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Goods trains will not lead to influx: Kyrmen

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG, Oct 26: Just days after Cabinet minister, Comingone Ymbon battled for the introduction of railways in Jaintia Hills, his cabinet colleague and Khliehriat MLA, Kyrmen Shylla has now called for introduction of goods trains in the Jaintia Hills region saying that goods trains have nothing to do with influx.

Playing safe, the minister said he will support railways if it serves the requirement of the people but will speak against it if people are not benefited.

He made it clear that if railways come to Jaintia Hills, it will be with due consent of the public.

He recalled verbal conversations with various stakeholders on the railway project and said everyone is keen to have a meeting to discuss the railways.

He said he would ask Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma to convene a meeting to discuss the matter.

He stated that good trains will not promote influx and also will help in transportation of the essential items at a low cost.

"We have witnessed many accidents on roads and damages to the roads will be less; besides, there will be less traffic jams if goods trains are here," the minister argued.

Ymbon had advocated for the state to introduce railroads, citing the great advantages that this mode of transportation has brought to every state in the country.

End of tussle: Academic Council gives nod to NEP

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG, Oct 26: The months-long stalemate surrounding the implementation of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in the state is now over.

An emergency meeting of the Academic Council (AC) of North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) held on Thursday decided to implement NEP 2020 for its undergraduate courses from the 2023-2024 academic session, post-facto.

The members in the meeting suggested the extension of the session of the first semester students since the question papers as per the NEP syllabus are yet to be set.

After the meeting was over, NEHU Vice Chancellor, Prof Prabha Shankar Shukla appeared disappointed that the members of the Joint Action Committee (JAC), comprising NEHUTA and NEHUNSA, were elated by the AC's decision, approving the NEP's implementation post-facto.

The six representatives from the affiliated colleges in the AC were not present in the meeting as their term ended in August. The university will now need to hold an election to elect the new representatives of the affiliated colleges.

JAC chairman, Prof Lakshon Kma told reporters at the end of the meeting that they are happy since they wanted

this to happen right from day one when the VC had notified the implementation of NEP for the undergraduate courses without the approval of the AC.

According to him, the VC's decision to implement NEP through the notification issued on July 12 was illegitimate since the AC is the supreme body to take a decision on policy matters of the university.

The JAC chairman pointed out that the 110th meeting of the AC had clearly stated that they were not ready to implement NEP.

"But the VC decided to go ahead to implement NEP through some resolutions adopted in the Executive Council which are illegitimate," Prof Kma said.

He mentioned that the Meghalaya College Teachers' Association (MCTA) had also urged the VC to rectify the error by convening the emergency meeting of the AC.

"We dragged this matter out for three months, which could have been solved in 15 to 20 minutes, due to the adamant attitude of the VC," he said. (Contd on P-10)

NEHU VC gets deadline to sack senior consultant

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG, Oct 26: The NEHUSU has set Vice Chancellor Prabha Shankar Shukla a deadline of midnight of October 26 to sack technical officer/senior consultant Rohit Prasad allegedly appointed illegally.

The Joint Action Committee (JAC) had given the same deadline earlier.

The members of the NEHUSU, which had set a two-week deadline for various demands, held a protest march demanding the removal of Prasad. The protest march began at the central library and culminated outside the VC's office.

The students also shouted slogans to condemn the VC for the illegal appointment.

After they found that Prof Shukla was not present in his office, the agitated students took out a protest march to NEHU's old guest house after learning that he was attending a meeting.

The students forced the VC to come out from the meeting and talk to them. Following the meeting, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the NEHUSU and the office of the VC. (Contd on P-10)

Education upgrade: Meghalaya may adopt NCERT textbooks

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG, Oct 26: Education Minister, Rakkam A Sangma on Thursday stated that the many metrics and indicators of education paint a terrible picture of the state education system and that the government and Education department will not hesitate to make the historic decision to change the textbooks if necessary.

"As of right now, our state has the lowest learning outcomes in the nation, the highest drop rate, and the lowest PGA ranking. For this reason, the government and the Education department will not think twice to make the historic decision to change the textbooks if necessary," Sangma stated.

"We may have to adopt the recommendations to use the NCERT textbooks with certain conditions and copyright to ensure our culture and traditions are not overlooked. We are currently awaiting the deliberations and consultations of the DRT. They have completed the exercise and met many subject experts from the state, various state boards, CBSE, and academicians," he stated.

Informing that he recently met heads of various schools in Garo Hills, he said, "We listened to their concerns about the curriculum and syllabus not being at par

with the national standard. They have asked the government to reconsider and update the curriculum to conform to the national requirements."

Additionally, he said that he will meet with the headmasters and principals of the secondary and higher secondary schools of Khasi-Jaintia Hills region on Friday. During their meeting, they will discuss a number of topics, including curriculum standards and textbook comparisons with national standards.

"We will be having the first sitting to review about textbook and curriculum on Nov 1, where the textbook revision committee comprising of officers from the Education department, the DRT, MBoSE, and some expert members will be there," he said, stating that the goal of the entire exercise is to raise the standard of the state education system to a level that is comparable to the national standard.

When asked if they would also be talking about NCERT textbooks at the school level, he responded: "That will depend on the report from the DRT. Allow the DRT to provide us with a roadmap that includes the whole curriculum, a syllabus, a comparison of the current state and national curriculum standards, and their recommendations."

Safety assessment of all govt buildings in state on cards

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG, Oct 26: The state's Revenue and Disaster Management Department has asked its team to conduct a safety assessment of government buildings.

The direction came close on the heels of the devastating fire that destroyed a private building in Thana Road area of Police Bazar here.

Revenue and Disaster Management Minister, Kyrmen Shylla said the matter was

discussed at a meeting of the state cabinet and all departments concerned spoke about their requirements.

Stating that the Revenue and Disaster Management Department conducts mock drills from time to time, he said it has given directions to its team to conduct the safety assessment in government buildings.

In addition, the state government has asked the Fire and Emergency Services department to submit its recommendations and suggestions so that it can (Contd on P-10)

Cherry Blossom finale after church service: Prestone

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG, Oct 26: The state government gave in to mounting pressure and ordered the Cherry Blossom Festival organisers to start the last day of the festival on Sunday, after the church service, at approximately 3 pm.

"We have instructed the organisers that for this time since it ends on a Sunday let the function start after 3 pm at the end of the church service," Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong said on Thursday.

Speaking about the discontent that some have voiced over the event ending on a Sunday, he stated, "If you talk about Sunday, Saturday, or Friday, sometimes it happens. Sometimes the last day ends on a Sunday or the first day begins on a Sunday."

"I want to reassure everyone that this programme is only three days long, and it just so happens to end on a Sunday," he remarked.

"I would appeal to everyone to be cool and calm, and we will see from next year onwards to calculate the date accordingly so that everyone are happy and benefited out of this festival," he added.

When asked if he believed that the opposition had a political agenda, he responded, "I would like to say that this is a sentimental issue. Meghalaya is referred to as a 'Christian state', and some church leaders or NGOs share that viewpoint. The government appreciates that sentiment." (Contd on P-10)

NEHU VC gets deadline to sack...

(Contd from P-1) This followed an agreement for resolving issues related to the hostels, the establishment of the School of Technology library, the provision of proper lab equipment, and a marking system.

NEHUSU general secretary, Banpyngbiang Rieng told reporters that the union has persistently raised concerns about the hostel conditions, including food quality, poor Wi-Fi access, and infrastructure. "We have decided to establish the NEHU Mess Committee within two weeks to see the quality and standard of food," he said.

Riang said the office of the VC has a committee to ensure proper Wi-Fi access to all hotel rooms and initiate necessary repairs and maintenance work for a safe and comfortable environment. "Acknowledging the importance of a dedicated library for the School of Technology, the VC's officer committed to allocating a dedicated room and facilitating the transfer of relevant books from the central library," he said quoting the MoU.

"Recognising the urgent need for new computer equipment, particularly in the Department of Library and Information Science, we were given a commitment that the equipment would be procured within two weeks," Rieng said.

In pursuit of a fair and equitable marking system, he said that the office of the VC committed to reviewing and enhancing the current marking system to ensure objectivity and equity within two weeks. "This MoU is effective immediately and shall be implemented within two weeks of its signing. Both parties agreed to review the progress of the outstanding commitments and address any outstanding concerns as necessary. Regular updates will be provided by the office of the VC to NEHUSU," he said.

Riang also said they are supporting the demand of the JAC to immediately remove Prasad.

NEHUTA president, Lakhon Kma also came to address the students. He said the NEHU has competent expertise in the field of technology for which the individual was appointed.

According to Prof Kma, these experts can be easily utilised to perform the minuscule tasks for which Prasad was appointed. He further said that providing a hefty salary along with DA, to which consultants are not entitled, and that too from the recurring fund of NEHU, raised eyebrows as the university is going through financial difficulties. "The deadline for Prasad's removal by the midnight of October 26 stays," he said, adding that the meeting of the JAC, scheduled on Friday, will go ahead as planned as they have several other issues to discuss.

"We will make sure that the JAC stays strong, and we will keep fighting until Prasad is removed. Even if he is removed, we will have other issues plaguing this university," he said.

End of tussle: Academic Council...

(Contd from P-1) According to him, they are moving ahead with the implementation of NEP taking into account the interest of students and colleges. He further stated that it is victory of sorts considering the united fight put up by various associations in the past three months.

"Some good sense has finally prevailed as the VC was under pressure from several quarters including the President of India and the Governor who had written to him to set things right as per the rule book," Prof Kma said.

On the extension of the session of first semester students, he said their examination will normally be held in November. "But the extension of the session is necessary since we have not yet set the question papers for NEP. We need to adopt the Model Paper under NEP to set the questions. We are expecting that the Model Paper will be adopted in the normal meeting of the AC to be held on October 31," the JAC chairman said. He said this is a normal thing in a transition period and the first batch students will always suffer.

According to him, the teachers will need more time to complete the syllabus and allow students to learn things as per the courses under NEP. "We are aware that the MCTA teachers were not able to take classes in view of the stalemate over NEP's implementation," Prof Kma added.

Meanwhile, the Meghalaya Tribal Teachers' Association, NEHU (MeTTA-NEHU) in its emergency general body meeting unanimously resolved to extend full support to the JAC-NEHU so as to safeguard local causes and concerns and prevent any more infringement and abuse of power by the present VC. In a statement, MeTTA-NEHU president, Prof DRL Nonglait said the meeting resolved to seek clarifications from the office of the VC on the selection and appointments of teachers for different positions, such as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor.

Solar lights illum

(Contd from P-5) The project, which was completed in the chata Action Plan under the Special Campaign 3.0, by

The lights are aimed at being helpful for not only the people but also it difficult to navigate the roads at night.

The solar street light project was inaugurated by the Deputy Chief Minister, Agawar, in the presence of Sohra legislator, Gavin Mylliem, and other officials of the Bhatoli Zone, Vandana Deori among senior officers of CB

Agarwal expressed his happiness that the Customs Zone is providing solar street lights with low maintenance and value for money and conserve energy. Agarwal also appreciated the efforts of the government in providing within 14 days at a cost of approximately Rs 9 lakh right

Gavin Mylliem, expressing his gratefulness to the CBZ, said that he supports the vision of the CM solar mission and help the state to achieve its goal. Mylliem added, "People from these villages have been long waiting for this will benefit the people and when proper illumination is provided, it will be safer, thereby promoting safety and security."

The low maintenance of the solar lights along with its benefits make it a proper alternative and also be the right step towards a

Safety assessment of all go

(Contd from P-1) can come up with a policy and a strategy to address the issue, especially for the urban areas.

Deputy Chief Minister, Prestone Tynsong said, "I have directed the Fire Services (Department) IG in-charge to submit all the details of the fire incidents if they are in terms of equipment, infrastructure or manpower."

"We will see one by one to meet the requirements as per the SOP. The Deputy CM said, "I think we need to come up with a full SOP, especially in urban areas, which I personally will look into. Once that is done, I am very sure that we will come out with a policy."

Stating that the government will sit again and discuss the details, he already told the Fire Services to submit all the details. It is a matter of suggestions and views. Once I receive those, I will call for a meeting."

Tynsong said the government is willing to do it at the earliest. He said the IG in-charge of Fire and Emergency Services Department should submit all those documents. The Thana Road area fire, which broke out in the Building on October 14, had left one person dead.

It was one of the most devastating fires in the history of the state after an effort of more than 32 hours by Fire and Emergency Services Department, administration, Army, Indian Air Force, Border Security Force

Byrnihat most polluted ur

(Contd from P-1) Plan measures to deal with air pollution. The government, and demolition activities on a plot size of or above 5000 sq

The restaurants and hotels have been directed to stop using open fires. Moreover, the government has undertaken automated clean up of the area. It is activated when AQI is "poor".

The AQI is a tool for communication of air quality status. It is divided into categories - good, satisfactory, moderately polluted, poor, very poor. These categories is decided based on the ambient concentration of pollutants and their likely health impacts (known as health breakpoints).

According to the Meghalaya State Pollution Control Board, the high levels of particulate matter may be attributed to the build-up from industries located in the Byrnihat industrial area. The emissions from vehicles, dust generated due to the movement of construction activities, the MSPCB stated.