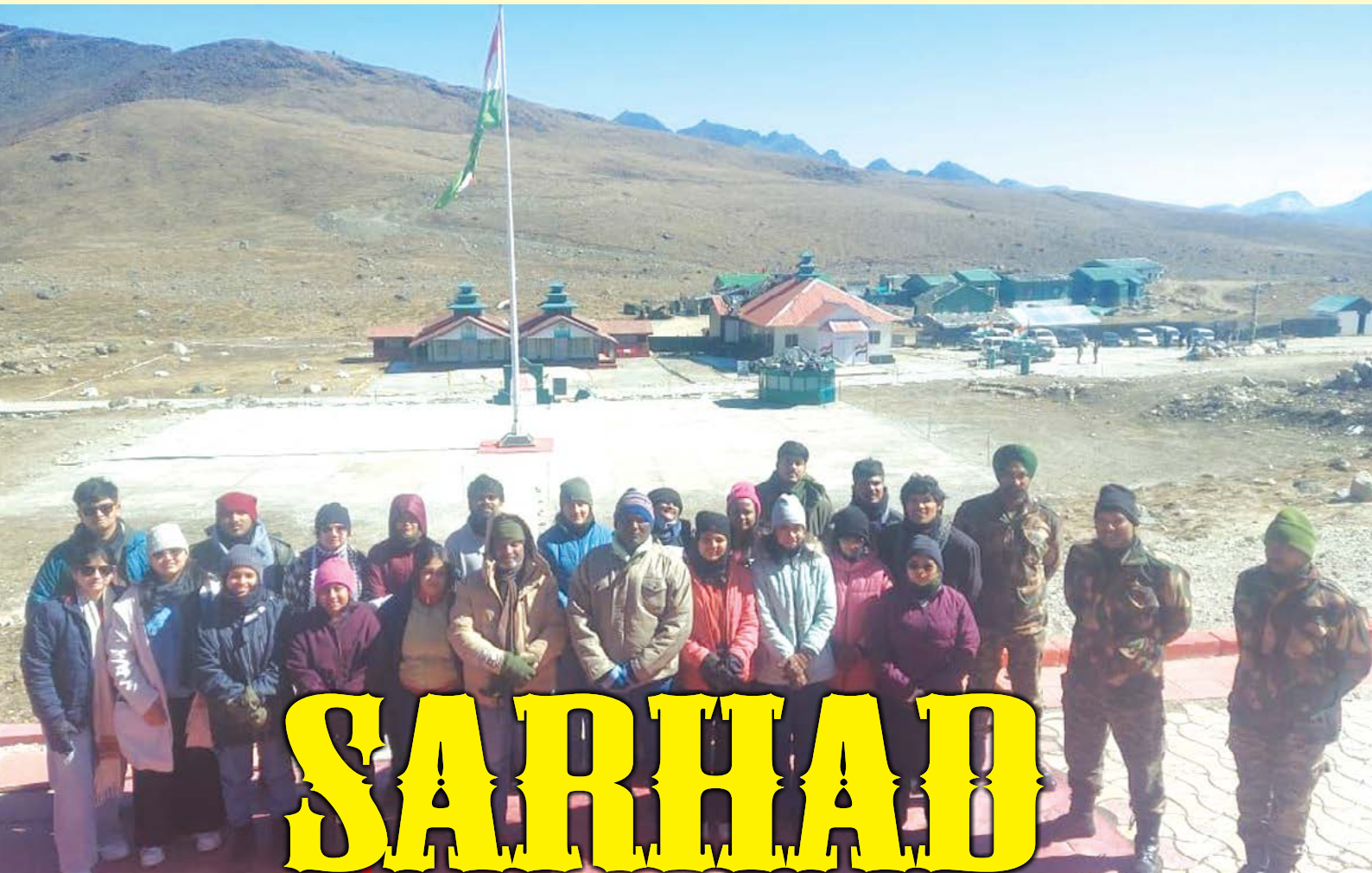


The Voice of Youth Samvaad

An Experimental Magazine by Department of Mass Communication & Journalism,
MES, Abasaheb Garware College, Karve Road, Pune (Maharashtra)



ko pranaam

**Monpa's :
The Guardians
of the Eastern
Himalayas**



**Restoring
the Faith :
The
Holy
Tree**

**Tawang :
A Vital
Borderland
of India**



STUDY TOUR SPECIAL

Commander's Comments



Brig Bhupal Singh, SM
Station Commander,
Tawang Station

The Forward Area Study Tour of the budding Journalists of "Abasaheb Garware College, Pune" to the strategic town of Tawang was a significant phase in their understanding of national effort in ensuring India's sovereignty, multifaceted efforts of Indian Army & Civil-Military bonhomie existing in the region. I had an exhilarating interaction with the young talents & I hope they will be instrumental & strong in strengthening the fourth pillar of democracy in this country.



Lt Col Sasmita
Staff Officer
Tawang Station

The students of Journalism from "Abasaheb Garware College, Pune" brought with them a whole lot of energy, curiosity, questions & doubts which was an amazing experience to see. For me it was "Unforgettable odyssey to present Indian Army's Grit which fuels our commitment towards the country". My good wishes to all the students for a bright future ahead.



Capt Saurabh Sah
Staff Office
Tawang Station

Conducting the Border Area Study Tour for the budding Journalists was a great experience. The curiosity of the students to understand & gain knowledge on the intricacies of how Indian Army operates in challenging weather & terrain and the importance of holding every inch of land was overwhelming. I wish them all the best for their future endeavours.

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Exposure, Experience & Empowerment...

While travelling through the lush green mountains and mesmerizing valleys of Arunachal Pradesh, the land of rising Sun, I was cherishing the memories of my long and unending association with this beautiful state and my visits to the sentinel of India, the last village along the Line of actual control (LAC) with China, Bum La, (Now in changing scenario the Prime Minister rightly mentioned Bum La as the first village of India). My journey to Bum La started way back in 1998 and continues till today. The journey made me what I am today.

My recent visit to this scenic but equally tough region was in connection with the forward area study tour arranged by the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of Maharashtra Education Society's Abasaheb Garware College for the students of masters and final year degree programme. This was a once in a lifetime experience for the 22 students who were part of this tour. We, at department of Journalism and Mass Communication, regularly arrange such activities for our students. This is our endeavor to provide on-field experience to our students. This includes on-job training, internships, field visits, talk-shows of prominent personalities and last but not the least our study tour. These tours are huge opportunity for students to get first-hand knowledge of important socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural issues as we believe such exposures are very vital to build their character.

We believe that journalism is a powerful tool to bring the change we desired. Media is a platform to provide voice to the voiceless, provide strength to the downtrodden and to make them aware of their rights and duties. We also feel that journalism and journalists should have national character and by arranging such tour we try to nurture these qualities, a journalist with the 'Nation First' approach. The idea of visiting forward areas is an outcome of this thought process. We have initiated dialogue with armed forces to bring our dream in reality and received first invitation to visit Ladakh in 2015 where we conducted a survey and research project on Educational Landscape of Ladakh. The report was submitted to Jammu-Kashmir government as well as HRD ministry of the Government of India. The tour was jointly hosted by Jammu-Kashmir government and the Jammu-Kashmir Study Centre. Next tour in 2017 was hosted by Border Security Force and was planned along International Boundary. Students got an opportunity to patrol along the IB from Amritsar to Ferozpur in Punjab. Third tour was in Jammu & Kashmir and arranged by 16 Corps of Indian Army and hosted by 25 Division. During the tour students visited Line of Control in Poonch, Rajouri, Naushera, Bhimbar Gali and Krishna Ghati sectors.

Our recently concluded forward area tour was arranged by 4 Corps of the Indian army and the contingent of 22 students and 2 faculties was hosted by 190 Mountain Brigade. Headquartered in Tawang, this



Tawang War Memorial

This stupa stands as a poignant testament to the brave Indian soldiers who laid down their lives during the 1962 Indo-China War. The imposing structure is adorned with names of the martyrs, their regiments, and inscriptions honouring their sacrifice. Surrounding the stupa are several flags flying high, including the National Flag, the Army Flag, the Air Force Flag, as well as the flags of the 27 other regiments that fought in the war. The memorial was built in memory of the 2,420 members of the armed forces who laid down their lives in the Kameng district during the war.

brigade is responsible for protection of Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China mainly Bum La and Lungro La sectors. All the officers and other ranks along with Station Commander Brig. Bhupal Singh (SM), tour Coordinator and General Staff Officer (G2) of the brigade Captain Saurabh Sah invested their great time and efforts in providing many aspects regarding Sino-India relations to the touring students. Students also got glimpses of cultural fabric of Tawang and Arunachal Pradesh which has great similarities with mainland Indian culture. During the interaction with educational institutes and civil administration students have experienced the bonhomie between army and civilians. Even we have witnessed the quality infrastructure development all along LAC which is providing boost to the border area tourism. The Indian Army plays an important role in all these sectors. Army

has major role in developing economy in this remote region and a major torchbearer of national integration. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Such visits are beneficial to the budding journalist to get the first-hand knowledge of how the army operates in inhospitable terrain to protect the national boundaries and sovereignty. I hope, this visit will serve as a guiding light for all the students so that they can stick to the objectivity while reporting the issues related to the national security. This was our effort to provide exposure to them, getting exposure by experiencing the real issue will empower them as a journalist and as a proud citizen of this great nation. My best wishes to them

JAI HIND

- Dr. Vinay Chati



A Monpa artisan from the Eastern Himalayas skillfully crafting a traditional bamboo basket, showcasing the rich heritage and craftsmanship of this indigenous community.

Monpa's : The Guardians of the Eastern Himalayas

The Monpas have been an integral part of India since independence. The undeterred loyalty of the Monpa tribe to the nation is a lasting aspect of Indian history. The Indian Army received vital assistance from the Monpa Tribe during the Sino-India War of 1962. The Army plays a crucial role in the socioeconomic development of the Monpa people. They promote skill development, employment opportunities, and local entrepreneurship, helping the community become more self-reliant. Their support and dedication have developed a relationship that goes beyond duty, making it a heartwarming example of unity and cooperation.



By Shreya Javalkar

Tucked away in the picturesque Himalayan valleys of Arunachal Pradesh, India, lies the invigorating Monpa tribe, a significant symbol of India's diversity and culture. Their story is of great endurance, spirituality, and an undying commitment to preserve their unique identity and heritage, adding to the extensive mosaic of India.

The Monpa calendar is very purposeful and colorful, at times marked with festivals blending up community with spirituality. Festivals such as the Torgya festival, celebrated every year at Tawang Monastery, Losar (The Monpa New Year), and Choskar (the harvest festival) are held in high regard in their community. These festivals reflect the Monpas' strong ties to their ancestry and their surroundings.

Besides being excellent artisans famous for their intricate Thangka mandala paintings, the Monpa community also evolved a symbiotic relationship with nature. Native to the eastern Himalayas, their ancestral practices provide a model of sustainable living. The balance of their agricultural practices, their advanced irrigation methods, and their harmonious relationship with nature can offer many lessons to contemporary society.

The Monpas have been an integral part of India since independence (1947 CE). The undeterred loyalty of the Monpa tribe to the nation is a lasting aspect of Indian history. The Indian Army received vital assistance from the Monpa Tribe during the Sino-India War of 1962. They possessed a wealth of knowledge about the treacherous terrains that were invaluable for India's sovereignty.

The tribe's history is closely tied to the formation of Arunachal Pradesh, which was established as an independent state in 1987. The Monpas have actively participated in India's Democratic process.

In today's rapidly changing world, despite their strong cultural Indian Identity, they face several challenges. Due to the remote location and limited infrastructure, the economic development and access to healthcare and education is slow. With a population of 60,000, they are one of the largest tribes in their region.

Indian Army's contribution to the development of the Monpa people is an important

aspect, considering the region being a border region & labour being limited. Their contributions go well beyond defence, as they also help build infrastructure — building roads and bridges to remote villages. Not only does this boost access, but it also promotes economic development, thus facilitating trade and communication.

In addition to infrastructure, the Army significantly impacts education and healthcare in the region. They establish and support schools, ensuring that children in these remote areas receive quality education. Medical camps and healthcare initiatives led by the Army provide essential services to communities that would otherwise struggle with access to medical facilities.

Beyond these contributions, the Army plays

The journey of Monpa culture begins at the mighty Tawang Monastery, situated at an altitude of over 10,000 ft. Established in 1681 by the 5th Dalai Lama, Merak Lama Lodre Gyamsto, this monastery is not only a religious monument but also the heartbeat of the Monpas' spiritual odyssey. Proudly recognized as the largest Buddhist monastery in Asia, its walls reverberate with the chanting of Buddhist monks gathered in maroon robes, lost in deep meditation.

a crucial role in the socioeconomic development of the Monpa people. They promote skill development, employment opportunities, and local entrepreneurship, helping the community become more self-reliant.

The bond between the Indian Army and the civilians in this region is one of deep respect, love, and mutual dependence. Their support and dedication have developed a relationship that goes beyond duty, making it a heartwarming example of unity and cooperation.





The Students of Manjushree CBSE-affiliated school, offering education from nursery to class 12.

Manjushree : A Beacon of Education and Hope



In Buddhism, Manjushree is the Goddess of wisdom and education. Manjushree is a CBSE-affiliated school, offering education from nursery to class 12. The Army helps them with food, infrastructure, and educational programs under its Sadbhavna initiative. The unwavering support of the Indian Army, Manjushree continues to provide quality education, discipline, and a better future for underprivileged children.



By Ajinkya Chigle

During my recent study tour hosted by the 190 Brigade (Korean Brigade), I had the incredible opportunity to explore all the war memorials, army camps, holy places, and educational institutions in Tawang and its neighboring towns. Among these experiences, one institution stood out for its noble mission and impact—Manjushree.

What is Manjushree?

In Buddhism, Manjushree is the Goddess of wisdom and education. True to its name, Manjushree is an educational institution dedicated to helping orphans and underprivileged children. It was established on 13th October 1998 by Padmashree Lama Tutin Funso with just 17 children and 3 teachers. Overcoming immense challenges, including Tawang's harsh climate and strategic location, Manjushree has grown to provide education to 362 children, with 31 students currently studying in colleges across the nation.

A Unique Institution

What makes Manjushree special is the discipline and values instilled in its students. The children are well-mannered, ethical, and systematic in their daily lives, reflecting the efforts of the dedicated staff. In an era where many educational institutions operate like businesses, Manjushree remains a pure and selfless initiative.

Manjushree is a CBSE-affiliated school,

offering education from nursery to class 12. So far, 60 students have graduated from this institution, many of whom return to volunteer for a year or serve as teachers in rural government schools, helping to educate others.

Leadership and Recognition

The vision of Padmashree Lama Tutin Funso earned him the Padmashree Award in 2007 for his dedication to education. The institution has been led by Amal Gav, who has served as the principal for over 22 years, playing a key role in shaping the future of the students.

Support from the Indian Army

Since Manjushree runs primarily on donations, the Indian Army plays a crucial role in supporting the institution. The Army helps them with food, infrastructure, and educational programs under its Sadbhavna initiative. Programs include teaching assistance, classroom construction, and cultural exchange programs for students.

The connection between Manjushree and the Indian Army is not just practical but also emotional, as the Army deeply values the mission of educating and empowering children in remote areas.

A Bright Future

Through the dedicated efforts of its staff and the unwavering support of the Indian Army, Manjushree continues to provide quality education, discipline, and a better future for underprivileged children.

The institution stands as a symbol of hope, proving that even in the most challenging environments, education can thrive with the right support and dedication. Manjushree is not just a school—it is a movement towards a brighter and more educated India.





Tawang Monastery

Preserving Culture and Unity

Arunachal Pradesh's Rich Heritage and the Indian Army's Role

Arunachal Pradesh is a land of rich culture, deep spirituality, and strong community traditions. It is home to Tawang Monastery, the second-largest monastery in the world, and historical sites like the Dalai Lama's Route. Festivals like Losar and Gorsam Kora bring people together in joy and celebration. The Indian Army plays a big role in preserving monasteries, supporting cultural events like Maitri Diwas, and promoting sports through the Tawang Marathon. Their efforts help protect the state's traditions while bringing people closer and supporting development.



By Isha Naik

Arunachal Pradesh, known as the "Land of the Rising Sun," is a state rich in cultural heritage, spirituality, and traditions.

As part of our Border Area Tourism Incentive program, we had the opportunity to explore this beautiful state, experience its unique customs, and witness the remarkable efforts of the Indian Army in supporting and preserving its cultural identity.

One of the most striking aspects of Arunachal Pradesh is its deep connection to Buddhism. The state is home to many monasteries, stupas, and religious landmarks that reflect its spiritual roots. During our visit, we explored the magnificent Tawang Monastery, built in 1681, which stands as the second-largest monastery in the world. This sacred place is home to many monks who dedicate their lives to prayer and meditation. The peaceful atmosphere of the monastery provides a deep sense of spirituality and devotion.

Another important religious site is the Gorzam Stupa in Zemithang, a 93-foot-tall structure built in the 13th century. Inspired by Nepal's Boudhanath Stupa, it serves as a place of worship for Buddhist followers. Additionally, we visited the historic Dalai Lama's Route, where the 14th Dalai Lama entered India in 1959. It is believed that he placed his walking stick into the ground, which later grew into a sacred tree. Today, locals visit this tree to make wishes, and it has become an important symbol of faith.

Apart from religious sites, the festivals of Arunachal Pradesh play a vital role in preserving and celebrating its culture. The Gorsam Kora Festival, held in Zemithang Valley, represents the friendship between India and Bhutan. Pilgrims and monks from both countries participate in religious ceremonies at the Gorzam Stupa, strengthening their cultural ties. Another significant festival is Losar, the Tibetan New Year, which is celebrated with traditional dances, feasting, and rituals. This festival marks a new beginning and is one of the most important events in the region.

The people of Arunachal Pradesh take immense pride in their traditions, and their culture is reflected in their music, dance, art, clothing, and rituals. During our visit, we observed that many people still speak their native languages, wear traditional attire, and actively participate in community events. Their deep respect for tradition helps keep their cultural heritage alive

for future generations.

While the people work hard to preserve their heritage, the Indian Army plays a crucial role in supporting their efforts. The Army is not just a protector of borders but also an active contributor to the region's development.

The Indian Army actively participates in cultural events. It collaborates with locals to celebrate Maitri Diwas, an event that strengthens the bond between soldiers and civilians. The Army also supports the Tawang Marathon, an international event organized in partnership with the Arunachal Pradesh Government. This marathon promotes sportsmanship, cultural unity, and the spirit of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Giant Buddha Statue near Tawang Circuit stands 30 feet tall and is made of gilded bronze. Overlooking valleys, mountains, and rivers, it offers breathtaking views. Buddha statues symbolize peace, wisdom, and enlightenment, with different poses and hand gestures (mudras) representing various teachings. This statue is an important part of Buddhist culture, representing devotion and harmony. Many people visit it for spiritual peace and positive energy.

The Army also plays an essential role in preserving historical and religious sites. It maintains the Major Bob Khathing Museum of Valor in Tawang, which showcases Arunachal Pradesh's history and its integration into India. By protecting monasteries and other religious places, the Army ensures that these important sites remain well-maintained and accessible to devotees and tourists. Arunachal Pradesh is a land of deep traditions, spirituality, and community values.

This journey has been an unforgettable experience, allowing us to witness the unity between the people and the Army. The commitment to preserving Arunachal Pradesh's culture while embracing modern development is truly inspiring. This experience has left a lasting impression, reminding us of the importance of cultural preservation and the role we all play in keeping our traditions alive.

Cultural Heritage

Tawang Monastery: Second-largest monastery, built in 1681.

Gorzam Stupa: 93-foot stupa in Zemithang, inspired by Nepal's Boudhanath Stupa.

Dalai Lama's Route: Sacred site of the Dalai Lama's 1959 entry into India.

Festivals & Events

Gorsam Kora Festival: Celebrates India-Bhutan friendship in Zemithang.

Losar Festival: Tibetan New Year with dances, feasting, and prayers.

Tawang Marathon: International event by the Army & Govt, promoting unity and fitness.



Losar - The Tibetan New Year

Prayer wheels


Prayer wheels are an important part of Tibetan Buddhism, used for prayers. They are round and made from materials like metal, wood, or stone. The most common prayer written on them is Om Mani Padme Hum, but other prayers can also be used. Inside, they have a special core wrapped with prayers. Tibetan Buddhists believe that when a prayer wheel is spun, the prayers written inside are released into the air, spreading positive energy and blessings everywhere. This is why spinning the wheel is considered just as powerful as chanting the prayers aloud, bringing peace and good fortune to all.





तवांग युद्ध स्मारक: वीरता की गाथा

तवांग युद्ध स्मारक भारत की सैन्य दृढ़ता और राष्ट्रीय गर्व का प्रतीक है। यह दुनिया को उन सैनिकों के निःस्वार्थ समर्पण, वीरता और बलिदान की याद दिलाता है

 कमरुनिसा काज़्मी

तवांग युद्ध स्मारक, जिसे नामग्याल चोर्टेन के नाम से भी जाना जाता है, 1962 के भारत-चीन युद्ध में अपने प्राणों की आहुति देने वाले भारतीय सैनिकों को श्रद्धांजलि अर्पित करने वाला एक पवित्र स्थल है। यह अरुणाचल प्रदेश के तवांग में, लगभग 10,000 फीट की ऊँचाई पर स्थित है और तवांग-चू घाटी को निहारता है।

यह स्मारक उन 2,420 भारतीय सैनिकों की स्मृति में बनाया गया था, जिन्होंने विशेष रूप से तवांग और सेला दर्रे की भयंकर लड़ाइयों में वीरगति प्राप्त की। 1999 में इसका उद्घाटन तत्कालीन थलसेनाध्यक्ष जनरल जे.जे. सिंह द्वारा किया गया था। यह संरचना एक 50 फीट ऊँचा चोर्टेन (स्तूप) है, जो इस क्षेत्र की बौद्ध संस्कृति को दर्शाता है। इसमें शहीद हुए सैनिकों के नाम पत्थर की पट्टिकाओं पर अंकित हैं। स्मारक के चारों ओर प्रार्थना चक्र, झंडे और एक शांत वातावरण है। इसके अंदर एक छोटा हॉल है, जिसमें युद्ध से जुड़े अवशेष, तस्वीरें और 1962 के युद्ध का इतिहास दर्शाने वाला एक संग्रहालय मौजूद है। यह स्मारक आगंतुकों के लिए सम्मान और स्मरण का स्थान है।

हम, आबासाहेब गरवारे कॉलेज के छात्र, तवांग युद्ध स्मारक गए और यह अनुभव वास्तव में अविस्मरणीय रहा। वहाँ पर हमारे कई यात्रा थे जैसे की टेंगा वैली, बॉल ऑफ फायर म्यूजियम की यात्रा, न्यूकमाडुंग युद्ध स्मारक की यात्रा, सेला सुरंग, जसवंतगढ़ स्मारक की यात्रा, बॉब खाथिंग म्यूजियम की यात्रा, मुख्यालय 190 माउंटेन ब्रिगेड में संवाद और ब्रीफिंग, युद्ध स्मारक की यात्रा, मठ (मोनास्ट्री), विशाल तवांग बुद्ध, मंजूश्री, उॉलिंग गोम्पा की यात्रा, स्थानीय लोगों के साथ संवाद – विभिन्न संगठनों के प्रमुख, अधिकारी, युवा, सांस्कृतिक संगठन, स्कूल के विद्यार्थी, पूर्व सैनिक और गाँव के बुजुर्गों के साथ बातचीत, पीटीएसओ झील और मार्ग में स्थित सूबेदार जोगिंदर सिंह युद्ध स्मारक की यात्रा, बुमला की यात्रा और संवाद व ब्रीफिंग, शुंगत्सेर की यात्रा, सैनिकों के साथ बातचीत, सुरवा सांबा स्मारक, पवित्र वृक्ष और लकड़ी के पुल की यात्रा, अधिकारियों के साथ सामाजिक संध्या, सामग्री और उपकरण प्रदर्शनी (NGES सहित), सैनिकों के साथ 'बड़ाखाना' (सामूहिक भोजन), मुख्यालय 190 माउंटेन ब्रिगेड की यात्रा, 5 माउंटेन डिवीजन के जीओसी के साथ बातचीत, अधिकारी मेस में भोजन।

अरुणाचल प्रदेश की यह यात्रा सिर्फ एक यात्रा नहीं थी, यह एक जीवन परिवर्तक अनुभव था जिसने मेरी आत्मा को गहराई

से छू लिया। बर्फ से ढके पहाड़ों से लेकर हरे-भरे घाटियों और शांत नदियों तक की भूमि की अपार सुंदरता ने मुझे विस्मय और आश्चर्य से भर दिया। ऐसा लग रहा था मानो प्रकृति ने एक उत्कृष्ट कृति रची हो, और मुझे इसे देखने का सौभाग्य प्राप्त हुआ हो। लेकिन अद्भुत प्राकृतिक दृश्यों से परे, वे लोग और कहानियाँ थीं, जिन्होंने वास्तव में मुझे प्रभावित किया। मिली दयालुता, संस्कृति की गहरी अनुभूति, और जीवन जीने का सरल परंतु शक्तिशाली अंदाज़ मेरे दिल पर अमिट छाप छोड़ गया।

हमारा अध्ययन दौरा 1 फरवरी से 10 फरवरी की अवधि के दौरान इस प्रकार नियोजित था। वहाँ हमने अनुशासन और समर्पण के साथ कार्यरत भारतीय सेना के अधिकारियों को देखा। तवांग में सेना की कार्यप्रणाली प्रभावी सैन्य संचालन का एक उत्तम उदाहरण है।

यात्रा के दौरान, हमने भारतीय सेना और स्थानीय निवासियों के बीच मजबूत संबंधों को देखा। सेना न केवल इस क्षेत्र की रक्षा करती है, बल्कि स्थानीय समुदाय के विकास में भी योगदान देती है। वे बुनियादी ढांचे में सुधार लाने और तवांग की प्रगति सुनिश्चित करने के लिए निरंतर प्रयासरत हैं। सेना और जनता के बीच यह सहयोग इस क्षेत्र के विकास में एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाता है।

फरवरी 2025 की एक सुबह, सुबह 9:00 बजे, हमने तवांग युद्ध स्मारक पर उन वीर सैनिकों को श्रद्धांजलि अर्पित की, जिन्होंने राष्ट्र के लिए अपने प्राण न्योछावर कर दिए। वह क्षण अत्यंत भावुक और अविस्मरणीय था। जिस भूमि पर हमारे वीरों ने अपने प्राणों की आहुति दी, वहाँ खड़े होना हमारे लिए अत्यंत प्रेरणादायक था। यह अनुभव हमारे दिलों में असीम सम्मान और कृतज्ञता की भावना भर गया।

भारतीय सेना द्वारा इस स्मारक का संरक्षण किया जाता है, और यह न केवल सैन्य कर्मियों बल्कि आगंतुकों के लिए भी सम्मान और श्रद्धा का स्थल है।

तवांग युद्ध स्मारक मात्र एक ऐतिहासिक स्थल नहीं, बल्कि भारत की सैन्य दृढ़ता और राष्ट्रीय गर्व का प्रतीक है। यह दुनिया को उन सैनिकों के निःस्वार्थ समर्पण, वीरता और बलिदान की याद दिलाता है, जिन्होंने सभी कठिनाइयों के बावजूद अपने कर्तव्य का पालन किया। यह स्मारक आने वाली पीढ़ियों को प्रेरित करता रहेगा और भारतीय सेना की अडिग भावना को श्रद्धांजलि स्वरूप जीवित रखेगा।





Residents of Tawang celebrating Kepang La at the first village of India, with the Indian Army.

Honoring Heritage, Embracing Unity

The Indian Army and Tawang's People in Festive Unity



Tawang has a strong presence of the Indian Army, which plays a crucial role in maintaining security and national defense. The Army not only safeguards the region but also contributes to its development through infrastructure projects, medical camps, and educational initiatives. Tawang is renowned for its rich Buddhist heritage, with the Tawang Monastery being one of the largest monasteries in India.



By Annanya Putta

Tawang, ensconced in the eastern Himalayas of Arunachal Pradesh, is a breathtaking region known for its snow-capped mountains, lush valleys, and serene monasteries, including the famous Tawang Monastery. The region's natural beauty, with pristine lakes and dense forests, makes it a paradise for travelers.

Strategically located near the India-China border, Tawang has a strong presence of the Indian Army, which plays a crucial role in maintaining security and national defense. The Army not only safeguards the region but also contributes to its development through infrastructure projects, medical camps, and educational initiatives. The residents of Tawang, primarily of Monpa ethnicity, share a deep cultural and historical connection with the land. They maintain a harmonious relationship with the Army, benefiting from security and economic opportunities while preserving their rich Buddhist

heritage. Despite occasional challenges, the synergy between nature, the military, and the local community defines the unique essence of Tawang.

The Army organizes welfare programs, medical camps, and educational initiatives that benefit local communities. These initiatives help bridge the gap between civilians and military personnel, fostering goodwill and cooperation.

Tawang is renowned for its rich Buddhist heritage, with the Tawang Monastery being one of the largest monasteries in India. The Indian Army has maintained a respectful relationship with local Buddhist monks and traditions, recognizing the cultural and spiritual significance of the region. Events such as the Tawang Festival and Army-organized cultural programs help strengthen ties between the military and the community. Soldiers often participate in local festivities, further integrating themselves into the social fabric of the region.

Festivals of Tawang

Torgya Festival

The Torgya Festival celebrated at the Tawang Monastery, is a three-day event that wards off evil spirits and ensures prosperity. The Torgya festival is celebrated annually in the Tawang Monastery, usually in January. It is celebrated from the 28th to 30th day of the 11th lunar month. Monks perform the mesmerizing Cham dance, wearing elaborate masks and costumes. The Indian Army often provides logistical support and joins in the celebrations, showing deep respect for local traditions. Their participation highlights their commitment to preserving the cultural heritage of Tawang.

Tawang Festival

The Tawang Festival is celebrated annually from October 27–31 in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh. It's one of the biggest tourism festivals in the state. It is a modern cultural extravaganza showcasing the region's rich heritage, music, dance, and crafts. Organized with government support, the festival attracts tourists and strengthens local traditions. The Indian Army actively participates by setting up stalls, hosting adventure sports, and performing military band displays, enhancing the festive spirit. Their presence fosters goodwill and encourages tourism, benefiting the local economy.

Buddha Jayanti

As Tawang is a significant Buddhist center, Buddha Jayanti is celebrated with great devotion. The occasion includes prayers, processions, and teachings on Buddha's life. The Army, in collaboration with the residents, organizes special events, meditation sessions, and community feasts, reinforcing their shared spiritual connection.



Indian army conducts plantation drive in border villages of Tawang on Buddha Purnima

Gorsam Kora Festival: A Sacred Pilgrimage and a Symbol of Unity

The Gorsam Kora festival is celebrated annually on the last day of the first month of the Lunar calendar. In 2024, the festival was held from March 7 to March 10. The Gorsam Kora Festival is one of the most important Buddhist festivals celebrated in the Tawang region, particularly in the Gorsam Chorten, a sacred stupa located in Zemithang, about 90 km from Tawang. This festival is an annual spiritual gathering that attracts Buddhist devotees from Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, and Tibet, who

come together to participate in prayers, rituals, and the sacred practice of circumambulating (kora) around the stupa.

The Indian Army, which is stationed in Tawang and its surrounding areas, plays an active role in ensuring the smooth organization of the Gorsam Kora Festival. Their involvement goes beyond security and logistics; they actively participate in the festivities, reflecting their deep respect for the local traditions and spiritual practices.

Losar – The Tibetan New Year

Losar, the most significant festival for the Monpa people, marks the beginning of the Tibetan New Year. This festival is celebrated in February or March, depending on the Tibetan lunar calendar. Celebrated with grand feasts, prayers, and traditional dances, it is a time of joy and renewal. The residents clean and decorate their homes, visit monasteries for blessings and enjoy cultural performances. The Indian Army participates by organizing special programs, distributing sweets, and joining the locals in festivities, symbolizing their close bond with the community.



Tawang's children performing at Losar Celebration.

The Indian Army and the People : A Shared Celebration

The Indian Army, deeply integrated into the social fabric of Tawang, actively participates in these festivals as a gesture of solidarity with the local people. Soldiers often join traditional dances, attend prayer ceremonies, and share festive meals with residents. The Army also organizes special cultural programs, friendly sports matches, and welfare initiatives during these celebrations, further strengthening their bond with the community.

Beyond festivities, the Army ensures smooth logistics, security, and infrastructure support for major events. Their respectful engagement with local traditions fosters a deep sense of trust and cooperation between the military and the

residents.

Festivals in Tawang are not just cultural events; they are a testament to the unity between the residents and the Indian Army. These celebrations offer a unique opportunity for both groups to come together in joy, tradition, and mutual respect. As Tawang continues to flourish, the harmony between its people and the Army ensures that the region's vibrant heritage and spirit of togetherness remain strong for generations to come. These joint celebrations reinforce the strong civic-army relationship, guaranteeing that cultural heritage and national security go hand in hand. Through such events, Tawang continues to thrive as a land of spirituality, resilience, and harmony.

International Tawang Marathon 2.0

Apart from the many festivals of Tawang which the residents and the Army jointly celebrate, the International Tawang Marathon is an event organized by the Indian Army. It is a prominent high-altitude marathon event held in Tawang. Jointly organized by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh and the Indian Army, the marathon aims to promote physical fitness, showcase the region's natural beauty, and strengthen the bond between the military and local communities.

The most recent edition took place on October 24, 2024, coinciding with United Nations Day. This event attracted 4,580 participants, including 1,199 women, from 27 Indian states and 10 foreign countries. Notably, an 80-year-old runner from Mumbai participated, highlighting the marathon's inclusivity across age groups.

Set up with the stunning backdrop of the Eastern Himalayas at approximately 10,000 feet, the marathon presented runners with challenging terrains featuring steep inclines and sharp descents. Participants were rewarded with breathtaking views of Tawang's pristine landscapes throughout the course. The event was graced by the presence of Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu and the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Gajraj Corps, Lt. Gen. Gambhir Singh, both of whom ran alongside participants, symbolizing unity and collaboration.

Beyond the race, the marathon provided an economic and cultural boost to the region. The influx of participants and visitors benefited local businesses, particularly tourism and hospitality. The event also showcased Tawang's potential as a world-class adventure tourism destination and highlighted the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous Monpa community.

The collaborative effort in organizing the marathon emphasized the deep bond shared between the people of Arunachal Pradesh and the Indian Army, reinforcing Tawang's reputation as a premier destination for adventure, culture, and community spirit.



Medals for the finishers of Tawang Marathon



Patriotism in the hills – A proud salute to the tricolor in Tawang.

Through the Valleys of Arunachal Pradesh

A Journey to Remember

Zemitang is a hidden gem. This picturesque valley near the Bhutan border is known for its stunning landscapes and cultural significance. Gorsam Stupa, one of the oldest and largest stupas in Arunachal Pradesh. It attracts pilgrims and tourists seeking peace and spiritual enlightenment. Bumla La Pass, a high-altitude border between India and China, is another fascinating place. Located over 15,000 feet above sea level, it offers breathtaking views and a glimpse into India's strategic defense zones. Every locations showcases a different aspect of Arunachal Pradesh—from history and bravery to spirituality and natural beauty.



By Samruddhi Kamble

Northeast Arunachal Pradesh is home to ancient monasteries, sacred sites, and war memorials that honor the bravery of Indian soldiers. Every place here tells a story, making it a perfect destination for travelers seeking history, spirituality, and adventure.

As a student of Mass Media and Journalism from Abasaheb Garware College, my journey through Northeast Arunachal Pradesh has been filled with mesmerizing memories that will last a lifetime. The beauty of Tawang Monastery, the serenity of Bumla La Pass, and the bravery commemorated at war memorials all left a deep impact on me. The peaceful vibes and cultural richness of the region shaped my understanding in profound ways.

Guwahati to Tawang: A Scenic Journey

The journey from Guwahati to Tawang was one of the most emotionally overwhelming experiences of my trip. As we drove over 500 kilometers, the scenery unfolding around me left me speechless. The winding roads led through dense forests, quiet villages, and majestic mountains, each view more beautiful than the last. The higher we went, the more I felt connected to the untouched beauty of the land—snow-capped peaks standing tall, rivers flowing serenely, and vast valleys stretching as far as the eye could see. Every turn in the road revealed a new wonder, and I couldn't help but feel a deep sense of gratitude for being able to experience such natural splendor.

One of the most significant sites was the War Memorial, which pays tribute to the brave Indian soldiers who fought in the 1962 India-China War. The memorial stands as a reminder of their sacrifice and courage. Another must-visit is the Tawang Monastery, the largest in India and an important center of Tibetan Buddhism. Its serene atmosphere, prayer chants, and stunning architecture make it a spiritual retreat for visitors. Close to Tawang, the Holy Tree is revered by locals and travelers alike. It is believed to have divine powers and offers a peaceful spot for reflection.

Zemitang is a hidden gem. This picturesque valley near the Bhutan border is known for its stunning landscapes and cultural significance. Another iconic site is the Gorsam Stupa, one of the oldest and largest stupas in Arunachal Pradesh. It attracts pilgrims and tourists seeking peace and spiritual enlightenment. Bumla La



At the crossroads of borders – a signpost near the India-China boundary.

Pass, a high-altitude border between India and China, is another fascinating place. Located over 15,000 feet above sea level, it offers breathtaking views and a glimpse into India's strategic defense zones. The Indian Army allows visitors to experience this restricted area with special permits.

Each of these locations showcases a different aspect of Arunachal Pradesh—from history and bravery to spirituality and natural beauty. Whether exploring ancient monasteries, paying respects at war memorials, or witnessing the grandeur of



Serene Escape: Stay at the Army Holiday Home in Tawang, surrounded by pristine snow and breathtaking Himalayan views.

the Himalayas, Northeast Arunachal Pradesh promises an unforgettable journey filled with adventure, peace, and inspiration.

War Memorials: Honoring the Brave

War memorials are special places that honor the bravery and sacrifices of soldiers who gave their lives for the country. They remind us of the difficult battles fought to protect our freedom and values. These memorials allow us to pay our respects to those who never returned home while also making us realize the cost of peace. Each name and stone tells a story of courage and love for the nation. Visiting these places fills me with immense respect and gratitude for the heroes who

devoted everything to our safety and freedom.

The Holy Tree at Kinzamane

Located in the remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Kinzamane is a revered site that holds significant cultural and spiritual importance for the local tribes. This tree is considered sacred, with the locals attributing divine powers to it. The tree is often seen as a symbol of spiritual connection, with people visiting it to offer prayers and seek blessings for prosperity, health, and peace.

Jaswantgarh: A Memorial of Valor

One place that deeply moved me was Jaswantgarh, the memorial of a soldier who sacrificed his life in defense of the nation.

Standing there, surrounded by the silent beauty of the place, I couldn't help but feel overwhelmed. The thought of Jaswant Singh's bravery—fighting until his last breath to protect our land—stirred something deep within me. The sacrifice of these soldiers, far from their families and homes, touched my heart in a way words cannot describe. At that moment, I understood the true meaning of patriotism, courage, and the value of freedom we often take for granted.

The Beauty of Arunachal and the Strength of the Indian Army

The courage of the Indian Army, combined with the powerful story of Jaswantgarh, left me with an overwhelming sense of pride, respect, and gratitude. Some lessons go beyond what can be taught in a classroom—they touch the heart and change you forever.

Standing at Bumla Pass

Standing at Bumla Pass, one cannot help but feel a deep sense of respect and emotion. Located at 15,000 feet above sea level, this remote border post is more than just a strategic military location—it represents the unwavering courage, dedication, and sacrifice of the soldiers who guard our nation. The conditions here are extreme: freezing temperatures, thick snow, and isolation. Yet, the soldiers remain steadfast in

their duty. As the Indian flag flutters high against the backdrop of the towering Himalayan peaks, it evokes a deep sense of pride.

These soldiers, far from their homes and families, often spend months in harsh conditions, maintaining vigilance over the borders with no expectation other than their commitment to protecting the country. Standing in the cold winds of Bumla Pass, it's impossible not to reflect on their sacrifices—the sleepless nights, the constant alertness, and the hardships they endure to ensure our safety. Bumla Pass is not just a physical location; it represents the heart and soul of the Indian Army. It is a testament to the selflessness of the soldiers who, with unwavering resolve, protect us from threats, ensuring our peaceful lives. Their sacrifices fill my heart with gratitude.

A Journey That Redefined Me Forever

This journey wasn't just about visiting new places—it was a life-changing experience that transformed me in ways I never expected. It taught me how to find strength in myself, even when I faced tough challenges. Being surrounded by nature—mountains, rivers, and forests—made me feel a deeper connection to the world around me. Meeting people from different backgrounds helped me understand how important it is to respect and learn from others.

Life's Greatest Lessons: From Arunachal to the Army

Some of the most powerful lessons I've learned came from experiences, not textbooks. Traveling through the stunning beauty of Arunachal Pradesh opened my eyes to a world beyond what I had imagined. The majestic mountains, peaceful rivers, and endless greenery made me realize how small we are compared to nature's wonders. But the most profound lesson came from seeing the Indian Army in action. These brave soldiers, stationed in such harsh and isolated conditions, show incredible sacrifice and strength every single day. Their dedication and selflessness taught me more than any lesson could. The beauty of Arunachal, combined with the courage of the Indian Army, filled me with deep respect and made me appreciate the freedom and peace I often take for granted.

A Journey That Touched My Heart

This journey through Arunachal Pradesh was more than just a trip—it was a life-changing experience that deeply touched my soul. The sheer beauty of the land, from the snow-capped mountains to the lush valleys and peaceful rivers, filled me with awe. But beyond the landscapes, it was the people and their stories that truly moved me. Leaving Arunachal Pradesh, I felt like I was leaving a part of my heart behind. The experiences, the beauty, and the emotions I carried from there will stay with me forever. No matter where life takes me, I will always cherish the lessons learned and the memories made on this incredible journey. The courage of the Indian Army and the serenity of Arunachal will always hold a special place in my heart.



Students visited holy tree with army officers.

Restoring the Faith : The Holy Tree



The Indian army plays a crucial role in the development of border areas, extending beyond the primary function of national defense and security. They are involved in infrastructure development promoting tourism and economic growth of border areas. One such recent project was the restoration of the surrounding area of the holy tree, situated in Kinzeman.



By Sanskruti Jadhav

Arunachal Pradesh is a state filled with mountains and cultural heritage on the eastern side of India. This state is important for various reasons that makes it a crucial geographical entity. It is a strategically important location for India as it shares its border with China, Bhutan, and Myanmar. The Indian army plays the excellent role of defence from these long international borders.

The students from Aabasaheb Garware College of Journalism and Mass Communication, Pune visited the different places in Arunachal Pradesh on behalf of the study tour, which was hosted by Indian Army's 190 Mountain Brigade also known as Korea Brigade. One of the important cities they visited in this state was Tawang. Enriched with cultural and historical significance, Tawang has developed to become a prominent place for tourists to experience natural phenomena. As this city has sectors near it sharing international borders, the Indian Army has huge contribution in its development.

One such place that has been recently developed is the 'Holy Tree' located in Khinzemane. Indian Army's 15 Maratha Infantry is deployed in the Khinzemane sector near the Holy Tree the Chinese occupied Tibet border from where is just few steps away which restricts the visit for tourists to a certain limit. The students were fortunate enough to visit this area under the assistance of Indian Army and were also privileged to be the first representatives of media to visit the place.

The Indian army officers of the sector and civilians jointly take care of the Holy Tree and its area which was recently renovated. The Company Commander Devashish Upadhyay, along with his team and engineers, completed this task in the period of 20 days. The work mostly took place in the nighttime in the dark which was a strategic move to escape from the external surveillance.

The process involved 70 Army men and 30 civilian workers. The task was very hard and risky due to the obstacles in transportation. The equipment and material were transferred through two ropeway bridges increasing the risk of the job. But the military and other workers made it happen through their commitment and dedication. The place has been beautifully decorated and kept clean, making it a pleasant experience for every visitor.



This tree has a historic relevance as the 14th Dalai Lama entered Khinzemane through the border pass on 31st March, 1959. Lama had a stick which he planted in Grong- Kukpa, which has now turned into a large tree. There is a belief among people that this tree grants all wishes of those who worship here.

The Indian Army is developing the area around borders of Arunachal Pradesh and contributing to its growth. Such examples show a real picture of how Indian Army is important for the development of various factors in the nation other than just security.



Sela Tunnel

Indian Army the backbone of development in border areas



The Indian Army and the BRO have been instrumental in the development of critical infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh, particularly in the border regions. The government of India has undertaken a range of projects aimed at improving connectivity, security, and quality of life for the local population. Indian Army has also been involved in "tourism development" in the region. The relationship between the Indian Army and the civilians in Arunachal Pradesh is a model of mutual cooperation and respect.



By Pushpanjali Shinde

Arunachal Pradesh, the biggest state in the Northeast region of India located strategically sharing borders with Bhutan, China (Tibet), and Myanmar. With its 98% forest-covered area, Arunachal Pradesh is a region rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage yet a region of national security importance. The state's location along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, especially the disputed area of Tawang, demands constant vigilance and development. The Indian Army, in collaboration with various government agencies plays a pivotal role in both the security and socio-economic development of Arunachal Pradesh.

Border Area Development and Infrastructure Projects

The Indian Army and the BRO have been instrumental in the development of critical infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh, particularly in the border regions. The government of India has

undertaken a range of projects aimed at improving connectivity, security, and quality of life for the local population.

One of the most prominent projects is the "Sela Tunnel", a strategically important all-weather tunnel that connects the Tawang region to the rest of Arunachal Pradesh. This tunnel significantly reduces travel time and ensures year-round access to the region, even during heavy snowfall or adverse weather conditions.

In addition to the Tunnel, other development projects like "Bank Multipurpose Hydropower Project", "road widening", and "railway station redevelopment" have been carried out to boost the region's economy. The Indian government has also ensured that all households in the region have access to "clean drinking water" under the "Church Vision Project", which aims to provide sustainable water resources to rural and remote areas.



Dibang Multi-Purpose Hydro Power Project:

- It is a flood control cum hydroelectric power project planned to be developed on the Dibang River, a tributary of the Brahmaputra River, in Arunachal Pradesh.
- At 2,880MW installed capacity, it will be the country's biggest hydropower facility.
- It is being developed by India's state-run National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC).
- The Project is designed as an energy storage project, with flood moderation as one of the key objectives, besides power generation.
- The project envisages the construction of a 278m-high and 375m-long concrete gravity dam, which will be the highest Concrete-Gravity Dam of India.
- The Dam is planned to be constructed with Roller Compacted Concrete (RCC) technique and it will be the highest RCC Dam of the World.



Jaswantgarh Memorial



Ball of Fire Museum

Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development

While ensuring security along the LAC, the Indian Army has also taken steps to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Arunachal Pradesh. Tawang, an area of deep historical and spiritual significance, is home to the famous "Tawang Monastery", one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in India. The Indian Army works in close collaboration with local communities to maintain and preserve these heritage sites.

In addition to protecting cultural landmarks, the Indian Army has also been involved in "tourism development" in the region. Several "memorials and museums" have been established, such as the "Surwa Samba Memorial", "Jaswantgarh Memorial", and the "Tawang War Memorial", to honor the sacrifices of Indian soldiers during the 1962 war with China. These sites attract tourists, not only for their historical significance but also for their spiritual and educational value.

One remarkable example of community collaboration is the "Holy Tree at Khinzemane" the area of which was constructed by the civilians and the soldiers together, without any machinery, in a record time of just 20-21 days. This symbolizes the unity between the army and the locals, highlighting their shared commitment to preserving the region's cultural legacy.



Tawang Monastery

Civil-Military Cooperation and Socio-Economic Development

The relationship between the Indian Army and the civilians in Arunachal Pradesh is a model of mutual cooperation and respect. The Indian Army's presence in the region is not just limited to security but extends to active participation in the welfare and development of local communities.

One of the key initiatives of the Indian Army is "women empowerment". The army has helped set up cafes run by local women, providing them with economic opportunities and a platform for personal growth. These initiatives help boost the local economy and support gender equality in the region.

In education, the 'Sadbhavna Yojana' has been crucial in fostering better educational opportunities for children. Under this scheme, new hostel constructions and improvements to existing schools have been initiated. The army has also provided funding for government academic resources and infrastructure development ensuring that students in remote areas receive quality education.

In addition, the Indian Army has recognized the importance of sports and recreation in the development of young people. Sports facilities, including badminton courts and archery ranges are being constructed to encourage physical fitness and discipline among the youth. These activities help foster community spirit and provide a healthy outlet for the younger generation.

Empowering the Local Community through Education and Skill Development

The Indian Army has played a pivotal role in providing education and skill development opportunities to the youth of Arunachal Pradesh. In addition to traditional education, the army promotes spiritual and cultural understanding. Subjects like Buddhist literature are taught in schools, including monastic institutions, to help children better understand their cultural roots and heritage. This contributes to the preservation of Arunachal's rich traditions and customs.

Under the Sadbhavna Yojana, the army provides scholarships and builds infrastructure for schools, ensuring that children, especially in remote areas, are not deprived of a quality education. This, in turn, leads to greater opportunities for employment and social mobility for the youth of Arunachal Pradesh.



Conclusion

The Indian Army, through its ongoing initiatives and collaboration with the government, has been a cornerstone in the development of Arunachal Pradesh's border areas. Whether it's through strategic infrastructure projects, the preservation of cultural heritage, or direct support to local communities, the army's role goes beyond just defence. It actively contributes to the socio-economic growth of the region, making Arunachal Pradesh an integral part of India's national development strategy. By improving living conditions, promoting tourism, and providing educational and empowerment opportunities, the Indian Army is helping build a more secure, prosperous, and vibrant future for the people of Arunachal Pradesh.



Major Bob Khathing Museum in Tawang

A Soldier's Mission, A Nation's Triumph



History is often measured in battles fought and borders drawn, but some victories come without bloodshed. Major Ralengnao Bob Khathing's 1951 mission to integrate Tawang into India is monumental to diplomacy and courage. Visiting the Major Bob Khathing Museum in Tawang, I discovered the story of a man whose contributions to India's sovereignty remain largely unsung. Through the museum's artifacts and personal accounts, the legacy of this extraordinary soldier comes alive, reminding us that true heroism lies in securing a nation's future with wisdom and resolve, not just warfare.



By Nupur Shirsat

Stepping into Tawang felt like stepping into a long forgotten yet significantly profound story. I was fortunate to be part of a study tour hosted by the Indian Army for media students of Abasaheb Garware College, providing an experience that changed my perspective on history, patriotism, and sacrifice. Amongst the various places we visited, the Major Ralengnao Bob Khathing Museum stood out the most— for its impressive architecture and the soul-stirring story it held in its walls. Learning about Bob Khathing's fearless efforts in integrating Tawang into India without conflict was without a doubt, inspiring.

Major Ralengnao Bob Khathing is a name that resonates deeply with Tawang's history. He played a pivotal role in establishing Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, as an integral part of India. Although his name often remains inconspicuous in mainstream historical narratives, his legacy is deeply etched in the land of India's northeastern frontiers. A strong-minded man of commitment and immense courage, he was instrumental in ensuring that Tawang became a significant part of India without bloodshed.

Major Bob Khathing was an army officer, a respected educationist and a civil servant. Born in 1912 in Ukhrul, Manipur, he belonged to the Tangkhul Naga community. He pursued his education at Cotton College, Guwahati, and later joined the British Indian Army during World War II. His invaluable experience in the army became a crucial asset in understanding conflict zones and developing strategic skills. His legacy is not confined to a single mission; rather his steadfast dedication and deep understanding of India's diverse cultures continue to inspire many.

After independence, he transitioned into the Indian Frontier Administrative Service (IFAS), an elite service designed to administer India's sensitive northeastern border regions. His expertise in tribal cultures combined with his military background made him the perfect choice for the Tawang mission—a mission that would cement India's territorial integrity in the Northeast. The Tawang mission of 1951 remains a defining chapter in his life. Tawang, a historically significant town in present-day Arunachal Pradesh, has a complex history. Although, it was considered part of Indian territory under the McMahon Line drawn in 1914, it remained under Tibetan administration. While India gained independence in 1947, Tawang was loosely governed, with minimal Indian presence. This lack of administration raised concerns, especially with China's expansionist policies after its annexation of Tibet in 1950, making Tawang's integration into India an urgent necessity. Recognizing the situation, Major

Khathing was assigned the mission of integrating Tawang into Indian territory. His task was to ensure a smooth transition of power and gain the trust of the local Monpa population while avoiding confrontation with Tibetan authorities.

In January 1951, Khathing led a determined force of Assam Rifles personnel and local tribal scouts into the region. His diplomatic approach emphasized direct communication with local tribes, many of whom were wary of the existing Tibetan administration. Through these interactions, he identified their grievances and leveraged them to establish Indian governance.

On February 17, 1951, Major Khathing hoisted the Indian flag in Tawang, formally integrating it into India. His administrative efficiency was evident in how swiftly he established law and order, reassuring the locals of their rights under Indian governance. Remarkably, there was no armed resistance from Tibetan authorities—a feat rarely seen in territorial integrations. His efforts had long-term implications for India's northeastern security, particularly during the Sino-Indian War of 1962, when Tawang became a focal point of conflict, proving just how crucial the mission had been.

Despite his monumental contributions, Major Bob Khathing's story remained largely overshadowed in historical narratives. It was only in recent years that his contributions gained the recognition they deserved. In 2021, the Indian government honored him by inaugurating a memorial in Tawang, ensuring that future generations would remember his role in safeguarding India's sovereignty. The Major Ralengnao Bob Khathing Museum stands as a tribute to his legacy.

In February 2024, students who had the privilege of visiting the museum, shared a few words. Shreya Javalkar states, "Walking through the halls adorned with rare photographs of Major Bob Khathing and his men, I felt an overwhelming sense of pride and gratitude. It ignited a fire of patriotism inside me that has left an indelible mark on me." Another student commented, "The land we are walking on today holds so much history that doesn't need to be verbalized—we can all just feel it."

The Indian Army officers accompanying us shared insightful anecdotes, emphasizing how Khathing's mission remains a guiding example for modern military and diplomatic strategies. Standing before the display of his uniform, medals, and personal letters, I could deduce the magnitude of his sacrifice and dedication. The museum serves as a reminder that national security and sovereignty are upheld by individuals whose names often fade into obscurity despite their monumental contributions.



During their stay in Tawang students had an opportunity to have interaction with civil administration. Deputy commissioner of Tawang along with other top civil officials interacted with the students on various developmental, cultural as well as the issues related to national integration.

Celebrating 'Bonhomie' in Tawang

One gets reminded of good-natured, easy friendliness when we speak about the word 'Bonhomie'—now' imagine this being present among our Indian army and civilians!Yes, this is true, and this bonhomie is still being followed in a beautiful place in Arunachal Pradesh named TAWANG. There are many distinct sectors in which the Indian army and civilians work hand-in-hand, like the security of monasteries and museums, the administration of Tawang and local festivals



By Aarya Wadvalkar

An educational tour was organized by the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Abasaheb Garware College, Pune, for 10 days covering Assam, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh, to be more specific—Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. The tour proceeded on the 31st of Jan, 2025, and returned on the 11th of Feb, 2025, back to Pune. Throughout this tour, there were 22 students combined of master's and T.Y. graduation in mass communication and journalism, headed by two of the faculties, including our H.O.D., Mr. Vinay Chati sir, and assistant professor, Mr. Santosh Gogale sir. This tour's motto was to make students aware of the beauty of eastern India and the role of the Indian army in those states. To start with, we almost stayed for 6 days in Tawang itself to know the rich culture and heritage of the monastery, Buddhism, the sacrifices of our 'Jawans,' and most importantly, the military relations in Tawang with their civilians (local people). The Indian army has been participating in the formation of a peaceful environment all over India and its rooted cities by helping them discuss rules and regulations, fundamental changes, and the implementation of decided projects and laws. If not always physically involved, then through permission and documentation work, the Indian army has played a significant role in making all the possible work done through their administration, particularly in Tawang.

Speaking of Tawang, the bonhomie seen between the Indian army and civilians there is truly remarkable and appreciable, which we students of Garware College got to acknowledge and experience through this tour. There are many distinct sectors in which the Indian army and civilians work hand-in-hand, like the security of monasteries and museums, the administration of Tawang, local festivals and celebrations like the Losar festival, educational infrastructures and administration like Manjushree Vidyalay, and healthcare facilities, including medical care and awareness drives conducted by the people of Tawang together. Also, to get a more briefing regarding civil- military relations we students got the opportunity to meet the honourable Assistant DC of Tawang and had a fruitful conversation with them regarding many variant topics which also included how peacefully Tawang is being handled by Indian army and its residents without any clashes, be it external or internal. Also, Tawang has proven that even civil services like an IAS

officer and a lieutenant commander can work along peacefully while keeping certain boundaries in mind and can make the best out of work. Again, the Department of Arunachal Pradesh police does come into the highlight when we talk about the Indian army participating in the process of management and security and the overall progression of Tawang as a city and Arunachal Pradesh as a state.

Tawang has become a worldwide example of having the best military-civilian relations all over India and abroad, and also they have had a huge contribution in exemplifying the taboo of having the Indian army being involved in civil life can make life full of danger and weapons, which is so not true and has been dominantly proven by the wonderful city Tawang. We, as Indians, do look forward to continuing to celebrate this blissful and satisfactory bonhomie between the Indian army and civilians in Tawang and would try even harder in making such relations all over India.

There are certain limitations and boundaries which are very skillfully followed and handled by both Indian army and police administrations when working together, keeping in mind the designations and it's respect towards each other is what makes Tawang a unique city in terms of having a bonhomie within the residents and military officials. Any kind of problem, be it on a social level or domestic level, sorting, solving, and handling it can be a difficult task at times if we take the cultural and linguistic differences into consideration, but yet again, the Indian army and civilians of Tawang and Arunachal Pradesh have shown us that there can be a peaceful world with a progressive environment under the guidance of the Indian army and cooperation of civilians in the very same terrain.



STUDY TOUR

some
clicks

The Study Tour left a perspectivistic impact on the young journalistic minds of students. It changed the way one perceives the life of people in Border Frontier Areas and the Indian Army. Here are some reflections of these experiences.



Students at Tawang War Memorial



Visit of students at a Gumpa situated at Gorzam Kora Cultural Center



Students along with the Army at Holy Tree



The Tawang War Memorial in Arunachal Pradesh honors the Indian soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the 1962 Sino-Indian War. Built in traditional Buddhist style, it stands as a symbol of bravery and remembrance.

Exploring the Frontiers

A Study Tour of Arunachal Pradesh's Forward Areas

Nestled in India's northeasternmost corner, Arunachal Pradesh is more than just a land of breathtaking landscapes—it is a crucial frontier safeguarded by the unwavering dedication of the Indian Army. This strategically significant state, sharing borders with China, Bhutan, and Myanmar, stands as a testament to resilience, security, and national integrity. As students of Mass Media and Journalism from Abasaheb Garware College, we embarked on a study tour that offered us a rare glimpse into life at the borders. Beyond its mesmerizing valleys and towering peaks, this journey introduced us to the extraordinary role of the Army in not just securing the nation but also fostering development, culture, and civilian well-being.



By Apeksha Chorage

Visiting the Northeast had always been my dream, and now, I can finally say—I made it! Arunachal Pradesh, a state of unparalleled beauty, is a land of stunning landscapes, towering mountains, and serene valleys. What makes it even more fascinating is its strategic location, bordering three nations—China, Bhutan, and Myanmar.

As students of Mass Communication and Journalism from Abasaheb Garware College, we embarked on a study tour that turned out to be a mesmerizing experience of a lifetime.

The Heart of Arunachal: Army, Civilians, and Culture

More Than Just Soldiers: The Emotional Side of the Indian Army

Before this trip, my perception of the Indian Army was limited to war and security. However, visiting the Tawang Monastery, Manjushree School, Gorzam Stupa, and the Holy Tree changed my perspective.

Lamas at these sacred sites spoke about the Army's crucial role in protecting religious places, assisting staff and visitors, and maintaining peace. Their selfless service instills a sense of security, gratitude, and a shared responsibility to support our soldiers.

Operation Sadbhavna: A Bridge Between Army and Civilians

The visit also highlighted Operation Sadbhavna, an initiative where the Army actively contributes to infrastructure, healthcare, education, and employment in border areas. This collaboration between locals and soldiers strengthens national security and fosters trust and cooperation.

An Unforgettable Meeting with the Army

A Lesson in Discipline and Charisma

Interacting with senior Army officials, including brigadiers, was one of the most inspiring moments of this journey. Their discipline, aura, and leadership were truly captivating. The social evening with the Army gave us firsthand insight into their lives, values, and unwavering commitment to the nation.

A Personal Realization: The Need for Self-Improvement

This experience made me reflect—I have so much to learn and grow. The way the Army carries themselves with grace, respect, and confidence is something I aspire to emulate in my personal and professional life.

The Holy Tree: A Testament to Nationalism

Among all my experiences, the Holy Tree stood out the most. It is a living symbol of unity, showcasing how faith, nationalism, and respect for the armed forces intertwine in Arunachal Pradesh.



Development and the Army: A Lifeline for Arunachal

Project Vartak: Defying the Odds to Build Connectivity

Infrastructure development in mountainous terrains is an uphill battle—both physically and socially. Yet, Border Roads Organisation's Project Vartak has done tremendous work in improving road connectivity, making travel smoother and linking remote areas to the rest of the country. Their efforts prove that national development and security go hand in hand.

Echoes of Bravery: A Tribute to War Memorials

A Shivering Introduction—The Ball of Fire Museum

Being a civilian, I never truly understood the depth of a war memorial's significance. Our first exposure to military history was at the Ball of Fire Museum, where Army officials briefed us on the 1962 Indo-China war. Observing the weapons and learning about the heroic sacrifices of our soldiers sent chills down our spines. It was our first glimpse into the harsh realities of war.

Jaswantgarh War Memorial: A Symbol of Unmatched Valor

The Jaswantgarh War Memorial left a profound impact on me. Hearing the tale of Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat, who single-handedly fought against enemy forces, gave me goosebumps. His courage proved that for our soldiers, fear is never an option—they stand tall, ready to protect us at any cost. Walking through the actual battlefields and bunkers, where these warriors once fought, was a freezing yet humbling experience.

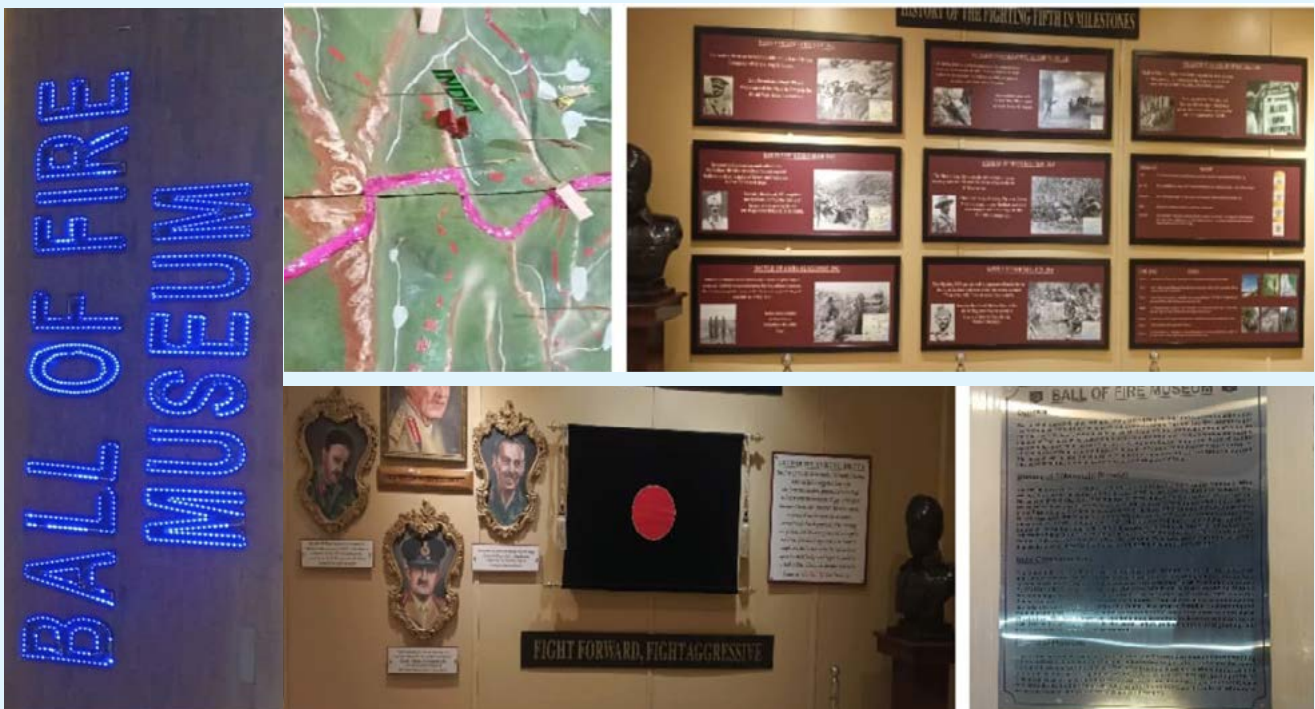
Interestingly, a holy tree at the site holds deep patriotic and spiritual significance, symbolizing the unbreakable bond between soldiers and civilians.

Bob Khating Museum: A Legacy of Dedication

The Bob Khating Museum introduced us to an inspiring figure—Major Ralengnao "Bob" Khating, a man of patience, valor, and dedication to India's border development. His contributions remind us that national security isn't just about wars—it's about visionary leadership and unwavering commitment.

War Memorials: Preserving the Legacy of Unsung Heroes

Visiting these memorials was not just a lesson in history but a realization—these are stories that must be told. Our soldiers' sacrifices deserve recognition across the country. Establishing similar memorials in other states would foster unity, patriotism, and respect for our armed forces.



A Journey That Changed Me Forever

Lessons Beyond the Classroom

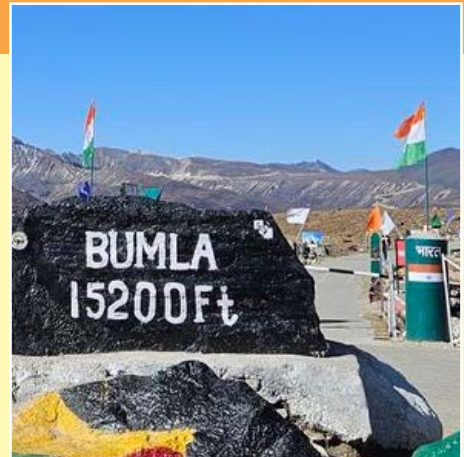
This study tour was more than just a visit—it was an awakening. Seeing border realities firsthand made me realize that talking about patriotism is easy, but living it is a whole different story. The civilians and Army personnel stationed in these remote areas are the unsung heroes, working tirelessly to protect us. Their cooperation, sacrifice, and dedication ensure the safety and integrity of our nation.

This trip has left an indelible mark on my heart, reminding me that patriotism is not just about words—it's about action, gratitude, and responsibility.

Bum La Pass: Standing at the Edge of India

Face-to-Face with the Chinese Army

Visiting Bum La Pass, the Line of Actual Control (LAC), was an experience of a lifetime. Watching Indian and Chinese troops maintain military diplomacy in a sensitive border zone highlighted that the Army is not just about wars—they are also diplomats, peacekeepers, and guardians of stability. The chilling winds, rugged terrain, and breathtaking mountains only deepened my admiration for our soldiers, who brave these extreme conditions every single day to protect our country.



Hospitality Beyond Borders: The Army's Warmth and Generosity

A Home Away from Home

From the moment we landed at Guwahati Airport, the Army welcomed us with open arms. The way they took care of us throughout the journey made us feel safe, valued, and respected. Their hospitality was so heartfelt that, despite being hundreds of kilometers away from home, we never felt alone. It wasn't just about hosting us—it was about making us feel like part of their extended family.

A Journey That Changed Me Forever

Lessons Beyond the Classroom

This study tour was more than just a visit—it was an awakening. Seeing border realities firsthand made me realize that talking about patriotism is easy, but living it is a whole different story. The civilians and Army personnel stationed in these remote areas are the unsung heroes, working tirelessly to protect us. Their cooperation, sacrifice, and dedication ensure the safety and integrity of our nation.

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Rough and harsh border terrain

India's Starting Line

In the icy heights of Arunachal Pradesh, where faith and conflict intertwine, the Indian Army stands as the last line of defense. At 15,000 feet, where the mountains whisper history and borders are invisible yet fiercely contested, soldiers brave isolation, bitter cold, and constant vigilance. More than warriors, they are lifelines—connecting remote communities, guarding peace, and carrying the weight of an unfinished war. This is the untold story of India's frontline, where survival is duty, and duty is survival.



By Harshal Waghmare

In the northeastern reaches of India, where the first light of dawn touches the subcontinent, lies Arunachal Pradesh—a land of towering peaks, deep valleys, and ancient monasteries. Here, history does not sit in textbooks; it is woven into the very fabric of the land. The mountains have stood witness to shifting empires, forgotten treaties, and wars fought and avoided.

As you journey through this terrain, the road to the border winds past monasteries and military outposts, through landscapes where faith and conflict exist side by side. In Tawang, a town nestled in the high Himalayas, the largest monastery in India hums with Buddhist chants. But beyond the serenity of its prayer halls, the mountains whisper a different story—one of fragile peace and unseen boundaries.

“The mountains do not speak, but they listen. And in their silence, we hear the truth of what divides us.”

The road from Tawang to the border is treacherous, yet breathtaking. It snakes through rugged cliffs, past frozen lakes, and stretches of snow-draped wilderness. The ascent is marked by sudden drops in temperature, by the thinning of the air, by the distant hum of Indian Army convoys navigating this unforgiving terrain.

Here, the army’s presence is unmistakable—outposts dot the landscape, soldiers march through the biting cold, and bunkers stand as silent sentinels. In these desolate altitudes, the soldiers are not just warriors; they are guardians of an invisible line, braving nature as much as geopolitics.

“Our enemy is not just the other side; it is the relentless cold, the isolation, and the loneliness of being stationed in this vast emptiness,” one soldier reflects.

At over 15,000 feet, the border exists not as a grand structure but as an unassuming divide. No towering fences, no walls—just a line that exists more in the minds of men than in the mountains themselves.

For those who live in these highlands, the border is not merely a political concept—it is a reality that shapes every aspect of life. Villages echo with a blend of tongues—Tibetan prayers murmured under breath, Hindi spoken between traders, local dialects passed from elder to child. Here, identities shift as fluidly as the clouds that roll over the peaks. The border is both an anchor and a limitation.

Yet it is the Indian Army that keeps these remote

communities connected to the rest of the country. Beyond defence, soldiers here serve as medics, transporters, and providers—ensuring supplies, medical aid, and warmth reach those at the edge of the nation.

“We are the thin line between isolation and survival,” a soldier in a remote outpost states. “We don’t just defend the border—we bridge it.”

At the border post, soldiers from both sides stand just meters apart. No words are exchanged, yet the air is heavy with unspoken meaning. Eyes meet briefly before turning away. The silence here speaks louder than any negotiation, a fragile understanding suspended in the cold mountain air.

This is a battlefield without a war, a frontline without combat. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is not just a territorial divide—it is a psychological boundary, a point where history waits, poised on the edge of an uncertain future.

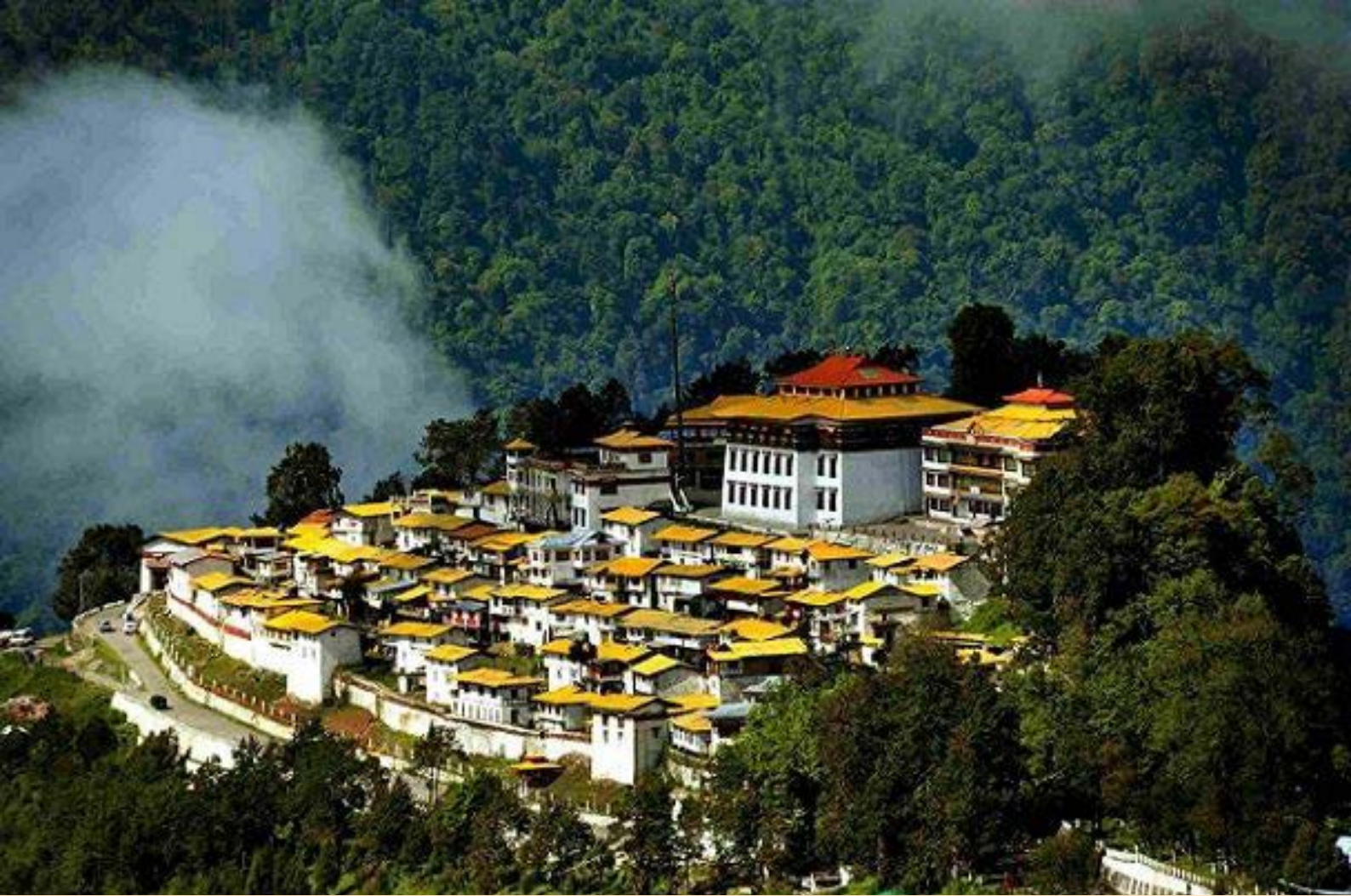
For the soldiers stationed here, the border is not just an abstract concept—it is their responsibility. They patrol through blizzards, man their posts in sub-zero temperatures, and stand watch through nights where the only sound is the wind howling through the valleys.

Unlike city barracks, where the enemy is distant, here the adversary is only meters away. Yet, beyond the uniform and the national insignia, there is an unspoken respect between the men on either side. They stand in the same cold, breathe the same thin air, and share the same understanding—that one wrong step could turn this silence into something far louder. For these soldiers, the battle is not just against an unseen enemy—it is against the elements, against loneliness, against time itself.

Borders exist to define nations, yet they do more than that. They shape identities, alter destinies, and impose meanings onto landscapes that once knew no such constraints. But where does a country truly end? At the last military post? At the final milestone? Or does it extend beyond, carried in the hearts of its people?

For the soldiers, the border is duty. For the civilians, it is survival. For the mountains, it is nothing at all. “Borders are not drawn on maps—they are etched into the soul of a nation,” muses a retired general.

And as the sun sets behind the peaks, casting long shadows over the land, the truth becomes clear: a border is not where a nation ends—it is where the world begins.



Gardian of Mountains - The Tawang Monestry

Connecting People Harnessing National Integration.



Arunachal Pradesh, the "Land of the Rising Sun," is a land of breathtaking beauty, rich culture, and strategic significance. Nestled in the eastern Himalayas, it shares borders with China, Bhutan, and Myanmar, making security a priority. The Indian Army not only safeguards the region but also enhances tourism by improving infrastructure and ensuring safe travel. Their efforts promote adventure, culture, and connectivity, making this remote paradise more accessible to the world.



By Shruti Khalatkar

The role of the Indian Army in enhancing border tourism is multifaceted, encompassing infrastructural development, sustainable practices, and community engagement. The Army plays a vital role not only in protecting the nation, but also in fostering tourism in remote and challenging terrains by creating safe and accessible spaces for travelers.

Despite its strategic importance, Arunachal Pradesh remains one of the least explored regions of India, primarily due to its remoteness and difficult terrain. Security concerns often deter tourists from visiting border regions, but the presence of the Indian Army provides a sense of safety and reassurance to both visitors and locals.

In regions like Tawang, Bumla, and the Holy Tree, where tourists come to witness breathtaking landscapes and cultural heritage, the Indian Army plays a crucial role in maintaining peace and security. Their presence ensures a safe environment, which in turn promotes tourism. Apart from defense responsibilities, the Army actively contributes to promoting local culture and ecotourism. For instance, they participate in and celebrate festivals with the local tribes, who have a rich tradition of vibrant cultural festivities. This interaction between the Army and civilians fosters a strong bond, making the region even more appealing and unique to tourists.

Arunachal Pradesh is known not only for its scenic beauty and spiritual significance but also for its adventurous offerings. The Indian Army has organized trans-theater adventure activities along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), featuring river rafting, mountaineering expeditions, mountain biking, and trekking. These activities witness enthusiastic participation from both locals and tourists, promoting adventure tourism in the region.

The Indian Army has played a significant role in promoting notable tourist attractions in Arunachal Pradesh, such as:

1. Shungatser (Madhuri) Lake – Located in Tawang, this stunning lake gained popularity after being featured in the Bollywood movie *Koyla* and remains a must-visit destination for tourists.
2. Bumla Pass– Situated at an altitude of 15,200 feet, this is the highest point along the India-China border. Tourists can visit the Bumla War Memorial, which is maintained by the Army. The Army also provides logistical support to ensure safe travel to this remote location.

Arunachal Pradesh is prone to natural calamities such as landslides, floods, and earthquakes,

particularly in its remote border areas. The Indian Army is at the forefront of disaster relief operations, ensuring the safety of both tourists and locals. Effective crisis management is an essential aspect of tourism in this region, given the challenging terrain. The Army plays a pivotal role in carrying out relief operations, instilling confidence in tourists that in times of emergency, help will be readily available.

Arunachal Pradesh, also known as the "Land of the Rising Sun," holds the distinction of being the easternmost state of India. It is a land where stunning mountains meet diverse cultures, offering breathtaking beauty and a rich history. Beyond its natural charm, Arunachal Pradesh is strategically significant, sharing its borders with China, Bhutan, and Myanmar. Its unique geographical location in the eastern Himalayas makes it a crucial part of India's defense while simultaneously presenting immense tourism potential.

The Army's contribution to border area tourism in Arunachal Pradesh extends beyond national security. Their efforts in infrastructure development, maintaining key tourist sites like Madhuri Lake, Bumla, and the Holy Tree, and ensuring safe travel conditions make them indispensable to the region's tourism sector.

Border tourism is not only important for economic development but also serves as a testament to India's strong territorial claims. Increased tourism in border regions provides greater development opportunities and strengthens national integration with these remote areas.

As Arunachal Pradesh continues to attract travelers seeking adventure, spirituality, and natural beauty, the Indian Army remains the strongest pillar supporting tourism in the region.



Sela Lake : A silent poem of the mountains



Tawang gateway.

Tales of tawang

Inspiring role of indian army



Tawang, a beautiful town in Arunachal Pradesh, is known for its history and the presence of the Indian Army. Located near the India-China border, it plays an important role in national security. The Indian Army not only protects the country but also helps local communities by improving education and infrastructure. Their hard work and sacrifices are truly inspiring, teaching valuable lessons about discipline, courage, and dedication.



By Dhiraj Pundage

As a final-year Mass Communication student at Abasaheb Garware College, Pune, I recently visited Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, with my teachers and batch mates for a study tour. This journey was not just about exploring the beautiful landscapes of Tawang but also about understanding the immense contribution of the Indian Army in this region.

Tawang, located near the India-China border, has great historical and military significance. The Indian Army plays an important role in every aspect of life here, from education and museums to hospitality and infrastructure development. Their dedication to border security and community welfare is truly inspiring. The more I learned about their contributions, the more I felt a deep sense of respect and admiration for them.

One of the most inspiring stories I came across was that of Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat. During the 1962 India-China war, he fought alone against the Chinese Army for 72 hours, sacrificing his life at just 21 years old. His courage and patriotism define true heroism. His story, along with many others, made me feel proud and motivated. The Indian Army's history in Arunachal Pradesh is filled with stories of bravery and dedication, reminding us of the sacrifices made by these soldiers to protect our country.

This journey to Tawang was an eye-opening experience. The Indian Army teaches us valuable lessons about life. Their never-give-up attitude, discipline, and dedication inspire us to work hard and stay strong, no matter how difficult the situation is. The soldiers work in extreme conditions, far from their families, to ensure our safety. Their sacrifices make them the true heroes of our nation.

Not everyone can join the Indian Army, but every Indian can serve the country in their way. Whether through education, sports, social work, or any profession, we all have a role to play in making our nation better. The soldiers not only protect us but also show us the true meaning of

kindness, generosity, patience, and hard work.

This visit to Tawang has changed my perspective on life. Seeing the bravery and discipline of the Indian Army has taught me to give my best in everything I do. Their stories will always stay with me, inspiring me to work harder and stay dedicated to my goals.

I feel extremely grateful for this experience. The Indian Army unknowingly teaches us important lessons about courage and selfless service. Hats off to every soldier who works



Students visited 15 maratha infantry.

tirelessly to protect us in every situation. Their sacrifices will always be remembered, and their dedication will continue to inspire generations. This journey to Tawang has been a life-changing experience, and I will carry this inspiration with me forever.



Students visited Bumla - First village of India.

A2

Cultural Connection



“In Arunachal Pradesh's lush hills and valleys, where history blends with stunning scenery, the Indian Army serves as more than just a guardian of the country's boundaries. As evidenced by programs like Operation Sadbhavana, this remarkable collaboration shows the army's dedication to promoting peaceful coexistence and guaranteeing that Arunachal Pradesh's unique customs continue to flourish for many years to come.”



By Prajakta Gadekar

Arunachal Pradesh, a region known for its rich cultural heritage and stunning natural beauty, is a tribute to India's diversity. Beyond its picturesque scenery, however, the state has particular difficulties in maintaining its native cultures. The Indian Army is essential in this regard, not just for defending the borders but also for actively supporting the preservation and advancement of Arunachal's cultural legacy.

A Stronghold of Safety and Consistency

The Indian Army's major responsibilities in Arunachal Pradesh, as in other places, are to uphold peace and order and safeguard the country's territorial integrity. This gives the local communities a safe space to follow their traditions and practices without worrying about internal unrest or external threats.

Beyond the Battlefield

Operation Sadbhavana: The Indian Army recognised the significance of its role in the socio-cultural fabric of the state and launched 'Operation Sadbhavana' in Arunachal Pradesh. This initiative goes beyond traditional military duties and focuses on developmental projects that directly benefit the local population. As part of this operation, the army has undertaken various initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting the state's cultural heritage.

Preserving Cultural Heritage

One of the Indian Army's most notable contributions has been the establishment of museums and cultural centres, which act as repositories of local artefacts, traditional attire, and historical documents, ensuring that the rich heritage of Arunachal's diverse tribes is preserved for future generations. The army has also played a key role in arranging cultural events and festivals.

Empowerment and Education

Additionally, the Indian Army has been instrumental in advancing education in Arunachal Pradesh's outlying regions. They are giving the younger generation access to contemporary education and enabling them to embrace their cultural heritage by founding schools and offering scholarships. This guarantees that the cultural heirs of Arunachal Pradesh are prepared to continue their customs in the twenty-first century.

Overcoming the Divide

Access to infrastructure and essential services is

still difficult to come by in many isolated Arunachal Pradesh areas. By building roads, bridges, and medical facilities as part of Operation Sadbhavana, the Indian Army has actively contributed to closing this gap. The army is indirectly aiding in the preservation of local cultures by facilitating communities' ability to maintain ties to their heritage through increased connectivity and availability to necessary services.



Indo-China Border, Bumla

A Mutually Beneficial Partnership

The Indian Army and the people of Arunachal Pradesh have a cordial and respectful relationship. Because of their attempts to preserve the state's culture, the army has gained the respect and confidence of the local populace. This mutually beneficial relationship is essential to preserving regional peace and tranquillity, which in turn fosters an atmosphere that is favourable to the development of Arunachal Pradesh's own cultural identity.

Conclusion

Beyond its conventional military responsibilities, the Indian Army plays a significant role in Arunachal Pradesh. The army has become a steward of the state's rich cultural legacy because of the programs like Operation Sadbhavana. The Indian Army is contributing significantly to the preservation of Arunachal Pradesh's varied cultures for future generations by fostering education, supplying security, and aiding local populations. As a country, we must acknowledge and value the diverse role that our military plays in maintaining our cultural heritage as well as guarding our borders.



Bumla

Tawang : A Vital Borderland of India

“The importance of Tawang was evident even during the 1962 Sino-Indian War. The region became one of the key battlegrounds, and Chinese forces occupied it for a brief period. However, they later withdrew, underlining the contested nature of this territory. Since then, India has strengthened its presence in the region, with forward military bases and observation posts that keep an eye on Chinese activities. These installations help in rapid troop mobilization, ensuring that India can respond quickly to any potential threats.”



By Tanaya Neve

We, the students of Abasaheb Garware College, Pune went on a study tour to Tawang under the Border Area Tourism Initiative. This study tour was organized under the guidance of Dr. Vinay Chati, our HOD. During this visit, we explored various border areas, including Bumla, Zemithang, Khinzemane, and some locations near the Line of Actual Control (LAC). This study tour helped me to understand the immense strategic importance that Tawang holds for India.

Tawang is situated in Arunachal Pradesh, at an altitude of 9,800 feet in the Eastern Himalayas. Its location makes it a crucial high-altitude outpost near the India-China border. The region's proximity to the LAC provides it a significant role in India's defense strategy. If there is ever a military confrontation with China, Tawang would be a frontline defense area. I observed how India maintains strict surveillance in this region to ensure quick deployment of forces if required. Tawang also provides a strategic advantage due to its elevation, offering a clear vantage point over the Chumbi Valley, where India, Bhutan, and China meet. Controlling Tawang gives India an upper hand in this tri-junction area, allowing better monitoring of movements across the border.

The importance of Tawang was evident even during the 1962 Sino-Indian War. The region became one of the key battlegrounds, and Chinese forces occupied it for a brief period. However, they later withdrew, underlining the contested nature of this territory. Since then, India has strengthened its presence in the region, with forward military bases and observation posts that keep an eye on external activities. These installations help in rapid troop mobilization, ensuring that India can respond quickly to any potential threats.

Infrastructure plays a major role in maintaining control over Tawang. The roads and airstrips in the region are essential for military movement. The Sela Pass, which connects



Jaswant Garh Memorial

Tawang to the rest of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, is a vital supply route. Any disruption in this route could create logistical challenges for the Indian Army. I observed how the government has been improving road connectivity, making sure that military convoys can move smoothly even in harsh weather conditions. The Border Roads Organization (BRO) has played a key role in this development, constructing new roads and upgrading existing ones to ensure all-weather access. Tawang is home to various military divisions, including infantry and mountain units specialized in high-altitude combat. These units are equipped with special gear and vehicles designed for the tough terrain. The Indian Army has also deployed advanced



Tawang War Memorial

artillery and missile systems in the region to strengthen its defence systems. These weapons are positioned in a way that allows them to cover key approaches where potential threats could emerge. The presence of such military assets ensures that India is always prepared for any conflict.

Apart from its military significance, Tawang also holds cultural and religious importance. It is home to the Tawang Monastery, one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in India. This monastery not only attracts tourists but also serves as a symbol of India's deep-rooted cultural connection with the region. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of its territory, referring to it as "South Tibet." However, India's control over Tawang reinforces its sovereignty in the region. By preserving the cultural heritage of Tawang, India counters China's efforts to assert its influence.

Tourism is another crucial aspect of Tawang's identity. The region's stunning landscapes, Buddhist monasteries, and cultural festivals attract visitors from all over India. However, managing tourism in a border region comes

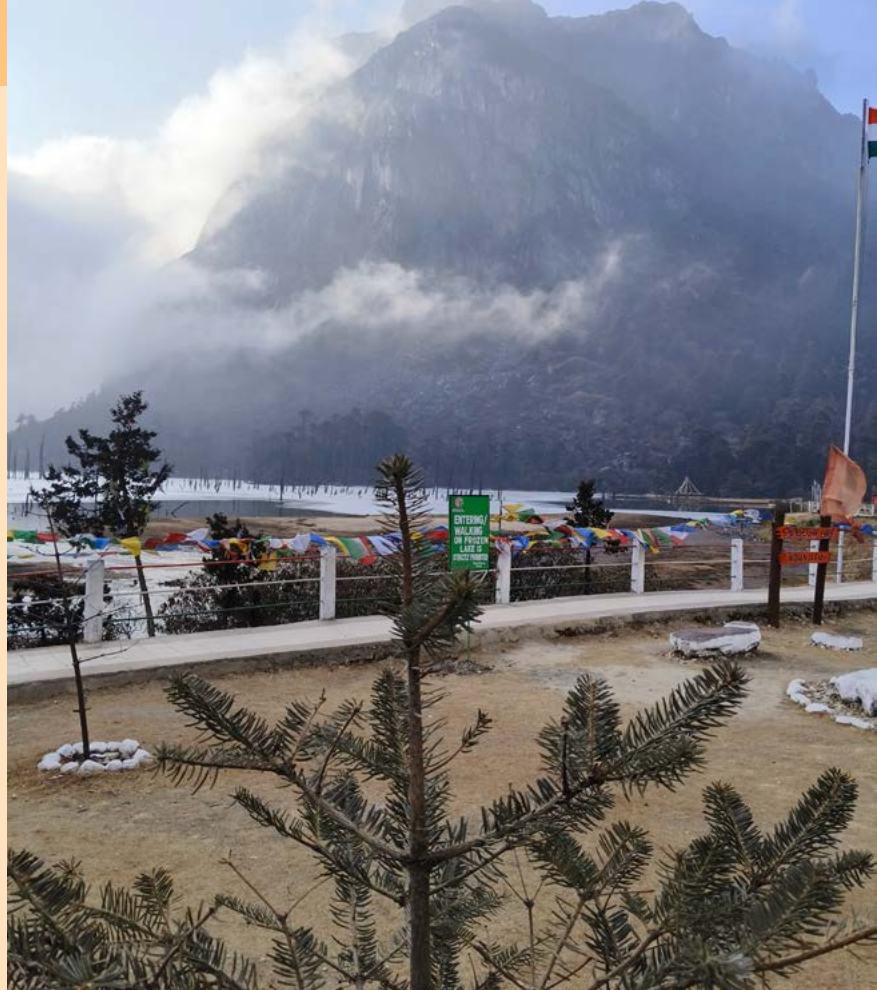
Air power is another important aspect of Tawang's defense. The Indian Air Force operates from bases close to the region, allowing for quick deployment of fighter jets and transport aircraft if needed. Advanced landing grounds (ALGs) and helipads in Tawang facilitate the movement of troops, equipment, and supplies to forward areas. This is especially important in winter when road access becomes difficult. I observed how the radar systems in Tawang enhance airspace monitoring, providing early warnings against any aerial threats.

with challenges. Sustainable tourism practices, such as promoting eco-friendly accommodations and responsible travel, can help preserve Tawang's natural beauty while boosting the local economy.

The economy of Tawang is closely linked to its strategic location. The military presence in the region brings better infrastructure,



Chakzam Bridge, Tawang



Madhuri Lake

healthcare, and employment opportunities for the local population. Many residents are involved in businesses that cater to soldiers, tourists, and government officials. The development of roads, digital connectivity, and other essential services further improves the quality of life for the people of Tawang.

Despite the challenges, Tawang continues to play a crucial role in India's defense and security framework. Over the years, India has increased its military presence in the region, deploying additional troops, advanced weaponry, and surveillance systems. Regular joint military exercises are conducted in high-altitude areas to ensure that Indian forces are well-prepared for any situation. The Indian Army's efforts in securing Tawang not only protect India's borders but also contribute to maintaining stability in the region.

I deeply feel proud of the work the Indian Army is doing in this area. It is extremely challenging to maintain border security while also taking care of civilians, promoting tourism, improving education, building infrastructure, and conserving both culture and nature. However,

Healthcare remains a challenge in the region due to its remote location. While military hospitals provide medical services to both soldiers and civilians, there is still a need for better-equipped hospitals with specialized doctors. The government has been working to improve healthcare facilities by introducing telemedicine services and upgrading existing centers. Similarly, the education sector in Tawang is growing, with schools run by both the government and monasteries. However, better infrastructure and access to modern teaching resources are needed to enhance learning opportunities for children.

I observed that the Indian Army is handling all of this effortlessly, making sure that Tawang not only remains with India but also remains safe, secure, and developed for its people.



The Sacred Gorzam Stupa in Zemithang Sector

The Frontier Tells It All

Sacred Spaces of Nationalism and Spiritualism



The Maratha Light Infantry unit deployed in the Zemithang and Khinzemane sector assisted us to the areas allowing us to closely witness different aspects of the region including education, culture, society, tourism etc. We were also privileged to have lunch with the soldiers which was prepared by them. We experienced the hospitality like never before by the way Indian Army offers with its disciplinary values. We learnt many lessons from Indian Army like patience, dedication, kindness, down to earth quality and most importantly discipline.



By Rutuja Elchatwar

The study tour was organised to explore the border areas and observe the way Indian Army works in the perspective of journalism under Border Area Tourism Initiative. It was a 10-day study tour of the students of Journalism and Mass Communication in the land of mountains, land of rising sun and a place of multiple significant identities, Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh.

The most beautiful thing that I noticed in Tawang was the saffron colour of the sky when the sun rises, white colour of the snow and green colour of the bio-diverse flora that represented the colours of our national flag and how naturally the Indicness of Arunachal is certified by the nature itself.

We also visited Zemithang and Kinzimane, villages near the Indo-China border. At first, we visited at one of the most beautiful place, Gorzam Stupa Cultural Centre. Personally, I felt very positive energy reverberating from the sacred Gorzam Stupa. Later, Lama explained the history of Stupa and the significance of the symbol at the entrance of Stupa. It is believed that the wishes of people get fulfilled if prayed by touching the symbol on the right spot blindly.

We also met the school teachers and Principal of the school in the border region of Zemithang and I was overwhelmed to know how exactly the school runs. Where they face a number of challenges in critical weather conditions. & economical situations. In all the situations they are running the school successfully throughout the year since long time.

Moving ahead, we went to the Holy Tree where I experienced

positive & spiritual vibes which connected me to the to the roots. Also, it is a belief that whatever you pray to the Holy Tree, the wish gets fulfilled. The universe works in favour to fulfil your wishes. Also, our guide told that many people have experienced the same thing. Later, we met the engineer who actually developed the space of Holy Tree. The one who was totally looking for that place for its development and for its betterment where he showed us the previous photographs of the place and then I realised that Indian Army has worked really hard to make this happen.

The Maratha Light Infantry unit deployed in the Zemithang and Khinzemane sector assisted us to the areas allowing us to closely witness different aspects of the region including education, culture, society, tourism etc. We were also privileged to have lunch with the soldiers which was prepared by them. We experienced the hospitality like never before by the way Indian Army offers with its disciplinary values.

Conclusively, it was a very productive and informative tour with Indian Army and all the students, where we explored a lot of things that added values to our lives. We learnt many lessons from Indian Army like patience, dedication, kindness, down to earth quality and most importantly discipline.





A mesmerising visit to Shri Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Statue at 238 Transit Camp in Tenga.

Tawang : India's Sentinel in the Himalayas



Tawang is situated in the western region of Arunachal Pradesh. Tawang is known for its stunning scenery, rich Buddhist history, and strategic importance. Tawang is evidence of India's enduring defence tactics and rich cultural legacy. Tawang has been a hotspot for geopolitical tensions due to its closeness to the disputed Indo-China border. Tawang is a key component of India's military strategy because of its placement along the McMahon Line. With cutting-edge fighter jets and helicopters positioned at strategic air bases to offer aerial support.



By Parnal Bhalerao

Nestled away in Arunachal Pradesh's northeastern region, Tawang is known for its stunning scenery, rich Buddhist history, and strategic importance. At more than 10,000 feet above sea level, this charming village is not only a cultural gem but also a vital military stronghold that is constantly watched over by the Indian Army. Tawang has been a hotspot for geopolitical tensions due to its closeness to the disputed Indo-China border, making the Indian Army's presence there essential to preserving regional security and sovereignty.

Tawang's Geopolitical Significance

Tawang is situated in the western region of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the Tibet Autonomous Region of China. As a crucial gateway to India's northeastern boundary, the town holds significant strategic importance. China has often claimed Tawang, citing its historical ties to Tibet; however, India has consistently reaffirmed its territorial integrity.

The historical background stems from the Sino-Indian War of 1962 when Chinese forces briefly captured Tawang before withdrawing. The Indian Army has strengthened its presence in the area ever since to prevent a recurrence of this kind of incident. Tawang is a key component of India's military strategy because of its placement along the McMahon Line, where the army keeps a stronghold to ward off any possible invasions.

The presence of the Indian Army in Tawang

With the Eastern Command in charge of operations there, the Indian Army is essential to maintaining Tawang's security. To maintain national security, several important military units, including the Tawang Garrison, are positioned in and near the town. With severe winters that bring heavy snowfall and below-freezing temperatures, soldiers stationed in Tawang are subjected to terrible weather conditions. They continue to be tenacious and dedicated to preserving India's territorial integrity.

Over the years, India has made major improvements to its military facilities in Tawang. Roads, tunnels, and sophisticated monitoring systems have been built to guarantee efficient logistics and quick military mobilization. With cutting-edge fighter jets and helicopters positioned at strategic air bases to offer aerial support, the Indian Air Force also plays a vital part in preserving security.

Frequent Barriers and Military Preparedness

There have been several border standoffs between Chinese and Indian troops at Tawang; the most recent one occurred in December 2022. Aggressive patrolling and varying interpretations of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) are frequently the causes of these encounters. Nonetheless, India's assertive military stance guarantees the preservation of its territorial claims. The Indian Army has a strategic advantage in the area thanks to its sophisticated weapons, vast training, and experience in high-altitude combat.

The government has placed a strong emphasis on strengthening the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and other paramilitary groups to support the army's operations. To avoid escalation, India has also strengthened diplomatic ties with China while upholding its strict border security posture.

Cultural and Strategic Significance

Tawang is a significant cultural and religious hub in addition to its military significance. It is the location of the well-known Tawang Monastery, which is the biggest Buddhist monastery in India and the second largest in the world. Established in the 17th century, this monastery is a center of spirituality that welcomes thousands of pilgrims and visitors annually. Since the region's spiritual links to Tibet impact larger geopolitical considerations, India's strong Buddhist affiliations also influence its diplomatic strategy.

Strong civil-military ties are also fostered by the Indian Army's coexistence with the local Monpa community. The army maintains a mutually beneficial connection with the local population by actively participating in infrastructure projects, medical camps, and community development.

Conclusion

Tawang is evidence of India's enduring defence tactics and rich cultural legacy. The nation's dedication to defending its borders and preserving regional security is demonstrated by the Indian Army's constant presence in the area. With the army acting as its unwavering protector, Tawang will continue to be a crucial hub in India's strategic environment as regional and global forces change.



Indian Army : The true example of Atithi Devo Bhavah

Hospitality of the Indian Army

Beyond its military process, Indian Army also upholds a strong tradition of hospitality. Whether welcoming guests at military establishments, providing aid during crises, or ensuring the well-being of civilians in remote areas, the Indian Army reflects India's values of kindness and respect. The Indian Army's hospitality is incomplete without its famous culinary traditions. Army kitchens or mess halls serve a variety of nutritious and delicious meals that keep soldiers energized in challenging terrains.



By Pranalli Harpale

The Indian Army is renowned for its bravery, discipline, and dedication to national security. However, beyond its military process, it also upholds a strong tradition of hospitality. Whether welcoming guests at military establishments, providing aid during crises, or ensuring the well-being of civilians in remote areas, the Indian Army reflects India's values of kindness and respect. One of the most heartwarming aspects of this hospitality is the delicious food they cook and share, particularly in regions like Arunachal Pradesh, where their presence plays a crucial role in local communities.

While on a Study tour to Arunachal Pradesh, initiated by the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Abasaheb Garware College, Pune students were excellently hosted by '190 Mountain Brigade' to multiple destinations having cultural, historical & political significance equally. Students witnessed once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, where they visited number of places assisted by the Indian Army flawlessly. Most highlighted and noticeable thing was the hospitality of the Indian Army!

Hospitality is deeply ingrained in Indian culture, and the Indian Army proudly carries this tradition. Military bases and cantonments across the country are known for their warm treatment to visitors, dignitaries, and civilians. Army officers and soldiers take great care in organizing meals, events, and celebrations, ensuring that guests experience the best of Indian hospitality. This tradition extends beyond formal gatherings.

Arunachal Pradesh, with its rugged terrain and extreme weather conditions, is home to several army bases that protect India's northeastern borders. In this region, the Indian Army not only defends the nation but also serves as a pillar of support for local communities.

The army's presence in Arunachal Pradesh also plays a crucial role in disaster relief, medical aid, and infrastructural development. Their efforts in providing food, shelter, and medical assistance during emergencies make them a lifeline for the people in this remote part of India. During natural disasters, they are often the first to provide aid, setting up relief camps where affected civilians receive food, water, and medical attention.

Additionally, even in conflict situations, Indian Army adhere to international conventions, ensuring that captured soldiers receive proper food, medical care, and dignified treatment. Among themselves, Indian soldiers maintain

a strong sense of brotherhood, which is often expressed through food and shared meals. Communal dining is a tradition in the army, fostering unity and mutual respect among officers and soldiers alike. Special occasions such as Army Day, Republic Day, and festivals like Diwali and Holi are celebrated with grand feasts, where both traditional and local dishes are enjoyed.

The Indian Army's hospitality is incomplete without its famous culinary traditions. Army kitchens or mess halls serve a variety of nutritious and delicious meals that keep soldiers energized in challenging terrains. Some of the most loved dishes include Rajma Chawal, Mutton Curry, Aloo Paratha, Dal Tadka and Roti, Thukpa, Momos, Tea and Pakoras & so much more! The Indian Army also ensures that their food reflects the local flavors of different regions, making their meals even more special.



Students enjoying delicious food at Mess

The Indian Army's hospitality is a reflection of the nation's rich cultural values. Whether through extending warm welcomes, offering aid during disasters, or preparing delicious meals, the army showcases not just strength but also compassion. Their culinary traditions, especially in regions like Arunachal Pradesh, highlight their adaptability and deep connection with the communities they serve. This unique blend of discipline, generosity, and warmth makes the Indian Army not only a powerful force but also a symbol of India's legendary hospitality.



Indo- china border (Bumla pass)

Whispers from the East

A Journey Through Assam and Arunachal Pradesh

This study tour was more than just an educational experience; it was a journey of self-discovery. It broadened my horizons, challenged my preconceptions, and instilled in me a deep appreciation for the diversity and beauty of our country. The stories I collected, the interactions I had, and the sights I witnessed will remain engraved in my memory forever. The whispers from the East, the messages from the BRO, the warmth of the people, and the magnificence of the mountains have left an indelible mark on my soul.



By Vishal Patil

As a journalism student, the opportunity to embark on a study tour to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, especially the border areas with the support of the Indian Army, was nothing short of a dream. This wasn't just a trip; it was an immersion into a world vastly different from the one I knew, a landscape painted with vibrant cultures, breathtaking vistas, and stories etched in time.

Our journey began in Assam, the land of blue hills and lush tea gardens. From Assam, we ventured into Arunachal Pradesh, a state of dramatic elevation changes and stunning natural beauty. The landscape shifted from rolling plains to towering mountains, shrouded in mist and dotted with vibrant prayer flags. The air grew crisp and clean, carrying the scent of pine and rhododendrons. The roads, carved ingeniously into the mountainsides, were a testament to the Border Roads Organisation's (BRO) tireless efforts. Their presence was a constant reassurance, their dedication evident in the witty and often profound slogans painted on the roadside walls. "Hard work speaks louder than words," one proclaimed, while another cautioned, "Safety is not a gadget but a state of mind." These simple yet powerful messages resonated deeply, reflecting the challenges and triumphs.

Our journey carried us to Bumla Pass, the Indo-China border, a place steeped in history and strategic significance. Standing there, amidst the stark beauty of the snow-capped peaks, one felt a sense of awe and respect for the soldiers who guard these frontiers. The weather at Bumla was unpredictable, changing from bright sunshine to swirling mists in minutes. The biting wind reminded us of the harsh conditions these brave

men endure. Interacting with the army personnel was a humbling experience. Their dedication to their duty, unwavering patriotism, and cheerful camaraderie were truly inspiring. They shared stories of their lives, challenges, and sacrifices, giving us a glimpse into the realities of guarding the nation's borders.

We also visited the sacred "Holy Tree," a poignant reminder of the human cost of conflict. This tree, a silent witness to battles fought in the region, stands as a symbol of resilience and hope. It serves as a place of quiet reflection, a space to remember the lives lost, and to pray for peace.

Another highlight of our trip was Tawang, a town steeped in Buddhist culture. The Tawang Monastery, one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in the world, was a sight to behold. Its grandeur and serenity were captivating. The intricate artwork, the colorful murals, and the peaceful atmosphere transported us to a different realm. We interacted with the monks, learning about their philosophy, their way of life, and their commitment to preserving their rich cultural heritage.

The people of Arunachal Pradesh were as warm and welcoming as their counterparts in Assam. Their simple lifestyle, their deep connection to nature, and their vibrant traditions were a refreshing change from the fast-paced urban life we were accustomed to.

As a budding journalist, I am inspired to share these stories, strengthen the voices of these remote communities, and contribute to a better understanding of this incredible region. The experience has reinforced my belief in the power of journalism to connect people, to bridge cultures, and to inspire positive change.



photo caption



Bum La Pass (Approximately 15,200 Feet above Sea Level)

The Bum La Pass : The Indian Side



Bum La Pass, located on the India-China border in Arunachal Pradesh. The journey begins from Tawang, a town steeped in Buddhist culture, and requires a special permit issued by the Indian Army and District Administration. The route is a test of endurance, marked by steep ascents, unpredictable weather, and rugged terrain. Bum La was a key battlefield during the 1962 war, and even today. The Army personnel take it upon themselves to guide visitors, sharing historical insights about the 1962 Sino-Indian War and the strategic significance of the pass today.



By Ayush Telang

Bumla Pass: A Tale of Toughness

At a staggering altitude of 15,200 feet, Bum La Pass, located on the India-China border in Arunachal Pradesh, is a destination that blends breathtaking landscapes with deep historical significance. This remote pass, once a crucial route during the 1962 Sino-Indian War, now stands as a symbol of resilience and diplomacy.

The Road to Bum La

Reaching Bum La Pass is an adventure in itself. The journey begins from Tawang, a town steeped in Buddhist culture, and requires a special permit issued by the Indian Army and District Administration. The route is a test of endurance, marked by steep ascents, unpredictable weather, and rugged terrain. Along the way, travelers encounter stunning high-altitude lakes like P.T. Tso and Sangetsar Lake (Madhuri Lake), their pristine waters reflecting the surrounding snow-capped peaks. Military bunkers and checkpoints along the path serve as a constant reminder of the region's strategic importance.

A Glimpse into History

At the pass, Indian Army personnel welcome visitors and provide insights into its historical relevance. Bum La was a key battlefield during the 1962 war, and even today, the Chinese army posts on the other side of the border remain visible. The air is thin, the winds biting, and the silence almost reverent—an eerie yet humbling experience of standing at one of the most sensitive geopolitical frontiers in the world.

Harsh Beauty of the High Himalayas

Despite the stunning views, Bum La's climate is unforgiving. Even in summer, temperatures hover around freezing, and the low oxygen levels make even short walks exhausting. Dense fog often sweeps across the pass within minutes, further amplifying its dramatic aura. Yet, for many, the sight of the Indian tricolor fluttering proudly against this stark backdrop evokes a deep sense of patriotism.

A Historical and Cultural Link

Mountain passes in the Himalayas have long served as conduits for trade, cultural exchanges, and pilgrimages. While Bumla Pass may not have historically been a major commercial route,

such border crossings have facilitated limited interactions between communities on either side.

A Warm Welcome in the Cold

Reaching Bum La Pass is no easy feat. The rugged roads from Tawang, requiring a special permit, test both man and machine. Yet, upon arrival, travelers are greeted not just with breathtaking views but also by smiling soldiers who offer a glimpse into the life of those guarding India's borders. The Army personnel take it upon themselves to guide visitors, sharing historical insights about the 1962 Sino-Indian War and the strategic significance of the pass today.

Tea and Tales from the Frontline

One of the most heartwarming moments comes when soldiers invite guests into a small but cozy Army shelter for a cup of steaming hot tea. In a place where temperatures frequently plummet below freezing, this simple gesture feels like an act of kindness that transcends words. Over tea, visitors engage in conversations with the soldiers—discussions that range from military life in extreme conditions to lighter moments that showcase their resilience and camaraderie.

Ensuring Comfort and Safety

Despite the high-altitude challenges, the Army ensures that visitors feel secure. Oxygen cylinders are kept on standby for those struggling with breathlessness, and medical assistance is readily available if needed. Soldiers also remind guests to stay hydrated and move slowly to avoid altitude sickness, demonstrating not just discipline but genuine care.

A Lasting Impression

The Indian Army's hospitality at Bum La Pass is a testament to their unwavering commitment—not just to national security, but also to the people they protect. Their warmth in such an unforgiving landscape leaves visitors with a profound sense of gratitude and respect.

For many, the journey to Bum La is about witnessing a border post. But for those who experience the Army's hospitality, it becomes a memory of human connection, resilience, and an unspoken promise that even in the coldest corners of the nation, there is warmth to be found.



A Moment of Privilege and Honour at Tawang Officers' Mess.

Arunachal : A Place of Multiple 'B's

Border Area Tourism Initiative, a program that was initiated by the Indian Army to facilitate the tourism experience and services for the students all over Bharat under which this tour had been organized had a purpose of providing a journalistic view to the operations and life of Indian Army in the border areas by witnessing both closely. The sector chosen for the tour was Tawang, situated at the India-China border in Arunachal Pradesh. The 190 Mountain Brigade, also known as Korea Brigade of Indian Army had been the host of the tour.



By Om Patil

"Failure is an opportunity to start again more intelligently." The simplistic formation of this quote and the message it conveys provides a proof of a developed intellectual mind behind it and we shall let this identity be a mystery at the initial stage of this article and keep it for a moment of enlightenment later. February, a month with a popularly perceived identity of love and romance has got much more than that when it comes to Bharat. For Bharat, February is a month of war histories, victories and sacrifices. This very month was chosen for the Study Tour of us students of Mass Communication and Journalism from Abasaheb Garware College, Pune, Maharashtra. Border Area Tourism Initiative, a program that was initiated by the Indian Army to facilitate the tourism experience and services for the students all over Bharat under which this tour had been organized had a purpose of providing a journalistic view to the operations and life of Indian Army in the border areas by witnessing both closely. The location, or for that matter to sound technically correct in military terms, the sector chosen for the tour was Tawang, situated at the India-China border in Arunachal Pradesh. The 190 Mountain Brigade, also known as Korea Brigade of Indian Army had been the host of the tour. The curiosity stimulating title of this article aims to explore different dimensions of Tawang and representatively Arunachal at the same time.

The 'B's

BEAUTY

The land of Rising Sun, the land of lush greenery, the land of snow, rivers and waterfalls, the land above clouds, the land of mountains and valleys, the land of biodiversity, the land of nature. All these identities perfectly describe Arunachal and yet lack in it. The beauty here indeed allows to conquer oneself by providing a perspective of life as a whole and making them realise what being human means.

BRAVERY

The word synonymizes with the great Indian Army who is standing with their heads upright and a feeling of pride on border frontiers in a spine-chilling temperature of negatives and on higher altitudes of more than 15000 fts giving a tough fight with the scarcity of oxygen in the first place and all this for a single oath taken towards our country and its security. The Ball of Fire

Museum in Tenga, the Kameng Cultural Museum and War Memorial, Jaswantgarh War Memorial, Tawang War Memorial, Namka Chu War Memorial in Zemithang, Kinzimane etc. all these places narrate different stories of soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the 1962 Sino-India War. These memorials built by the Indian Army are decorated with the significant elements including the architecture which tell a story that ignites a fire of pride and respect in us.

BORDERS

Arunachal holds a strategic importance one of the reasons for which is its geographical location. It shares its boundaries with Bhutan and Chinese occupied Tibet. The Line of Actual Control i.e. LAC dividing the borders of India and Chinese occupied Tibet lies at the Bumla and Kinzimane sectors near Tawang. Also, the disputed McMohan Line lies near Kinzimane. These lines marked imaginarily with the help of landmark locations are the witness to the 1962 war where the soil is coloured red with the blood of soldiers who sacrificed their lives for nation.

These border areas with several stories and serene beauty have been engaged in much more than just security with the various initiatives of Indian Army. To mention, the BATI or Border Area Tourism Initiative that is led by the Indian Army and under which this study tour was organized provides the exposure to the students to border areas and allows the lives of people there and the Indian Army stories to be observed and witnessed closely that results in expanding their knowledge and instils a feeling of nationalism in every individual.

Also, the Border Roads Organisation i.e. BRO which is again a unit of Indian Army has been engaged in developing the road infrastructure in the Border Areas ensuring a smooth and safe connectivity to these areas for the civilians, tourists as well as the military. These roads also ensure a quite enlightening travel with the life-values adding quotes displayed on the boards roadside. The quote at the beginning of this article is attributed to BRO.

BONHOMIE

One of the many enlightening moments on this study tour included discovering the meaning of this word. Co-operation would be an understatement to the Civil-Military affair that exists in Arunachal. The unsigned memorandum



Education prospering in Arunacha

of understanding, mutual notions and the great acceptance is what defines the Bonhomie of the Indian Army and Civil, that is both the people and the administration. This very affair acts as a fuel to catalyse the development in the border areas including infrastructure, education, tourism and also preserving culture, religion, nature hence preserving identities. Hospitability in this region of dynamically tough terrain neighbouring the disputed borders is one of the most imperative results of this prolonged bonhomie. The involvement of Indian Army in the civil issues and the acceptance of people is a perfect reflection of the Bharatiya value, Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam.

BUDDHISM

Religion, the notion of the term which is unfortunately limited to ideologies due to different social and political narratives, which is limited more often to the practices, remained an element to explore more about with curiosity when it was encountered by the students in Tawang. Religiousness of people in Arunachal is depicted by the human values and principles they follow those are reflected not just through their practices but their normal human actions and everyday activities. The values left behind by the great Lord

Buddha exist among the people as his legacy.

The Monasteries, the Stupas, the Prayer Wheels, the monks and the prayers does not just represent the historical and cultural values, but their presence inculcate a feeling of involvement and acceptance towards every element of life present around, a feeling of gratification, in all what reflects a spirit of Bhakti among the people. This very spirituality extends the bonhomie from people to the land, the forests, the rivers, the lakes, the air, the valleys and the mountains and the commitment to protect and preserve them showcases the real meaning of Dharma.

BHARAT

Borders, it is not a physical entity but is an idea of human mind. Similarly, Bharat does not limit to the borders and is a philosophy with which an individual leads their life. Arunachal sets to be a perfect exemplar to this philosophy of life. The values, the principles, the histories, the culture, the people, also, the borders whisper and the air reverberate, 'Bharat is Arunachal and Arunachal is Bharat'.

SY. B. Voc students at Vidhansabha

As part of the field exposure initiative students of Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (Undergraduate Programme) of MES's Abasaheb Garware College have visited State Assembly (Vidhansabha), Marathi news channel SAAM TV, Editor Dr. Nilesh Khare and other prominent figures during their Mumbai visit. It was the great learning opportunity for all of them.





महाराष्ट्र एज्युकेशन सोसायटी

'मएसो भवन', १२१४-१२१५ सदाशिव पेठ, पुणे ४११ ०३०.
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