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Public, patients losing patience

It is obvious that the government wouldn't want to entertain critical comments over its efforts to contain spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, though increasing number of infections among healthcare workers, social media posts highlighting deficiencies in Covid care centres, sluggishness in contact tracing activities and spike in local transmission case, etc., underscore the fact that the fight against the contagion has not been heading in the right direction. To those who have firmly resolved to back the government under any circumstances, grievances highlighted by the general people or Covid-19 patients over slackness in curbing the rapid spread of the disease and initiating treatment procedures would naturally be construed as expression of ill-will against the establishment. Nevertheless, the virulent contagion threatening to overwhelm the tiny state and affect its fragile economy are tell-tale signs that the situation is going from bad to worse. Recent protests by Covid patients at JNIMS regarding inadequacies in provision of basic amenities, complaints against improper management in some Covid care centres and outcries over continuous confinement of the citizens without any notable arrangement for distribution of essential items suggest that neither the patients nor the public are satisfied with treatment and preventive initiatives of the government. Patients in the recently established treatment facility at Lamboi Khongnangkong complaining that no doctor has shown up despite admission of substantial number of infected persons cannot be dismissed as anti-government rhetoric. Rather, grievances being posted on the social media should serve as a lesson for the government authorities to plug the loopholes so that the patients could feel and believe that they will be recovering within short notice.

As the slightest hint of governmental apathy would amount to asking the patients, including infants and elderly persons, to fend themselves from the dreaded disease, authorities need to ensure that the grievances are addressed to the optimum. If at all the government is of the view that such complaints have ulterior motive then it should prove the detractors wrong. Among others, the patients' grievances range from closeting the beds to overflowing of liquid remnants from the toilet block into the sleeping area in the case of the Lamboi Khongnangkong facility. If such a treatment centre can't be maintained properly while the government keeps blaming the public for flouting social distancing norms, it is but natural that the patients would lose their patience and question commitment and efficiency of the government authorities to fight the pandemic. Instead of disdaining the complainants, authorities concerned need to ascertain veracity of the grievances and if found to be genuine then those responsible for such negligence should be reminded about their task. As early detection of cases remains the most crucial element to break the chain of infection and reduce the number of fatalities, the need for proper treatment facilities cannot be ignored for slow recovery of infected persons will only add to the burden of the healthcare service providers, who are already on the verge of exhaustion. Moreover, Union Health Ministry directing states and UTs on Saturday to take up coronavirus testing of grocery shop workers, vegetable and other vendors so as to prevent undetected vectors from spreading the infection to a large number of people, drives home the message that there is no room for laxity in the fight against the disease.

LOUREMBAM ORENKUMAR

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a collection of infrastructure projects under construction throughout in Pakistan with Chinese fund since 2013. The total value of the project up to 2017 was estimated at \$62 billion. The project will upgrade Pakistan's required infrastructure and strengthened its economy by constructing transport networks, numerous energy projects and special economic zones. From November 13, 2016 the connection between the two countries became partly operational when Chinese cargo was transported overland to Gwadar Port for onward maritime shipment to Africa and west Asia. The CPEC corridor connects Pakistan's Khyber, Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh and Azad Kashmir with China's Xinjiang province. The project was funded by China Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Silk Road Fund, Exim Bank of China and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China. Under this investment project a vast network of highways, railways are to be constructed inside Pakistan to link Gwadar and Karachi seaports with Northern Pakistan than further north towards Western China and Central China. A motorway of 1,100 km will be built to connect Karachi and Lahore, and from Hasan Abdal of Karakoram to the Chinese border will be reconstructed and overhauled. The railway line of Karachi Peshawar will also be upgraded to the standard of high speed rails upto 160 KPH. Pakistan rail network will extend to connect Southern Xinjiang railway line in Kashgar. The modernisation of transport network to an estimated cost of \$11 billion will be financed under subsidized concessional loans. To elevate Pakistan's chronic power shortages energy infrastructure will be constructed spending above \$33 billion to produce 4,550MW also 10,400mW of power generation capacity to be brought online with the majority developed as part of CPEC's Fast Tracked Early Harvest projects. A network of LPG transport pipeline and oil will also be constructed under this project, including \$2.5 billion pipeline between Gwadar and Nawabshah to eventually transport gas from Iran. Electricity to be generated will base on fossil fuels though hydroelectric and wind-power projects are also included, as is the construction of one of the World's largest solar farms. CPEC is seen as the main plank of Xi Jinping's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative. The project will give job to 80,000 Chinese and 40,000 Pakistanis, 80 per cent of the investment are joint venture enterprise between the China and Pakistan while the rest are debt-based finance. Taxes up to \$6-8 billion will be collected per annum from toll taxes on roads and bridge. The total CPEC loan is 6 per cent of Pakistan's GDP and India Government has claimed that the project is a debt-trap. On January this

year, 2020 the Gwadar port has started operationalized for Afghan transit trade. The strategic Gwadar seaport in Balochistan province of Pakistan on the Arabian Sea is being built by China under the multi-billion CPEC project to link with BRI and maritime silk projects. Gwadar Sea port is the deepest sea port in the world now operational controlled by China Overseas Port Holding Company since 2016. The project is constructed on 2,292 acre Free Trade Area and is planned to be completed by 2045 in 3 phases. It will host up to 4 lakh deadweight tonnage vessels and TI-class super tankers and will receive 400 million tonnes of cargo per year. This port will also be the site of a floating liquefied natural gas facility that will be built as part of the larger \$2.5 billion Gwadar-Nawabshah segment of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project. Adjacent to the port a Special Economic Zone is being built on 2,292 acres of land and is constructed in the model of China's Special Economic Zones and was also handed over to China Overseas Port holding Company for 43 years. The SEZ will be completed in three phases, manufacturing and processing industries will be developed by 2025 while the expansion of zone is intended to be completed by 2030. Officially the Gwadar Sea port has also been given lease to China up to 2059 for 43 years. The port is located at 140 km from the Iranian border and 533km from Pakistan's biggest city of Karachi, 380km from Oman and is near the

key oil shipping lanes from the Persian Gulf. The greater surrounding region is home to around two-thirds of the world's proven oil reserves. The Gwadar peninsula is a natural hammerhead-shaped rocky coastline with a width of 2.5 miles that connected a shore by a narrow and sandy 12 km long isthmus. The isthmus separates the shallow Padi Zirri bay to the west, from the deep water Demi Zirri harbour in the east. Saudi Arabia will build \$10 billion oil refinery at Gwadar port. The straits of Malacca provides China with its shortest maritime access to Europe, Africa and Middle East and about 80 per cent of the country's energy imports pass through the straits of Malacca. As the world's biggest oil importer, energy security is a key concern for China while current sea routes used to import oil from Middle Eastern and African are frequently patrolled by the US Navy. Chinese sea route through the straits of Malacca is approximately 12,000km. This distance will reduce to only about 3,000km from Gwadar up to their border at Xinjiang and it will reduce time. In the present Malacca Straits route, when crisis erupted energy imports from Persian Gulf was frequently disrupted and halted, vulnerability is faced in Malacca Straits and depends heavily on this route. CPEC project will allow energy imports to circumvent these contentious areas. Indian Navy also increased maritime surveillance of the Straits of Malacca region from its based at Great Nicobar Island. India fears of Chinese 'String of Pearls' encircling it. When conflict erupts, India could potentially impede Chinese imports through the straits. In addition to reduce Chinese dependence on Sea of Malacca the port of Gwadar will provide China an alternative and shorter route for energy imports from the Middle east, reducing shipping costs and transit times. India criticised CPEC project, an initiative under the Belt and Road Initiative of China since it passes through POK and challenged Indian sovereignty. India expressed deep concern on Chinese funded CPEC project, which links China's Xinjiang province to Gwadar passes through Gilgit-Baltistan in POK, which India considers as its territory. CPEC would bolster China's position as the regional hegemon, propelling them to super power status and Pakistan to become a stronger and more stable regional and economic actor. This dismays not only India but also America which views CPEC as a threat to hegemony and superpower status. To dismantle CPEC US continue to create and support discord in Pakistan's Balochistan which is the heart of CPEC. India opposes CPEC because it considers Sin-Pakistan co-operation a threat and China used it to counter balance Indian economic growth. Pakistan plans to make Gwadar a regional commercial hub in future with the help of China. To counter the success of Gwadar port India invested in Chabahar port in Iran, located just 175 km from Gwadar just after one year of signing for Gwadar port. Chabahar could be a formidable competitor of Gwadar but US sanction on Iran Indian investment was in a difficult position. Beijing is likely looking at using Gwadar Port as a dual use- economy hub as well as military base. It is building several new high security complexes at the Port and deploying marines. Dual use logistic facilities best suit Chinese policies with strategically Pakistan being the ideal location for a military base for which Gwadar fully fits this description of fully functional base in Pakistan that inhibit Indian plans. In China's grand strategy, Gwadar is an important foothold that is part of its String of Pearls strategy for the Indo-Pacific region, including Myanmar's Kyaukpyu port and Hambantota in Sri Lanka. Maldives has also negotiated an agreement with China for the long term lease of a port. Chinese maritime strategy draws heavily on sea dominance that whoever controls the Indian Ocean will dominate the whole of Asia. If Gwadar port is converted into a naval base, it will enable the PLA Navy to maintain a permanent presence in the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman. CPEC is designed to give a fillip to China's slowing economy by generating large scale construction activities, building an alternative route for oil and gas supplies and creating new markets for its products. Simultaneously China is building its first overseas military base in Djibouti.

Traditional and institutionalised earning of knowledge in Manipur

KENNY MK

In Manipur since the ancient times, knowledge has been valued. From oral traditions to written documents and literatures, knowledge is turned into and incorporated with the lifestyles of the people. Therefore, people living in the land have been considered to have high living standards and values as compared to others as knowledge is imbibed in their daily lives. Rituals, traditions and culture being the depository of knowledge, knowledge is passed down to the posterity through them. We cannot say that our ancestors were scientifically advanced because they do not theoretically postulate an idea which can be scientifically experimented. Nevertheless, their living activities and wisdom obtained afterwards are in itself an experiment. It is universal act of attaining knowledge by trial and error methods or by necessity. This does not mean that there exist no thinkers in ancient Manipur, but they are so deeply ingrained into the cultural and the traditional habits of performances that the cultural advancement is at the forefront in their mind rather than scientific and reasoned experiments. Well, from the very beginning, a child is taught to do things on their own with the directions of their elders especially their parents for example with the activity called "Pakhon shiba" (can be roughly translated as "running errands" or "made to help in activities"). This not only benefits the elders by getting help but also gives a tremendous opportunity to the child to earn to be able to perform tasks as small as fetching water or cleaning or learning plus and

minus while running an errand to buy small and basic household items. This being a part of the household gives the parents or the elders the authority to instruct and harness the ability of the child to attain knowledge. Oral tradition of folklore or storytelling by the grandparents near the fireplace locally known as "Phunga" in Meeteilon is where the oral tradition of embarking knowledge to the posterities is performed. This will not make them build a spacecraft or do complicated operations on human body but certainly paved the first steps to spark a light to learning process. From the private space of Phunga to the community space of "Laibung" (an open space for performing community religious rituals which now have been mostly converted into a modern community hall) the child is taught the philosophy of livelihood and different basic activities to earn livelihood. But rarely the philosophies and concepts behind the cultural product are explained like today many workshops and seminars are organised to uncover the archival languages and performance which carries the ideologies behind. Language is a constantly changing entity. The languages which are used in the tradition hardly changes so as to adapt to the new generations therefore, they are considered sacramental which makes them refrained from observation. This however, when a change is made, it is seen as a vulgar action to the "sacredness" of the tradition. Children nowadays, having given many "rights and protections" by the modern law which at least protects them from violation and usurping of their vulnerable lifetime becomes more independent with less responsibility.

They aim high yet skip the stepping stones; the outer becomes hardened yet the inner self is still vulnerable to cultural and emotional exposures. This dilemma will help them climb to the moon but forget to look down to the earth. Every child was taught and exposed to an art-form, whether it is dance, music or literature the form of folklore. For instance in Manipur, both in the valley and the hills, whether it be the "ta-dhing-ding-ta-ding-ding" word of hand movements or the rhythmic and breathing sound of "Pam yanba" (tilling for Jhum cultivation on hill side) or climbing the steps of the steep mountain while at the back of their guardians. They are at least once in their childhood exposed to these cultural products. Either in "Lai-Haraoba", harvest festivals or any other festivals for that matter, cultural products are produced. This most certainly gets stuck to the memory of the child but not often formulates it to be a passion or a career. Rather it is present as a cultural memory, when occasionally encountered nostalgia is what it is turned into the minds. Learning one of these activities to be a career of an individual is often not happened. Passion for most is something not affordable because most Manipuris' lifestyle and livelihood is based on agrarian lifestyle. So they make merry when they get to do which may be mostly annual in nature. When modernity and globalisation hits the land, the identity is in dire need of exposure to the world. The tradition, nature and most importantly the culture, the people became the identity. The human resource of the land lies in these faculties rather than their technical and inventional skills that could be the competitive

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Planning for school re-opening readiness: Approaches during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis



DR. JEEBANLATA BALAM

and secondary level, and 28 million children of pre-school education in anganwadi centres. Added to this, 6 million children plus were already out of school prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. So, in the Indian context, even before the school closure due to Covid-19, disadvantaged children and adolescent youth from poor families had the worst access to schooling opportunity accompanied with high dropout rate, and learning deficits. School closures carry high social and economic cost for people across communities and economic strata of society. Its impact, however, is particularly severe for the most vulnerable and marginalised children and their families. School closures exacerbate already existing disparities within the education system. Prolonged school closure and attempts to compensate by normalizing online teaching-learning process has also caused disproportionate disadvantages for underprivileged learners, especially so in the absence of alternative learning opportunity available beyond schools. This has further compounded educational inequities between disadvantaged children who are deprived of laptops, mobile apps, internet facility, basic digital skills and the privileged

children equipped with online learning facilities. Poor households are already facing precarious situations as lockdown has forced them to jump from fire into the frying pan as their means of earning for everyday living has been uprooted. The chances for the majority poor having a mobile app even in the near future remains a dream. School is an important hub of social activity and a domain of immense possibilities for students. Therefore, in the absence of alternative learning opportunities, the cumulative negative impact of school closure on disadvantaged children will be significantly higher and massive as prolonged school closure deprives them of the only available learning opportunity and other essential school services and support systems. Covid-19 pandemic crisis can't kill student and parental aspirations. Prolonged school closures have begun to cause tremendous anxieties, worries and restlessness among vulnerable student and parents belonging to poor socio-economic background. Hence, it's important for the state and stakeholders to ensure that a temporary haul in schooling does not become a permanent one for children. In this unprecedented moment

in time, while none knows the future of Covid-19 pandemic crisis in a certain way; one certainty is, the longer children are out of school; the less likely they are to return to school; being out of school can trigger disengagement, and educational deficiencies that severely limit their economic and social well-being throughout their adult lives. The time has come to plan in detail and prepare for the immediate future of schooling for children to safeguard long term educational benefits. The Government is mulling over school reopening soon. However, India is yet to develop a strategic roadmap of school reopening preparedness to address this complex new reality for an uncertain future for the education of children. Most countries that have begun school reopening don't have strict yardsticks of school reopening model to follow. However, some of the models and guidelines commonly shared in these countries can be considered. Along these guidelines, local policy implementers have to bear in mind that it's important to follow flexible and ready to adopt protocols considering local specific context, needs and demands. Some of the necessary guidelines of school

reopening preparedness are provided below:

- Identification of villages/towns/cities on the basis of Covid-19 affected zones-Red, Orange, and Green.
- According to Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, Red Zones are areas having substantial number of Covid-19 positive cases and areas with a doubling rate of fewer than four days. Orange Zones are districts/areas which are neither in the Red Zone nor in the Green Zone. Within Red and Orange Zones, Containment and Buffer Zones are further identified. The perimeter of the Containment Zone is decided based on the number of positive cases in the area, contact tracing history and population density. The area of 3-km radius around the epicenter (the residence of the positive case or where he/she has been isolated) is considered Red Zone. This area of 3-km radius is the containment zone. In case of a Buffer Zone, the area identified is within 5-km radius while it's 7-km in radius in rural areas.
- Readiness of school reopening can be anticipated after assessing the challenges faced by schools under such classified clusters of Covid-19 affected zones.
- School reopening requires

examining school resources, preparedness of school authorities and teachers, different administrative and innovative teaching-learning approaches in the present situation such as health and safety concerns in pedagogical practice. Implementation of transmission control measures include among others, class size reductions, physical distancing, wearing face masks, hand washing, regularization of soap, water, temperature checks, viral testing facility, and daily sanitization of the school such as doors, and window handlers, teaching-learning aids, avoidance of unnecessary contacts among students, students and teachers, hygiene etiquettes for example, coughing, sneezing into the elbow etc. Immunization of school children must be continued. Ensure everyday briefings on health and safety practices during school assembly. *(The writer is a faculty at the School of Social Sciences, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore. She can be reached at: Jeebanlata@nias.res.in, Jeebanlata90@gmail.com, sjiwanlata@gmail.com)*

Thomas Jefferson was afraid of public speaking. He had terrible stage fright, added accent marks to his copy of the Declaration of Independence in case he ever had to read it aloud, and often faked illness to avoid giving speeches. He was so opposed to public attention that about 20 pages into his own autobiography, he complains that he's already tired of talking about himself.



Frog and Toad were probably more than just friends. Author Arnold Lobel told his family he was gay 4 years after publishing his first Frog and Toad book, and, according to his daughter, the pair are 'of the same sex, and they love each other.' Though he never publicly linked them with his sexuality, she thinks 'Frog and Toad was really the beginning of his coming out.'

DID YOU KNOW

SPECIAL FEATURE

A hint of a perspective on patriotism: My memoir

CHANU LAISOM (SHEELEIMA)

I am glad that revisiting my childhood certainly helps me, in allowing formulating and expressing my own perspectives on many things. It also gives me the willingness and permission. Today, my focus is on a hint of a perspective on patriotism.

On 13th August, the patriots of Manipur both known and unknown are remembered for their heroic act. The most significant ones being Yuvraj Tikendrajit Singh and General Thangal, who were publicly hanged in Imphal (13th August, 1891). Until today, there is no match to their patriotism. They are the idols of supreme sacrifice for our nation. The patriots sacrificed their life for protecting the sovereignty of the Manipur Nation and also the common good of the people. The common good, certainly involve an act of sacrifice in whatever way you put into. Relating to the common good, my parents were no exception. I would like to recall, what my parents had done during my young age. They had rendered

their willingness to contribute for the common good.

From a very young age, with my limited level of understanding, I was made aware of being in a democratic country. The strong emphasis was on its ideal way of the system's functioning. It does include the system's continuous efforts to bring stability, harmony and peace in its operation. However, in Manipur, I (we) from a young age was (are) exposed to many of the common people's efforts, the included practical ways. Most of them were attempts in bringing into alignment of the system's (state authority) functioning and best interest of the people of Manipur. I did witness (many of my contemporaries may did so) several strikes, boycott, blockade, bandh, etc. So, here I am bringing back, a piece of my memory of as I was growing up.

The All Manipur Student's Union (AMSU), the only non-political student's body in the state, was very active (during 1980's) for the common interest of the students of Manipur in particular and the people of Manipur in general.



As of my accurate memory, it was in response to the decision of the Authority's (State Education) will to bring some changes at schools (delinking of +2 after class 10 from the colleges and forced admission of students in the upgraded Higher Secondary Schools which does not have proper infrastructure to accommodate the same in Manipur).

The Union was active by taking up various steps. However, for most of the time, for more than several months, our house (my parents) was the epicentre

of the operation of the Union. In welcoming the Union (not ignoring the fact that, my siblings were active participants), my parents were willing to and sacrificed some space in our house, Keishamthong Laishom Leirak, Imphal. For certain time period of a day (early morning till dusk), our living room space and portion of porch was always for the Union and their activities. Also, my parents were never hesitant for anyone of them to get access to for many other things as well. I myself was

aware of and witnessed many activities of the Union. They include daily meeting/s and press note writing and leaflet preparation and other activities. Banners and slogans were made and prepared. It was part of the Union's efforts in the interests of the collective good of the students of Manipur and people as well. However, things could not have been possible without the respectful people of our Laishom Leirak.

There was always a sense of respect and care for each other in our Leirak. Here, along with my memories, I am allowing myself to extend a bit further and beyond. So, I am proud to mention some of our neighbours- personalities of laishom leirak. It is with the sole intention of recognizing and appreciating them being the role models of many Manipuris. Limitedly, I do include, Mr. Laishom Lalit Singh, Academic and Ex Finance Minister, Govt. of Manipur (Papa, to us) and his wife, R.K. Bimolata Devi (Emashi to us). She was putting her own life at risk in rescuing her husband from attempted assassination (during his tenure

ship as Finance minister). Mr. Laishom Ibomcha Singh, Former Law Secretary, Govt. of Manipur, Ex MLA and Politician, Govt. of Manipur (Tinchu to us). My limited and un-elaborated mention cannot be completed without Dr. Thiyam Suresh Singh, Former Medical Director, Manipur (Mamang Tamo to us), Patron of Meira Paibi, and the office bearers: past and present of the Meira Paibis (Women Torch Bearers who have been the vanguard of Human rights of the people of Manipur) and Ningthouja Lancha (Hayam Tamocho to us), film maker and advocate of peace, Manipur. It is well known that, all of them made significant impact by their sacrifices and contributions for the common good of the Manipuris (India) in general.

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Risk multiplies for survival of NE indigenes

FROM the belligerence of insurgency-related incidents in the past to the present-day simmering hostility between security forces and outlawed organisations, the indigenous communities settling in the northeast region in general, and Manipur in particular, have been facing a perilous situation. While fierce gunfights, which used to be the hallmark of the region for the past many decades, have scaled down to a great extent in the last few years, many states in the region have been unable to wriggle out of the vicious cycle of tension and violence due to sensitive issues cropping up from time to time. Even as influx of outsiders remains one of the greatest challenges, outbreak of the novel coronavirus in the region will undoubtedly be the toughest test for the survival of the indigenous in case the regional governments try to gloat over the few silver linings in the fight against the pandemic. Thus, the observance of International Day of World's Indigenous People by student organisations and civil societies on Sunday amid the scary Covid-19 situation in the state brought to the fore the unending risks exposed to the natives. This year's commemoration of the first session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations at the United Nations in 1982 under the theme "COVID-19 and indigenous peoples' resilience" drives home the point that the virus poses yet another threat to survival of the minority indigenous communities. Whether or not the regional governments could cope with the challenge, the observance signifies that the natives cannot shirk their responsibilities of preserving and promoting indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and practices.

As stated by speakers at different venues of the observance, survival of the indigenes will not only depend on sustainable management of the natural resources but in remaining free from the disease as long as possible. While issues besetting the north-eastern states are prominently highlighted and dissected at various forums during national or international level events with clarion call given to the commoners to unitedly fight the challenges, such show of camaraderie tends to dissipate and communities start pursuing their own interests and socio-political aspirations only to share the same views in the next anniversary event. Such mind-set has been the crux of the problem for the threatened indigenes of the northeast undermining the need for joining hands to achieve the common goal, which is safeguarding the natives. Repetitive calls for upholding interests of the indigenous communities could be construed as venting angst against the establishment as well as asserting that no amount of developmental initiatives taken up by the Union government will calm the nerves of the NE natives unless steps are taken up to ensure protection of their varied cultures and unique identities. The north-eastern states have for long been facing many common issues which pose threat to culture, identity and livelihood of the indigenes with unrestrained infiltration of both illegal migrants and foreign nationals from impoverished international neighbours becoming the greatest threat to the demographic structure of the region. To all those who still suspect that outcres of region's civil societies against unrestrained influx of outsiders has any hidden agenda, then the case of native Tripuris vanishing from their own homeland in the present-day Tripura could be an invaluable reference.

Economic Bioresources: Anantamul (Hemidesmus indicus (L.) R. Br) # 112

DR HUDROM BIRKUMAR SINGH

Key Uses: The whole plant of Anantamul (Indian sarsaparilla) is used in treatment of a large number of diseases and complications; leaf is used in treatment of asthma, bronchitis, whooping cough; root used to treat fever, loss of appetite, ulcers, gastritis, cough, excessive thirst, menorrhagia, diarrhoea, diabetes, nephritic complaints, syphilis, coronary diseases, skin diseases, chronic rheumatism, sore mouth; it purify blood, coolant, and prevents miscarriage; increase semen count, asthma, gonorrhoeal neuralgia, marasmus, venereal diseases, scrofula, neutralize poison, diuretic, emetic, promote body energy and overall health; root and stem of Indian sarsaparilla are laxative, diaphoretic, diuretic and useful in treatment of syphilis and leukoderma, useful in uterine complaints, paralysis, cough, etc., fresh root decoction paste is applied as bandage against snakebite and scorpion sting; treat premature graying of hairs, jaundice and eye related diseases; root soup in milk to treat renal calculi.

BOTANICAL POSITION: Anantamul is one of the most important medicinal plants of Indian system of medicine. It is called Indian sarsaparilla or East Indian sarsaparilla or Hemidesmus in English, Anantamula or Sariva or Naga-jihva or Gopakanya in Sanskrit (meaning endless root), Ananthamoo-

la in Ayurveda, Anantamul or Kapuri or Magrabu in Hindi, Anant vel or Maeen mool in Marathi, Iramusu in Sinhalese, scientifically or botanically called as Hemidesmus indicus (L.) R. Br or Periploca indica L. and belongs to the family Apocynaceae (Dogbane family). Some of the plants belong to this family are Kabirei (Nerium spp.), Khagileihao (Plumeria spp.), etc. But some botanists keep the plant in Periplocaaceae family.

HABIT-HABITAT: Indian sarsaparilla is a perennial prostrate or twining or climber or semi-erect shrub, root-stock woody, thick, rigid, cylindrical; leaves opposite, petiolate, much variable, linear to broadly lanceolate, acute or ovate, entire, smooth, shining, dark green, later variegated with white above. Flowers in racemose or cymes in opposite axils, small, green outside purple within, corolla tubular; fruit of two follicles, long, slender, tapering, spreading; seeds many, flat, oblong with a long tuft of white silky hairs. As reported, the stem and branches of Indian sarsaparilla twine anti-clockwise. Roots are woody, slender and aromatic similar smell to camphor, hence the plant is also known as Kapoori. The Indian sarsaparilla is found in almost all parts of India, more commonly in the eastern and southern parts of India, upto an elevation of 900 m. In Manipur, the Indian sarsaparilla plant is seen grown nearby streams, grazing grounds and foothills.

PHYTOCHEMICAL CONTENTS: As reported, the leaf of Indian sarsaparilla contain several alkaloids ranging from 0.2 to 0.4 per cent of which the major one is the tylophorine (0.1%). Others are sterols, -amyrin, flavonoids, quercetin, kaempferol, tannins, glucose, calcium, salts, rutin, coumarin, hyperoside, Hemidesmin I & Hemidesmin II, etc. (Roy et al. 2001, Alam & Gomes 1998). In another report, the root has hexatriacontane, lupeol, its octacosanoate, -amyrin, -amyrin, its acetate & sitosterol.

HEALTH BENEFITS-MEDICINAL USES: (i) In traditional healing system, the leaves of Indian sarsaparilla is used to treatment asthma, bronchitis and whooping cough. As per a scientific report, the extracts from the leaves of Indian sarsaparilla have shown anti-asthmatic, bronchodilatory, anti-inflammatory, antiallergic & immune suppressive properties. (ii) The alcoholic extract of Indian sarsaparilla leaves have shown antispasmodic and bronchodilation effects in guinea pig ileum. (iv) The root extract of Indian sarsaparilla is used as a coolant and as a blood-purifier. (v) As reported, in Ayurvedic system of treatment the root of Indian sarsaparilla can be administered in the fourth and ninth month of pregnancy to prevent miscarriage. Further, the plant root is used in treating ulcers, fever, loss of appetite, gastritis, cough, excessive thirst, menorrhagia, diarrhoea and diabetes. It is also believed that

the extract from this root help in increasing semen count, neutralizes poisons, works as diuretic and emetic. (vi) The native healers of India are said to use the root of Indian sarsaparilla in nephritic complaints, syphilis and in sore mouth of children (Joseph et al. 1981, Globalherbal 2005). (vii) The root of Indian sarsaparilla promotes health and energy and always cures all kinds of diseases caused by vitiated blood (Pioneerherbs 2005). (viii) The root of Indian sarsaparilla is used traditionally in treating chronic rheumatism, urinary diseases and skin diseases. (ix) The fresh root decoction paste is applied as bandage against snakebite and scorpion sting. (x) The root of Indian sarsaparilla is used in treatment of autoimmune disease, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic skin disorder, asthma, gonorrhoeal neuralgia, venereal diseases, scrofula (Globalherbal 2005). (xi) According to Unani System of Medicine, root and stem of Indian sarsaparilla are laxative, diaphoretic, diuretic and useful in treatment of syphilis and leukoderma. It is also useful in uterine complaints, paralysis, cough, asthma, etc. (xii) In Central India, a special "Herbal Mala" is made from the root of Indian sarsaparilla and root of Tera pambi (Bombax ceiba) which is used in the treatment of marasmus (chi-thungba - a type of severe malnutrition). (xiii) The boiled root soup of Indian sarsaparilla is consumed to treat premature graying of hairs,

jaundice and eye related diseases. (xiv) The root of Indian sarsaparilla is boiled in milk and the soup is given to treat renal calculi.

OTHER USES: (i) The roots of Indian sarsaparilla is used to make beverages. (ii) In South India especially in Tamil Nadu, the roots of Indian sarsaparilla is used in making pickle and served along with rich dishes. (iii) The root extract of Indian sarsaparilla is used in preparation of refreshing syrup with sugar and lemon and served at small refreshment shops in South India.

PROPAGATION-CONSERVATION-MARKET: The Indian sarsaparilla is generally propagated through seed but stem cutting is also possible. The whole plant especially the roots are sold in local, national and international markets with high price.

[This article is a compilation of author's knowledge & available literature for providing broad knowledge & awareness; its applications & consumption should be under the supervision of experts] (The writer is Senior Principal Scientist (Scientist-in-Charge) & Professor of ACSIR (New Delhi), CSIR-North East Institute of Science & Technology, Branch Laboratory, Lamphelpat - 795004, Imphal, Manipur (an autonomous Institute of the Ministry of Science & Technology, Govt. of India). He can be reached at singhhb@neist.res.in / hbrikumars@yahoo.com or through the website: www.neist.res.in).

➔ If you want to be more productive, listen to a video game soundtrack while you work. People who work in silence are slower and less proficient than those who listen to music, and video game music is specifically designed to keep you motivated and finishing tasks without stealing your focus.

Digital Divide and its impact on the COVID era



ic and geographic conditions can mean a jarringly uneven distribution of information technologies. The advent of the Corona virus pandemic which has taken the world by storm since the beginning of 2020 has pushed this digital divide out into the limelight. There has been an unexpected upheaval in all arenas and sectors whether it is commerce, health care, education or simply social and cultural gatherings. In a world where social distancing and agoraphobia have become a norm, people have no choice but to take it all online, into a virtual existence. This may not be an issue for a privileged few, where the routine office work and negotiations are simply

converted into zoom meetings, but for those whose daily wages depend on physical work and labour, the situation is grave. For a vast majority of people in India who simply do not have internet access or even a smartphone, a basic bank transaction becomes a humongous task. The issue of digital divide is the most conspicuous when it comes to the education sector. School buildings have closed down to make way for quarantine centres and COVID wards. Classes have shifted online and student teacher interactions are completely dependent on the availability of internet. Some schools such as The Kids Foundation School in Imphal have even gone out of their way to conduct tests

on WhatsApp and give routine assessments to each individual student. But at the same time, it is obvious that a large chunk of the student population especially those belonging to a lower socioeconomic group are not able to have access to these classes. At this juncture we need to pause and reflect on our constitutional right of the Right to education. The government needs to consider that the definition of this right needs to be more expansive, and should not just suggest or promote online education, but should also actively address the issues of connectivity, and take initiatives so that access to knowledge and information is available to all. Moreover for the digitisation of education to

be successful, teachers need to be trained to look beyond a conventional classroom mode and be given technical assistance. In the healthcare sector too, hospitals and doctors are increasingly reverting to telemedicine and online consultations. The premier private hospital in Manipur Shija hospitals has strictly adhered to a policy of "consultations through appointments only." This is in accordance with the dictates of the present situation where a crowded consultation/ waiting area is to be avoided. Gradually the other health care centres are following suit too, at least within Imphal city. But the health care facilities in remote villages and far flung

areas look far from satisfactory in the digital front and understandably so. The government has undertaken a bold step in launching the "Arogya Setu" app in a bid to fight the corona pandemic. But the app can be termed successful if almost everyone in the vicinity downloads it. This is possible within office environments and even in public places in big cities, but considering that more than 60% of the population in India is in the rural areas, the issue of Digital Divide rears its ugly head once again.

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To be contd...

Planning for school re-opening readiness: Approaches during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis



different grades or arrangement of morning shift for lower class, afternoon shift for higher grades as the situation demands. It's important to ensure that young children don't face the challenge of losing learning opportunity while prioritizing students in higher grades especially secondary and higher secondary students to complete school successfully and enable them chart out their future career pathways. • Condense curriculum focusing on core subjects so that students need not be further stressed. It is impractical and unwise to stress children pushing them to try catching up for lost academic time through accelerating curriculum delivery at a time when students are finding it difficult to even return to school. The negative impacts of lost instructional time and social,

emotional and psychological development in children should be anticipated. Go steady and easy. Utilise a mix of innovative and renewed approaches to seamlessly integrate classroom learning for ensuring the right to education for children. • Classrooms must be clean, well ventilated and electrified and schools must ensure basic conveniences such as safe drinking water, clean toilets, latrines and sufficient water to maintain proper hygiene. • Teachers have special roles in sharing of knowledge and basic information about Covid-19 pandemic, symptoms, its transmission and prevention with students. Parents must keep an eye on children's health and keep children at home if they are unwell. • The Covid-19 pandemic has stripped many families

the opportunity to earn and hence thrown into poverty and food shortage. School reopening must consider continuous providing mid-day meals rich in calcium, protein and iron. Mid-day meal serves as good incentive. While serving mid-day meals, students must wash hands with sanitizer before and after eating. Utilise outdoor clean space as far as possible. • Restrict unnecessary visitors into the school compound and offices. • For students facing the risk of travel and transport, consider relocation in neighbourhood schools. Successive education policies recommend Common School System/Neighbourhood Schools to equalize educational outcomes of children coming from different socio-economic background. As per the Government policy guidelines, school must be available within

a distance of 1 km from the home of a child studying at primary level while it's 2kms for an upper primary student. • Planning school reopening measures and parameters must be geographic and context specific. States having low density population such as Northeastern states (Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh), Uttarakhand, Chhatisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir can prioritize school reopening as per the local situations and affected clusters. These states have low density population ranging from 17 persons per square km in Arunachal Pradesh to 189 persons per square km in Uttarakhand as against the national average of 382 persons per square km. • For building a safer and caring community, it's im-

portant to have knowledge of Covid-19 virus that will help reduce unnecessary anxiety and fears around the virus. Guidance, key messages and other necessary considerations by engaging school administrators, teachers and staff, parents, health caregivers, community members and children themselves will help in promoting safe and healthy school environment and confidence in tackling this unpredictable challenging situation.

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Concluded...

DID YOU KNOW



➔ Clearing the area to the left of your driveway after it snows can help you avoid the 'second shovel'. This gives the plows a space to push all the snow from the road that would normally end up blocking your way, and then you won't have to shovel twice.'

