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GUWAHATI'S OWN ENGLISH WEEKLY

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Five days and waiting, politics over CM chair continues in Assam

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Winning elections was easier for the leading partner of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) than choosing the next leader of the government in Assam, which is turning into a litmus test for the party. The central leadership of the party and its leaders here in the state are still undecided on should they continue with incumbent Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal as head of the government or pick Himanta Biswa Sarma for the post. This said, the Congress has kept its doors open to form a coalition with BJP allies in Assam to form a government.

Congress leader Debabrata Saikia told to media said that the Congress is ready to support anyone to form a non-BJP government in Assam. He said that if someone wants to form a non-BJP government in Assam, they will get Congress' support.

Like Shiv Sena broke alliance with BJP in Maharashtra and formed government by allying with Congress and NCP, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) as a regional party of Assam might get such chance if the BJP high command does not take a decision on who would be the Chief Minister soon as five days have already past and the BJP high command is yet to make a decision.

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA)

secured 75 seats while Congress and its allies bagged 50 in the elections to the 126-member Assam legislative assembly. The counting took place on Sunday, May 2.

A BJP state executive member



talking to G Plus said on

condition of anonymity that the high command is confused as Himanta Biswa Sarma who is credited for the victory of BJP Assam is not openly seeking the CM's post but that the latter will neither accept any ministerial berth nor the post of deputy chief minister if offered by the party's top leadership in New Delhi.

On the other hand, it is well known that the national leadership in Delhi have their confidence on Sonowal and want him to work as the chief minister for the second term. Sonowal is also known to be very close to Narendra Modi which may work in his favour to help him retain his throne in Dispur.

"It is clear that either of the two (Sonowal or Sarma) would be the next chief minister. I appeal to all BJP legislators and workers to remain calm till a decision is reached," BJP state president Ranjeet Kumar Dass told reporters on Tuesday.

Sarma, whom the local media called 'super CM' in the last cabinet because he held multiple portfolios, is a strong contender for the post. As the convener of the BJP-led North-East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), a coalition of non-Congress parties, Sarma wields influence across the region.

A BJP leader who is a cabinet minister talking to G Plus said, "Everything depends on the party high command, but I feel Sonowalji will become the chief minister as he is respected by all party members and he is close to Narendra Modiji."

Sonowal has his roots in regional politics. He is regarded as a 'Jatiya Nayak' (state hero of Assam), for his petition on the basis of which the Supreme Court had struck down the controversial Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983 or IMDT Act, on July 12, 2005.

Many BJP MLAs are thronging the house of Sarma and Sonowal and with the prevailing situation the rift in Assam BJP is visible. The pressure on the high command to control the situation without increasing the rift looks inevitable. Fact remains that politics over the chief minister's chair continues in Assam or call it the musical chair between the Sonowal and those in the Sarma camp.

Amid COVID struggles in Assam denial of insurance claims add to woes

G Plus News
@guwahatiplus

As if the pandemic is not enough for people to worry, now getting medical treatment bills settled have become the latest headache, as most people have one complaint, that is insurance companies are refusing to settle their claims made against treatment for COVID-19. The city of Guwahati is flooded with such stories besides the denial of cashless claims by most hospitals.

In what would seem as a complete violation of the rules set by the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to ensure that the insured persons are not harassed and their demands are met transparently by the insurance companies, now hospitals are refusing to take patients who want to pay through their cashless insurance facilities. Just today, and coincidentally members of the news media in Guwahati had a real struggle to get their relatives admitted to hospitals owing to refusal by the latter to treat the patients against cashless insurance cover.

Ironically, some hospitals are acting at the behest of insurance companies and denying people the right to affordable treatment by using the cashless insurance process. The hospitals that these media persons approached were told that they would "only accept cash for COVID treatment."

While the incumbent Finance Minister of the state Himanta Biswa Sarma who incidentally is also the Health Minister has not spoken on the recent reports regarding insurance claims problems, but the fact that is aware of the problem surely does not need any guesses. The writer of the news report sent him a tweet explaining the problems people have been facing, but so far he not responded. Given that Sarma is one of the most active ministers and shall we say personalities in the state on Twitter, constantly posting how much the state is prepared to tackle the crisis and what facilities are available and what has been done, one expects a response at the least.

But on the ground the situation has been rather disturbing, with many people upset that they have been denied their basic right to treatment using a means of financial transaction which is perfectly legitimate and has to be accepted by the hospitals and the insurance companies. What is even more strange, many people who have made claims for reimbursement have been told by insurance companies that they should have contacted the insurers for advice before hospitalisation.

Once the doctor has decided that a patient has to be treated and admitted in the hospital, the insurer is dutybound to settle the claim. Sachit Jolly of the Partner DMD Advocates said in an NDTV programme on medical insurance on May 6, that "Once the doctor

has admitted, administered some medicines, the insurer cannot turn around and say I will not honour the claim." Referring to a patient whose claim was rejected by company on the pretext that the treatment could be done at home, Jolly had this to say - "Today the insurer is telling me whether I needed hospitalisation or not. I am sorry that is not their job."

In the same programme, Amit Chhabra of the Policybaazar.com pointed to the fact that the insurance policies are "strictly regulated by IRDAI and claims cannot be rejected by the whims and fancies of anybody. Not the companies and not even the hospitals." Where a claim is rejected it has to go through a very high level committee and a junior employee cannot just reject it, Chhabra informed, adding that as per IRDAI directives "All COVID claims have to be settled within one hour of receipt of documents by the company."

Many people have cited cases relating to the HDFC ERGO, Ericson Insurance who for example have cited hyper tension as a reason for not paying a 65 year old patient and the other saying you could have done this at home.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had recently directed the chairman of IRDAI, S C Khuntia to "act immediately" and ensure that there is no denial of cashless claims by insurance companies. She had



Representative Image

tweeted saying, "Reports are being received of some hospitals denying cashless insurance. Spoken to Chairman, IRDAI Shri SC Khuntia to act immediately. In March'20 #Covid included as a part of comprehensive health insurance. Cashless available at networked or even temporary hospitals."

The Union Finance Minister had also said that the IRDAI had assured that it would prioritise the settlement of COVID claims.

But if we were to do a reality check, and especially where smaller states like Assam is concerned it appears that many hospitals apart from the regular ones do not have TPA (Third Party Administrator) and this is a major problem. The role of the TPA is that of an intermediary between the insurer and the policyholder. The IRDAI has authorised the TPA

to process claims and provide cashless facilities to the insurer. Once a person gets hospitalised the TPA needs to be informed.

The IRDAI has meanwhile cautioned insurers for not being transparent while deciding on claims of policyholders. In a circular issued recently Life, General and Standalone Health Insurance Companies as well as TPAs the IRDAI said "Insurer shall ensure that the repudiation of the claim is not based on presumptions and conjectures."

Meanwhile, those who have been involved in working in the insurance sector said that even if claims are rejected, it does not mean that the process cannot be settled and in the interest of the policyholder. Those whose claims are not entertained or denied have to approach the IRDAI through various channels.

Vaccine availability hindered with mismanagement

G Plus News
@guwahatiplus

Guwahati: The National Health Mission (NHM) data shows that a total of 28,32,173 people have been vaccinated as of May 6. Out of these, 22,09,282 have taken the first dose, 6,22,891 have taken the second dose.

The total vaccine availability is 3,82,670 after a lakh doses of Covishield vaccine arrived on Friday, May 7 for people of 45 years+.

This was informed by the Assam Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Twitter.

This news comes amidst the increasing trend in daily COVID-19 cases in the state. As many as 4,936 COVID-19 cases with a daily positivity rate of 8.04% were reported in Assam as of Thursday, May 6 out of the

61,377 tests that were conducted in the state. Therefore, the active COVID-19 cases in the state of Assam went up to 31,829.

However, many residents of Guwahati city are claiming that they have been denied vaccinations due to a shortage of vaccines by hospitals and health care institutions, even after careful registration for the same.

Availability is the key concern

Although vaccine drive has been setup across the state from Dhubri to Sadiya, however getting an appointment has been the issue.

To get the vaccine, one has to register in the COWIN app and get an appointment. The first issue has been the problem of getting an appointment. Registrations have happened smoothly but the window for getting an



appointment has been really small.

"It feels like the Tatkal service of the IRCTC," a resident of Lachit Nagar told *G Plus*. "I was glued to my screen for two days to get an appointment," said Raahi Deka, a student from Hengrabari.

In Ulubari, designated persons who got the appointment for the vaccine had a tussle with people who were waiting since early morning for the jab. The healthcare authorities failed to

manage the chaos that presided at the Ulubari Health Centre. As per sources close to *G Plus*, the healthcare officials were not apprised as to how to prioritise between people in line or the once who have taken appointment.

As per the claims of locals in Ulubari Health centre had put a blank page where people will come and write their name, starting from serial no. 1.2...and so on. This has affected the elderly people as they have to stand in queue from morning till the vaccination centre opens at around 9 30 AM.

Along with that there has been a violation of COVID-19 safety protocols where people have not maintained the adequate distance required for social distancing. "The online registration is going on but no specific rules.

My mother didn't receive any message or reference no post vaccine that's the reason I am not able to schedule online," said a resident.

The issue of digital literacy

"I don't understand how to register via apps or websites. The only way for us to get the vaccine is to wait at the vaccine centres," said Dhanjit Das, a resident of Satgaon. Many with lack of access in Guwahati as well in Assam are finding it difficult to register owing to their inability to use digital platform on phones. This risks the economically weaker section of the population who lack accessibility to smartphones and the knowledge of using them.

Meanwhile, many from the city are trying to locate a vaccine centre at the outskirts due to the lack of availability.

34 newly elected MLAs of Assam have serious criminal records

Trishna Das
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Assam Elections are over and the results are out and newly-elected MLAs are in waiting to take oath as legislators and make up the Legislative Assembly. All that is fine, but what must not be lost sight of is the fact that many of the newly-elected MLAs may have a background that needs to be pondered upon, especially where criminal records are concerned.

Thus, when we do a background check on the politicians who are soon going to hold positions of power, we may not have much to write about and instead could be disappointed to know that 34 of the newly-elected MLAs in the state of Assam have criminal records against them.

This data, revealed by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), points to the fact that people in the state are either unaware of the candidates' criminal records or are willing to give chance to the politicians who

have either committed crimes against women or have tried murdering someone at least once in their lifetime until being elected to become a public representative.

The people of Assam have elected at least 34 MLAs who have criminal cases registered against them at various police stations. After ADR reviewed the self-sworn affidavits of all the 126 winning candidates, it found that 27 percent of winning candidates of the Assam Assembly Elections have committed a crime in the past against the 11 percent last time.

Moreover, the number of MLAs with criminal records against them has doubled since the 2016 Assembly elections. In 2016, 14 MLAs declared criminal cases against themselves.

Winning Candidates with Serious Criminal Cases

28 of the 34 winning candidates with criminal records have declared serious charges leveled against them related to murder, attempt to murder, and crimes

against women, etc.

"Out of the 34 winning candidates, at least 28 (22%) winning candidates have declared serious criminal cases including cases related to murder, attempt to murder, crimes against women, etc," stated the ADR report released on May 5, 2021.

One among the 34 newly elected MLAs has declared cases related to murder under IPC Section 302 against himself. Five of the winning candidates of assembly elections have cases of attempt to murder under IPC Section - 307 registered against themselves, while two others have declared cases related to crimes against women, which comes under serious criminal offenses.

Major political parties had fielded candidates with criminal backgrounds in the assembly elections. 7 out of the 60 winning candidates from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), 10 out of 29 winning candidates from the Indian National Congress (INC), 8 out of the 16 winning candidates from the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) have serious criminal cases against

themselves. Other parties such as the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the United Peoples' Party, Liberal (UPPL) have 1 winning candidate each declaring serious criminal cases against themselves, according to the affidavits filed for the Assembly elections this year.

Meanwhile, Assam has witnessed a constant rise in the number of MLAs with a criminal background.



Serious criminal cases fall under the following criteria -

- ✳ Offence for which punishment is of 5 years or more
- ✳ If an offence is non-bailable
- ✳ If it is an electoral offence (for eg. IPC 171E or bribery)
- ✳ Offence related to loss of exchequer
- ✳ Offences that are assault, murder, kidnap, rape-related
- ✳ Offences that are mentioned in the Representation of the People Act (Section 8)
- ✳ Offences under Prevention of Corruption Act
- ✳ Crimes against women

200 above test COVID-19 positive in two tea gardens of Assam

Guwahati: Over 200 workers and staff members from at least two different tea gardens in Assam's Dibrugarh district have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past few days, forcing the district administration to declare it a containment zone.

"Over 150 people are positive at Zaloni tea estate and 60 positive cases have been found in Mayajan tea estate," said a government source.

The Zaloni tea estate has been completely shut down. Top medical officials have been sent to the area to

take stock of the situation. The district administration has also shut down markets nearby as a precautionary measure.

The Deputy Commissioner of Dibrugarh Pallav Gopal Jha has asked officials across the district to close markets in their areas if the situation deteriorates further.

"A vaccination drive would be carried out in the garden from today apart from other measures like sanitization, etc.," said Nabajyoti Gogoi, the District Surveillance Officer of IDSP (Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme).





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Three wards identified as COVID-19 hotspot in Guwahati

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Assam has been struggling as the second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic continues to spread across the state, with Kamrup (Metro) district taking most of the heat. Only recently, three wards in the capital city of Assam, have been identified as COVID-19 hotspot. The Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup (Metro) Biswajit Pegu on Wednesday, May 5 said that the areas that have more COVID-19 cases will be declared as Containment Zones. On that basis, the wards that have been declared containment zones by the Kamrup (M) district administration are Ward no 28, 16, and 8.

Speaking to the media, Deputy Commissioner Pegu said that to stop the further spread of COVID-19, the administration has taken this decision. "Three wards have been identified as hotspots and more cases have been witnessed with test positivity of COVID-19 crossing more than 10% in the last one week in these wards. We are working on it and meanwhile, we declare the wards as containment zones," Pegu said.

Reports reveal that the maximum number of COVID cases have been registered from the following areas - Beltola, Basistha, Fatasil Ambari, Barsapara, Dhirenpara, Panjabari, Kumarpara, Machkhowa, Bhootnath, AT Road, Khanapara, Ulubari, Hatigaon, Rehabari, Bilpara, Solapara, DGP Complex, Pandu, Narengi, Banda and Maligaon.

Ward no. 28 covers parts of Barsajai, Basistha Grant, Maidan, Barmatari, and Hatigaon area. The boundary of the containment zone is:

North: By the northern side of Ajanta Path from Hatigaon Chariali to Basistha Road junction point, then by the western side of Basistha Road up to Chandan Nagar Road point, then by the northern side

of Chandan Nagar road point to Tongora Sutra Wooden Bridge.

East: By the eastern side of Rukmini Bahini river from Tongora Wooden Bridge to NH 37 up to Basistha Chariali, then by the eastern side NH 37 up to Basistha Road, and then by the eastern side of Basistha Road up to the Southeastern extreme boundary of Basistha village in the line of Basistha Road.

South: From the above point along the northern and eastern side of the South and Western boundary of Basistha Grant at Basistha Hatigaon Road junction at NH 37.

West: By the western side of Hatigaon main road from NH 37 junction point to Bhetapara Chariali, then by the eastern side of Hatigaon Road from Bhetapara Chariali to Hatigaon Chariali Point.

Ward no. 16 comprises Fatasil, Bhaskar Nagar, Barsapara and a part of Dhirenpara areas of Guwahati. The boundary of the containment zone is:

North: AK Dev Road from Ambari Tiniali up to Marabharalu then up to Lokhra Road

East: Eastern side of Marabharalu from Glass Factory via the northern side of Cycle Factory Road to Lokhra Road up to Dhupalia Road

South: From Lokhra Road via Dhupalia Road by lane no 2 up to Marabharalu

West: Marabharalu from Dhupalia bye lane no 2 up to Ita Bhata Road junction then up to AK Dev Road then up to Ambari Tiniali

Ward no. 3 comprises Bhutnath, Kumarpara, Machkhowa, and a part of the Athgaon area. The boundary of the containment zone is:

North: From the central line of River Brahmaputra backside of Sonaram Field up to Kedar Road

East: Eastern side of Kedar Road from the central line of River Brahmaputra up to AT Road, then up to Chabipool via the eastern side of Sati Jaymati Road

South: Eastern side of Netaji Subhash Road up to Fatasil.

Reportedly, Ward No 3, 8, 14, 16, 24, 28, 29, and 31 have also



Ward no 28 declared as containment zone | G Plus Photo

registered a massive spike in COVID cases amid the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

Any unauthorized entry and exit to and from the above containment Zone is prohibited during the containment period. However, the following exemption is allowed inside the containment zones:

- ✧ All government/private offices, educational Institutes, and business establishments other than exempted categories will remain closed during the containment period.
- ✧ There will be no restriction on the movement of officials engaged in emergency and essential services within the containment zone area.
- ✧ Bank, insurance offices, and ATMs will function normally by maintaining COVID-19 protocols.
- ✧ Grocery/milk/fruits shops

will remain open from 8 AM to 12 PM. Shopkeepers and customers shall have to maintain social distancing, to wear masks and hand gloves.

Moreover, shop owners shall ensure six feet distance among customers and shall not allow more than 5 persons inside the shop.

In addition, shop owners should compulsorily keep sanitizers and hand wash in their shops.

✧ Medicine shops, veterinary clinics, and animal feed shops are being exempted from the restrictions.

✧ Mobile vending for vegetables/fish and meat will be allowed in the containment zone area.

✧ People with medical emergency purposes will be allowed for movement in and outside the containment zone area on the production

of valid medical documents.

- ✧ Home delivery of essential commodities including e-commerce will be allowed up to 6 PM.
- ✧ Dealers of essential commodities will function up to 2 PM.
- ✧ There will be no restriction in operating petrol pumps, LPG dealerships, manufacturing units of essential commodities, telecommunications, Internet services, broadcasting and cable services, VT and IT-enabled services, warehouses, and cold storages.

These restrictions should remain in force until further notice. Violation of this order will attract punishments under Disaster Management Act 2005.

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 |

BJP removes minority cell after poor show in elections

Nibir Deka
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The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has decided to dissolve the Assam unit of the minority cell. The decision comes in the wake of no Muslim candidates of the party managing to win a seat in the recently concluded state assembly elections.

In a letter, a copy of which was shared with *G Plus*, the BJP State President Ranjeet Kumar Dass stated the cell has been dissolved due to the lackluster performances in the minority-dominated areas in the Assam Assembly Elections 2021 for an "uncertain time period." In few places, the party had received fewer votes than 20 of its booth members.

The BJP-led alliance had a comfortable victory - winning 75 of the state's 126 seats of which the BJP won 60 seats. The party will be ruling without a single Muslim candidate this term. The BJP had fielded eight

Muslim candidates. Five of them contested from western Assam, and one each from the Upper Assam, central Assam, and the hill districts. However, none of them won from the respective constituencies.

G Plus spoke to BJP Minority Morcha President Mukhtar Hussain, who claimed the minority cell was not apprised of the decision. "We did comparatively better than the last polls in terms of vote share but there were many other factors too," Hussain told *G Plus*.

As per sources close to the matter, the confidence of the BJP in winning minority-dominated areas was still visible in parts of lower Assam. "It was going well until Hagrama Mohily joined the Congress Mahajot," added a BJP minority leader. It has been seen that the joining of the Bodoland Peoples' Party (BPP) with the Mahajot reduced the chances of the BJP in the minority-dominated areas.

Meanwhile, the BJP Minority Morcha President Hussain has even claimed that the vote share has risen from the last Assembly

elections.

Although BJP had won no seats in the minority-dominated areas, all eight constituencies showed a marginal vote rise (as seen in the chart). This was in sync with the members who joined the party in high numbers before the Assam Assembly elections.

victorious Congress candidate got 50.75 percent. In Baghbar, the winning Congress candidate garnered over 52 percent of the votes. The BJP candidate got 2 percent.

Few minority leaders have even stated that the party would have done well if the higher

| SL No. | LAC | 2016 | 2021 |
|--------|-----------------|-------|-------|
| 1 | Sonai | 44236 | 52283 |
| 2 | Lahorighat | 25692 | 34732 |
| 3 | Rupahighat | 15963 | 25739 |
| 4 | Bilasipara West | 14688 | 27054 |
| 5 | Jaleswar | 11535 | 14053 |
| 6 | Jania | 6067 | 11408 |
| 7 | South Salmara | 1954 | 8919 |
| 8 | Baghbar | 1418 | 3038 |

Although the vote share has risen, the rise is minimal in comparison with the winning parties. In Jaleswar, the BJP candidate secured only 9.38 percent of the votes while the

command didn't play out the narrative of "Mughal" politics in the name of otherizing the "Miya" community. The BJP minority leaders claim this has been counter-productive to the

BJP's success in the minority-dominated areas. "We used to be charged by locals in few areas when we went to campaign," said a minority worker of the BJP.

The Miya issue

The political rhetoric of the BJP top brass has been on the lines of 65-35, which indicates an "us vs them fight" with 35 being minorities from East Bengal origin. Along with this, the BJP had been critical against the emancipation of the East Bengal minority communities, especially when the demands for a "Char-Chapori" museum in the Sankardeva Kalakshetra were made.

BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma had even stated that there are two streams of Muslims - indigenous and the ones from Bangladesh. Although, the claims have catered well to the people of Assam as they have voted back the BJP to power but the comments might have proven to be counter-productive to the party in the campaign to win the minority seats.

Kaziranga National Park closed due to COVID-19

The Kaziranga National Park (KNP) in Assam has been closed due to the worsening COVID-19 situation in the state. The Union Ministry of Environment and Forest on Monday, May 3 issued an order stating the closure of Assam's Kaziranga National Park for tourists until further notice.

The decision of closing the Kaziranga National Park, a major tourist attraction in the state was taken after reviewing the COVID-19 situation amid the

second wave which has crippled the health system of the nation.

Despite the prevailing pandemic situation, around two lakh tourists, including over 550 from foreign countries, visited the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNP & TR) in Assam in the past six months till April 21, according to reports.

Assam on Sunday, May 3, recorded as many as 4,489 new positive cases of COVID and 29 deaths while the active caseload stood at 26,477. Over 55,939 tests were conducted on the same day.



How to use a PULSE OXIMETER

- Remove nail polish/nail extension and **warm up** your hands if they are cold
- Rest** for at least 5 mins before taking the measurement
- Place your hand on your chest at **heart level** and hold it still
- Switch on the oximeter and place it on your **middle or index finger**
- Keep the oximeter in place for **at least a minute** or longer if the reading is not stable
- Record the **highest result** once it has not changed for 5 secs
- Identify each **reading** carefully
- Start recording from baseline and record **three times** a day at the same times

Note: Seek medical help if oxygen level is 95% or less and you are facing breathlessness

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Janasanyog No. 36/21

No lessons learned, people openly flout COVID-19 norms in Guwahati

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Not a day goes by when doctors and medical experts are not constantly reminding people to be careful and follow all COVID-19 appropriate behaviour. They are sending out clear warning and without mincing words that if people don't learn how to protect themselves, then they are not only endangering themselves but also others.

However, even with the cases increasing every day and with repeated appeals from medical experts and from the National Health Mission (NHM) which is sending out reminders that people need to take all forms of precautions, for many it appears to make no difference. A common sight that you get to almost in every street of the city and in smaller localities is people roaming around without masks, or masks hanging below their chin, crowding market places and spitting everywhere.

Thus it is no surprise when doctors say that "just blaming the government will not help." Visibly upset with how people have been responding to the government set guidelines, medics warn that this could spell disaster. With the Coronavirus moving eastwards and the numbers on the rise in Bengal and in Assam, there can only be one theory that we need to believe, that is a third wave is eminent.

"We can still control the rise in the Covid numbers to a great extent only if we learn to behave and follow the instructions. But no, people seem not to be too affected which is an irony as because of such attitudes others are suffering," said Doctor Hitesh Baruah, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Nemcare Hospitals in Guwahati.

Such concerns is being regularly echoed on television and other news media by medical experts and those have been part of the government machinery at different times. Director of the All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Doctor Randeep Guleria has been stating categorically that by not following the COVID-19 protocols people are endangering the

lives of others. Former Director General of Police (DGP) of Uttar Pradesh Vikram Singh has lashed out at violators from the Kumbh, to the some Christian priests in Kerala and to the Iftar shopping at Charminar in Hyderabad saying, such people should be persecuted under the Disaster management Act, 2005. "They are endangering the lives of others by their actions which is a criminal act," Singh had said, while reacting to a news on how hundreds of devotees defied Covid-safety norms and gathered in Gujarat's Ahmedabad district for a religious procession on May 3.

In Guwahati, the scene is not too different. While there has not been any religious gatherings but the way people are openly flouting the guidelines set by the Assam State Disaster and Management Authority (ASDMA) would actually add up to make many such gatherings. Many people can be seen roaming around maskless on the streets as well as in public places, which is playing a huge factor in the increasing number of COVID cases in the city. This is happening mainly because of lack of complete awareness about the deadly disease. Many are not aware of how COVID-19 spreads from one person to the other.

A resident of Zoo Road, Bishwarupa Singh said that despite her effort to make some people understand the necessity of wearing a mask in this grave situation when people are dying due to COVID infections, they are carefree and ignorant about what's happening around them. "There's still much to learn about this new disease. But since people are now getting vaccinated, it is even more important to wear a mask to avoid any infection. Wearing masks has proved that it can stop the spread of COVID-19. So we must all continue to follow the COVID guidelines to not only keep ourselves safe but to curb the further spread of the deadly disease.

COVID can spread through aerosols. When a Coronavirus-infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks droplets or tiny particles called aerosols can travel into the air from their nose or mouth which also carry the virus along. And anyone within 6 feet of the infected person can inhale the virus into



People roam around without wearing mask properly in Guwahati | G Plus Photo

their lungs while breathing. So it is necessary to cover your face while you sneeze or cough to prevent the virus from floating into the air.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has shared COVID-19 appropriate behaviour guidelines which says sneeze or cough into your elbows to stop the spread of the disease. While most families are already used to doing things like washing their hands well and often, wearing masks near people, social distancing, there's still much to learn about this new disease.

Talking to *G Plus* Additional DCP of West Guwahati Numal Mahatta said, "People have to be aware. Many people are now wearing masks. We have conducted COVID awareness campaigns for the public. Some are following the guidelines properly and those who have been caught violating them are being fined. I think it's high time the authorities should announce a lockdown to curb the COVID situation. Once there is a lockdown, cases will decrease."

The police have been caught on camera beating up people, which has come for criticism. Many people reacted saying, "this is not how the police should react, they should explain to the people." Others said, "what happened when election rallies were happening, why are the

police taking it out on poor people."

The question here is not so much about what happened during the elections and how the police reacted. The situation that confronts everyone demands that the police enforce the guidelines strictly, especially if people are violating. Beating up violators may not help, but there must be strong action taken which will send out messages to the rest that any form of violations will not be overlooked.

Meanwhile, a resident of Ghoramara, Lakhyajit Bharali said, "I wear my mask every time I step outside my house. But I see people violating COVID norms in the public. Some people even get involved in fights and arguments with the police if told to wear their masks. But people should understand that it's not a joke. Life is at stake and we all should follow the rules."

Moreover, according to the latest reports, the virus can transmit through the air which is called 'Airborne transmission'. According to research the COVID-19 virus can live in the air for up to 3 hours. It can get into a person's lungs if a COVID infected person breathes out and another person breathes that air in. However, it is still unclear how often the virus spreads through the air and how much it contributes to the deadly

pandemic.

Another transmission is through virus-stained surfaces and this can happen when a person touches surfaces with the aerosol particles or droplets of someone who has the virus. You may touch a countertop or doorknob that's contaminated and then touch your nose, mouth, or eyes. It has been said that the COVID virus can live on plastic and stainless steel surfaces for over two days. People should clean and disinfect all counters, knobs, and other surfaces which are frequently touched several times a day.

Reportedly, the virus mostly spreads through people who have COVID symptoms. However, asymptomatic people can also pass it on without showing any signs. Some people despite having COVID don't show symptoms of the virus, which is called asymptomatic spread, but they act as a carrier of the disease that can destroy the lungs of a person ultimately leading to his/her death.

Assam has recorded over 31,800 active cases and 4,936 new cases of COVID infections as of May 6 with the highest death toll which stands at 46. This is extremely serious, which is why people should take it seriously and follow all the COVID norms directed by the government to curb the ongoing crisis.

As cases surge in Assam, government mulls complete lockdown

Assam COVID-19 Update: Total cases, deaths and developments in the last 7 days

Angita Mahanta
@guwahatipius

With the worrisome surge in coronavirus cases in Assam, the state government has been toying with the idea of a complete lockdown in the state.

In the last seven days, i.e. from April 30 to May 6, Assam has reported as many as 27,761 new COVID-19 cases, out of which 9,498 cases were reported from Guwahati (Kamrup Metro district) city alone. With this, the number of active cases in the state currently stands at 31,829.

The second wave of coronavirus has taken the lives of many in the past few days. A total of 250 persons succumbed to infections caused by the dreaded virus in the last seven days of which 88 patients were from Kamrup Metro. With this, the total number of COVID-19 deaths in the state of Assam to date has gone up to 1,531.

Meanwhile, 18,786 patients in total have been discharged from various hospitals across the state in the past seven days.

Although the Assam government has recently revised the COVID-19 restrictions for all districts which came into effect on Wednesday, May 5, banning the movement of individuals from 6 PM to 5 AM, the same hasn't been taken into the cognitive spirit by some members of the society.

"We do not get as many customers in the day time, the rush hour only starts by 4 or 5 in the evening. Night curfew for us entrepreneurs is as good as a complete lockdown," a store owner from Hatigaon told *G Plus*.

Following the new government mandate guidelines all shops, commercial establishments, and offices shall shut down at 2 PM. Moreover, restaurants, dhabas,

and other eateries can entertain dine-in guests only up to 2 PM.

In view of the horrendous outbreak of the virus, the state government has also taken measures to boost the number of COVID-dedicated isolation wards to cater to the daily incoming patients. Only recently, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has been asked to keep 150 covid care coaches ready for deployment at identified stations all over Assam as and when required by them. Each cabin of the train coach has been converted into an independent isolation ward that can accommodate at least two patients at a time.

The state government has also decided to convert the Sarusajai Stadium - also known as the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium - into a make-shift hospital to treat patients suffering from COVID-19.

Additionally, 150 ICU beds have been added in Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital (MMCH), and Kalapahar Covid Care Hospital in Guwahati. This was informed by the state Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during a press conference on April 26. Such an initiative can help the state be well-prepared to meet any kind of medical emergency or in the least put people's minds at ease.

The fear continues to strike, as the principal scientific adviser to the Centre, Professor K Vijay Raghavan on Wednesday, May 5, while addressing a briefing of the Union Health Ministry said that a phase three of the COVID-19 virus is inevitable.

"It is inevitable, given the higher levels of circulating virus but it is not clear on what time scale this phase three will occur. We should prepare for new waves," informed K Vijay Raghavan.

In India, the first wave of the



Himanta Biswa Sarma visits Ulubari Cremation ground | File Photo

COVID-19 Cases Recorded in the Last 7 Days (April 30-May 6)

| Date | New Cases In Assam | Deaths In Assam | Patients Discharged | New Cases In Guwahati | Deaths In Guwahati |
|----------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| April 30 | 3197 | 26 | 2449 | 1184 | 8 |
| May 1 | 3453 | 23 | 2229 | 1417 | 9 |
| May 2 | 2385 | 30 | 2831 | 1099 | 12 |
| May 3 | 4489 | 29 | 2534 | 1645 | 13 |
| May 4 | 4475 | 41 | 2851 | 1417 | 15 |
| May 5 | 4826 | 55 | 2916 | 1383 | 18 |
| May 6 | 4936 | 46 | 2976 | 1353 | 13 |
| Total | 27761 | 250 | 18786 | 9498 | 88 |

virus peaked in September last year (2020) and eventually started declining toward the beginning of 2021. Later, just when many people thought that the nightmare was finally going to end, the masses started getting infected again.

In theory, a second wave is typically smaller than the

first. Such a second wave was expected although a larger second wave with the ferocity we are seeing now was not by anybody. And, now scientists say there are indications of a third wave.

These indications raise a lot of red flags in terms of preparedness of the

government and health care facilities and demand an effective plan for the future. The way the new variants of the virus are adapting to a host's immunity, people of Assam should also be ready to adapt and find a threshold to come out of this dark time.

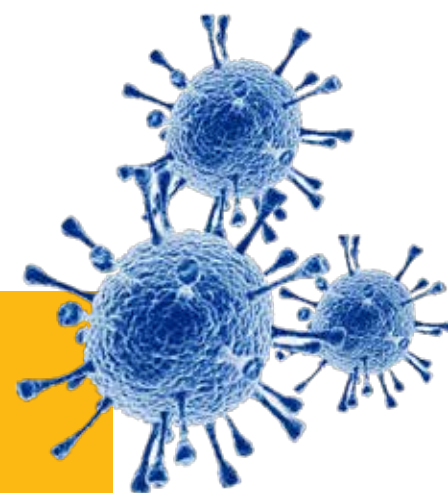
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In the face of the COVID-19 challenge



All restaurants, hotels to close from 2 PM

Guwahati: In the context of the continuing surge of infections amid second wave of COVID-19 pandemic, the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) has declared that all restaurants should shut down by 2 PM, starting from May 5. All restaurants, dhabas, and other eateries in the state can entertain dine-in guests only up to 2 PM, daily. Restaurants operating within a hotel or resort can allow outside guests up to 2 PM as well. However, in-house guests of the hotel/resort may be allowed to dine-in up to the usual time of operation. Moreover, takeaway including home delivery of food will be allowed till 6 PM after which only home delivery of food will be allowed. This new order shall remain in force until further orders.



Market places and shops to close at 2 PM

Guwahati: As per the revised rules the ASDMA the timings of shutting down of all market places and shops will be 2 PM and night curfew shall be in place from 6 PM daily, following the steep increase in COVID-19 cases in the state.

All shops and commercial establishments are to be shut down at 2 PM instead of 6 PM from tomorrow, i.e Wednesday, May 5 till further notice.

Cold storages and warehouses may continue after 2 PM. However, sale counters, showrooms, etc. attached to these warehouses or cold storages shall not operate after 2 PM, every day.

Although, delivery of essential goods through e-Commerce may continue with observance of COVID appropriate behavior.

Moreover, essential and emergency services are to operate without any restrictions, such as pharmacies, hospitals, animal care centres, and veterinary clinics.



Government issues COVID-19 protocols for apartments and buildings

Guwahati: The National Health Mission (NHM) Assam has released several protocols appealing to the people living in apartments and buildings to curb the COVID spike.

Preventive measures to be followed:

Visitors: All apartment societies shall enforce a visitor's protocol limiting access of outside visitors to the apartment. All visitor details, including travel history, will be recorded.

Handwash/sanitizer: Every apartment entrance will have a designated handwashing area with handwashing techniques clearly mentioned on a poster. Sanitizers, if available, should also be placed at the entrance.

Common activities to shut down: Ensure that all public gathering platforms be it parks, swimming pools, fitness centres, common activity centres be closed, and no gathering of people allowed within the premises.

Frequent cleaning of common premises:

Implement cleaning and disinfection measures at least three times a day particularly for lift buttons, handrails in the staircases, gates, and grills, and all other such areas within the apartment. Visitors should be advised to avoid touching anything in the common premises.

Contactless delivery: Place delivery baskets at the security points to ensure contactless delivery. Or the families should be asked to pick up deliveries outside the gate after the necessary disinfection.

Domestic help: Discuss COVID appropriate behaviour and hygiene practices with your domestic help, especially since they work at multiple locations.

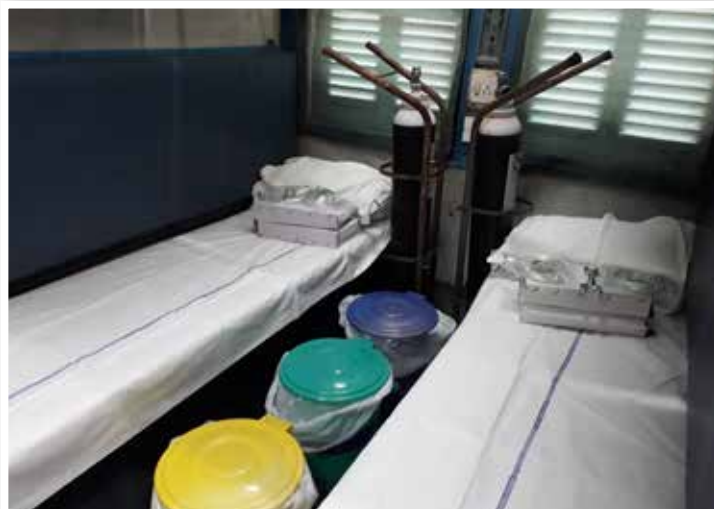
Ensuring stricter implementation of home quarantine:

If any resident has a travel history to COVID-affected places or is being advised for self-quarantine, the management committee shall ensure the same while also maintaining confidentiality and not

hurting/disrespecting the self-respect of such residents. Further, if any person is being asked for self-quarantine, the management society may consider:

Supporting the home-quarantined person in accessing daily necessities such as groceries, medicines, etc.

Shall provide necessary psycho-social support while maintaining all infection control protocols.



Ministry of Railways provides 21 isolation COVID-19 coaches at Guwahati and 20 at Silchar

Guwahati: The Ministry of Railways is taking rapid action to swiftly move Isolation Coaches to places of demand (made by respective states) mobilising workforce and material for this task. The Railways has made available a fleet of more than 4400 Isolation Coaches with around 70,000 beds to serve as isolation units.

In the latest update, with the latest demands from Assam, Railway has swiftly moved 21 isolation coaches to Guwahati and 20 Isolation Coaches to Badarpur near Silchar in Assam (N. F. Railway). Earlier in the week, isolation coaches were deployed at Sabarmati, Chandlodiya and Dimapur respectively.

Accordingly, as per States' demand, at present 298 coaches have been handed over to various states for

COVID care with a bed-capacity of more than 4700 beds. The latest demand came from the State Govt of Gujarat, wherein the Railways have deployed 10 coaches for Sabarmati and 6 coaches for Chandoliya. Alongside, in terms of the demand by the State Govt of Nagaland Isolation Coaches, the Railway worked has positioned 10 Isolation coaches at Dimapur. 5 Isolation Coaches having 70 bed capacity with one coach for medical personnel were deployed for Jabalpur and are now functional. 21 Coaches are now made functional for the medical exigencies at Palghar by the railways in terms of the terms of agreement with district authorities. 2 sets of oxygen cylinders are also provided in these coaches to meet any exigency by the state health authorities in many places.

Pandemic & education: what's the solution?

What at first seemed like a temporary, emergency precaution quickly became a new normal, as students—even graduating seniors—were forced to finish the academic year online. Now the educational institutes are grappling with how, or even whether, they can safely re-open in the fall.

For teachers, the shift to online education has meant rethinking lesson plans to fit a very different format. But as the educational institutions, the authorities, teachers, students and even parents are working hard to cope up with the emergency, is the government doing enough? Talking about Assam, the pandemic has impacted the education system.

Practices, which were previously considered impossible have now become possible due to the quick and concerted efforts by educationists who seized the opportunity to find new ways to make learning possible and managing to keep children and parents positively motivated and engaged all through the year.

As we look back at this turbulent year (2020), it's now time to look forward and focus on the trends that will shape the future of education. This pandemic has given the education sector a golden opportunity to pilot changes that would have otherwise taken many more years to implement. But without the help of a new government it would be

impossible.

Special importance should be given to the rural areas of the state. Smart phones now are no more a luxury but a necessity for education, therefore the underprivileged class should be provided with such technologies by the government. Not only that, the telecom giants should be warned that without proper service to the customers it would be difficult to do their businesses in Assam. The telecom services like Vodafone or VI is providing pathetic service in the state, their services should be regulated by the state government instead of depending on TRAI. Even BSNL is performing very poorly.

The state government has to play a vital role in improving the education scenario during pandemic and even if the educational institutes are closed, education should not be stopped from reaching the homes of the students. The government school and college teachers should be trained accordingly.

Due to remote learning, students are now learning individually. This has led to increased instances of personalized learning allowing educators to customize and personalize learning based on the needs of each student. The state government should make sure that the impact of pandemic on education should be positive.

[@guwahatiplus](#)

Mama vs Dada debate

While the debate on which party would form the government in Assam has ended with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led alliance winning by a clear majority, the "Mama vs Dada" debate has taken over.

The BJP leadership is in a quandary over the appointment of the new chief minister of Assam, the only state where the party has registered a convincing victory despite Congress Mahajot putting up some semblance of a fight.

The incumbent chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal is seemingly facing a tough fight from the incumbent health and finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in his efforts to get the top position.

Thus, the Mama vs Dada debate has taken centre stage in Assam, becoming the most talked about topic (other than COVID-19, of course). The other day, I overheard a group of colleagues weighing the two options that the BJP has.

On the one hand is Sarbananda Sonowal who has maintained a squeaky clean image and is often associated with the narrative of corruption-free Assam. He also has a connection with Assamese sub-nationalism and his 'Jatiya Nayak' image (conferred upon him for the legal battle against Illegal Migrants -Determination by Tribunals- Act) has definitely been a factor in garnering votes for the BJP.

On the other hand is Himanta Biswa Sarma (or "mama" as most people refer to him) who powered the BJP rule in Assam by establishing the party's foothold in the state. Sarma's bandwagon spread further as he went on to help BJP come to power in other states of the Northeast as well including Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

While Sarbananda Sonowal has a good connection with the high command, having served as a Union Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma is being vocally supported by many elected MLAs including those from Karbi Anglong.

So who among these two equally capable candidates shall be appointed as the face of Assam? Well, assumptions are many but the Mama vs. Dada shall prevail until the BJP makes an official announcement regarding the chief minister of Assam.

One thing is for sure, Himanta Biswa Sarma for Assam BJP has emerged as the Sachin Tendulkar for Indian Cricket team – a force to reckon with.

Nehal Jain

[@NehalJain96](#)

Leadership & governance: Need of the hour in Assam

What at first seemed like a temporary, emergency precaution quickly became a new normal, as students—even graduating seniors—were forced to finish the academic year online. Now the educational institutes are grappling with how, or even whether, they can safely re-open in the fall.

For teachers, the shift to online education has meant rethinking lesson plans to fit a very different format. But as the educational institutions, the authorities, teachers, students and even parents are working hard to cope up with the emergency, is the government doing enough? Talking about Assam, the pandemic has impacted the education system.

Innovative approaches and distance learning solutions were thought of and implemented like never before. Practices, which were previously considered impossible have now become possible due to the quick and concerted efforts by educationists who seized the opportunity to find new ways to make learning possible and managing to keep children and parents positively motivated and engaged all through the year.

As we look back at this turbulent year (2020), it's now time to look forward and focus on the trends that will shape the future of education. This pandemic has given the education sector a golden opportunity to pilot changes that would have otherwise taken many more years to implement. But without

the help of a new government it would be impossible.

Special importance should be given to the rural areas of the state. Smart phones now are no more a luxury but a necessity for education, therefore the underprivileged class should be provided with such technologies by the government. Not only that, the telecom giants should be warned that without proper service to the customers it would be difficult to do their businesses in Assam. The telecom services like Vodafone or VI is providing pathetic service in the state, their services should be regulated by the state government instead of depending on TRAI. Even BSNL is



performing very poorly.

The state government has to play a vital role in improving the education scenario during pandemic and even if the educational institutes are closed, education should not be stopped from reaching the homes of the students. The government school and college teachers should be trained accordingly. Also, the education minister (whoever gets the chair after the new government is formed) should be

able to monitor all the institutes and even teachers making sure that the online classes are being taken efficiently.

A combination of synchronous and asynchronous methodologies using digital platforms and video-assisted learning has made online

OPINION

BIDHAYAK DAS



→ WORRIED OVER COVID WARRIORS



Letter to the Editor

I have a issue for you and your team, regarding the Government's decision on the Health workers/ Covid warriors of Guwahati Medical College & Hospital (GMCH) to serve Corona duty with daily up down from work place to home and no quarantine after 7 days of rigorous medical duty.

Requesting, to please take up the matter and being it to surface. What about the nurses (mother's) who are lactating and have child below 5 years. It is totally unjust and not at par.

Mark Anthony

A man-made disaster?

The second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an acute shortage of oxygen, which is failing to meet the medical needs of the patients in India. Over the past couple of weeks, many breathless COVID-19 patients have lost their lives due to the unavailability of medical oxygen in hospitals across India. A large number of SOS calls on Social media platforms have showed the severity of the oxygen shortage in the country. Reports from the department of commerce has showed that India had exported more than 9000 metric tonnes of oxygen across the world between March 2020 to January 2021. The Oxygen supplied could be used for both industrial as well as medical use. However, it is true that the demand of oxygen in India was not as high as it is now, as the demand for it doubled to 5000 metric tonnes per day during this second wave.

At the moment, India is producing a 7000 metric tonnes of oxygen per day, which is sufficient for now to meet the needs of the patients, however, the uneven supply and logistical issues have led to a crisis of medical oxygen in a number of states in the country. It is sad that a country that boasts of being the "pharmacy to the world" is falling so short of oxygen supply in hospitals, which has made India the second worst hit country after the U.S.

"Nationalistic pride may swell chests, but to fill lungs you need air"- it is high time someone tells that to all the state governments as well as the central government. Number of leaders in our country prematurely declared a victory over the virus before moving



Representative Image

forward with their participation in a series of huge political rallies. Instead of making preparations for an impending second wave of COVID cases in an already impaired and weak health care system, the governments had put too much of its focus on vaccinations, a process in my opinion too limited to avoid the oncoming disaster. Self-congratulations and publicly stating that the virus was in its deathbed in India led to the people of the country, including me to lower our guards against the

virus. Within a period of a year, the people ruling our country presented us with a classic example of bad governance. At a time when the whole country is scrambling to survive the COVID crisis, there are political leaders who have not only disregarded the pandemic but also have threatened to take action against those who voice their opinions regarding it. The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh has also threatened legal actions against anyone who complains of shortages of oxygen since he insists there is

no such shortage in the state. Moreover, Kumbh Mela, perhaps the largest riverside pilgrimage in the world, was allowed to be held in Uttarakhand in the middle of a pandemic, which also saw 99% of the attendees test positive for the deadly virus. Moreover, on a day when India saw more than 2 lakhs cases, the Prime Minister of the country on April 17 claimed in front of a large gathering of supporters that he had never seen such huge crowds at his rallies before. Today his country is on the brink of a humanitarian crisis.



Gaurav Prakash Pathak

It isn't just the political leaders, but India's media must also take responsibility for this crisis. The media by exaggerating the government's successes and a lack of accountability played a very ugly role in this current pandemic. They routinely glossed the failures of the government by disregarding the opinions and suggestions of all opposition. It is this weak-kneed media that protected the governments from any kind of public scrutiny when they failed to offer any concrete plans to tackle the crisis when it initially hit us.

Not much have changed since last year. The Indian Premier League is back after its gap year in the Gulf. Among the lit pyres, the IPL's floodlights signal showtime for the grand entertainment. Dedicated ambulances for the players, COVID tests and oxygen on demand, only the best will do for the Great Indian Circus. There is a scent of grandeur in the air, with its grand indifference to the unmistakable scent of a failing state and its healthcare system. However, I pray that banging utensils and showering flowers on hospitals rescue us this time from this deadly virus.

(The author is currently practicing as an Advocate in Delhi. The views expressed are his own.)

Guwahatians irked over public urinating in Bharalumukh walls

Guwahati: The residents of BR Phookan road have shown concerns over the issue of urinating in public walls of the area.

As per locals, people are conveniently urinating on the walls of the B R Phookan road, Bharalumukh. According to sources approximately seven to eight people urinate per minute. These men are mostly those working in nearby establishments or transport operators.

"There is a toilet nearby under Smart City but people still urinate here," Rajiv Didwania, a resident of the area told *G Plus*.

The toilet residue flows through the walls to the main road thereby even entering the

residential places. The complaints have been filed previously to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) following which a sanitization drive was undertaken in the area. However, the passers-by have again started to urinate in the same spot.

The locals of the area have proposed a way to tackle the situation by beautification of the area. "If the administration plants flowers in the area, maybe the people will stop," said a local resident.



G Plus informed the matter to the GMC. A senior official has forwarded the matter to the site engineer. The GMC is planning to enforce fines to the violators in the future.

Veteran politician Matang Sinh no more

Guwahati: Veteran politician from the Congress party as well as the founder of NE TV media Matang Sinh has passed away owing to liver complications. It is reported that Sinh had also tested COVID-19 positive.

Matang Sinh was a former union minister of India. He was elected to Rajya Sabha from Assam in 1992 and served as union minister of state in parliamentary affairs from 1994 to 1998. Sinh was a close aide of former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao.

He started the first satellite channel of Assam NE TV along



with Radio Ooo La La and other popular media outlets. Sinh was arrested by CBI on 31 January 2015 for his alleged involvement in Saradha Chit Fund Scam.

Different methods of solving Vaastu problems



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

There are several ways of rectification of bad Vaastu. Some are traditional methods and some are with the help of energisers. These methods are listed here but an expert should be consulted in case of any doubt.

- ✦ By changing the entrance, negative orientation can be corrected
- ✦ Changing the structure of the building
- ✦ By making changes in a room
- ✦ Providing required opening towards North & East Side of a building
- ✦ By making changes in toilets & bathrooms
- ✦ By changing the colour of the walls
- ✦ By closing wrongly placed doors and windows and making new ones
- ✦ Closing the south and west sides and creating openings at north and east
- ✦ Shifting persons from one room to another according to suitability
- ✦ Making proper placement of furniture including beds and study tables
- ✦ Making proper lighting arrangements
- ✦ By removing or adding walls wherever necessary
- ✦ Having proper placement of balconies and terraces
- ✦ Closing unwanted water bodies and creating proper ones
- ✦ Proper positioning of the electrical and



- sanitary fittings
- ✦ Making or shifting staircases wherever needed
- ✦ Having proper water flow, water storage and drainage



- ✦ By planting different trees and plants in different directions
- ✦ By practising Yogic systems like meditation, Pranayama, Reiki, Art of Living, Pranic Healing etc
- ✦ Using different types of healing stones like quartz, Tourmaline, Obsidian Crystals etc
- ✦ Using wind chimes, bells or Mantras to create positive vibrations
- ✦ Using Gomti Chakras
- ✦ Black turmeric (Kala Haldi)
- ✦ Using Himalayan Salt lamp and sprinkling salt water mixed with turmeric
- ✦ By burning sandalwood incense sticks, guggal and camphor
- ✦ Using mirrors to change dimension or regulate flow of energy
- ✦ Using pyramids
- ✦ Using Yantras to remove negative energy and generate positive ones
- ✦ By performing various Puja, Homa or Havan, invoking positive energies within Idols, healing stones etc

Dealing with people: How to tackle passive-aggression?

We are social beings and we have to deal with all kinds of people. From colleagues to relatives, from friends to strangers, a person has to make contact, converse and socialize with them. We do realize that it is not a cakewalk to handle everyone we meet. This is because some individuals may bring you to the edge by their passive-aggression. It is a less often discussed area, but you might immediately know who these people are in your surroundings. They are within your proximity, maybe in your workplace or maybe relatives. Passive-aggressive behaviours are those that involve acting indirectly aggressive rather than directly aggressive. They might pass comments in a way which are rather sarcastic most of the times. Regular usage of sarcasm to attack someone personally is a primary characteristic of passive-aggressive individuals. They

might act as an ally when they are with you, but often passive-aggressive people spread false rumors about you. They may target people they do not like. When they are confronted, they may create drama or play the victim card. For example, they can say things like "You are being too naive, that was a joke, come on cheer up!"

Let us look at some ways how we can manage such people around us:

i) Set definite boundaries:

Once you notice that someone is trying to constantly cross the line, you have to be direct and assertive from that point onwards. The first step is to identify their obscure behaviour and then define the boundaries. You need to let them know what type of behaviour is not negotiable. Be concise, clear and calm when you are letting them know you are not here to entertain their passive-

aggressive comments.

ii) Be yourself:

When you know your qualities and strengths, their comments will rarely affect you. But, if their passive bullying tactics are taking a toll on you, you must realize that you cannot change them. It is advised that rather than being reactive to such behaviour, you should be ready to walk away. Walking away is a powerful answer even if you do not speak. This will let them know that you are not here to entertain their comments.

iii) Be not responsive:

This is hard at times when you face passive aggression from some person in proximity. But, when you are kind and less responsive to their comments, it will automatically send them a message that you are not affected at all by their behavior. If they know that you are least bothered about their remarks, they will

have no pleasure in doing such things. The response we give them acts as fuel; it drives them to further notorious behavior. Therefore, be cool-headed and be a rock.

iv) Communicate them face to face:

When you need to send a clear message, such as you have had enough of their behaviour, you must confront them in front. Sometimes people make mistake to start a conversation over text like WhatsApp or even email. When dealing with such people, it is suggested that you should discuss with them in person. If you discuss over text, more often than not these conversations will not be in favor of you, it can get ignited. So, you may want to converse right in front, rather than in text. A face-to-face conversation is better for honest people who lack manipulation skills. But, passive-aggressive people are good at shifting the topic and can



Abhijnan Pritam Sarma

gaslight you anytime. Gaslighting is a manipulative technique used by bullies where you are forced to question your sanity. These might include blatant lies, playing the victim card, drawing people against you, or confuse you.

If you are facing problems from people like these, these techniques that I suggested can help you to stand for yourself. Firstly, we should observe our environment. Secondly, we must understand what is disturbing us. Lastly, we must take the necessary incentives to get out of that cycle of passive-aggressiveness.

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

Tracing the roots of the idiom

Intimate theatre is meant to be 'intimate'. It is like walking on hot coals, where you need to build a bridge with the audience and yet maintain a space where you unleash your creativity. As you build that rapport, you have to hold a tight rein over your delivery and performance; so as to not go overboard. Special emphasis should be on the tonal quality and gestures; because an actor flourishes when he understands the dynamics of his space, time, and audience. He should know when to go full blast, like when he is performing in front of his audience, who comes 'to be fully entertained' after a hard day's work. For this kind of audience magic, circus, dance and music, light effects and all ingredients of a 'masala movie' needs to be served on a platter. Yet there is the sensitive audience who comes wanting 'fodder' to mull over 'in leisure'. This kind of audience reads between the lines and has a discerning eye and ear.

This was an experiment worth praising as far as 'content' was concerned. This narrative traces the trajectory of 'yatra' in Assam till the advent of bhramyamaan (mobile theatre) on stage literally in Assam.

The rich history of yatra is encapsulated in this narrative, be it actors, plays, music,



subject matter, and techniques, and how they developed over decades. Someone needs to treasure in pen and paper, the journey of yatra, and this mammoth task was undertaken by veteran theatre activist, Tapan Das. In fact, in behind-the-scenes conversations, he told that it was his labour of love during the lockdown. You can lock down the 'man' but not his 'spirits'.

'Rajdhar Sokoradourise' is a tribute to the tumultuous journey down the ages of yatra in Assam. Like in other parts of the world, Assam also followed the practice when males played the roles of the females in theatre and other performances.



These actors were called 'Sokras' in the native tongue. Hence we have the title of the play. Where a 'chokra' is seen racing with a story on his lips through the ups and downs of the personal narrative which adds momentum to the historical narrative.

What added to the momentum of the play are excerpts of popular plays enacted as a part of the script by Tapan Das. Two popular historical characters that found place were Aurangzeb and Shah Jahan. One cannot help but salute the stalwarts, who overcame financial, emotional, social, and family pressures and ostracization to create the masterpieces. It catapulted

theatre in Assam, to the platform where it stands today both in terms of creativity, technique, and content. This dramatic performance-oriented document is for any scholar a treat, a treasure trove that should have a place of honour in any theatre-based performance literature of Assam.

Tapan Das is quite a presence in amateur and professional theatre. Though for more than a decade now, he was conspicuously absent in amateur theatre; as he was involved in earning his bread and butter in the professional theatre circuit. Ask him if he misses being absent from theatre per se ie amateur theatre he says of course, "I miss Rabindra Bhawan and its audience; it is a loss that is not easily compensated."

As far as this particular experiment goes, content-wise it is very rich and scholarly. But as far as performance is concerned, the tonal quality one feels could do with some fine-tuning. One understands that when one performs in a particular format for a very long time that it becomes ingrained in one's idiom. It sometimes becomes difficult for an actor to break it. But having said that, one cannot forget or undermine the powerhouse talent that Tapan Das is; among theatre lovers of Assam, he is a

Meenakshi Gautam

household name.

Music is a very important element in this production and what leaves one pleasantly surprised is that themes like capitalization, exploitation and class struggle ruled the roost even way back then. Although the genre of music has been completely transformed down the ages, yet today as you listen to the music of bygone eras, it still strikes a chord in your heart. Manoj Sarma's rendition of music of the bygone era along with the costume very successfully transported us to the bygone era. It was a monologue, and a personal narrative was interwoven along with the historical content taking us on an educative, entertaining expedition.

Surjya, the cultural club, was responsible for organizing this experiment with Tapan Das at their premises of the club on 9th, 10th, and 11th April 2021. Surjya club has always been responsible for giving us some very rich theatrical experiences. Nayan Prasad did the creative design of the play. The narrative was written and enacted by well known actor Tapan Das and it was a genuine attempt to take us down the memory lane into the bygone forgotten eras of yatra days of Assam.

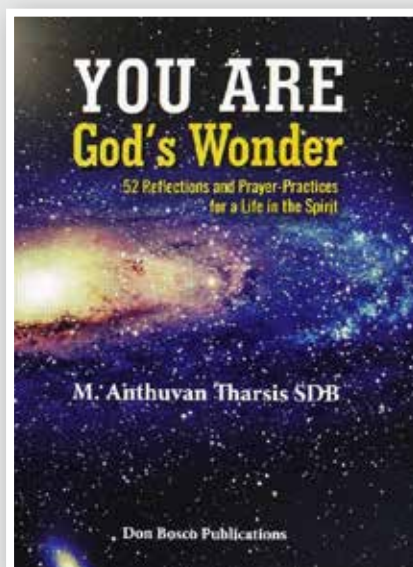
A spiritual guide

How often do we reflect about God? Honestly, if we were to answer this question, most of us would come up with self-embarrassing answers. Why? This is because we would try to get off with the alibi that "there's hardly time to reflect and ponder about God in our mad rush for work in today's mundane world." On a lighter note, students do remember God just before their exams or before entering examination halls.

There have been innumerable books on spirituality that have in some way or the other caressed and touched our inner conscience. You are God's Wonder, is a beautifully crafted spiritual guide by Fr. M. Anthuvan Tharsis, SDB, presently Provincial Secretary and Rector of Don Bosco Provincial House, Panbazar. He had completed his PhD from the Salesian Pontifical University Rome in 2014. The theme of the book is 'spirituality' and is bifurcated into 52 chapters (52 reflections). Since there are 52 weeks in a year, one reflection could be used per week. It has

336 pages, that includes introduction, prologue, epilogue, and three appendices. Every chapter (reflection) ends with a "Prayer" — a practical way of living spirituality. Every prayer has two parts: an "Intercession" and an "Action plan," to enable the reader to get in touch with one's own heart and the heart of God. The author encourages us to start keeping a personal journal for this purpose.

We all have a divine origin. We are created by God in love, and for love. As God is love, we too are love. Through the various reflections in the book, the author connects us to our divine origin. Our meaning and identity is born only when we connect ourselves to God. Human as we are, we need time and space for getting in touch with us, and with God who is our Creator. The book also proposes various prayer-practices to tap the divine in oneself. Reading this book should not be an intellectual exercise for the mind, but it should involve our whole being: body, mind and heart. A slow and



reflective reading of the book is therefore recommended.

On being asked as to how much time was needed to complete the book, Fr. Anthuvan says: "The lockdown period (last year) has been fruitful for me; it took about four or five weeks to give shape to the book. Some of the reflections come from my whatsapp and blog posting over the years. That's why it took only five weeks of major

work, to put together, and write the rest. Overall it took 5 months for the publication."

Anyone who is interested in an interior life, a meaningful life can benefit from the book. Any person from any religious or cultural background can benefit from this book. The author also shares his personal spiritual experiences and his convictions in the course of the book. The book can be read from any chapter; because every chapter is a reflection, and allows the reader to get in touch with oneself and with the divine present in oneself.

The book was released at Guwahati by Rev. Fr. Januarius S. Sangma, Salesian Provincial of ING on November 16, 2020. Introducing the book, Dr. (Fr.) P.D. John, SDB, Director of Don Bosco Publications and Communications, said that the author begins his book with the earth-shattering statement, "God does not love you because you're good; God loves you because God is good." The author portrays his conviction that God's love is absolutely real and that His

Saikh Md. Sabah Al-Ahmed

love doesn't depend on your worthiness!"

Fr. Anthuvan has dedicated his book to all the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Missionaries from abroad and from India who worked in North East India, and to their spiritual legacy — as the Salesians in Northeast are preparing to celebrate the centenary of their arrival to Northeast. The author does not claim either originality or a logical flow of chapters or themes, but presented spiritual reflections right from the heart for personal benefit and enrichment. Fr. Anthuvan has widely used the writings of other authors like Richard Rohr, Henri Nouwen and Pope Francis.

You are God's wonder
Fr. M. Anthuvan Tharsis, SDB
Don Bosco Publications
Price: Rs. 300/-

The reviewer is an international award winning poet and a Faculty of English and Social Sciences at Don Bosco School, Panbazar, Guwahati.

The exchange at the *Dhaba*

The late 80's and early 90's were the most turbulent years for the Tea industry in Assam and probably in most other parts of the north eastern states known collectively as the seven sisters. As we had our tea gardens in heavily rebel infested areas our trips to visit the estates and tea factories under our control had to be planned in outmost secrecy. We also had to take along a couple of armed security personnel allotted to us initially free by the government and later, on requisition basis upon prior payment. Frankly speaking, a planned attack on us could have been carried out at will by the more heavily armed militants but the presence of the armed escorts was somewhat reassuring. What was most satisfying was the ease with which we could pass through army/police barricades put up randomly to check for illegal arms and ammunition. It was only rarely that one heard of any capture of such items but it was a definite deterrent as the dreaded groups usually travelled at night taking the various village roads and even waterways. Those days in order to travel fast and also not attract unnecessary attention as there were many informers, we carried some packed food and avoided stopping at the many dhabas /restaurants on the highways and towns we had to pass through on our trips. These places served quite good hot and tasty meals which we all missed as we were on good terms with our favourite ones. I must admit that those trips were condensed for work points only for which I always prepared the special points to be checked and took some important decisions on the spot after careful evaluation. Time passed quite fast and only towards the evening I used to get a bit worried for the night when there was a great boost from our garden union who volunteered to send a group of around six strong adivasi young men armed with their traditional bows and arrows and a couple of machetes. We were very touched by this spontaneous action for our safety as they truly believed that come what may it was essential that the management does not get harmed which would in turn affect the running of the estate. This effort was continued for many years and I got to know these volunteers on personal names; needless to state we paid them a good allowance for ensuring our good night's sleep.

Once or twice the army officers posted nearby along with the local police station OC used to visit when we were there to make enquiries about our safety and they too remarked that the garden security was the best as they would be aware of the movement of the militants. During those

years our visits were made for one night only utilising two full days and only once or twice I had to stay longer. It was a time of stress and worry for everyone associated with Tea apart from the local businessmen and government officers as there was news of a lot of kidnappings and even heist attempts for looting money from the garden bankers. Letters and extortion notes for money were a dime a dozen which later on also was started by the bogus groups masquerading as the operating militant organizations. I remember receiving a letter once accusing us as having lot of dealings in black pepper and that we must pay a tidy sum to avoid strictest action upon us. Most people who got similar

Anyway on one trip to our garden near Gohpur an old business associate Dhanpat Agarwalla who had been supplying us ration and various other stores for the garden came to meet me with a strange request. I took him to the bungalow for a cup of tea when he told me of his predicament. He had received a letter asking him to pay up twenty five lakhs within a week failing which he would have to face dire consequences. This was sent by a fairly new but quite active group which had spread terror by their cruel tactics and a number of killings in the villages. He was asked to go to Dhekiajuli with the money when he would be met there by someone who would take him to meet their

and he discreetly handed over the same to me which I locked up in my briefcase. My PSO did not know anything about this as I did not want to involve others and next day after breakfast we started our journey around nine in the morning. In fact I had to cut short our visit by avoiding an inspection of the nursery to be on time for the meeting in the Dhaba.

We reached Dhekiajuli around one pm and I advised the driver to drive slowly as I wanted to see if Dhanpat was there and reached the Dhaba which was overrun with some army jawans and policemen. A jawan asked us not to stop there as there had been an operation to nab some militants and they had accosted some persons

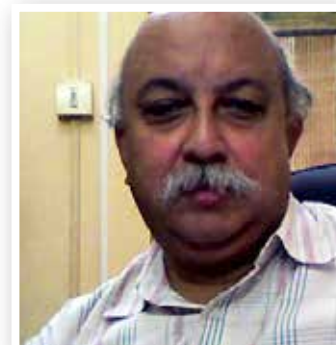
who had all been called there for delivering some money



threats all settled up after negotiations and usually the rule was to pay up around 10 to 25 per cent of the initial demand... we were probably one of the first to disclose this threat and our appeal for help to the administration in fact went up to the highest level in Delhi for which an armed police/paramilitary outpost was put up in our more vulnerable garden. Unfortunately they had to transfer this unit out for the Tripura election duties and within a year our family had to face the brunt of repeated attacks and harassment culminating in two kidnappings and major ransom demands. This probably did not have any connection to our complaint as the militants had a free run for some time especially in the north bank areas.

commander. He wanted my advice on how to deal in this matter and he in fact asked me to come with him which of course I refused point blank. However the distressed man could not be solaced and he begged me repeatedly when finally I asked him to wait for some time and I would see if I could help him in any way. In any case I would be going back tomorrow to Guwahati and in fact I would have to pass by Dhekiajuli. I advised him to go ahead to Dhekiajuli tomorrow morning and I offered to carry the cash amount with me which I planned to hand over to him at a Dhaba a few kilometres away from the town on the highway itself. He had already negotiated the amount which was five lakhs

to them. In one corner I saw about five men all looking very frightened and quiet and I spied Dhanpat amongst them. I caught his eye and seeing me he perked up and came over to meet me accompanied by two jawans. I revealed that he was one of our bigger garden supplier and the police was surprised to see that he had come empty handed while all the other four men were carrying cash with them. Apparently the Army intelligence for which I had a lot of respect was quite efficient to have found out about this meeting for the pay off but Dhanpat being there too with no money on him confused them. So before any further embarrassment I quickly took the officer to one side and explained



Ranjan Kumar Choudhury

my role in the matter; but I spoke a half truth that I would have to arrange to clear off our supplier's bills to enable him to pay his demand and hence I had stopped at the Dhaba to meet Dhanpat. I concocted a story that the poor victim had just been called to negotiate and settle his demand and I would arrange to release his money from Guwahati. The officer was quite flush with the successful operation as they were able to catch two men suspected to be working overground for the militant outfit and accepted my explanation. Suddenly Dhanpat spoke out in a pleading voice requesting the officer to let him go as he had only come to talk about his demand letter and he looked at me for support. I realised that he would first have to give his statement so I went to him and in a soft voice told him to report his case as I had informed the officer and not to worry about his five lakhs with me. He could come to take it from me at Guwahati or I could carry the amount on my next trip.

But Dhanpat had become very afraid for his safety as he suspected that there would be a retribution from the militants so he quickly arranged the affairs of his business to be managed by his "munib" i.e. their one man trouble shooter. After a few days he landed up in our office at Chenikuthi to pick up his money and left for his native village near Jodhpur planning to return once the problem died out. He did return after seven long months but an attempt was made on his life one evening in his shop which however was not fatal as the bullet only grazed his left arm. This time he did not flee but took additional security and decided to brazen it out. Like many others Dhanpat knew that he would have to fight it out to survive in his seventy years old business started by his grandfather as it was the only work he knew and loved. Fortunately for him the repeated pressure from the combined security forces started to yield results which put the militants on the run losing their control on the field. I have remained in touch with him over the years and he has expanded his business to two other towns setting up his sons to be independent. Indeed those were real turbulent times

(The story is inspired by true event.)

#ntw

News This Week

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



1 Rupsi Airport ready for take-off

The Rupsi Airport of Assam, situated near Dhubri, is ready to take-off.

On May 5, 2021, a trial flight was conducted on the Guwahati-Rupsi-Guwahati route by Flybig airlines. The trial run was completed timely & safely with extended support from the State govt & concerned agencies. The Rupsi Airport is developed under the RCS-UDAN scheme and operations for the same are to start from Saturday, i.e., May 8, 2021 between Guwahati-Rupsi-Kolkata route. The flight is scheduled to operate on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. Bookings for this route have been opened by Flybig airlines.



6 PM Modi only spoke his 'mann ki baat' but failed to listen: Jharkhand chief minister

Jharkhand Chief Minister and senior party leader of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Hemant Soren took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Twitter Thursday night. Hemant Soren said that PM Modi had called him, however, he failed to listen and instead only spoke of his own ideas. "Today the respected Prime Minister called. He only spoke his 'mann ki baat' (his mind). It would have been better if he talked about something productive/fruitful and listened as well," CM Soren tweeted.



7 Battlegrounds Mobile India to launch soon

PUBG Mobile India, which has been renamed Battlegrounds Mobile India, is set to launch in India soon. South Korean video game developer 'Krafton' has announced the reveal of the online game which will be launched with exclusive in-game events, outfits and features. The Indian version of the PUBG will have its esports ecosystem with tournaments and leagues, according to reports. Battlegrounds Mobile India will be launched in India allowing all users to play for free on mobile devices. Gamers who have been eagerly waiting for the launch of the Indian version of the PUBG game will

be able to pre-register themselves ahead of the launch and get the gaming experience at the earliest. This version of the game will only be available for gamers in India.



2 AMCH closes OPD services for next two weeks, emergency services to continue

The Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) in Dibrugarh on Friday, May 6, issued a notice stating that the OPD services in the hospital will be closed for the next two weeks with immediate effect. "As per discussion with the district authority it has been decided to close the OPD services for a period of two weeks with immediate effect and until further order. However during the period, regular emergency services will continue as before round the clock," stated the notification

released by the AMCH. The notice further stated that during the period, all staff of AMCH Dibrugarh will have to be present in their respective department for rendering their services.



3 Endangered greater adjutant stork rescued by villagers in Assam

In this hour of prevailing crisis due to the pandemic, villagers of Gosorguri, Morigaon demonstrated humane ways of saving a life. Today, they rescued two endangered Greater Adjutant Stork later handed them over to the nearest Forest Department Office. The rescue mission was undertaken by Lokendra Chetri in Morigaon and his team. The villagers of Gosorguri of Morigaon also supported and protected a nesting colony of the bird. Due to their active support, the endangered bird found this place as a new safe home.



4 Frogs married off to please hindu rain god 'Indra' in Tripura

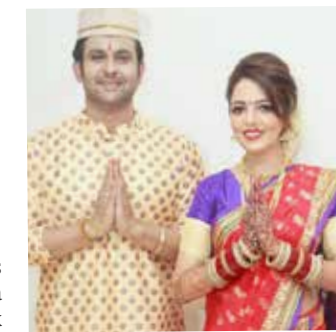
Tea workers in Tripura are trying to please rain God with a bizarre ritual. Tribal tea garden workers from western Tripura organized the frogs' wedding ceremony traditionally called "banger biye." The wedding of the two frogs took place in order to please the rain gods. The frogs tied the knot with aplomb after having taken bath in the river and wearing fancy wedding clothes. A video has gone viral showing the two frogs exchanging garlands, and applying vermilion (sindoor) as well. This ritual, also called 'Mandooka Parinaya,' is performed in the belief that

the marriage will appease the Hindu rain-god, Indra.



5 Dinosaur bones found in West Khasi Hills

Researchers have found Dinosaur bones believed to be as old as 100 million years from an area in West Khasi Hills in Meghalaya. The findings of the fossil bone fragments of Sauropod dinosaurs identified at the site are yet to be published. This makes Meghalaya the fifth state after Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu to report Sauropod bones having titanosaurian affinity, according to reports. Sauropod dinosaurs have comparatively smaller heads with long necks, long tails and four thick legs. They are the largest animals to have ever lived on earth.



8 Comedian Sugandha Mishra, husband booked for violating COVID-19 norms

Actor, comedian, and singer of The Kapil Sharma Show fame Sugandha Mishra and her husband comedian Sanket Bhosale, have been booked for allegedly violating COVID-19 restrictions, imposed by the Punjab government, during their marriage ceremony on April 26. The celebrity couple was booked on Wednesday, May 5, under the Disaster Management Act, under section 188 of IPC (Indian Penal Code) for allegedly violating the official orders. The case has been registered on the basis of a video clip of the marriage function which came out on social media.

Punjab government restricted the number of persons for marriage functions to 10 and this restriction was in place when Sugandha's marriage was held.



9 Third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is inevitable: Centre

A phase three of the COVID-19 pandemic is inevitable, said the principal scientific adviser to the centre Professor K Vijay Raghavan on May 5, while addressing a briefing of the Union Health Ministry. "It is inevitable, given the higher levels of circulating virus but it is not clear on what time scale this phase three will occur. We should prepare for new waves," informed Raghavan. He also said that scientists were currently making a map in the laboratory of all possible changes that could happen to

the virus and see how these changes could affect immune and vaccine evasion.



10 RLD leader Ajit Singh dies due to COVID-19

Former Union Minister and RLD (Rashtriya Lok Dal) chief Ajit Singh has died due to COVID-19 on Thursday, May 6. Ajit Singh, 82, was one of India's senior most politician. He was tested positive for COVID-19 on April 20. He was admitted to a private hospital in Gurugram after his condition deteriorated due to a lung infection on Tuesday, May 4. Ajit Singh was a seven-time MP and served as Union Minister in the Governments of VP Singh, PV Narasimha Rao, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh.

Guhahati

GYAN

Did you know?

Barasha Das

The Gowhatee Municipal Board

Guhahati came under British occupation on March 28, 1824, when Colonel McMarine annexed the town. On February 24, 1826, with the signing of the Yandaboo Treaty, Assam was officially taken over by the British. However, the region was just another source of earning for the Raj, and Gauhati was merely treated as a cantonment for British troops. As such, no developments were undertaken for a decade, until 1836 when many of the soldiers and officials succumbed to malaria and kala-azar.

The East India Company attributed this to the very bad sanitary system of Gauhati town. As such, a Town Improvement Committee was formed in 1836 with the district magistrate and the civil surgeon. The Bengal Government allotted a grant of Rs. 3000 to this committee.

In 1848, the committee proposed that tax be levied on the businessmen and peddlers (feriwala), and hence both North and South Gauhati were brought under its ambit.

In 1852, Major H. Vetch was appointed the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup and the chairman of the Town Committee. 113 residents of the town submitted a signed petition to the Chairman, appealing for the establishment of a municipal board under the Bengal Municipal Act of 1850, which was initially denied. Major Vetch stated that the committee did not have the necessary resources and manpower to set up a municipal board. Later, the Bengal government agreed to the proposal and an order was passed "to constitute a municipal board for Gowhatee".

Accordingly, the first statutory Municipal Board of Gowhatee came into existence. Capt. Rowlatt was the ex-officio president of the board, and James Harriot and C.K. Hudson were the municipal commissioners. Garga Ram Das

and Kefayet Ullah Munshi, two civilians, were soon included in the Town Committee. A municipal tax was levied on those whose earning was Rs. 5 per month or above.



Expressing their displeasure, 50 inhabitants of the town submitted a petition to the Commissioner demanding the abolition of the board. They argued that 113 people could not represent a town with 3000 citizens and that they themselves were not taxpayers as their earnings were less than Rs. 5. This petition was rejected.

The Gowhatee Municipality took up the tasks of developing pucca roads, providing water supply, sanitization, cleaning of drains, filling up unnecessary wetlands, establish cremation grounds and vernacular schools, etc.

In 1876, the municipality was elevated to class one category, and Manik Chandra Barooah was appointed the municipal commissioner in 1883. In 1913, he became its first civilian chairman. Till 1864, house tax was the main source of municipal revenue. In 1875-76, the total revenue collected was 2727 pounds sterling. The first concrete road of the town was built in 1880. The supply of tap water started in 1887, streetlights were introduced the next year.

In 1892, a grant of Rs. 10,000 was received by the board. When a big

fire destroyed Fancy Bazar in 1907, the municipality had to borrow Rs. 2,270 for its restoration, which was completed within a record time of three months. In 1905, the length of the Guwahati-Shillong

road was 764045 sq. miles, of this only 22.40 kms were under the Gowhatee Municipality, and only 15.2 kms of this was graveled road. During 1906-07, Rs 4,500 was spent on the development of two roads. The streetlights were replaced by carbide gaslights in 1910. Electric lights were introduced in the 1920's, wrote Dipankar Banerjee.

On January 27, 1974, the 121-year-old Guwahati Municipality was elevated to a corporation under the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act of 1971. Radha Govinda Baruah and Lakhyadhar Choudhury became its first and second mayors respectively, while Govinda Kalita and Saroj Kumar Sengupta were the first two deputy mayors. The total population of Guwahati rose to 11,661 in 1901.

In 1853, the municipality started functioning from a small room adjacent to the Kachury (Kachari, the Deputy Commissioner's Office). In the 1880s the old Assam-type single-storeyed building was rebuilt into a new double-storeyed structure by the public works department. The Gauhati Municipal Corporation has since then been functioning from here.

PIC OF THE WEEK



Prayers amid pandemic | Photo: Surajit Sharma

KAMUR OF THE WEEK

With COVID-19 around, sneezing and coughing are looked at as crime.

After a half day at work and rain, reached home sneezing. Everyone came to check and asked "covid niki?"

Looking at the situation decided to isolate for sometime. Had a mini panic attack before I realized I should have done what maa said earlier, "Rod r pora ahiso, ga nudhubi, ga beya hobo."

Covid, Guwahati's changing weather, lockdown and curfew, all are kamur now.



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