



I like quips. I like whiffs of cynicism and I think they can be witty. But I don't really know where wittiness is constructive. Matthew McConaughey

Partners in coalition Govt Witty exchange of words

Not exactly weird but strange bedfellows. No love lost and it is the maths of keeping the Congress out of the frame of any Government formation that the BJP and the NPP are still there together in the coalition Government. And making things more worse would obviously have been the decision to drop L Jayanta and Kayisii from the Council of Ministers some time back. Top this off with the much earlier decision to strip the finance portfolio from Deputy Chief Minister Y Joykumar and the script appears perfect for the BJP and the NPP to go hammer and tongs against each other ahead of the by elections in the five Assembly Constituencies, for which voting will be held on November 7. Witty exchange of words, no doubt, but it is not yet clear how well this would have gone down with the voters. With Chief Minister N Biren putting on his best foot forward to woo the voters of Wangoi Assembly Constituency and mincing no words in reminding the people that in BJP candidate O Lukhoi they have a Minister to back and rely on, the NPP also shot back with the cryptic remark that it wouldn't make sense to vote a man who has been made a Minister for only six months. To good effect, the Chief Minister has also on more than one occasion said that the Ministerial berth allotted to Lukhoi is in recognition of the sacrifice that he made (giving up his seat/resigning) to back the BJP led Government, which is committed to the welfare of the people. To the keen political observers, the witty exchange of words, 'a Minister to elect' and a 'Minister for only six months,' should be clear that no stones have been left unturned to woo the people on the 'Minister plank'. An indication that the line, 'A Minister can do so much for the people' is being sold to the people to garner support, overlooking the fact that an MLA can also do so much for the people.

So while the two partners in Government verbally slug it out in their bid to win over the people, the virus continues to play havoc with the lives of the people. For many days the increase has been in the three figure mark with Manipur recording the highest spike of 426 cases on October 17. Along with this also came the news that Manipur is running low on testing kits, thereby telling the story that so much more needs to be done to combat the virus. Top this off with the fact that local transmission or positive cases amongst people with no known travel history make up the bulk of the more than 15 thousand positive cases and this is ideally where the focus of the Government should be. And election campaign obviously means gathering of people and one can imagine where the call for maintaining physical or social distancing would have gone in such public meetings. Top this off with reports coming in that the State Government is seriously mulling over the idea of imposing yet another round of lockdown for one or two weeks thereby giving rise to the question 'what about the hectic election campaigns?' Remember too, as one columnist has pointed out, if the elections to the Autonomous District Councils was earlier postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, among other reasons, how about the scheduled by elections? Or is it a case of the virus knowing the importance of not keeping an Assembly seat vacant for long?

Notice

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Etc etc

Can supplements really help fight COVID 19? Here's what we know and don't know Laura Beil

Consumers have long turned to vitamins and herbs to try to protect themselves from disease. This pandemic is no different—especially with headlines that scream “This supplement could save you from coronavirus.” It also helps to have celebrity enthusiasts. When President Donald Trump was diagnosed with COVID-19, his pill arsenal included Vitamin D and zinc. And in an Instagram chat with actress Jennifer Garner in September, infectious diseases expert Anthony Fauci touted vitamins C and D as ways that might generally boost the immune system. “If you're deficient in vitamin D,” he noted, “that does have an impact on your susceptibility to infection. I would not mind recommending, and I do it myself, taking vitamin D supplements.” But whether over-the-counter supplements can actually prevent, or even treat, COVID-19, is not clear. Since the disease is so new, researchers haven't had much time for the kind of large experiments that provide the best answers. Instead, scientists have mostly relied on fresh takes on old data. Some studies have looked at outcomes of patients who routinely take certain supplements—and found some promising hints. But so far there's little data from the kinds of scientifically rigorous experiments that give doctors confidence when recommending supplements. Here's what we know today about three supplements getting plenty of attention around COVID-19.

(To be contd)

On the brink of irrelevance ?

Ninglun Hanghal



Polling at Senapati for ADC (Autonomous District Council) election on June 1 2015

The neglect of the tribal hill districts in Manipur is obvious. The local self-governance which is purportedly hyped as the base and soul of democracy remains merely on paper. The rural hinterlands and grassroot democracy continues to be overlooked, underrated, marginalised without any tangible signs of 'autonomy' or 'republic' in the truest sense of the term on the ground.

Contrast to the bottom-up concept, everything comes from the top. The most visible indicator of this is the continued delaying of the election to the six Autonomous District Council (ADC). The last election was held in June 2015 and the five-year term of its members ended this year. Voters, the members, and intending candidates are still awaiting permission from 'authorities concerned' and the higher ups in the Government for holding polls, even as it is well over six months after the expiry of the term.

Until now, there seems to be no hurry and elections are unlikely to be held any time soon. Even though the latest circular of the Chairman of the Hill Areas Committee (HAC) on 8 October proposed and recommended to the State Government to hold the ADC election.

In early January this year, the HAC had recommended to the State Government for extending the term of the ADC members for six months - from June to November. It is quite interesting that the committee seems to have foreseen the unfortunate COVID-19 pandemic, or it did so after keeping the annual monsoon rains in mind. Whatever be the reason, the HAC had recommended postponing the election and sought extension as early as in January, more than six months before the scheduled end of term.

Subsequently, in March, the State Government in its Cabinet meeting chaired by the Chief Minister decided to defer the election on grounds of proposals from the HAC. The reason was reportedly that June-July being "rainy season" it would not be ideal to hold election then.

In August, when the extension period was gradually ending, the State Election Commission urged the State Government to issue notification for publication of the draft of electoral rolls of the district councils of each constituency in order to enable the Commission to conduct the election on time—that is in November. The Commission though remarked "However, the opinion of the State executive's committee of the State Disaster Management Authority, Manipur may be taken into account regarding holding of election during this time of COVID-19 pandemic".

The priority seems clear. While monsoon rains or the pandemic are being cited as a hurdle for conducting ADC polls, the same problems do not seem to matter for the Assembly by-election. The preparations for the first phase by-election to five Assembly Constituencies in November are in progress. All together 13 Constituencies are vacant after mass resignation and disqualification of MLAs.

Perhaps, empowered by the announcement of the by-election, intending candidates for the six District Councils under the "Forum for ADC election intending candidates" banner, have called for dissolving of the present ADC, which would pave the way for conducting polls in November. Formed in early October, the forum insists that the incumbent ADC must be dissolved for a free and fair exercise, and the election must be held on time. It has warned that if the State Government fails to meet the two demands, they shall resort to a democratic agitation and the State Government shall be held responsible for any untoward outcome.

All Tribal Students' Union, Manipur also echoed the demand for holding the ADC election. The student union alleged that if the State Government is not serious, they are ready to take up 'any mode of agitation'.

Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Dr Meesha Haorongbam

Some of us have had friends who were often disruptive and fidgety in classrooms; the ones who often got in trouble with teachers for their constant interruptions and for failing to do their class assignments in time. They'd talk to us during lectures leading to everyone getting punished by the teacher. When they came over to our house to play, they seemed all over the place; they'd be jumping or running around all over the house. As adults, some of our colleagues may have trouble initiating or completing a task, difficulty with multitasking, zoning out during important conversations, and are often extremely distractible. If asked, we'd describe them as "edgy" or "tense". They're often labelled as dreamers, slackers, trouble-makers or "bad students". As annoying as their traits seem to us, they are struggling with a neuropsychiatric disorder known as "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder" or "ADHD" in short.

ADHD is highly common yet often misunderstood or misdiagnosed. As the name suggests, inattention and hyperactivity or impulsivity are the core components of the illness, thereby affecting people's behaviour. Based on the diagnostic criteria and assessment tools used, global prevalence of ADHD ranges from 1-10%. In India, it is reported to be 1.6%-17.9%.

It is more prevalent in boys than girls with the ratio ranging from 2:1 to as high as 9:1. ADHD often presents by 3 years of age, but unless they are very severe, the diagnosis is frequently not made until the child is in primary school, when teacher information is available comparing the index child peers of the same age.

While the exact cause for ADHD is unknown, studies have found that the following factors have potential roles in causing ADHD: genetics, brain injury, toxic environmental exposures, alcohol and tobacco use and/or maternal infections during pregnancy, premature delivery and low birth weight. Psychosocial factors such as severe chronic abuse, maltreatment, and neglect also contribute to development of ADHD.

There is no uniform presentation of symptoms. It may be presented as (a) predominantly inattentive, (b) predominantly hyperactive/impulsive, or (c) combined presentation.

The main signs of inattentiveness include, but are not limited to:

- Difficulty in organizing tasks
Constantly changing activities or tasks
Short attention span
Easily distracted
Appearing forgetful

Inability to stick to tasks that are tedious or time-consuming

Inability to listen to or carry out instructions

The main signs of hyperactivity and impulsiveness include, but are not limited to:

- Inability to sit still, especially in calm or quiet surroundings
Markedly excessive fidgeting and wriggling during spontaneous activities
Inability to concentrate on tasks
Excessive physical or verbal movements
Difficulty awaiting turns in games or group situations
Acting without thinking

In adults, ADHD has slightly different symptoms which manifest as: struggling to complete tasks, tardiness, tendency to overlook details, easily bored and seeking out new stimulating experiences, tendency to procrastinate, frequently losing or misplacing things, poor self control, addictive tendencies, being easily flustered, trouble staying motivated etc

What are its effects?

ADHD makes the person feel like constantly struggling to keep their head above water and they're often overwhelmed by the stress caused by procrastination and disorganization. Undiagnosed and untreated ADHD causes problems in every aspect of one's life:

1. Health: The symptoms of ADHD may contribute to a variety of physical and mental health problems such as substance abuse, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, sleep disorders etc.

2. Academic and career: Easy distractibility, inattention, difficulty in completion of assignments, ability to learn, etc are hampered by ADHD. This leads to poor academic performance. As adults, they have trouble meeting deadlines, completing detail oriented tasks, and managing finances.

3. Relationship: As those with ADHD are often perceived as irresponsible, lazy, stupid or insensitive, it can put a strain on their relationships with their loved ones.

How is a diagnosis helpful?

A diagnosis of ADHD is made after careful examination by healthcare professionals with expertise in ADHD after obtaining information from various sources eg teachers, colleagues etc. Diagnosis is helpful as it helps in formulating a treatment plan. As mentioned above, undiagnosed ADHD can wreak havoc in the person's life as well as in the lives of their loved ones. More importantly, a diagnosis of ADHD gives relief and hope to the affected individuals, who go through life feeling they'll never be able to get their life

It may be recalled that the six district councils - Churachandpur, Chandel, Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Senapati, Sadar Hills, was established under the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971. Beginning from 1975, four elections were held until it was boycotted from 1990. The reason being the demand for implementation of the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution in the District Council areas. Meanwhile Naga areas had also boycotted the District Council election in demand for a solution to the Naga political issue. After a gap of 20 odd years, the District Council was revived and election was held in 2010. Initially though, as the district councils were limping back to life, there were not much public response, while Naga areas still witnessed boycott with most of the candidate elected un-contest or nominated. The following 2015 election saw a wave of public response. Since then there has been some activity and momentum in the hills, given that the district councils are grassroots governance and have direct touch with the masses. It generated public interest and hope.

And yet, the ADCs are not without grievance and those are genuine ones. The ADCs, being the lowest level of governance are left at the mercy of the State Government and its legislatures. The council members and general public are left high and dry due to lack of financial resources and autonomy. There has been disenchantment over the devolution of power. Elected members have sent representations and memorandum, umpteenth time, demanding for devolution of powers particularly financial powers.

In fact, in the true practical sense the ADCs are merely implementers of projects for rural development. The council members were not empowered to have their own development plans or financial budgets. The only power they were entitled were of customs and cultural matters. In tribal societies wherein traditions are still prevalent and the custodians are the traditional institutions such as the Chief or village authorities or clan-base, the district councils and its members are unlikely to be powerful in this matter. Moreover there have been no reported incidents or cases wherein the members of the district councils intervene in any case related to custom or culture.

There is no doubt therefore, that the ADC as a unit of local self-governance in Manipur's tribal hill districts are unable to function as desired. It is time to review the role and function of the Hills Areas Committee of the state government.

This article has appeared in The Statesman

under control or fulfil their potential. It helps them and the people around them realize that their difficulties are due to a biological condition and not defects in their character.

Common misconceptions

ADHD is over diagnosed: Disparity in diagnosis depends on the diagnostic criteria used and more importantly on awareness. Eg more awareness leads to more evaluations leading to more diagnosis

ADHD is a character flaw: Inattention, distractibility, and impulsivity are the outcomes of a neurobiological disorder. They are not character flaws.

ADHD is under your will: Research backs the fact that the harder one tries, the worse the symptoms seem to get.

You can outgrow ADHD: While you can outgrow hyperactivity, the inattentiveness and impulsivity that cannot be outgrown causes impairments in academic, personal, and occupational life unless treated.

Treatment: Regardless of the age at diagnosis, ADHD is treatable though treatment initiation at a younger age would have more impact. Various treatment modalities are essential such as medications, behaviour therapy,

parent training and education programmes, social skills training, cognitive behavioural therapy, and organizational strategies.

How can we help?

People with ADHD are not uncaring, irrational, or unreliable. Rather, they are acutely aware of failing to live up to neurotypical expectations. So when their loved ones mirror those feelings with words or actions it validates their embarrassment and frustration. There are minor steps we can take which in the long run would have a profound positive impact on our loved ones struggling with this disorder:

- 1. Educate yourself and others about this condition. As parents, learn how ADHD affects your child in school, at home and in social gatherings and what parenting techniques to be implemented. As friends and colleagues, empathise with their illness and their struggles.
2. Encourage them to seek professional help.
3. Help them disclose their diagnosis.
4. Remember, ADHD is not a sign of one's intelligence and capability. It is an illness. And like all illnesses, proactive steps should be taken to regain control over their lives.

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Building resilience is critical to minimise the impact of humanitarian crises

Shobha Shukla - CNS

The number of people affected and displaced by conflicts and natural disasters has almost doubled over the past decade and continues to rise. Climate crisis is a major driver and amplifier of disaster risks and losses, even as armed conflicts compel hordes of people to flee their homes in search of safety. Slow onset disasters, like extreme temperatures and droughts, have added to disaster related economic losses.

Infectious disease outbreaks among refugees and displaced persons are also becoming increasingly common and pose a major threat to health security and social protection. The impact is especially severe on women and girls, people living with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

This changing humanitarian landscape is even more relevant in the Asia Pacific region, which is the most disaster-prone region of the world. In 2018, 50% of all the 281 global natural disasters occurred in Asia Pacific, with 8 out of the 10 deadliest ones also in this region.

The growing impact of recurrent and protracted disasters and humanitarian crises is posing a major threat to sustainable development and reinforces the importance of developing long term interventions that address humanitarian needs as well as development and peacebuilding challenges.

While delivering the plenary address at the 9th virtual session of the 10th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights (APCRSHR10), Dr Tomoko Kurokawa, Regional Humanitarian Advisor at United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Asia Pacific, made a case for building resilience across the humanitarian, development and peace-building triple nexus.

What is triple nexus? The "humanitarian, development and peace nexus" is about synergising the efforts of members of the humanitarian, development, and peace community by ensuring that humanitarians can focus on acute needs and those in development can focus on long term resilience, promoting peaceful and robust communities.

What is resilience? Resilience is the ability of an individual, a community or a country to cope with, adapt and recover positively, efficiently and effectively from the impact of a natural disaster,

violence or conflict. Resilience covers all stages of disaster - from prevention to adaptation.

Dr Kurokawa calls resilience "the unifying approach that transcends the various pillars and is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development, peace and prosperity for all and particularly those who are furthest behind". Systems, institutions, communities, families and individuals are considered resilient when they have the capacities and resources to cope with and bounce back from both anticipated and unanticipated shocks.

She gives a very lucid explanation of resilience at different levels.

"At the National and societal level resilience may be about having positive social norms and customs that support gender equality. It entails having early warning and early action systems and having strong social protection schemes. At the institutional level resilience is having strong health and school infrastructures, sea walls built along vulnerable coastal areas and mobile health units and skilled personnel that can mobilize quickly at the onset of a disaster. At the community level it means local leadership and participation and decision making of women and youth groups. At the family and individual level it means having equal household decision making, equal livelihood and economic opportunities for all, especially women and having supportive intergenerational relationships."

An individual's resilience may depend on factors such as their economic well-being, education, health, and age as these define their capacity to cope and adjust. Building communities' resilience is critical to minimise the impact of disasters and prevent future humanitarian crises.

The Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction - the first major agreement of the post 2015 development agenda - provides Governments with concrete actions to protect development gains from the risks of disaster. It prioritises that disaster risk reduction is inclusive of and accessible for people disproportionately affected by disasters. It also advocates for gender and disability to be integrated in all policies of disaster risk management and the comeback of young people in humanitarian action.

Even under normal conditions, reproductive health issues

are some of the leading causes of death, illness and disability among women. Moreover, during and after any disaster, women and girls are disproportionately exposed to the risk of loss of livelihood, security and even lives. They face significantly increased risks for unintended pregnancies, gender-based violence, sexually transmitted infections and maternal mortality, says Dr Tomoko Kurokawa.

Globally some 500 women and girls die every day from pregnancy and childbirth related complications in countries facing humanitarian and fragile contexts. This is often a result of unavailability of sexual and reproductive health services and not having access to delivery and emergency obstetric services.

The non-availability of voluntary family planning services (like condoms and emergency contraception) in crisis situations increases the risk of unintended pregnancies, increases health risks for pregnant women and for those who resort to unsafe abortions. Gender based violence, one of the most pervasive human rights violations, that is already widespread in times of peace, is exacerbated during conflicts and disasters when communities' protection systems break down.

Dr Tomoko Kurokawa feels that during emergencies availability of sexual and reproductive health and family planning services and protection of women from violence are as essential as food and shelter. So much so that very often access to basic sexual and reproductive health services determines the choice between life and death for women and girls.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put to test all health systems and national response capacities - both in terms of scaling of public health preparedness as well as for mitigation of broader socio-economic impacts. Some countries in the Asia Pacific region have also had to simultaneously contend with the already existing humanitarian crises and overlapping natural disasters. It has made them particularly vulnerable and less equipped to respond effectively.

The pandemic has already had far reaching impacts on poverty, inequality, employment, economic downturn, human rights protection, which will leave long lasting scars on the process of recovery and rehabilitation and inter-development work for years to come. To be contd