absence of a law for appointment of election commissioners has resulted in an "alarming trend".

But the Centre had told the court that the present system of appointing elec-

tion commissioners is in consonance with constitutional provisions. This process, it had argued, is "working smoothly" and that the commission is "working in a free and fair manner".

As the arguments were about to end in the last week of November, the bench had asked Attorney General R Venkataramani to produce documents related to the appointment of Arun Goel as election commissioner on November 19. Goel, a bureaucrat, took voluntary retirement on November 18 and was appointed to the post the next day.

The court, after examining the files, had asked how the entire appointment process was completed within a day and why the government appointed a person who would not be able to complete his six-year tenure. The bench had also asked how names were shortlisted for the post for which Goel was eventually picked.

It had also remarked that ideally the appointment should not have been made while the matter was being heard, especially since the post had been vacant since May 15.

But Venkataramani had argued that Goel's appointment was not unusual and appointments to the Election Commissioner are usually made speedily.

NIA Court Awards Death Penalty to Seven IS Operatives in Kanpur Conspiracy Case

By Raju Vernekar
Mumbai, Mar 2:

Seven ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) terrorists were convicted and were awarded death penalty while another terrorist was given life imprisonment in the Kanpur conspiracy case by the NIA Court, Lucknow on Tuesday.

According to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), the accused had prepared and tested some improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and unsuccessfully tried to plant them at various locations in Uttar Pradesh.

Those who have been awarded death sentence are: Mohammad Faisal, Gaus Mohammad Khan, Mohammad Azhar, Atif Muzaffar, Mohammad Danish, Syed Mir Hussain, and Asif Iqbal Rocky. The eighth convict Mohammad Atif Irani was sentenced to life imprisonment. Another accused in the case, Mohammad Saifulla, was killed in an encounter with the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) in March 2017, NIA statement read.

They convicts were found guilty under sections 121, 121A, 122, 123 of IPC, sections 17, 18, 18A, 18B, 23, 38 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and sections 3/25/35 of the Arms Act. Pronouncing the sentences, judge VS Tripathi said that the case fell in the rarest of rare category, and therefore the convicts were entitled to the severest punishment.

These ISIS terrorists were arrested in the Kanpur conspiracy case in 2017, and they were booked under various sections of the IPC, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the Arms Act and the Explosive Substances Act. The case (No 03/2017) against the eight accused was initially registered on March 8, 2017,



A death penalty to seven ISIS terrorists. (A representational image).

with ATS, Lucknow. It was re-registered by NIA on March 14, 2017.

Investigations revealed that Mohammad Atif Irani and three others, identified as Mohammad Danish, Syed Meer Hasan and Mohammad Saifulla, were also responsible for fabricating the IED that was planted in the Bhopal-Ujjain passenger train, which led to the explosion on March 7, 2017, leaving 10 injured. This case is currently under trial.

Breakthrough

The breakthrough in the ISIS-backed criminal conspiracy case came when the main accused, identified as Mohammad Faisal, a resident of Kanpur Nagar, was arrested for his involvement in the Madhya Pradesh train explosion of March 7, 2017. Disclosures made by him led to the arrest of two of his associates, Gaus Mohammad Khan alias Karan Khatri and Azhar Khan alias Azhar Khalifa, on March 09, 2017.

After taking over the investigations, NIA arrested five more accused- Atif Muzaffar, Mohammad Danish, Asif Iqbal alias Rocky and Mohammad Atif alias Atif Iraqi, all hailing from Kanpur Nagar and Sayed Meer Hussain of district Kannauj, UP, accused in the case. A charge sheet was filed by NIA against all the eight arrested

accused on August 31, 2017.

A notebook seized from their Haji Colony (Lucknow) hideout was found to contain handwritten notes about potential targets and details about bomb-making. Investigations had also led to the discovery of several photographs of the accused making IEDs and even with weapons, ammunition and ISIS flag, NIA said before the court.

One of the accused, Atif Muzaffar, had also disclosed that he had compiled information on techniques to fabricate IEDs after collecting materials from various internet sources. According to the NIA spokesperson, investigations in the case had clearly shown that the accused were terrorists of ISIS and had sworn 'bayat' (allegiance) to the Islamic State and its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Gujarat ISIS case

In another case on Tuesday, the NIA Special Court, Gujarat, convicted two ISIS terrorists and awarded them 10 years rigorous imprisonment on charges of radicalising youth through social media, to carry out terror acts in the country in the name of ISIS. Originally the case (No 1-2017) was registered on May 20, 2017 by Gujarat ATS. It was re-registered as RC-09/2017/NIA/IDLI (ISIS Rajkot case) by NIA and charge sheet was filed on August 22, 2017.

India logs 268 Covid cases, active tally at 2,439; recovery rate at 98.8%

Agency
New Delhi, Mar 2:

India logged 268 new coronavirus infections, while the active cases increased to 2,439, according to the Union

Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

The death toll stands at 5,30,772, the data updated at 8 am stated.

The Covid case tally stood at 4.46 crore (4,46,86,879) and

the national recovery rate has been recorded at 98.80 per cent, the ministry said.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 4,41,53,668, while the case fatality rate was

recorded at 1.19 per cent.

According to the ministry's website, 220.63 crore doses of Covid vaccine have been administered in the country so far under the nationwide vaccination drive.

Contd. from Page 2

National Security at Heart of Agnipath Scheme, Fitter Force Needed....

Most analytically, the Division Bench points out in para 79 that, "The contention of the learned Counsel for the Petitioners that the persons who have been appointed in Navy have been given preferential treatment via-a-vis the recruitment of Soldiers and Airmen in the Army and the Air Force respectively also cuts no ice. A perusal of the material, as submitted by the learned ASG, shows that due to COVID-19 Pandemic, there was no recruitment in the Indian Air Force and, therefore, 02/2020 Batch was declared as a Batch holiday. The learned ASG has also submitted that before the onset of COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdown, the written examination of the candidates of 02/2020 Batch had been completed and the merit list had been prepared and all the candidates of 02/2020 Batch were treated as 01/2021 Batch. It has also been submitted by the learned ASG that the recruitment of Sailors, which is the entry level appointment in the Indian Navy, is much lesser as compared to the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force. It has been submitted by the learned

ASG that the total strength of Sailors in Indian Navy is approximately 60,000 and due to COVID-19 Pandemic, the Indian Navy has a manpower shortage of approximately 12,500 Sailors. The learned ASG has further submitted that there was a short-fall of 16.5% Sailors in the Indian Navy in 2020 due to delay in recruitment process and not recruiting Sailors in the Indian Navy would only make the situation worse. Resultantly, the Indian Navy had to, in national interest, continue its recruitment process. In view of the reasons given by the learned ASG, this Court does not find any force in the contention of the Ld. Counsel for the Petitioners that if the Indian Navy could continue recruitment, so could the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force."

Be it noted, the Division Bench notes in para 81 that, "With respect to the Indian Army, the rally recruitment was undertaken to increase intake of the people from tribal and hilly areas in the Armed Forces so as to maintain a demographic balance, rallies were conducted at various locations in the country to recruit young people in

the Armed Forces. A chart detailing the recruitment rallies conducted by the Army Recruiting Offices (AROs) has been submitted by the Ld. ASG which shows that the recruitment rallies during the COVID-19 Pandemic were conducted in ARO Ludhiana at Khanna from 12.01.2021 to 20.01.2021 and in ARO Siliguri at Agartala from 12.01.2021 to 20.01.2021 and in ARO Siliguri at Selve Road Mil Station from 13.01.2021 to 21.01.2021. The said chart further shows that out of 47 rallies that were to be conducted only four rallies could be conducted between December 2020 & January 2021 as compared to about 80 rallies which were conducted throughout the year in pre-pandemic. As explained by the Ld. ASG, the method of recruitment of soldiers by way of written examination and the method of recruitment of soldiers by way of rallies are different and the time taken in both the processes is also different; while the rallies are a fast-track method of recruitment, the regular mode of recruitment was multi-pronged, and took longer,

especially during the pandemic. By the time the normal recruitment process in the Army was concluded, the Government had already taken the policy decision to bring in the new Agnipath Scheme."

It would be instructive to note that the Division Bench clearly mentions in para 82 that, "Hence, due to these marked differences in rally recruitment and the erstwhile method of recruitment, the contention of the Petitioners that the normal method of recruitment through examinations must be concluded, does not hold any water. In any event, it cannot be said that the Government ought not to have recruited any candidate, other than through CEE, as the same would result in massive shortage of soldiers in the Indian Army. Article 14 cannot be invoked to state that soldiers must have been recruited by both the processes, i.e. by CEE and by conducting rallies, and appointing soldiers through only one of the source is violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India."

While continuing in a similar vein, the Division Bench then observes in para 83 that,

"Similarly, for the Indian Air Force too, due to delay in recruitment through examination mode, i.e. STAR, rallies were conducted at various places in the country to cater to the intake of Air Force. The rallies for recruitment in the Air Force were conducted between January and February, 2020 and from September to December, 2020."

Most remarkably, the Division Bench holds in para 86 that, "The Petitioners, during the course of hearing, also sought to argue that the stated objective of maintaining demographic balance in the Armed Forces through the rallies is misconceived since such rallies were also conducted in Delhi and Bhopal. This argument too does not find favour with this Court as we cannot take a myopic view of the objective sought to be achieved by the rally recruitment. During the pandemic, we were confronted with unprecedented and uncertain times. Such unprecedented times warranted that certain decisions be taken in public interest to ensure that the Armed Forces could function optimally. It is in such public interest that a handful of rallies were con-

ducted in cities. This by itself does not mean that the purpose of rallies, which is to maintain demographic balance, was abandoned by the Government. This Court does not find any fault with this decision of the Government, which was carried out in good faith, and in larger public interest."

It cannot be glossed over that the Division Bench clearly holds in para 87 that, "We have gone through the genesis of the two principles of equity, and the jurisprudence governing their applicability. We have also had the occasion to go through certain cases, with similar facts; wherein a recruitment process was halted midway. It emerges that firstly, the Petitioners have no vested right to seek such recruitment, and secondly, that promissory estoppel and legitimate expectation find themselves severely restricted by the overarching concerns of public interest."

Most significantly, the Division Bench mimes just no words to hold in para 88 that, "We have extensively gone through the Agnipath Scheme, and can conclusively state that this Scheme was made in national interest, to

ensure that the Armed Forces are better equipped. Due to this, this Court finds that the Petitioners have no vested right to claim that the recruitment under the 2019 Notification and CEE Examination needs to be completed. Furthermore, both promissory estoppel and legitimate expectation cannot be applied in the instant case to force the Government to complete the recruitment keeping in mind larger public interest."

Finally, the Division Bench concludes by holding in para 89 that, "In light of this, all the Writ Petitions stand dismissed, along with the pending application(s), if any."

In conclusion, the Delhi High Court has made it indubitably clear while dismissing the writ petitions that national security is at the heart of Agnipath scheme. It is a no-brainer that national security stands paramount and no compromise can be made on it under any circumstances. It also made it crystal clear that a fitter force is definitely needed against border skirmishes which we are witnessing also so regularly along both the Chinese and Pakistani borders. No denying!

64 districts in Northeast identified as landslide affected: ISRO

Agency
Guwahati, Mar 2:

Out of 147 districts in the country, 64 in the Northeast have been identified as landslide-affected districts.

This was revealed in the Landslide Atlas of India brought out by National Remote Sensing Centre, Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) under the Department of Space.

The atlas provides the details of landslides present in Landslide provinces of India including damage assessment of specific landslide locations.

The atlas has a database consisting of 80,000 landslides in India mapped by the NRSC/ISRO programme during the 1998-2022 period is reported.

The landslide atlas was released by ISRO recently.

The database covers landslide-vulnerable regions in 17 states and 2 UTs of India in the Himalayas and Western Ghats.

The database includes three types of landslide inventory – seasonal, event-based and route-wise for the 1998-2022 period.

The seasonal inventory contains a pan-India landslide database corresponding to the 2014 and 2017 rainy season in India.

The event-based inventory contains details of some of the major triggering events such as Kedarnath and Kerala disasters, and the Sikkim earthquakes as well as a few large valley-blocking landslides.

Landslides are among the main natural catastrophes,

which cause major problems in mountainous terrain by killing hundreds of people every year besides damaging property, disrupting transportation and blocking communication links.

Landslides have led to massive environmental damages such as an increase in sediment discharge due to soil erosion and loss of human lives every year.

India, a country with varied physiographic and climatic conditions, frequently faces the vagaries of landslide disasters.

Approximately 0.42 million sq. km or 12.6% of land area, excluding snow-covered area, is prone to landslide hazards.

The majority of landslides are triggered by variability in rainfall patterns, while sporadic events such as very heavy rainfall outside the monsoon period (Kedarnath event of 2013) and earthquakes (Sikkim earthquake) cause significant disruption to livelihood and infrastructure.

The Northernmost Indian states, J&K, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, are the worst affected states by the landslides disasters as the

majority of the territory falls within the Himalayas.

Many districts of these states have high population densities, and major pilgrimage routes or major tourism spots are exposed and affected by landslides.

Out of this, 0.18 million sq. km falls in North East Himalaya, including Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalaya; 0.14 million sq. km falls in North West Himalaya (Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir); 0.09 million sq. km in the Western Ghats and Konkan hills (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra) and 0.01 million sq. km in Eastern Ghats of Araku area in Andhra Pradesh (www.gsi.gov.in).

In India, landslides mostly occur in the monsoon season. The Himalayas and Western Ghats are highly susceptible to mass movements due to hilly topography and heavy rainfall.

The Northwest Himalayas contribute 66.5% of landslides in India, followed by the Northeast Himalayas 18.8% and the Western Ghats 14.7%. Landslide exposure analy-

sis was carried out in the mountainous areas. Rudrapur district in Uttarakhand state which has the highest landslide density in India is also having the highest exposure to the total population, working population, literacy and number of houses.

Of the top 10 districts in the country which is most exposed to landslides, 2 districts are in Sikkim- South and North Sikkim.

"Although the North Eastern states have many landslides yearly, they are not particularly vulnerable to them in terms of socioeconomic factors due to their lower population density and wide unoccupied mountain areas," the atlas says.

A total of 61 people had died and 18 were injured after a massive landslide hit the construction site of Tupul railway station in Manipur in June last year.

The Tupul station is situated in the Noney district. But Noney district does not figure in the list of 147 districts most exposed to landslides in the country.

Indian Army assisted a remote village in Manipur under Operation Sadbhavana



PRO (Defence)
Kohima, Mar 2:

In consonance with its commitment of Infrastructure and Community Development, Red Shield Division of Indian Army extended assistance to P. Moulding, a remote village in Kangpokpi district of Manipur. Responding to the request by the villagers Red Shield Eagles distributed Computers, Sports Items and Solar Street Lights to the villagers.

The event was conducted under Operation Sadbhavana and has immensely contributed towards

development of infrastructure, providing sports facilities in line with Khelo India Movement and promoting IT education amongst the local youth in remote areas in line with Digital India policy. The handing over

and dedication ceremony was attended by the village council, villagers and students of the village, who expressed their gratitude to the Army and Red Shield Division for the continued support to the locals.

Name Change

I, the undersigned, Abdul Malik, do hereby declare that I have renounced, relinquished, and abandoned the use of my old name Qasmi Abdul Malik as I have assumed my new name Abdul Malik from now onwards.

Sd/-
Abdul Malik
Phoubakchao Mayai Leikai
Imphal West, Manipur

Yaipha Thourang Crafts Bazar

At MMRC & Unity Park, Khangbaok, Thoubal District, Manipur

DATE : 24th Feb., to 5th March 2023

TIME : 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.



Sponsored by :

Development Commissioner (Handicrafts)
Ministry of Textile, Government of India

Organised by :

Yaipha Thourang Handloom & Handicrafts
Co-operative Society Limited
Leimaram Waroiching, Bishnupur District, Manipur