



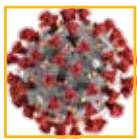
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# Gplus

GUWAHATI'S OWN ENGLISH WEEKLY

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## No cliffhanger in Assam as pollsters predict win for BJP alliance

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@guwahatiplus

**N**early, all exit polls have given the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led alliance a clear cut majority in Assam. Whether or not poll pundits got the voters' pulse right will be known on May 2, when votes are counted.

However, the ruling BJP is brimming with confidence as most of the exit polls predicted a return to power for the party in Assam. Party leaders are of the opinion that it will win nearly 85 of the total 126 seats in the state along with its allies.

According to Assam BJP president Ranjeet Kumar Dass the party has data from booth-level workers to prove that its findings are accurate. If what the BJP leader said is to be believed then it appears that the saffron brigade on its own will get seats well above the magic figure of 64.

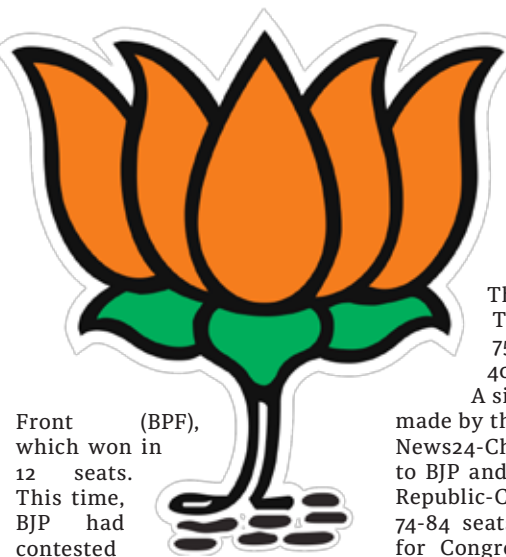
The BJP leader has predicted that his party will win 70 seats. "Our alliance partners Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) will win 8 and United Peoples Party Liberal (UPPL) will win 5 seats, taking our seat count to 83. There are 21 constituencies, where our chances are doubtful. Of them we will win at least 2 to 3 seats, which will take our total seats to 85 or more," he added.

Dass gave details of the constituencies which the BJP and its alliance partners would win and also the approximate number of votes the party would secure in most of these seats.

He added that the findings are based on what party workers have calculated and there could be some difference in the actual outcome.

In 2016, the BJP had won 60 seats and formed its first government in Assam with the support of AGP which won 14 seats and Bodoland Peoples

Front (BPF), which won in 12 seats. This time, BJP had contested 93 seats, its alliance partners AGP and the UPPL fought from 29 and 11 seats respectively. "The alliance of Congress with AIUDF (All India United Democratic Front) hasn't been accepted by voters in Upper Assam as it was deemed an unholy nexus. Because of this alliance, Congress will lose at least six of the seven seats it had won in the region five years ago," said Dass.



On whether the electronic voting machines (EVMs) could

be a factor as the Congress party seems to be suggesting, the BJP leader dismissed it as "signs of Congress' defeat in the elections." He further said, "The party talks about EVMs in states where they lose, but accept the outcome in places where they are victorious."

The Congress party has in fact appealed to the ECI about possible security lapses of EVMs in the strong rooms. The party said there are "serious discrepancies," and demanded an inquiry into the matter.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, the India Today poll had given 75-85 seats to BJP and 40-50 to the Congress. A similar prediction was made by the Axis My India poll. News24-Chanakya gave 70 seats to BJP and 56 to Congress. The Republic-CNX poll predicted 74-84 seats for BJP and 40-50 for Congress and Times Now poll gave 72 to BJP and 53 to Congress. On the other hand, the ABP-CVoter poll says it will be a very close contest between the two alliances. It gives 58-71 seats to BJP and 53-66 to the Congress alliance.

The G Plus exit poll based on trends has shown that BJP led alliance will get anywhere between 67 to 70 seats with the Congress led Mahajot getting 56 to 60 seats. Other parties like the newly formed Assam Jatiya Parishad and Rajior Dol could get 1 to 2 seats.

# As COVID-19 cases rise, Assam prepares itself for a surge

Indrakshi Dutta  
@IndrakshiDutta1

Even as several states have imposed curfews and lockdowns hoping to break the transmission chain, India has 18.8 million and counting active COVID-19 cases on April 30, 2021. To put that number in perspective, till about a fortnight ago, the number of people infected was just about a third of this figure at 1 lakh cases per day. Till two months ago, India was recording just 10,000 fresh cases per day. That's the speed with which new infections are growing.

India on Friday, April 30, posted a record daily rise of over 3.86 lakh new COVID-19 cases and continued to post over 3,000 deaths for the third consecutive day, as per Union health ministry data updated at 8 AM. With 386,452 new cases recorded on April 30, India's tally of total COVID-19 cases now stands at 1,87,62,976, the highest since the pandemic started in 2019. The death toll jumped by 3,498 over the last 24 hours, taking the total death toll to 2,08,330, according to updated health ministry data.

States like Uttar Pradesh are facing an abject shortage of

essential medicines and oxygen. Amid a massive surge in novel coronavirus cases across the state, the Allahabad High Court directed the Uttar Pradesh government on Monday, April 19 to impose lockdown in five major cities of the state including Lucknow, Kanpur till 26 April. The lockdown was ordered to be imposed in Prayagraj, Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur Nagar, and Gorakhpur. However, essential services will be allowed. Uttarakhand reported a total number of active cases while this story was filed to be 3, 86, 555. In an order released on April 24 by the Uttarakhand Government, all government offices remained closed from 23rd to 28th April as a measure to control spread of COVID-19 in offices.

Compared to the rest of the country, Assam seems to be better equipped to tackle the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. The administration of Kamrup Metropolitan district, which primarily comprises Guwahati, has instructed private hospitals to tie up with hotels so that asymptomatic patients can be shifted there in case of a shortage of hospital beds. The District Administration on April 23 declared a list of COVID-19 vaccination centres (CVC) in the

Kamrup Metropolitan District. In the event of detection of 1000 COVID-19 cases on a particular day, the Deputy Commissioner cum District Magistrate of Kamrup Metropolitan District has been authorized to issue orders regarding the closure of all Educational Institutions (Government and Non-Government), Colleges and Universities, Coaching Institutions, and all category of students hostels till May 4, 2021. However, for the continuous education process, online classes have to be mandatorily conducted for the students. Assam Health Minister took to Twitter today, April 24 to announce that Assam has received a fresh batch of 2 lakh more doses of Covishield Vaccine from the Government of India. The current doses availability stands at 406,610.

Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal said the state government has adopted a five-fold strategy to combat the COVID-19 pandemic - testing, tracing, treatment, enforcing COVID-19 appropriate



People wait outside a vaccination center in Guwahati | G Plus Photo

behaviour and vaccination, while addressing a meeting in Guwahati. The Chief Minister also mentioned that paramount importance has been given to protect lives of people from the virus, and accordingly appropriate guidelines have been formulated. Measures taken by the Assam Government includes Government-mandated COVID-19 tests that are operational in all airports in the northeastern region, especially in LGBI airport, whose numbers

(of daily passengers) are higher than others. In the run up for counting of votes for the Assam Assembly Elections, the Kamrup (Metro) district administration on April 30 has arranged to conduct Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) tomorrow i.e. on Saturday, May 1 at Rabindra Bhawan, Ambari, Guwahati for the authorised media persons of Election Commission of India of the district who would be entering the counting venues for media coverage.

## Assam cops organise security drill for vote count

Trishna Das  
@trishnadass6

As the counting day for the Assam Assembly Elections 2021 approaches, the Assam police is making focused arrangements to help the Election Commission in ensuring that COVID-19 rules and protocols - that has put in place - are adhered to and the process unfolds smoothly without any chaos on May 2.

Officials of the Assam police were briefed about the need for security measures at a joint meeting of the District Administration and Election Commission of India.

Assam police officials said that preparations are in full swing especially keeping in mind the present situation and rules which are applicable in Kamrup will also be applicable for all

Assembly constituencies in the state of Assam. The counting will start from 8 AM and trends are expected to start coming in by noon. Security arrangements have been beefed up in the city to ensure smooth and hassle-free counting on the scheduled day, according to the police department.

Recently, the Election Commission had also announced that candidates and polling agents should produce either their negative test report for COVID-19 or show proof of full COVID-19 vaccination to enter the counting centres. The same is applicable to police personnel and media persons too.

### Security arrangements to ensure smooth counting

Talking to *G Plus*, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (ADCP) West Guwahati,

Nabaneet Mahanta said, "There will be three layers of security including CRPF, and Assam Police. We are following all the COVID guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to ensure safety during the counting. Only those with proper COVID test reports or vaccination against the virus will be allowed inside the counting centres. We will ensure that the public doesn't gather near the counting centers and a notice has been issued regarding the same."

### Police department and COVID protocols

All security personnel who will be deployed until the declaration of the Assembly Election results have been tested for COVID-19. "This year's election is not similar to that of the past elections. Due to the ongoing Coronavirus situation and second wave, we all have to be extra careful and



follow the COVID protocols for ourselves and people's safety. The department has been briefed about the guidelines and we will ensure people strictly abide by it," said Mahanta.

### CCTV surveillance on counting day

Speaking about the installation of CCTV, the ADCP said that the district administration has installed surveillance machines at all the necessary points and

the outer periphery of the city. Mics with loudspeakers have also been installed for announcing the updates of the counting and for Assembly election result announcement.

The police department has notified that political parties will not be allowed to publicly celebrate after the announcement of the results.

### Security drill for police department ahead of counting day

Officials of the Assam police speaking to *G Plus* highlighted that a security drill will be conducted as part of preparations a day before the counting, i.e. on Saturday, May 1. National Highway will remain open for the public, but they will not be allowed within the 500-meter radius of Maniram Dewan Centre in Guwahati, where the counting is set to take place.



# Markets, businesses in Guwahati suffer COVID-19 restrictions

Nibir Deka  
@nibirdeka

The market activities across Guwahati have taken a beating following the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19.

On Tuesday, April 20, the Assam government had announced the closure of all marketplaces by 6 PM except for the essential services. However, take-away and home deliveries have been allowed as per normal time.

Following the restrictions, the hoteliers of the ABC area have alleged this has hampered their business. "We have been asked to keep half shutter. This has led to people believing that our shop is closed and as such we are facing huge losses," said a restaurant owner in GS Road.

Online deliveries have also been reduced. *G Plus* spoke to a Zomato delivering agent who stated, "Our orders have gone

down significantly following the announcements of the COVID-19 restrictions."

## The retail sector

The Fancy Bazar, Ganeshguri markets were among the most affected areas due to the restrictions. The retail sector saw reduced growth as shopkeepers were of the opinion that 4-8 PM sales were the most important part of the business.

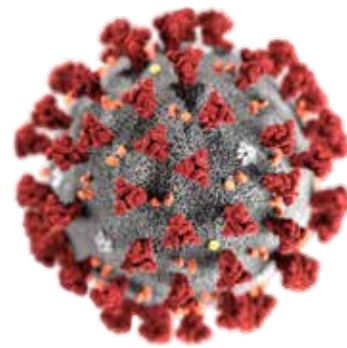
Few even questioned whether the move was intended to stop the spread of COVID-19. "I want to know what they sprayed during the Assam Legislative Assembly Elections as during that time, there seemed to be no COVID-19 cases," said a shopkeeper from Jail Road.

## The nail in the coffin

As cases of COVID-19 rose across the state with the second wave of the pandemic, the concerns of hospital beds, oxygen also increased. As a result of which, the government

issued a night curfew in the state from 8 PM to 5 AM daily.

The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) through an order



dated April 27, Tuesday notified that there shall be a total ban on movement of individuals from 8 PM to 5 AM.

Although the order had exemptions for the restaurant sector through online deliveries, many see the move as a blow to their businesses.

"I pay a rent of Rs 55,000

and then I have to pay salaries to the staff. Then I buy stock for the cafe, which brings my monthly expenses to Rs 2 lakh," said a cafe owner in Uzanbazar. Many of the cafe owners believe that this move will further affect their incomes which had only improved in the last five months.

The streets of Guwahati are empty post 8 PM and the Zomato and other food delivering agents are seen to be idle near the main road. *G Plus* spoke to a few agents near GS Road who claimed that almost 50% of the revenue has gone down. "Things have once again gone back to how it was during the lockdown as even during peak hours we hardly receive orders," said a delivery agent.

Another parameter to measure has been the flow of city buses, which has been reduced substantially. The bus fare has also increased owing to the 50% seat capacity rule.

"It is no longer possible to ply the buses on the road if

the fares are not hiked. As the government has mandated low seat capacity, we can't possibly be operating with the same fare," said a union member, from All Assam Motor Transport Association (AAMTA).

## The uncertainty ahead

As of 29th April, 3,079 cases have been detected in Assam with a positivity rate of 4.58% with 26 deaths registered. The active caseload is 23,104. In such a scenario, it is understandable that the government has issued restrictions in lieu of these concerns.

However, many believe that the situation has gone from bad to worse due to the indifference shown in the last few months owing to the conduct of elections amid a pandemic.

Another rumour that has caused panic in the market is that of a lockdown following the election results. As a result of which, the market sentiment has gone down significantly.

## Man who tried to kill 28-day-old daughter arrested in Guwahati

G Plus News  
@guwahatiplus

A man in the Bharalumukh area of Guwahati city has been arrested by the police for trying to kill his 28-day-old daughter on April 26. The man has been identified as Bappi Sarkar, who is a resident of Arya Path at Gopinath Nagar.

According to sources, the wife of Bappi Sarkar, 45, is the witness in the case. She saw him attempting to kill their daughter. As a result, the neighbors were alerted and the police, who were informed intervened to arrest Sarkar. The wife suspected Bappi of trying to kill his daughter as he was carrying a knife after the birth of their second daughter.

Sources close to the family have claimed that Bappi Sarkar, the father of the 28-day-old baby girl was upset upon the birth

of a second daughter as he always wanted a boy. "He had almost become mentally unstable after her birth and we even heard rumors that he wanted to throw her in a ditch," an insider close to the family told *G Plus*.

Meanwhile, police arrested Bappi and the baby girl, who was injured was sent to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) for treatment. However, there was no information as of Monday midnight whether the injured girl is out of danger.



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# Aftershocks numbering 18 after massive earthquake

Nibir Deka  
@nibirdeka

**A** total of 19 earthquakes (1 mainshock and 18 aftershocks) hit the state of Assam within 24 hours from the first earthquake on April 28.

An earthquake of Magnitude 6.4 on the Richter scale jolted Assam and other states of Northeast India at 7:51 AM on Wednesday, April 28 and a total of 18 aftershocks have so far occurred after the main shock.

Six of these aftershocks were felt within 2.5 hours of the main earthquake.

The most recent aftershock was felt at 7:13:36 AM of April 29. The epicentre of the tremor was at Sonitpur and it had a magnitude of 2.8 on the Richter Scale. One of the highest intensity aftershock was felt at 1:20:53 AM, measuring 4.6 M on the Richter Scale.

"The aftershocks signify the release of the stress in the vicinity of today's source zone in and around Sonitpur, Assam," Dr Sanjay O'Neill Shaw, Head, Regional Meteorological Centre, Guwahati.

The preliminary analysis shows that the event is located near to Kopili Fault closer to Himalayan Frontal Thrust (HFT).

The area is seismically very active falling in the highest Seismic Hazard zone V associated with collisional tectonics where Indian plate subducts beneath the Eurasian Plate.

The historical and instrumentally recorded earthquake data (NCS catalogue) reveals that the region is affected by moderate to large earthquakes and the most prominent event among those was the earthquake of Magnitude 6.0 on the Richter scale that occurred on July 29, 1960 in Assam.

Meanwhile, Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal has asked the Assam State

Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) to explore opportunities for a tie-up with Japan to "develop" an early warning system for earthquakes and creating awareness among the people to go for earthquake-resistant buildings.

## How was Guwahati affected?

Guwahati, being one of the most urban spaces in the Northeast was badly affected by the earthquake. From Vivanta Guwahati hotel to standalone flats, the damage was seen in many places.

Few of the flatmates residing in the Lakhmi Apartment of Beltola, Guwahati had to flee following the earthquake. Cracks occurred across the building and in a substantial margin as observed in the pillars. Some of the rented flatmates have already started looking for new places.

"I can't stay here for a single day. We have already started looking for a new place," said a college student staying on rent at the Lakhmi Apartment.

Locals of the area have claimed that the backside of the flat was covered in dust as a result of the cement coming out during the earthquake. Few even claimed that the building will remain unusable and have alleged weaker construction. However, an individual owner has claimed "Nothing can be said without a proper check by the engineers. Only after that, we can ascertain the reasons behind the damage."

G Plus spoke to the building secretary who stated that an engineer has already been called to check the cracks. "People are reacting because the cracks are visible easily on the outside. A proper check has to be done," the secretary told G Plus.

Meanwhile, the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) visited the building to observe the situation.



Damage caused at an apartment in Beltola, Guwahati | G Plus Photo

In one apartment at Ulubari, the entire ceiling was cracked open as water from the collapsed roof came down heavily inside a penthouse.

## Damages across Assam

The damages were evident across Assam with even water coming out of farm lands and destroying local ecology.

The massive tremors of the earthquake had caused a huge crack in the railway bridge at Bongalikushi, Rangiya. There were cracks observed at the Elephant Shell 516 Railway Bridge.

The railway authorities have intervened and have started repair work. As a result of the cracks, the train movement was stalled.

Cracks were observed in the upper part of the 126-feet Maha Mrityunjay temple. There is

no statement from the temple authorities on the matter yet. As per sources, the damages have been observed in the recently constructed part of the temple.

## Residents spend their days in fear

Most residents are spending their days with a sense of fear, as earthquake of such a magnitude hasn't been experienced by many. "We have only heard stories of the earthquake of 1950 and how it destroyed properties and caused devastation," said a teenaged resident as he tried to narrate his experience. The state of Assam has witnessed one of its strongest tremors if 8.6 magnitude on August 15, 1950.

Elderly residents recalled stories they had heard of the great earthquake 1897 Assam earthquake which left a trail

of destruction in the entire region. The earthquake of 1897 which occurred on June 12, had resulted in violently thrusting upwards the Shillong Plateau by about 11 meters. The earthquake had recorded 8.0 on the Richter scale and had resulted in approximately over 1500 casualties besides causing catastrophic damage to infrastructure reaching upto Calcutta, with the tremors reaching up to the Ahmedabad, Peshawar and Burma.

Meanwhile, a National Center for Seismology (NCS) reports said after the tremors that "The historical and instrumentally recorded earthquake data (NCS catalogue) reveals that the region is affected by moderate to large earthquakes and the most prominent events among those are the 29 July, 1960 Assam earthquake of M 6.0."

## GMCH gets major oxygen boost to fight COVID-19

**T**he Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) has received a major oxygen boost to fight COVID-19. Three functioning oxygen generator plants and one 20,000 litre cryogenic liquid oxygen tank has been set up at the GMCH complex. "We have another tank in Superspeciality of

the same capacity. On top of that, we have 300 oxygen concentrators and more than 400 bulk cylinders, etc," Abhijit Sarma, Superintendent, GMCH informed. Meanwhile, on Sunday, April 25, Minister of State (MoS) for Health Pijush Hazarika along with Member of Parliament (MP) Biswajit Daimary visited an under-

construction Oxygen plant located at Samdrup Jangkhar, Bhutan. It is estimated that on its completion, Assam will get 50 MT of oxygen per day. The break up of oxygen includes GMCH 3 (2.13 MT); Jorhat Medical College 2 (1.24 MT); Tezpur Medical College, Barpeta Medical College, and Diphu Medical College 1 unit each (of 0.62 MT).





# IIT Guwahati links multi-hazard activities to Assam quake

G Plus News  
@guwahatipius

**T**he massive earthquake which struck Assam on April 28, at 7:51 AM could be the result of various kinds of hazardous activities. Researchers of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati have linked the earthquake and its aftershocks to "multi-hazardous activities."

The earthquake measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale which hit Assam and other states of the region has left a trail of destruction of properties and a sense of fear among many residents. It has also got seismologists and geologists working on the possible causes and whether there could similar tremors in the near future.

Of the many findings, the one that has caught everyone's attention are the findings of a study led by Prof. T. G. Sitharam, Director IIT Guwahati and president of Indian Society for Earthquake Technology. The group headed by Sitharam has done extensive work in the North East particularly related to seismic hazard assessment and liquefaction of soils.

The findings assumes great importance coming as it does during the pandemic when people are already grappling with the health crisis.

The massive earthquake led to collapse of a free-standing rocky hill in Bhairabkund along with liquefaction of the ground. In several places water could be seen oozing out overground while in others visible cracks were seen on open grounds and fields.

Experts are of the opinion these occurrences on April 28 and the following day are indicators of the various multi-hazard. The finding suggest that these multi-hazards which hit Dhekiajuli, and the surrounding area are signs of hazardous events occurring simultaneously, cascading or cumulatively over time, and taking into account the potential interrelated effects of these hazards.

The high-intensity earthquake caused damage to houses and

buildings with people running out of their homes and other places in panic, obliterating social distancing and other Covid guidelines amid a raging pandemic. From the initial reports, the massive quake has caused only light damage to buildings and there have been no fatalities reported so far and only a few injuries have been reported.

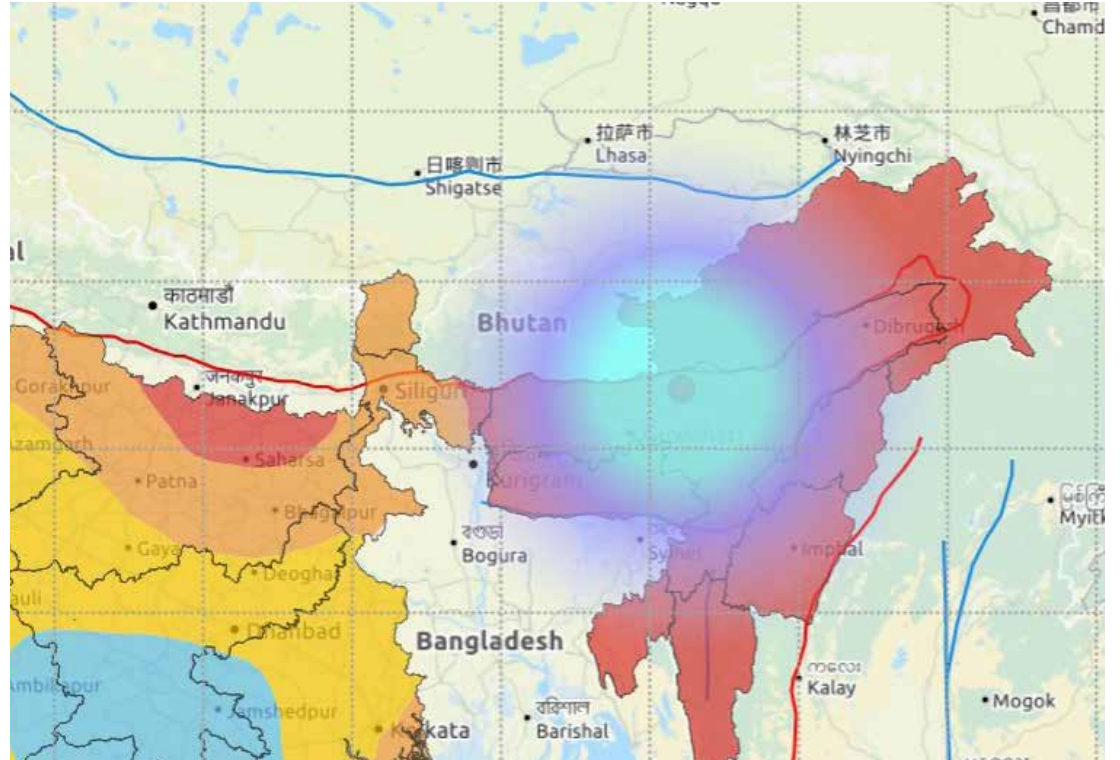
Experts believe that the impact of the massive earthquake was likely reduced by the fact that no major cities are located close to the epicentre. Even though it is a shallower earthquake, followed by strong or even strong tremors (intensity up to VII on the Mercalli scale), which occurred within a radius of approx. 50-70 km around the epicentre. Close to it, many ground cracks opened in fields and open spaces.

The media was flooded with many photographs and videos showing fissures exposing liquified soil. Water seeping out from a paddy field in Narayanpur area of Dhekiajuli, close to the epicentre of the massive earthquake has also been witnessed, indicating liquefaction of soil underneath.

The expert report states that the first big earthquake of 6.4 event along or near the Kopili fault closer to Himalayan frontal thrust was followed by 15 quakes so far and the event of 4.7 magnitude earthquake at 8.03 PM, 4.0 magnitude at 8.13 PM and many smaller events afterward.

The area was shaken by 1 major quake of magnitude 6.4, 1 quake of magnitude 4.7, 4 quakes between 4.0 and 5.0, 7 quakes between 3.0 and 4.0, and >10 quakes between 2.0 and 3.0. Among these events, the Biggest quake 6.4 quake occurred 7.7 km northwest of Dhekiajuli, Sonitpur, Assam, India, 28 Apr 7:51 am. The Biggest quake on April 29, measured as 4.9, occurred 25 km west of Tezpur near Sonitpur, Assam, India, 29 Apr 1:20 am, and later a quake of magnitude 2.8, 33 km northeast of Tezpur occurred near Sonitpur on 29 April 2021 01:43 GMT.

Sonitpur district has a population of 19.5 Lakhs. Physio graphically the area can broadly be divided into



A map of the earthquake as prepared by National Seismology Center

three parts, i.e., the hilly tract, the foothill region and the extensive flood plain created by the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries. The hilly tracts comprise Siwalik sediments of lesser Himalayas. The epicentre of the massive earthquake near Sonitpur spreads over plain areas interspersed with hills. The hills and the isolated hill locks are made of Precambrian granitic rocks. Quaternary alluvium occupies the valleys, deposited over the undulated and faulted basement of granitic rocks, forming the plain area inter-woven with several paleochannels and static water bodies, over which the present-day habitation stands. Tezpur town (with a population of approx. 60,000) and other smaller towns near the epicentre, numerous buildings suffered light to moderate damage: parts of wall plaster, bricks, roof tiles fell, windows broke, few small and weakly built walls collapsed, pipes were damaged, objects fell off from their position and similar effects, but overall, the

damage is comparably limited considering the size of the quake.

According to media reports, a multi-storied building in Nagaon tilted on the adjacent structure, triggering panic. Healthcare facilities such as Dispur Hospital, Apollo Clinic, Down Town Hospital and Excelcare Hospital also saw damages. Few similar minor damages were reported in Guwahati city also.

According to eyewitness reports on social media highlight that the duration near the epicentre was relatively long, up to approximately one minute. Even in IIT Guwahati, strong tremors were felt by a large number of people, and name boards of departments tremors for about 30 to 40 secs. In fact, the earthquake was felt in almost all of Assam state, but also in parts of neighboring Bhutan, only 50 km away to the northwest, Tibet 150 km to the north, and Bangladesh 250 km to the south of the epicentre. Social media reports weak tremors as far as 400 km distance from the epicentre.

As mentioned earlier, the earthquake which is close to Kopili fault is a Northwest-Southeast trending strike-slip fault that separates Shillong plateau from the Mikir hills and extends north up to the main central thrust (MCT). The seismotectonic setting of Northeast India is shown in Figure 2, which depicts the Kopili fault. The Kopili fault zone is under compressional stress from the Indo-Burma arc to the east and from the Himalayan arc to the north, characterized by transverse tectonics. In the past, seismic activity has been reported around this fault by several seismologists. As per USGS report, the event is reported as 6.0 magnitude earthquake and the Moment tensor solution shows that the earthquake is of reverse type with strike-slip components. In the past, two large earthquakes have occurred in this area or near the Kopili fault. One in 1869 (M 7.7) towards the southeastern end of the fault and the other in 1943 (M 7.2) that occurred further north of the 1869 event.

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# Facing flak, ECI embarks into damage control mode

Angita Mahanta  
@guwahatipius

**T**he curtain will fall on the Assam Assembly election come May 2 when the results are announced, unless the outcome is contested by the political party or alliances that falls behind in the race to Dispur. While this may be unlikely and in the best interest of the state what cannot be overlooked is that elections have been held at one of the most challenging times amid the surge of the Coronavirus.

However, on May 2 that is on Sunday, millions of people will tune in and wait for the results. While the memories of the elections are something that many don't want to recall, especially the huge election campaign rallies and irresponsible statements made by senior politicians that Assam is "free of Corona" and that "we don't need to wear mask," people are keen on knowing the outcome as on it will depend which government takes over the reins of power and takes the people and the State through the present challenges.

Many people are also furious at the Election Commission at the way it has behaved and allowed political parties to hold rallies without following any safety protocols. To them it matters little that the commission is now talking about following restrict regulations during counting. "Yes, we want the count to take place without any violations, but the Election Commission has already caused much damage," said an angry resident of the city when asked to share his thoughts.

With the COVID-19 cases rising every day, and the deteriorating situation of the entire state, many people feel that the Election Commission of India, should have been more careful with the organizing of the election rallies and convoys, which people believe might have worked as a massive COVID-19 spreader.

"Holding of election rallies was a big mistake, that is when the surge in COVID-19 starting

happening in the state again. No protocols were followed during the election period. Once the spike in cases happened, political leaders either canceled their visits or did the rally online. Why didn't they think of this before?" a government school teacher told *G Plus*.

Even Indian Medical Association (IMA) vice president Dr. Navjot Dahiya recently claimed that the Prime Minister did not take any steps to strengthen the health system, and instead held poll rallies which acted as a "super spreader" of the coronavirus.

Hit by accusations and faced with the ire of the courts which has held the Election Commission of India (ECI) responsible for the surge in Coronavirus cases in India, the latter has come up with some new ground rules for everyone (involved) to follow.

The ECI made it mandatory for all candidates and agents to have either negative COVID-19 test results or both doses of a vaccine before entering the counting halls on May 2, when voters of the five Assembly polls are tabulated.

The ECI also banned all victory processions on May 2 and restricted the number of people accompanying winning candidates to collect their certificate of election from the Returning Officer to two.

"In view of the second wave of pandemic and in order to ensure complete safety, arrangements during counting (votes), the Commission has been regularly consulting the Chief Secretaries and the Chief Electoral Officers of all five States/UT (West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry) and has taken their views and safety measures/protocol to be followed," an ECI statement said.

"No candidates/agents will be allowed inside the counting hall without undergoing RT-PCR/RAT test or without having two doses of vaccination against Covid-19 and will have to produce negative RT-PCR report or RAT report or vaccination reports within 48 hours of the start of counting," the EC instructions read.

Additionally, no public



Under-construction counting center in Guwahati | G Plus Photo

gathering outside the counting venue shall be allowed during the process of counting, the statement added.

Moreover, counting halls should be large enough to maintain physical distancing and have adequate ventilation. The counting centers as well as sealed outer boxes of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) should be sanitized. If required, postal ballots could be counted in separate halls, it said.

Everything looks good on paper, but it would be interesting to see how far the guidelines are respected this time. The problem is ECI top officials in the state appear to be increasingly inaccessible more so after the flurry of charges against their actions or rather inaction during the election period. For instance, the Chief Electoral Officer of Assam, Nitin Khade when contacted seemed reluctant to speak. On being asked about the measures in place and how effective these would be, he simply said, "it's all available on the website please check it out."

On the other hand, and very interestingly so senior politicians are still of the opinion that assembly elections had anything to do with the COVID surge in the state.

Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said earlier there is no link between election campaign rallies and rising Covid-19 cases in Assam and studies have in fact shown that not a single COVID-19 case has been reported from the places where campaign rallies were held.

"We carried out studies to see if there was any link between election rallies and new COVID cases but studies have shown that not a single case has been reported from any of the rally venues," Sarma said.

The Assam health Minister who campaigned for most part of the elections without wearing a mask and was seen mingling with huge crowds may have forgotten what medical experts and science says about virus and diseases connected with it. A virus like the COVID-19 and the new variants may come externally, like Sarma says, "brought by people coming

from outside," but it needs an ecosystem to thrive in and spread and huge gatherings of people acts as a readymade environment to breed and then spread in the population.

The Madras High Court against the backdrop of the pandemic on Thursday, April 29 went so far as to pulling up the ECI saying that it should be "put up on murder charges for being the most irresponsible institution"

"What were you doing for last 10 to 14 months?", the Madras High Court criticized the Centre's preparedness in relation to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Why are we acting only now in April, though we had one full year?" the Madras High Court further asked.

Assam state government and ECI should also realize the repercussions that they failed to foresee or straight-up ignored during the Assembly election in the state. It should be prepared to answer tough questions like these if the COVID-19 situation in the state further escalates following the vote counting day.

## Enquiry committee to investigate 12-year-old Karbi girl's death

The Governor of Assam has constituted a one-man Enquiry Committee led by Moloy Bora, IAS, Commissioner, Central Assam Division to enquire into the circumstances leading to the death of a 12-year-old housemaid

named Sumila Ronghangpi hailing from Karbi Anglong in the house of one Prakash Borthakur of Raha. The terms of reference of the Enquiry Committee are as follows- 1. To ascertain the facts and circumstances leading to the

death of a 12-year-old housemaid named Sumila Ronghangpi hailing from Karbi Anglong in the house of one Prakash Borthakur of Raha. 2 To suggest measures for the regulation of possible violent protests causing loss of

life and injury and also loss of public property. The enquiry report is to be submitted within 30 (thirty) days from the date of issue of notification. A 12-year-old Karbi girl was allegedly burnt alive by her employer in Nagaon.

The incident occurred at around 2 PM on Thursday, April 22. The victim, Sumila Ronghangpi, was working as domestic help for the past five years at the place of the man who allegedly committed the heinous crime.



EOS R SYSTEM

Canon

Delighting You Always

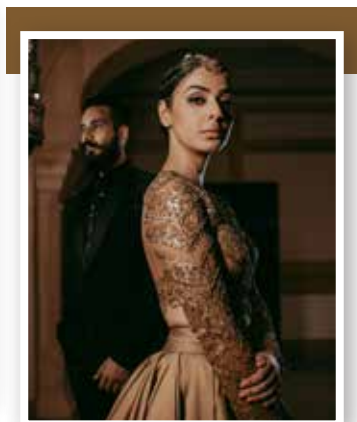
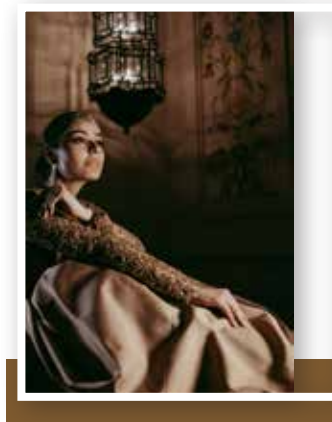
# The All New “EOS R6”

The all new EOS R6 features a high-resolution 20.1 Megapixels full-frame CMOS sensor along with a DIGIC X image processor, records both stills and 4K UHD video by using a broad sensitivity range, from ISO 100-102400, so as to suit working in a variety of lighting conditions.

## 20.1 Megapixels

### Reproduce the finest details to achieve greater realism

The EOS R6 feature a 35mm full frame CMOS sensor with approximately 20.1-megapixel for stunning results with incredible detail and clarity, even in low-light situations.



## 4K 60p

### Resolution enhancing the potential value of movie clips

The EOS R6 offer advanced recording features as 4K UHD uncropped at 60fps and Full HD at 120fps. Movie Servo AF is available in all 4K and Full HD movie modes except time-lapse. It supports Canon Log 4:2:2 10-bit internal recording and HDR PQ 4:2:2 10-bit internal recording at all viewing angles. Full HD videos at up to 120fps can also be recorded using the EOS R6 camera delivering refined and detailed image quality.

## Operability & Wireless Connectivity

The EOS R6 exteriors are made of lightweight and rigid polycarbonate resin, and the internal structure of magnesium alloy. The EOS R6 offers dual card slots for SD memory cards, despite being a small and compact body. The shutter life count is at 300,000 cycles. The EOS R6 is compatible with 2.4GHz wireless LAN (IEEE 802.11b/g/n).

## The New Generation Canon RF lenses

Designed to bring out the best in the new 54mm diameter RF mount system, each RF lens features an advance optical design built-in lens data for Digital Lens Optimizer. The newly designed 12-pin high-speed communication system in the RF lens transfer's larger amounts of data with high speed and incredibly fast AF. RF lenses also feature an entirely new “control ring” to which users can assign such exposure settings function. Mount Adapter EF-EOS R RF helps in using the existing EF and EF-S lens system to expand the capability of the existing EOS system.

## Dual Pixel CMOS AF II

### Next level focus speed and accuracy for efficient unassisted operation

The EOS R6's has all new highly responsive Dual Pixel CMOS AF II which features up to 1053 AF Segments & 6072 selectable AF positions, combined with a focus area that covers approximately 100% horizontal and 100% vertical. The EOS R6 can detect the body, face or eyes of a subject and Eye Detection AF can also be used in conjunction with Servo AF and Movie AF modes. The EOS R6 for the first time incorporates animal detection, AF can operate in light as dim as a light rating of EV -6.5 and supports AF aperture at as wide as f/22.



## IBIS X OIS 8.0 Stops

### Shooting stability while using handheld in any unstable situations

Canon for first time incorporated 5-axis In-Body Image Stabilization that corrects camera-shake blur across the entire zooming range, from wide-angle to telephoto. It will not only enhance the ability to shoot still images at slower shutter speeds, but it will also capture high-quality movies during handheld shooting.



## Drive Speed 12 fps/20 fps

### Moments frozen to be preserved as memories

The EOS R6 can capture the split-second details at a high-speed continuous shooting up to 12fps with mechanical shutter. Since the Dual Pixel CMOS AF II and Servo AF can track moving subjects, the user can depend on the camera to capture the decisive moment. In situations where the sound of a shutter could be obtrusive, the EOS R6 with AF/AE tracking allows users to shoot still pictures at speeds of up to 20 fps (approx.), with almost no sound.





# Vaccine shortages concern Guwahati residents

**Nibir Deka**  
@nibirdeka

**V**accines have been denied to residents across the city with many facing delays due to the lack of availability. Few of the frontline workers are denied the jab even after one year of the COVID-19 pandemic. "I have been running pillar to post to vaccinate my 52-year-old mother. She is a frontline worker in the railways. They were never vaccinated in the office, something that should have been done on a priority basis," said a Guwahati resident.

The lack of availability was also found in private-run

hospitals.

In other instances, people who have received appointments for the vaccine were denied. "I booked an appointment and received the appointment slip but the hospital authorities, when asked, said there is no vaccine supply from government end and hence they will not be able to provide it till the supply situation improves," Sushanta Talukdar, a Rehabari resident told *G Plus*.

As per the National Health Mission data, a total of 23,17,857 people have been vaccinated. As of 29th April, 3,24,241 health care workers, 5,56,890 frontline workers and 14,36,726 citizens above 45 years have been vaccinated. Although the vaccination drive has been

ramped up, availability issues have been a factor.

The senior citizens across Guwahati have been affected as they had to wait in lines since morning to get a jab. "My father had to be in line for a long time at Ulubari Health Centre and I am really concerned about the situation," a Kharghuli resident told *G Plus*. Another concern has the delay for the gap between the second dose of the vaccine.

"There is such a huge line for the vaccine that people have to return back after taking the jab. If this is the situation, how will we get the second dose," said a resident from Lachit Nagar.

*G Plus* spoke to many of the health centres across Guwahati. While some of those

in-charge have claimed that vaccination drive has been ongoing, whereas some stated that the demand is more than the supply.

## The present situation

Meanwhile, the Assam government has received a fresh batch of five lakh doses of Covishield Vaccine, which they claim to further vaccination program in Assam. As per State Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the procurement has been done through funds of Assam Arogya Nidhi.

The Assam government has claimed to vaccinate people for free in the age group of 18 to 45. Few have raised concerns as to the viability of the demand and supply. Among the five lakhs,

3,71,480 are Covishield and 1,28,830 are Covaxin for the 18+ people.

Amid the increased supply, the demand for the vaccines is still rampant across the state. This was evident with the issues face by citizens across Assam during CoWin registrations.

The registration process for vaccination against COVID-19 started on Wednesday, April 28 at 4:00 PM. Those who complete the registration process will be eligible to get a jab of the COVID-19 vaccine at various vaccination centers in Assam.

Further, people have questioned the availability of vaccines. "Registered on CoWin but no vaccination centres available till July at least," a Netizen posted on Twitter.





# The earthquake that shook Assam

I can't stay here for a single day. We have already started looking for a new place," a college student from Guwahati.



The aftershocks signify the release of the stress in the vicinity of today's source zone in and around Sonitpur, Assam," Dr Sanjay O'Neill Shaw, Head, Regional Meteorological Centre, Guwahati.



We didn't even get time to come down. We were stuck in our apartment and hoping that Maa Kamakhya save us," resident of from Lakshmi apartment, Survey.



I thought we are all gone case for sometime. It was a very scary experience," Shabana, a resident of Ulubari



E D I T O R I A L

## Collective responsibility, the way ahead

**T**he second wave of Corona virus is currently changing our life and economy dramatically. Our entire medical staff—corona warriors, frontline workers, youth, people associated with essential and emergency services, volunteers, urban local bodies, Panchayati Raj Institutions, bureaucrats and politicians have a huge responsibility in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic. Though we keep slamming the authorities for not being prepared, or the Election Commission of India for allowing rallies which has led to the Covid surge. But were we responsible?

It has been decided that COVID-19 vaccination for people in the age group 18-45 years will be free of cost in Assam. Have everyone registered yet? Are not people pulling strings for not standing in the queue and getting the vaccination easily without any hassle. For just to travelling to Shillong people used to bribe and get fake Covid reports. Was that being responsible? These are some serious questions that we need to ask ourselves.

Today, more than anything what we need most is, collective responsibility to help us to combat the pandemic. The authorities, the politicians, the security personnel, the general public, all other stakeholders – everyone has to work hand in hand to be able to contain the surge.

It goes without saying that the government needs to understand

that this is when people need it most, to provide them the lifeline they need. The same goes for the states which have to own up its share of responsibility. These are times when governance will be tested and if it fails then generations will remember what was allowed to happen and hold it responsible. When there is shortage of vaccines, shortage of oxygen, beds in hospitals we must respond to the crisis together. We don't need rocket science to understand that during such times we must act together and not against each other. Everything that is being done is to save human lives and to combat the present crisis. The political opposition must act responsibly and ask the right questions and not look for controversies in everything.

Since last one year, we have evolved our way of life, reshaped the interconnected world and have devised new mechanisms for sustainable and inclusive economic development. Just days before the second wave of COVID-19, the International Monetary Fund had raised country's GDP growth projection for the current fiscal to 12.5 per cent. This is the highest growth projection among the top and advanced economies across the world. In the present times the responsibility of each individual becomes much bigger. It is only collectively, the projection of development could be achieved and we can emerge out of this crisis.

[@guwahatiplus](#)

## Vaccination politics

**A**s India is witnessing a surge in the COVID-19 cases, another politics is ongoing in the country and even in the world – which all states or countries are vaccination ready? Mumbai, which is once again battling the novel coronavirus, suspended the inoculation drive at various COVID-19 vaccination centres across the city recently due to a shortage of vaccines. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasized 'Tika Utsav', several states across the country have shut down vaccination centres, citing a shortage of vaccine doses.

According to media reports at the beginning of April, even Assam's Covid vaccination drive slackened amid delay in the arrival of fresh stocks and reports emerged that recipients scheduled for a second dose were turned away from many hospitals. Well, the health authorities now claim that the situation is under control and vaccination of around 1 lakh people happens every day. But there are queues everywhere, and with vaccination of people above 18 years starting from 1<sup>st</sup> May, the situation is questionable. Even the registration process for vaccination of those above 18 years is chaotic. Many people who tried to register in Guwahati through CoWin.gov.in took hours to receive the OTP. Even if the entire process was over people did not receive the appointment. Many alleged that the website keeps getting stuck. So even before the vaccination started, the process of registration for the vaccines raised questions regarding the preparedness of the authorities.

Congress recently pointed towards the shortage of vaccines and warned the Union government of more protests if people were turned away at hospitals.

A national daily reported that the governments of Assam and Maharashtra were unlikely to begin vaccinating all adults from May 1 because of the unavailability of vaccines.

This came two days after four other states – Rajasthan, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand – also expressed their inability to kickstart the third phase of vaccination, alleging that the Centre had hijacked most of the stocks from manufacturers, leaving very little for them.

Only time will tell which state is better prepared for the vaccination drive but amid all the chaos, vaccination politics to remain for few days.

**Nehal Jain**  
[@NehalJain96](#)

## Sumila Ronghangpi and upper caste bashing

**T**he entire nation was taken aback when the news related to the murder of Sumila Ronghangpi broke out. It is alleged that the accused were the employers of Sumila who had kept her as a maid. The murder was so gruesome that words will fall short to describe it as her body was found in a "charred" form which means she was burnt.

The incident was not limited to the murder; as it seemed to have opened a Pandora's box such as the prima facie it exposed of the episode of child labor. As she was said to have been just 12 years old, plus the opening up of a very age-old custom to lure parents and children from nearby poor district such as the said West Karbi Autonomous District in the instant case by offering them a better life, education and hence it is nothing less than a 'vicious cycle' as it was alleged that deceased Sumila was not allowed to go back home since the last 4 years.

Moreover, the various voices such as Gayatri Laxmi Teronpi member KSYC had said it had also to do with the failure on the part of the autonomous council to establish proper educational institutions. The Karbi Students Association, Dimas Students Union, and other stakeholders have gone on to blame the media's hypocrisy in this matter as they have alleged that apparently, the media has not covered the news with the intensity as it did in the lynching of two youths Nilotpal-Abhijit at Karbi Anglong's Dokmoka. The allegations do not end there an angle; of caste Assamese and their demonic acts has been made out. It is just because the accused in this case were from an upper caste Assamese family, hence the media is not covering it and rather covering Bihu Toli functions at that time.

But, such narratives by the respective stakeholders seem to ring hollow, as seen with the article published by writers Suraj Gogoi and Soneswar Narah who spoke on the same lines but about upper-caste Assamese hegemony in the context of upper-caste Assamese such as revered Ambikagiri Raichoudhury's attempt at unifying the entire community with the help of Assamese language rather the authors had vilified him on the ground of shoving the Assamese language upon the tribals or the East Bengal immigrants. This is not new, the "upper caste" bashing is the new cool in the modern era and anything and everything is used to justify this claim; right from language, status quo, or anything. Writer

R.G Bhutia had criticized the authors on the ground that Raichoudhury wanted to integrate the Assamese society for example one umbrella and bring about uniformity as it was necessary to back then because we the divergent people of both the Brahmaputra and Barak valley had to have a common ground.

However, very few scholars or people will acknowledge the fact that Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati (an upper caste Assamese) a renowned Assamese freedom fighter who was a student of Cotton College played a crucial part in supporting



people like Bhimbar Deori to end caste-based discrimination in the then Cotton College (now University). The role of Gopinath Bardoloi (again an upper-caste Assamese) to support the creation of 'Tribal Belts and Blocks' and also opposed members of the Muslim league such as Maulana Hamid Khan Bhasini even attempted to garner support through public opinion had tried to eliminate the line system which was a "sinister conspiracy by the Muslim league to settle immigrants from erstwhile East Bengal.

It was before we attained independence that vigilantes such as Bhubaneshwar Baruah had endorsed the same sentiments in a letter which he had written affectionately to Bhimbar Deori referring to his role and significance of the Tribal League. It was a mark of their unity.

Yes, it true that certain factions did try to suppress the voices of tribals as observed by Charan Narzary in his book a "Dream for Udayanchal" who was a member of Plain Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA), the treachery of political parties such as the Congress party (dominated by upper-caste Assamese and Muslims) who at that time had never envisioned the Assam Tribal League as their long term partners, and even turned down the tribal league's

## OPINION

PRAKREETISH SARMA



rightful nominee Bhimbar Deori as a member of the constituent assembly. They had instead appointed their stooge Dharanidhar Basumutary. It was done with an attempt to subdue the tribal interest and rather uphold their vested interest such as fielding maximum candidates or control over the economy.

Nothing can pardon the heinous crime committed against the minor child or last year's Hathras Gang Rape and Murder. But, such outrage against upper-caste Hindus is not the solution to such problems or crimes. Rather, as Gayatri Laxmi Teronpi member KSYC had rightly pointed out about the failure on the part of the Autonomous council to establish proper educational institutions. Also, the presence of Child Labour the exception under Child Labour act is that a child is allowed to work in a place run by his family during non-schooling hours. But, it is not implemented properly and rules are violated by the "Elite" as per their whims and fancies, and rarely are they prosecuted for flouting the laws. Moreover, the safeguards for the people from lower caste is present in the form of acts such as against Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes (prevention of atrocities) Act, 1989 which is again necessary and there have been instances of its alleged misuse by the people of the community.

Assam can safely be considered as a place that is least influenced by upper-caste hierarchy such as the Varna system, it is a land dominated by various tribes and there has been a perfect amalgamation of elements of Indo-Aryan civilization and indigenous elements. These attempts at bringing about frictions by many will never bring any gain rather bring about differences. It is important to question the authorities for failing miserably to ensure a better living condition at places because of which poor people irrespective of the caste have to resort such forced labor, child labor. It is important to break the chain.

(The author is currently practicing as an Advocate in Gauhati High Court. The views expressed in the article are his own.)



# COVID-19 and doomed India

Does India have the most backward population with the world's brightest minds within it? The recent situation of COVID-19 has been revealed and proved in facts. It might sound bitter but the truth is that we have always acted dumb. And that is a valid reason that once a land of treasures has turned into a land of beggars. Casteism, inequality, poverty, depression, rapes, diabetics, and what not?! We top in all the indices where we should not. Even a sane mind would be in a muddle if asked to figure out the logic behind such a dilapidated condition our country is in.

The most recent deadly situation we are in due to the second wave of COVID-19 was very much inevitable if we would have been a bit more careful and cautious. As a country, we have been known for our craziness for the game of cricket but we like to play a game even more than that! The blame game. And up to such an extent that we like to blame someone else for us not taking precautions for ourselves. In the year 2020 when COVID-19 was at its peak, the government of India declared a countrywide strict lockdown starting from 22nd March of the year. And that, in turn, hit our people very badly, we had an economic downfall, people were dying out of poverty and hunger, many lost their jobs and all related dilemmas.

So, as the first wave of COVID-19 came under control the government started relaxing the strictness of the lockdown. Finally, after vaccines were invented and their production started there was full unlocking. Despite constant advertisements in whatever media possible and the nagging caller tune every time you call a person stating "The new year has brought a new ray of hope in the form COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine developed in India is safe and effective and provides immunity against COVID-19. Trust the Indian vaccines. Please take vaccination when



Mass cremations begin as India faces deluge of COVID-19 deaths | Credit - Reuters

your turn comes and don't trust rumors. Even after taking the vaccine continue to take all the required Covid precautions like wearing a mask, maintaining social distance, and washing hands." ; people ignored everything and started behaving more irresponsibly. It would be a deliberate lie if someone says that "I/we was/were not aware of the second wave of COVID-19" because the internet is very much feasible nowadays. When we were not facing the issue of the second wave of COVID-19 many other countries were already facing it and were reimposed with lockdowns by their respective governments. So, whose mistake it is that we were not paying attention to such information and acting carelessly?

We have always been known as a nation good with numbers. Isn't it foolishness that we were unable to figure out how much time it would take to fully vaccinate a country with a 1.3 billion population? Wasn't it an act of irresponsibility to not follow the safety protocols even after knowing that a vaccine can't provide 100% protection from getting infected with the virus? When requested, we don't follow the protocols; when imposed, we anguish it

to be a violation of our right to freedom. So, what are the government and administration supposed to do? Shoot down, protocol violators? Oh! Then it would be a violation of human rights. Even God helps those who help themselves. It is our fate that we are going through such a situation.

We were quick enough to declare the people participating in Tablighi Jamaat in March 2020 (when there were just a few hundreds of COVID positive cases in the country) responsible for spreading the virus. But we refrain from standing against participating in Kumbh Mela in March 2021 when more than 25000 COVID positive cases were there and are still soaring. We ignore everything and participate in political rallies, social programs with pomp and gaiety. Isn't it stupidity on our part to not consider the severity of the virus that doesn't discriminate like our society? And for people, putting up logic defending such programs where there were huge social gatherings by saying, that the entry to the program was provided only after producing RT-PCR test result stating COVID negative, you don't need to have the virus in your body while swab samples were

being collected from your body for the RT-PCR but you can get infected with the virus the very next moment. So, stop supporting anyone indulging in such activities irrespective of religion, political party, or anything else.

We have got no rights to question the government for not having enough hospital beds, for giving away vaccines to other countries when our own country is not self-sufficient to cater to the need of our people to get unnecessary fame, get praised for being the messiah of the world; because we were the ones who voted for temples not for hospitals & hospital beds, for statues but not for basic infrastructures. We were the ones who voted and elected criminals and underqualified people to the parliament.

It's high time that we learn how to take responsibility of our own and not blame others for our mistakes. As of now, it's not the time to panic but deal with the situation wisely. Referring to data 98% of cases recover easily, only 1% get serious or critical and 2% of deaths occur. This data is just concerning the total world population. Compared to these percentages more people die every year in road traffic accidents and



Dr. Githartha Talukdar

other diseases in India than the number of deaths occurring from COVID.

We have lost so many doctors during the first wave of COVID-19 and even after that, so many doctors are suffering from anxiety and other side effects due to long hours of duty donning the suffocating PPE kits and young doctors staking their careers as they have to be on covid duty leaving aside their regular course and curriculum. I hope we respect these sacrifices and not let the hard work and efforts put in by them go in vain. The second wave of COVID-19 is more severe and intense with number of cases spiking high and faster than its previous wave, different variations of the Coronavirus coming up in tests.

To keep the situation under control let us all follow the protocols of wearing masks, sanitizing or washing hands with soap or handwash at least after every 15minutes, and maintaining social distance. Getting tested on our own as soon as we have any similar and severe symptoms of the COVID-19. And let's hope and pray that we get over this situation soon.

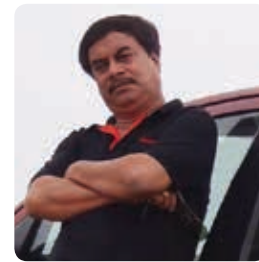
The author is a dental surgeon, securing his graduation in 2019 from Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Rohilkhand State University (MJPRSU), Uttar Pradesh and is currently serving as an intern in Kothiwal Dental College and Research Centre(KDCRC), Uttar Pradesh. The views expressed in the article are his own.

## Weather report for the week

Guwahati	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
SATURDAY						
Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Mostly Sunny	Sunny	Sunny
30°-19° C	32°18° C	32°18° C	33°19° C	33°20° C	32°20° C	32°20° C



# Remedies for Vaastu defects in various directions



**HEMANTA KUMAR SARMAH**  
Engineer, Businessman, Advanced Pranik  
Healer and Su Jok Acupressure specialist.

## EAST

If east is high wealth is drained out and if east is dirty, there are problems due to children. The solution is to keep the east neat and clean. If the slope is from east to west, eye troubles might arise. The solution is to place a flag in west

## NORTH

If the kitchen is in the north then there will be family disputes. To avoid it place a water fountain in the north. If north is high then disease and debts prevail as well. The solution is to get your walls painted in green. Cracks in the north cause problem due to women. Put wind chimes at the entry to sort it.

## WEST

Water sources in the west creates financial trouble. Place Varun yantra in the west to fix it. If the west is down, then it causes defamation. Try and fast on Saturdays (Install Shani Yantra) to combat it. If west is more occupied than east then the male child of the house might cause trouble.

## SOUTH

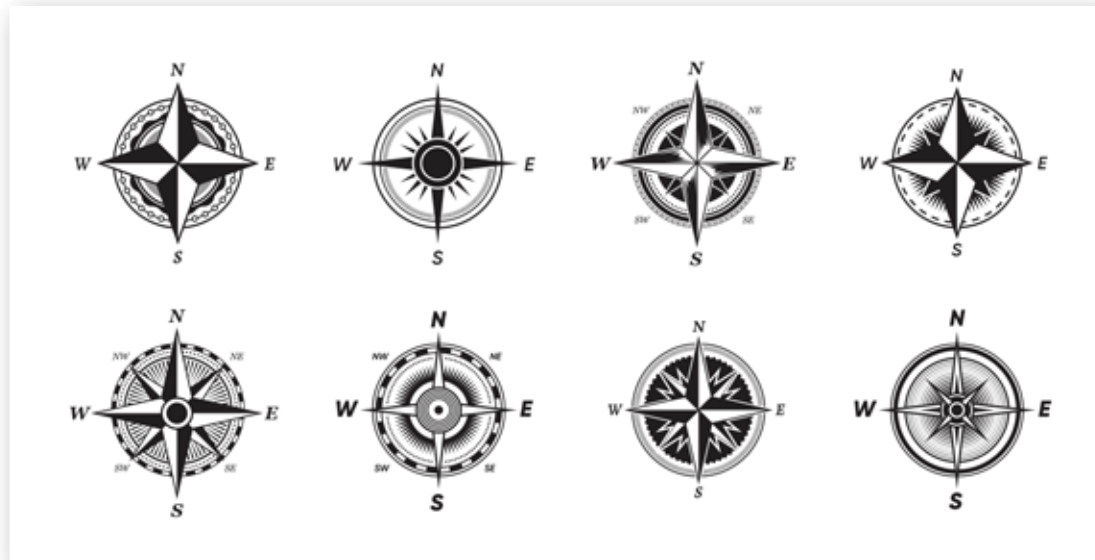
Well in the south makes the owner unwell and grips him in diseases. If the south is down women remain unhealthy. Place Yantra for mars in the south to combat this. Empty south causes money loss Worship Lord Hanuman to avoid it. Building temples in the south does not bring peace. Install Hanuman Yantra to combat adverse effects

## NORTHEAST

If the northeast of the house is dirty, there will be disputes. Keep the northeast clean and empty. If cut, then children face a lot of problems and the owner is in great tension. If high, then money loss will occur. Light lamps and place aquariums to combat it. Kitchens in the northeast causes quarrels too. Place shivlinga (Install Guru & Sriyantras) to combat it.

## SOUTHEAST

If the kitchen is dirty, the wife remains ill. Worship Lord Ganesh to prevent it from happening. Constructing wells in the southeast direction causes trouble to spouses. Place two



green ganeshji back to back at the entrance. If the southeast is lower than north or east it causes illness in the family. Higher southeast than southwest causes money loss and loss of children. Feed cows to combat it.

## NORTHWEST

If lower than the northeast, it creates problems related to court

cases in the family. Place Moon yantra in this direction to combat it. If it remains empty then it is possible that the owner does not enjoy staying at home. Color the walls with a cream color to lessen adverse effects. If the owner's bed room is in the northwest, it causes allergy and cold problems. Place white Ganeshji at the entrance to combat it.

## SOUTHWEST

If the southwest remains empty, it causes illness to the owner. Place Rahu yantra in the southwest. If down, it causes wealth loss. A well in the southwest causes tensions. Place a brown or gray coloured Ganeshji at the entrance to combat it. Broken wall causes theft and an extended southwest increases enemies.

# Optimise your morning routine

**H**ow does your time between 5 to 8 AM look like? Do you wake up between these hours? What is the first thing you do when you wake up? If you wake up early, what are the set of tasks you follow? These are some basic questions which we need to ask ourselves before constructing a routine according to individual needs. It is more common to be awake till night for youngsters than to wake up early. Some of them may have sleep deprivation due to insomnia. A sound sleep is the fundamental part of a good morning routine. Without 6-7 hours of sleep at night, it becomes difficult to wake up early. Therefore, the very first step is to have adequate sleep during night hours. When you sleep at peace, you are recharged fully for the next day. Let me guide you through a step-by-step procedure to maximize your productivity of the day.

## Keep away your phones from your reach

How your next morning will

look depends on the previous night's routine. So, the first step is to build a night routine that helps you to optimize your morning hours. A night routine can vary from person to person. But, anyone who follows a strict morning routine goes to bed almost always before 11 PM. From 11 PM to 6 AM, you get approximately 7 hours to sleep. Seems easy right? Easier said than done. This is because at night you are prone to most distractions from the virtual world. Your mobile phones will be always distracting you with messages, notifications, news, updates, etc. Keeping mobile phones away at a distance will help you to sleep peacefully. Without the blue light coming into your vision from mobile phones, your mind will be able to fall asleep faster.

## Have a light meal for dinner

Your diet has a lot to do with



Representative Image

how your body will behave the next day. A heavy and spicy meal should be avoided for a productive early morning. Try to have your meals before 8 PM if possible. Design a meal that suits you the best. People who cannot replace rice with wheat (Roti) can stick with rice but may reduce the amount with some green veggies. Drink 3-4 liters of water during the day, this will keep the body hydrated.

## Make the plan tonight for tomorrow

When you plan your day the night before, you know what you should do tomorrow. This is the easiest task for you. Yet, most people fail to make a plan for the next day and are lost. Your life is made up of days, when you organize your days, you organize your life. The day starts with the morning, which is the most productive and positive hours if utilized properly. A thrusting start to the day is provided by the morning. It is important to plan the morning. Essentially, any kind of exercise that keeps you moving is recommended.

## Keep a habit tracker

For your morning routine or day routine, you can keep a record of yourself for the tasks you do. This can be done by marking the number of days you can accomplish the tasks at hand. Suppose, you may keep a sheet on the wall which has days with



Abhijnan Pritam Sarma

your tasks in it. You can cross mark those boxes whenever you complete these tasks. Whenever you see those marks on the sheet, your mind will feel something is done. The mind will be energized seeing this. This is simply tricking your brain.

A productive day for an individual is always determined by the type of morning. There is absolutely no doubt whoever makes the morning a priority will feel energetic for tasks in the day. If we follow these simple rules, we can certainly optimize our mornings.

(The author has completed his master's degree in Linguistics from Delhi University. He can be reached at [abhijnan.sarma1@gmail.com](mailto:abhijnan.sarma1@gmail.com). The views expressed in the article are his own.)



# Important judgement of Justice S.A. Bobde as 47th Chief Justice of India



Surya Pratap

“Freedom of mind is real freedom. A person whose mind is not free though he may not be in chains is a slave, not a free man.

One whose mind is not free, though he may not be in prison, is a prisoner and not a free man. One whose mind is not free though alive is no better than dead. Freedom of mind is the proof of one's existence.” - Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde, the 47th Chief Justice of India (CJI), retired on April 23, 2021; therefore, it is appropriate to reflect on his career and the significant decisions he rendered. Justice Bobde earned his B.A. and LL.B. degrees from the University of Nagpur and was admitted to the Maharashtra Bar Council in 1978. For more than two decades, he practiced law at the Supreme Court of India and the High Court of Bombay. In the year 1998, he was appointed as a Senior Advocate, and in the year 2000, he was elevated to the Bombay High Court as a Judge. In 2012, he was selected as the Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, and in 2013, he was elevated as a Judge of the Supreme Court of India. He was sworn in as the 47th Chief Justice of India on November 18th, 2019, after serving as a judge on the Supreme Court of India for more than six years.

As Chief Justice of India and a Supreme Court judge, Justice Bobde has delivered several landmark decisions. It will be in the best interests of the situation to quickly discuss some of his key decisions. In *Suresh Shah v. Hipad Technology India Private Limited*, Arbitration Petition (Civil) No(s). 08/2020, a Bench led by Justice Bobde held that if special laws do not extend to the premises and the lease/tenancy created as of the date when the cause of action to request eviction or other relief occurs, and the parties are governed by an Arbitration Clause in such transaction, the conflict between the parties is arbitrable and there shall be no impediment to invoking the Arbitration Clause. The Court also held that eviction or tenancy relating to matters regulated by special laws where the tenant has statutory protection against eviction and the Court/Forum is specified and conferred jurisdiction under the statute alone will adjudicate such

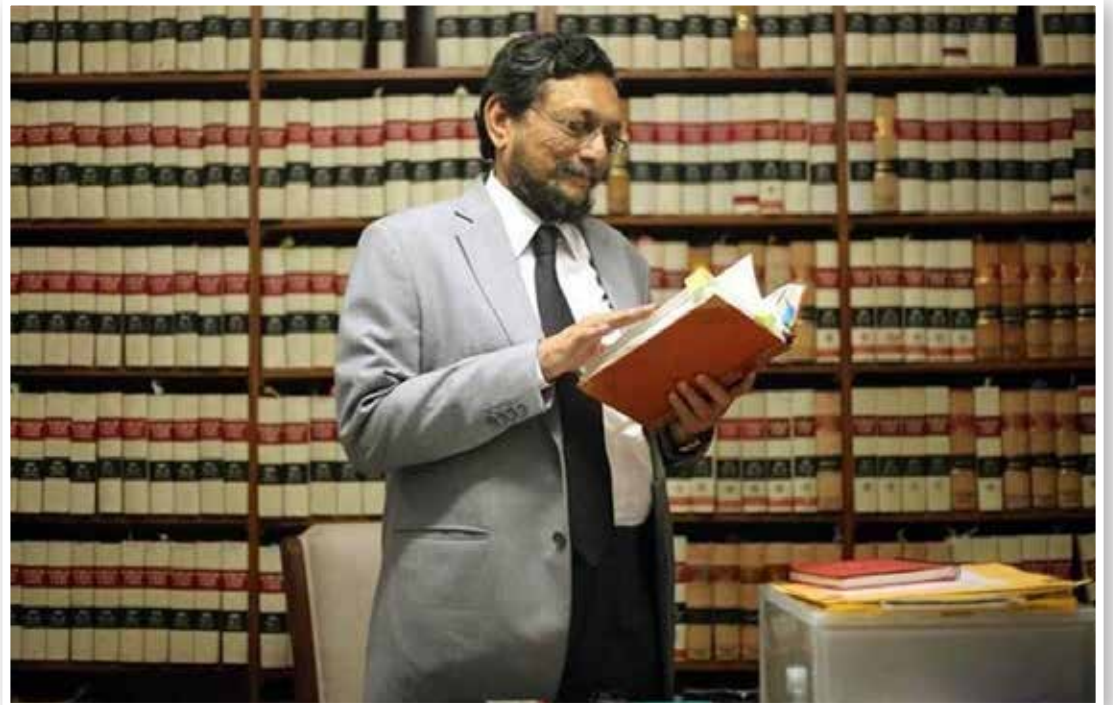
matters and that the conflict is non-arbitrable in such cases.

Because of the word 'his' in that clause, he held in *Abhiram Singh v. C.D. Commachen*, (2017) 2 SCC 629, that the bar under Section 123(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to appeal on the ground of faith must not be limited to the religion of the candidate. He noted that purposive interpretation in the social context adjudication as a facet of purposive interpretation warrants a broad interpretation of that section, that the section is intended to serve the broad purpose of checking appeals to religion, race, caste, community, or language by any candidate, and that to maintain the sanctity of the democratic process and avoid the vitiating of it, the section is intended to serve the broad purpose of checking appeals to religion, race, caste, community, or language by any

In *K.S. Puttaswamy (Privacy-gj.) v. Union of India*, (2017) 10 SCC 1, he was part of a 9-judge bench that held that the right to privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 and as a part of the freedoms guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. He also held that the first and natural home for a right to privacy is in Article 21 at the very heart of the Constitution. He observed that liberty and privacy are inextricably linked, with privacy often serving as the precondition for exercising one's right to personal liberty. He also noted that birth and death are two occasions when privacy is necessary for maintaining the integrity of all civilized citizens and that privacy is one of the rights that is instrumentally needed to enjoy the rights mentioned and enumerated in the constitutional document.

In *Jindal Stainless Ltd. v. the State of Haryana*, (2017) 12 SCC 1, he was part of a 9-judge bench that upheld the validity of the entry tax imposed by states on goods imported from other states, holding that a tax cannot be construed as a trade barrier simply because the rates are high.

Justice Bobde has maintained that the essential reason for the unique relationship between the bar and the bench is the shared principles and convictions between the two and that it is this solidarity that has ensured



ardent adherence to the rule of law and zealous defense of the citizens' fundamental rights time and time again. He has felt that it is important to develop the ability and foresight to deal with emerging concerns as everyone is leading a very demanding life and legal practitioners are no exception as they continuously face enormous pressure on the professional front, and such a demanding lifestyle can have grave consequences on the health of an individual. He has opined that we must no longer live in the hubris that only physical well-being is the important and mental well-being of members of both bar and bench is equally, if not more important. He also believes that the relationship between the bar and the bench is unique, considering that the bar is widely regarded as the mother of the bench; after all, most judges begin their careers at the bar before joining the judiciary.

The Indian judiciary's use of artificial intelligence, according to Justice Bobde, must be consistent with constitutional morality. Speaking at a forum, he stressed the importance of ensuring that Artificial Intelligence (AI) does not obstruct or threaten citizens' civil and legal rights. He noted that all equipment used to assist in the judicial decision-making process must be subjected to the final approval of a person

and that the use of AI, as well as all interaction with it, must be regulated by ethical, legal, and constitutional standards.

A bench headed by Justice Bobde recently provided numerous directions to all High Courts, directing them to take expeditious measures to enact the Draft Rules of Criminal Procedure, 2021 as part of the rules regulating criminal trials, and to ensure that current rules, regulations, directives, and practice instructions are suitably amended and promulgated wherever possible through the Official Gazette within 6 months. State governments, as well as the Union of India, were given directives to make necessary changes to their police and other manuals under their jurisdiction. Recently, a bench headed by Justice Bobde laid down rules for the selection of ad-hoc judges in High Courts under Article 224A of the Indian Constitution, which allows a Chief Justice of a High Court to recommend a former High Court judge to sit and serve as a judge of the High Court to hear cases with the President's prior approval.

He has always maintained that India is blessed with a skilled and brilliant pool of people who, with the right experience and orientation, can serve as arbitrators in even the most difficult cases. Given the sheer diversity and volume of matters

submitted to arbitration, he has indicated that the existence of a specialized arbitration bar with representatives who have not moved from the general bar and who function in close cooperation with qualified arbitral institutions is essential. He has stated several times that arbitration is not intended to be a substitute for litigation and that the time-consuming procedures of long oral arguments, lengthy written applications, and reliance on precedent are bound to provide the same results in arbitration as they do in litigation.

As Chief Justice of India and a Supreme Court Judge, Justice Bobde has written significant decisions. When the planet was struck by a pandemic in March 2020, Justice Bobde began holding simulated hearings around the globe to ensure that access to justice was maintained. He has always carried out his duties with a positive character, impeccable honesty, and upstanding behavior, and has been a great source of inspiration for all of us. I wish him the best of luck with his future endeavors.

(The author is a 3rd-year law student of BA, LL.B (Honours) course at Galgotias University. He can be reached at [sp69683@gmail.com](mailto:sp69683@gmail.com) or 7499088853. The views expressed in this article are his own.)



# The viper in the Machaan



Ranjan Kumar Choudhury

Spending time in a machaan was always a great stress reliever for me irrespective of whether you got a kill or not. One requires immense patience and perseverance to stay perched up on a tree controlling your biological needs for hours at a time. There was no way one could get down to answer a call of nature as then the scent would give away the presence of man to the animals in the forest so one must train for this long sitting alone with your thoughts as one could not also speak to your companion. I always preferred to sit with one other person but if it was deep in the forest I took a group of three in case of an emergency. The machaan was also made after a thorough inspection of the area usually under fruit trees like the Indian Gooseberry (Amla), Myrobalan (Hilika) and the Hog Plum (Amara); fortunately these trees grow quite freely in the wilds and found all over the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh besides in all the hilly regions of Assam and north eastern states. The catch is to find out a tree which has ripened fruits falling to the ground and somehow all the various species of deer will flock there to eat them. We had to sit atop a tree mainly to be high up to camouflage our smell and

course I was also lucky to have my Nishi hunter friends who used to scour the forests for such trees and they informed me when they found them. The Nishis however did not need to perch up on the trees as they smeared their bodies with the dung of the deer and were fully insulated from their human smell so as not to give their presence away.

That particular night I was feeling quite optimistic and went up to sit on the machaan eagerly around 4:30 pm just before the sun went down; it was an Amara tree which fruits were a delicacy for all types of deer. We had made our own sign language to alert one another when the deer came below listening to the faint rustle of the grass or a quiet snap of a twig; the deer moved in ghostlike movements very difficult to make out in broad daylight and impossible in the dark. I always waited to clearly hear the deer eat the fruits the sounds of which could be made out and then use the torch light to capture the animal in its beam before I took aim and fired. One had to be quite fast in the motions mentioned above and any mistake would allow the deer to jump off to safety crashing through the

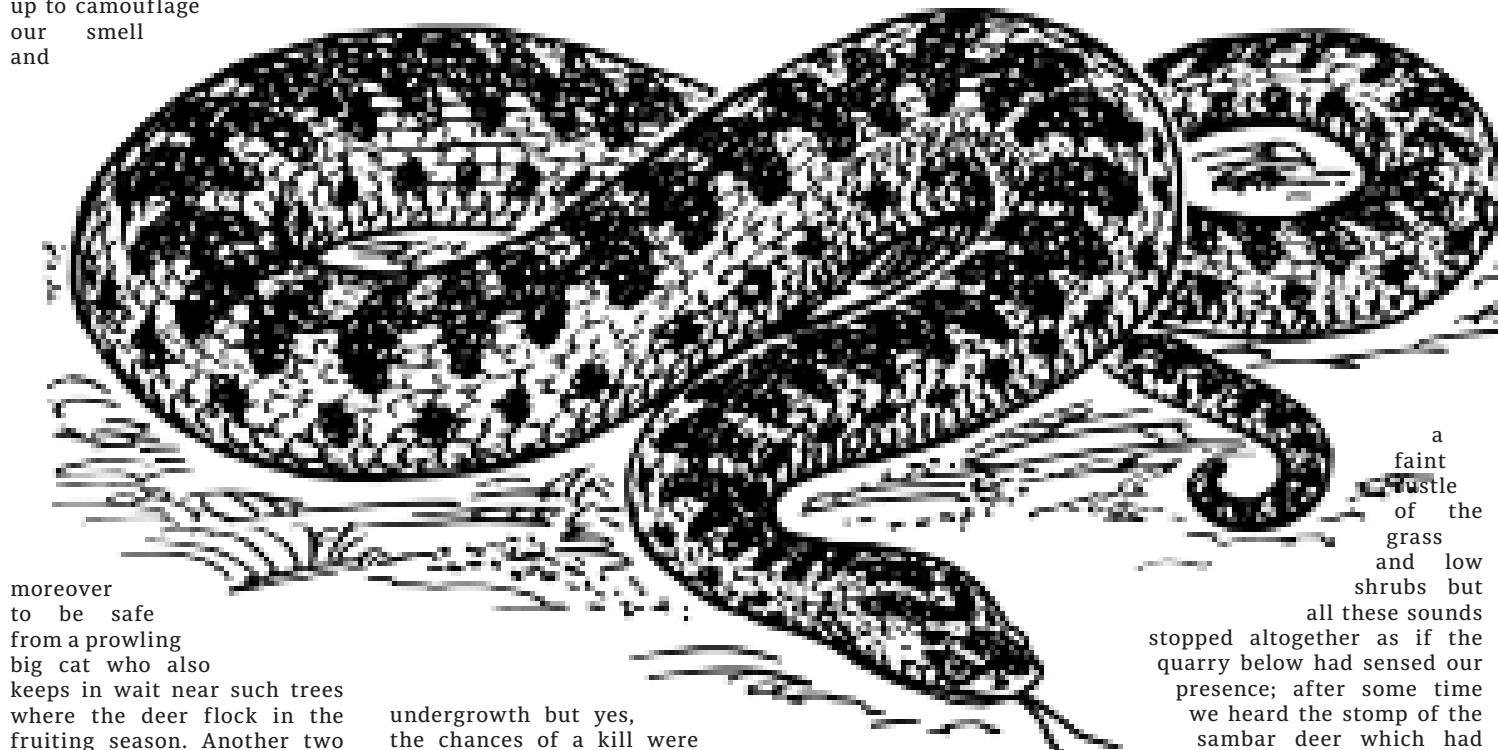
and I automatically calmed my nerves to prepare for the shot and raised the gun to shooting position. But as soon as the light was turned on from the corner of my eye I could make out the green viper staring at us. In that split second I could make out the green colour and thought that it was a viper snake found plentifully in the wild, especially in areas where bamboo thrives. Normally I did dread snakes as it would have been impossible for me to walk around in the forest with that fear and I learnt that snakes could probably hear our footsteps much before we stepped on it and slid off to safety. Also I had been told by the Nishis that snakes only bite in the early morning or afternoon when they come out to sun themselves and they sleep at night. But tree climbing snakes were always a concern while sitting in machaans for which we kept knives/sticks with us to strike a snake if it came too close for comfort. I had to decide and immediately I raised my gun signaling to my lightman to hit the snake with the stick and drop it off to the ground. Naturally with the sounds that we made the deer bolted off and we only glimpsed its round back

and the noises of the night had taken over I was feeling quite alert with my thoughts lulled by the familiar sounds of the cicadas, shrieks of the night jars and the occasional hooting of an owl. A faint moonlight had filtered in through the canopy of trees and took me back in time growing up in Shillong when we went with our brothers and cousins secretly into a pine forest near our house atop Moti Nagar hill to spy on the elves and goblins we had read about. We never got to see anything real but in the darkness our imagination played tricks and some of us did see them dancing amongst the trees which must have been the dappled moon beams dazzling our minds. No one challenged our sightings as each of us wanted to see these fairies but then about twenty years later on that machaan I wondered if now we would be assailed by the banshees and evil spirits living in the jungles. I clasped my fingers around the cold steel of the gun barrel to quieten my mind which after all these years still thought of the supernatural supreme beings. Just then I stiffened as did my companions as we all felt the presence of something big coming towards our tree. There was some twigs breaking and

shot and the impact of the LG shot killed the deer making it collapse in a heap. Everything was so sudden for getting a sambar deer was becoming more and more difficult that I couldn't believe our luck. The deer lay still and we knew it was dead so we first signaled with our torch lights towards the trees where our other two members were hiding to come to us.

My legs were numb from the long five hours we were up on the tree and it felt a bit giddy to find the hard ground below my feet. We shone the torch on the antlers of the sambar when we saw it; a bigger sized green snake, another viper had entwined itself on the antlers of the deer looking at us with baleful eyes. I recalled aloud our earlier encounter with a viper atop the machaan when the Nishi guide spoke up saying that this was probably the mother viper which had come down in search of the small snake we had thrown down earlier. There must have been a nest of the vipers up on the tree and we were indeed very lucky not to have sat near the nest.

The deer was fairly big with a fine set of six tine antlers and gingerly we let the snake climb off the antlers and guided it towards the base of the tree trunk. It gracefully encircled it and began to climb up to its nest. I watched it climb up higher, cross our machaan and then saw it disappear into the foliage above. I had never had such a close encounter with a poisonous snake before and thanked my guardian angels for looking after us all that night. The sambar took us the better part of the night to be cleaned up and the meat packed into rough bamboo baskets we made there itself to carry to the camp site about a good hours walk from that spot. However the success of the hunt and the joust with the viper and its young made all our tiredness go away and it was a happy and relieved band of hunters that returned with high spirits to the camp. It was first light when we reached the camp and a surreal feeling overtook me about all the beings that exist in a world we hardly get to see or experience if we do not come out of our cocooned lives.



moreover to be safe from a prowling big cat who also keeps in wait near such trees where the deer flock in the fruiting season. Another two persons in the hunting party would have to stay at least some distance away also on a tree top and wait for our signal to come down. Of course if a shot was fired they would be wary and ready to come to us with a mashal. Fire is something all animals are afraid of and on such trips I always insisted on carrying a few mashals covered in a plastic sheet. Of

undergrowth but yes, the chances of a kill were much better in this method of hunting. That evening a barking deer came after we were sitting for about two hours and it had probably been eating the fruits for the last few days and had come to the spot below without any fear. After a few minutes the unmistakable chomping sound of seeds being bitten by the animal gave its presence away

merging into the darkness. As it was quite early I decided to wait it out for another hour or two as we had not fired and surprisingly the deer also was not that frightened to give out its alarm calls.

After about two hours when it had become much darker

a faint rustle of the grass and low shrubs but all these sounds stopped altogether as if the quarry below had sensed our presence; after some time we heard the stomp of the sambar deer which had hit the ground below in defiance sniffing the air to smell for any danger. We sat absolutely still barely breathing and waited for the big deer to start eating the succulent fruits which it did throwing out the seeds from the sides of its mouth. The torch beam fell on its lowered head and the sambar looked up revealing its neck for a perfect



# #ntw

News This Week

A quick round up of the news that mattered during the past week



## 1 Registration on CoWIN must for those between 18-45 years to get vaccine

Getting registered on the CoWIN web portal and taking an appointment to get a COVID-19 vaccine jab would be mandatory for those aged between 18 and 45 years as walk-ins will not be allowed initially, official sources said on Sunday. Those above 45 years can still avail the facility of on-site registration to get vaccinated, they said. As India witnesses a sudden surge in coronavirus cases, it has decided to allow everyone above 18 years of age to get vaccinated from May 1, 2021. "Walk-ins will not be allowed in the beginning so that there is no chaos," an official said.



## 6 Madras HC directs ECI to submit COVID-19 management plan

The Madras High Court (HC) on Monday, April 26 slammed the Election Commission (EC) of India for allowing political rallies to be conducted amid the raging coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in the country, following which the High Court directed the EC to submit a blueprint of a plan before April 30 to ensure COVID-19 protocols are followed on May 2, the day when votes are counted. The court instructed the EC and Tamil Nadu's chief electoral officer Thiru Satyabrata Sahoo to hold consultations with the health secretary to come up with the blueprint on the stipulated date.



## 2 Public park turns into cremation ground

A public park in Southeast Delhi has been converted into a cremation ground as the bodies of patients who succumbed to the infection caused by COVID-19 pile up. Pyres are likely to start burning at the ground from today, ie. Monday, April 26 as designated crematoriums struggle to keep pace. People are running from pillar to post for space at the cremation grounds amid the chaos created by the pandemic. Many have to wait for hours to perform the last rites of dear ones. The municipal corporation in Delhi is desperately searching for additional sites to cater to the additional rush as several crematoria are operating on a day-and-night basis and way over their capacity.



## 7 CA students demand postponement of exams

Students are asking the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) to postpone their Chartered Accountant (CA) Exams 2021 which are supposed to be held in May. A large number of students have taken to the social media platform Twitter to share their woes over the conduct of annual examinations amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Several others expressed that the COVID-19 pandemic will prevail for a long time and that ICAI should consider an online mode of examination. ICAI has announced that the CA exams will be conducted from May 22 onwards.



## 3 ECI bans all victory processions

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has banned all victory processions on or after the day of the counting of votes. Further, the ECI has directed that not more than two persons shall be allowed to accompany the winning candidate or his/her authorized representative to receive the certificate of election. The decision has been made considering the views/suggestions received from various Chief Electoral Officers of States/UTs on election campaigns and public meetings. The Commission has fixed counting of votes for General Election to Legislative Assemblies of West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry along with By-Elections in various states on May 2, 2021.



## 8 Covaxin neutralizes 617 variants of COVID-19

India's homegrown 'Covaxin', which has been developed by Bharat Biotech in partnership with the National Institute of Virology and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), neutralizes 617 variants of the deadly Coronavirus, said America's top pandemic expert Dr. Anthony Fauci. Addressing a conference on Tuesday, Dr. Fauci told the media, "This is something where we're still gaining data on a daily basis. But the most recent data was looking at convalescent Sera of COVID-19 cases and people who received the vaccine used in India, the Covaxin. It was found to neutralize the 617 variants."



## 4 Couple gets married in PPE kits after groom tests COVID positive

A couple in Madhya Pradesh got married wearing PPE kits as the groom tested positive for COVID-19. The video of the couple is currently doing rounds on social media. In the video, both the bride and groom can be seen fully covered in the PPE kit and a few others attending their peculiar wedding amid the COVID-19 pandemic. "The groom tested positive on April 19. We came here to stop the wedding but on request & guidance of senior officials, the wedding was solemnized. The couple was made to wear PPE kits so the infection doesn't spread," said Navin Garg, Tehsildar, Ratlam, according to ANI reports.



## 9 Four children die in Bihar slum fire

Four children were allegedly burnt to death on Wednesday, April 28 after a thatched-roof hut caught fire in Patna near the Punpun police station area. All the victims are reported to be siblings. A police official said Chhotu Paswan, who was a daily wage earner, lived in a hut along the railway track near Allaaddin chak village, and had gone out of his house for work along with his wife. Meanwhile, a fire broke out in the house leading to the death of their four children present there.



## 5 Centre will give 50% vaccines free: Health Minister Harsh Vardhan

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Sunday, April 25 clarified the issue of vaccines after concerns were raised from various quarters including leaders of the Congress party. "As per the new policy, even after the launch of the third phase of vaccination starting May 1, the Government of India will continue giving vaccine doses from its 50 percent quota to the states and UTs for free. These vaccines shall continue to be administered by states and union territories," clarified the Health Minister. He said the remaining 50% quota shall give the states the freedom to vaccinate groups that they deem as a priority.



## 10 PM Modi is 'super spreader' of Coronavirus, Says IMA VP

The national vice-president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) Dr. Navjot Dahiya has blamed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the second wave COVID-19 in the country, calling him 'Super Spreader' of the deadly virus. "While the medical fraternity is trying hard to make people understand mandatory COVID-19 norms, Prime Minister Modi did not hesitate to address big political rallies tossing all COVID norms in the air," Dr. Dahiya told media persons.



Guwahati

GYAN

Did you know?

Barasha Das

# Hazrat Shah Makhdum Shah Dargah or Sijubari Mazar

A well-known locality of Guwahati, Sijubari in Hatigaon got its name from the famous Sujubari Mazar or Dargah.

This historic Mazar, or mousoleum is of Shah Makhdum Shah, the famous Sufi saint, who came to Assam in the 17th century.

Many people have many theories about the whereabouts of Hazrat Shah Makhdum Shah. As per one written history, the saint originally came from Siraj town of Baghdad, Iraq. He belonged to the family of Hazrat Noor of Baghdad.

Shah Makhdum Shah came to India with his grandson and fourteen disciples. After residing in Ajmer and Delhi, he proceeded to Assam and first arrived at Hajo of Kamrup district. He arrived sometime between 1669 to 1673. At Hajo the Sufi saint stayed at the 'khanqah' or dormitory of the Pir Ghiyasuddin Pao Mecca Dargah.

There he learned the Assamese language and started spreading the Sufi religion and culture amongst the local people. Few historians also believe that the saint was an expert in building the tombs of mosques the traditional way.

After years in Hajo, Hazrat Shah Makhdum Shah choose to set up a shrine at a peaceful and auspicious place to further spread the Muslim religion. He chose a small cliff near Hatigaon, a quiet and peaceful place located near a wetland.

The entire area was then known as Kekera Beel, a wetland and was connected to all the other wetlands of Guwahati



including Silsaku Beel, Chachal etc. The three auspicious streams, Sandhya, Lalita and Kanta – the confluence of which makes the rivulet Bahini that flows by the side of the Bashistha Mandir, ones merged with this Kekera Beel that is now extinct.

After the establishment of the shrine, the area was later renamed as 'Khirijbari' in respect for the saint's birth place and ancestry. 'Khijir' also meant waterbody or watergod. As the populace increased the name got distorted to Khijubari and further to Sijubari.

History also records that the land was donated in the name of the Dargah, about 37 bigha 3 katha and 2 lessa in 1714 by Swargadeo Sutanphaa (also known as Siva Singha).

The Sijubari Dargah has stood tall as a relic of the brotherhood

amongst the Hindu and Muslim communities of the areas. A large 'dhol' (drum) gifted by Shah Makhdum Shah to the Ganesh temple located at Sijubari is the ultimate symbol of that brotherhood.

After his death Hazrat Shah Makhdum Shah was buried near the shrine that is the Durgah or Mazar now. He had written many 'Zikir' in Assamese. His successive generations have reportedly lost connection with the original lineage and have adopted Assam and Assamese culture as their own.

On the death anniversary of the saint, the disciples celebrate 'Urus'. Devotees throng in from not just the state of Assam but from across India.

Source: "Aithihasic Patabhumit Asomir Aitijyamandita Islamdharmit" by Akdas Ali Mir

PIC OF THE WEEK



Guwahati thunders amid Covid-19 | Photo: Surajit Sharma

## KAMUR OF THE WEEK

What a week!!!

Started the morning with a major earthquake, followed by scorching summer, aftershocks, lightening and thunder in the evening and obviously the COVID-19 pandemic!

Where does one even go?



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